

GWZO Studies on Central and Eastern Europe:
Interdisciplinary Approaches to Culture, History, and the Environment

RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE AND THE CRISIS OF WORLD ORDER



A Global Reader

Edited by Dennis Dierks,
Katja Castryck-Naumann,
Lena Dallywater, and
Stefan Rohdewald

 CEU PRESS

Russia's War on Ukraine and the Crisis of World Order

GWZO Studies on Central and Eastern Europe: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Culture, History, and the Environment

GWZO Studies on Central and Eastern Europe: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Culture, History, and the Environment aims to deepen our understanding of processes of cultural, political, and social change in Central and Eastern Europe. Located at the intersection of different disciplines in the humanities, the series is a space for works of cultural and literary studies as well as history reaching from pre-modern times to the present. It seeks to offer new, differentiated, and multifaceted insights into the region against the backdrop of global (dis)entanglements.

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at a time when multiperspectival approaches to knowledge production hold exceptional social relevance.

Dennis Dierks, Katja Castryck-Naumann, Lena Dallywater, and Stefan Rohdewald

Leipzig, December 2025

Foreword

The Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO), in partnership with Central European University Press (CEU Press), is proud to inaugurate the new interdisciplinary English-language series *GWZO Studies on Central and Eastern Europe: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Culture, History, and the Environment*. Building on a long-standing collaboration, the series offers a platform for innovative research at the intersections of history, cultural and literary studies, art history, and the environmental humanities. With its emphasis on transcultural perspectives, the history of knowledge, and the region's manifold global entanglements, the series is designed to foster scholarship that is both rooted in Central and Eastern Europe and attentive to broader international contexts. True to the mission of both institutions, most volumes will appear in open access, ensuring that their insights reach readers well beyond academic circles.

As this inaugural volume goes to print, Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine is already in its fourth year. What began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine as an unlawful attack by one state on the territorial integrity of another has developed into one of the defining military conflicts of our time. It is reshaping Europe's security order, redrawing geopolitical alliances, and causing profound humanitarian crises. Its consequences extend far beyond Ukraine itself: disrupted grain exports undermine food security in Africa and the Middle East; energy shocks ripple through economies from Asia to Latin America; debates over sovereignty and human rights, the validity of international law, and the use of force at the United Nations reverberate across the globe. As for the medium- and long-term environmental impacts of the war, they remain hard to fully assess as it continues. This war vividly demonstrates the deep interdependence of our contemporary world.

At the same time, however, the war is not perceived in uniform ways. Everywhere, it is refracted through local histories, geopolitical orientations, and cultural imaginaries. It compels governments, publics, and intellectuals to rethink their own positions in an unsettled global order and is interpreted in ways that give rise to a wide range of overlapping and conflicting disputes. The reader *Russia's War on Ukraine and the Crisis of World Order: A Global Reader*, the first title in this series, brings together an extraordinary range of material—newspaper articles, policy analyses, expert commentaries, and public statements—that trace these diverse responses. By juxtaposing perspectives from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and North

America with those from both Western and Eastern Europe, and by including sources from a wide range of languages and media outlets, the volume highlights the multiplicity of debates the war has generated. In doing so, it offers both a record of international reactions and a resource for reflecting on how regional conflicts are woven into global concerns around the law, economics, ecology, religion, postcoloniality, and other ongoing struggles.

The idea for this book originated in the context of the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA), a collaborative research network initiated by the Leibniz Association to promote academic exchange between universities and research institutes in Germany. The GWZO's involvement in the EEGA reflects the institute's dual commitment: to cooperation with other institutions in Germany and to combining a regional focus with a decidedly international outlook. This reader embodies that agenda on both a practical and conceptual level. It also sets the tone for the series as a whole—closely engaged with sources, open to dialogue, and committed to situating Central and Eastern Europe within a genuinely global frame.

Julia Herzberg and Maren Röger
Leipzig, December 2025

Introduction

Abstract: The introduction presents this reader's approach, which is to explore how the debates triggered by the war extend beyond the military conflict itself, asking for their implications for the world order and the future of globalisation. This global debate is mapped out focusing on international law and international organisations; postcolonial critiques of power; rearmament, neutrality, and non-alignment; religious solidarities; and the economic and environmental consequences of the war. The introduction explains how articles published worldwide were collected, translated, and annotated to this end. It argues that this approach enables the documentation of the emergence of an international 'intellectual laboratory'—a space where journalists, academics, political analysts, and political activists discuss the current state and future of globality.

Keywords: international law, international organisations, postcolonialism, globality, globalisation

Russia's Attack on Ukraine: The Dawn of a New World Order?

On 23 February 2022, at its regular meeting, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly discussed, as set out in the agenda, 'the situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine'. The debate unfolded under the looming threat of an imminent Russian attack on the free territories of Ukraine. Most speakers agreed that, if this were to happen, the consequences would be far-reaching. Dmytro Kuleba, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, who spoke after the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, emphatically warned

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that 'the beginning of a large-scale war in Ukraine will be the end of the world order as we know it'.¹

What was a dire prediction on 23 February became a brutal reality with the start of Russia's full-scale invasion the following day. A few days later, Kuleba's words were echoed, as *The Times* reported: '[Russian President Vladimir] Putin attacked not only Ukraine, but European security and the world order as such'.² The perception of a threatened world order runs like a leitmotif through the press coverage of the war's early days. Yet other views on the consequences also emerged. Warsaw's *Gazeta Wyborcza* published an interview with Anne Applebaum, historian of Eastern Europe at Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC, who described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an 'attack on the postwar world order' ('zamach na światowy porządek powojenny'), but also emphasised the prevailing 'consensus that—at least in Europe—borders must not be changed by force'.³ She thereby implicitly suggested that the principle of territorial sovereignty has not been universally applied. In the Istanbul daily *Milliyet*, journalist Mert İnan went much further by pointing out that while the Russian attack violated international law, the US invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 had done so too. According to him, this had happened 'in a unipolar world order' ('tek kutuplu dünya düzeninde').⁴ An opinion piece by the editors of the Johannesburg-based *Sunday Independent* even argued that '[i]f the international order we all live in was truly multipolar, Russia would never have had a legitimate cause to invade Ukraine'. The 'so-called "rules-based" world order', the paper stated, has served to maintain 'US-led Western hegemony'.⁵

Not only has the world order been called into question by the war against Ukraine, but globalisation has also been said to have come to an end. On the day that Kuleba delivered his speech at the UN, the *Wall Street Journal* ran the headline, 'Clash over Ukraine Drives a Dagger into Globalization'.⁶ As

1 General Assembly official records, 76th session: 58th plenary meeting, 23 February 2022, New York (A/76/PV.58), 3, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3969163/?v=pdf>.

2 Catherine Philp and Oliver Wright, 'British Volunteers Invited to Sign up for Foreign Fight', *The Times*, 28 February 2022, 7.

3 Maciej Stasiński, 'Anne Applebaum: Zachód musi uznać Rosję za wroga wolności i odciąć ją [Anne Applebaum: The West must recognise Russia as an enemy of freedom and contain it]', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24 February 2022.

4 Mert İnan, 'Ukrayna'yı kandırıp yüzüstü bıraktılar [They deceived Ukraine and let it down]', *Milliyet*, 25 February 2022.

5 'Heed SA's Calls for the UN to Mediate in Ukraine War', *Sunday Independent*, 27 February 2022, 10.

6 Greg Ip, 'Clash over Ukraine Drives a Dagger into Globalization', *Wall Street Journal*, 23 February 2022.

CNBC reported one month later, Larry Fink, CEO and chairman of the world's biggest asset manager, BlackRock, stated in his 2022 letter to shareholders, 'The Russian invasion of Ukraine has put an end to the globalization we have experienced over the last three decades,' adding that it 'has left many communities and people feeling isolated and looking inward'. Fink's assessment resonated through the media outlets around the world.⁷

These and many other voices in the press have placed the war on Ukraine in the wider context of global relations. They reveal the contours of an international debate sparked by the war. This debate concerns the current state and future of globality—that is, worldwide interconnectedness—with 'world order' and 'globalisation' emerging as two of its most prominent aspects.

This reader documents this ongoing debate with a selection of articles that discuss how international relations and global interactions are evolving amid the turmoil of war and crisis. They are taken from daily and weekly newspapers, academic journals, blogs, and political as well as cultural magazines. We have collected and translated texts published in a variety of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish, and Ukrainian—alongside contributions originally written in English. The articles span the period from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 to the US presidential election in November 2024, which is widely regarded as a pivotal moment in world politics.⁸

These voices from around the world offer a variety of analyses, arguments, and assessments, demonstrating that perceptions of globality and debates about its future are multifaceted and multi-sided. In light of the current divisions within societies and the entrenchment of political and intellectual positions, as well as new global fractures, we believe it is crucial to understand the diversity of views in order to restore dialogue.

7 Financial newspapers such as *Mint* (Bengaluru, India), *Al Eqtisadiya* (Riyadh/Dhahran, Saudi Arabia), or *Diario Financiero* (Las Condes/Santiago, Chile) as well as the Ukrainian edition of *Forbes* all picked up on Fink's statement, to name just four examples of the global echo: 'Globalization Is Dying: Long May the Phenomenon Live', *Mint*, 29 March 2022; 'Fī ḡilli azmati Ūkrānyā wa-l-wabā'i: Al-'awlamatu tuwādjihu akbara l-makhāwifī' [In the shadow of the Ukraine crisis and the pandemic: Globalisation faces biggest concerns], *Al Eqtisadiya*, 25 March 2025; 'Larry Fink de BlackRock: "La invasión rusa a Ucrania ha puesto fin a la Globalización" [Larry Fink from Blackrock: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine has put an end to globalisation"]', *Diario Financiero*, 24 March 2022.

8 On this, see the second part of the epilogue.

Globality as an Analytical Concept

Kuleba's remarks at the UN General Assembly on 23 February 2022 indicate that international organisations and international law are at the centre of the debate on how the war on Ukraine is shifting the foundations of the current world order. Within this debate, the legal assessment of Russia's invasion leaves no room for interpretation: the war constitutes an attack on a sovereign state, and this violates international law. The Charter of the United Nations prohibits its member states from threatening or using force in their international relations (Art. 2, para. 4). Any use of military force—not only war—by one state against another is therefore a violation of international law. This comprehensive prohibition of violence—states are not allowed to go to war, except in self-defence or in defence of another state against aggression—is the normative basis of the international order in which we live. It is enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and other international treaties,⁹ and it is the responsibility of the UN Security Council to decide on and enforce measures against the aggressor in the event of a threat to peace or an act of aggression. In Resolution ES-11/1 of 2 March 2022, the United Nations General Assembly condemned the Russian invasion by 141 votes to 5, with 35 abstentions.

Many examples from the international press show that this violation of international law is, however, not undisputed. This has to do with divergent perceptions of the world order that emerged long before the current war. While in this reader we do not provide an account of the controversies surrounding the assessment of the war—much of this is already known—we aim to make such divergent perceptions of world order understandable. We do so by uncovering a deeper layer in the debates. Past experiences of global interdependence and power imbalances play a crucial role here, as does the call for global justice. Awareness of these divergent experiences and expectations helps to explain how the war in Ukraine is prompting discussions about the future direction of global relations.

'World order' and 'globalisation' are frequently invoked in these debates. Generally speaking, 'world order' refers to power relations between states and their regulation, whereas 'globalisation' emphasises worldwide interactions. However, what exactly is meant by these terms varies, since both

9 In 2004, the International Court of Justice additionally prohibited the acquisition of territory by force; see 'Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory', advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, § 87, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-204033/>.

terms are used not only to describe, but also to interpret—and thereby to shape—relations and exchanges between states and societies. The negotiations over how the world should be ordered and how globalisation should develop begin at the semantic level—that is, with the meaning of these terms. The meanings given to these concepts are underpinned by narratives, interpretations, and imaginings rooted in society and culture. Such cultural imaginaries and interpretations help individuals, communities, and societies make sense of these rather abstract notions. In times of uncertainty and radical change, such as those caused by a globally significant war, the process of assigning meaning becomes ever more contested.

To depict the negotiations underlying the meaning of the two terms, we use the analytical concept of ‘globality’. Geographers and historians, inspired by the spatial turn, understand this to mean the condition of global interconnectedness.¹⁰ This condition is not simply given; it has emerged through social relations, political power, and their respective material underpinnings. It is the result of multifaceted and overlapping interactions among individuals, societies, and states that have intensified and expanded to such an extent that they influence societal development—down to the local level. Everywhere in the world, individuals, societies, and states are affected by this global condition. Time and again, they negotiate and shape their relationships, thereby helping to determine what the world looks like under conditions of global interconnectedness. They do this, among other things, by formulating and attempting to implement their visions of world order and globalisation. Globality, therefore, focuses on how actors think and act, creating and changing global interconnectedness. This implies that the world is not only an idea or product of the imagination—or merely an awareness and perception of the world as a ‘single place’.¹¹ It is constantly produced through interactions and networks that encompass local, regional,

10 The ‘spatial turn’ marks a paradigm shift whereby ‘space’ is no longer understood as a physical background for social development only, but as a social entity—that is, as human-made, and thus changing and changeable. One of its beginnings is the book *La production de l'espace* by Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991): Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell, 1991). See also, e.g., Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Polity, 1994); Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* [Cultural turns: New directions in cultural studies], 3rd ed. (Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 2009).

11 The most well-known among them is Roland Robertson, who defines globality as ‘as the circumstance in which the entire world is regarded as “a single place”’; see Roland Robertson, ‘Globality’, in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Elsevier, 2001), 6254–6258, <https://philpapers.org/rec/ROBG-2>.

national, and global spaces of action, as well as the interrelations between these realms—and their interpretation.¹²

From this understanding of 'globality', globalisation is not a condition to which we are passively exposed, nor a process leading to ever-increasing worldwide interdependence. Rather, it is a sign of the abundance of cross-border interactions that result in both entanglement and disentanglement, and that create global as well as regional, transnational, and translocal spaces for action. Nor does world order merely refer to global power relations and their international regulation, but also to the increasing political regulation of global interactions in areas such as the economy, culture, labour, and many other dimensions of social life.

Reflections on the Global Consequences of the War

Our selection provides insights into considerations and perspectives from various places around the world, highlighting the diversity of thought about the changing world order and about globality, and thus enabling a multiperspectival understanding. Some texts trace the trajectories of transnational or even international debates, while others provide explanations aimed primarily or exclusively at a specific audience. We hope that this collection of sources will inspire further reflections on the global consequences of the war in Ukraine and encourage readers to take note of the research now available on the subject.

Since February 2022, several works have been published that explore the issues raised in this anthology in greater depth. Among them, Jesse Owen Hearn-Branaman and Tabe Bergman edited a book featuring case studies that examine how the war in Ukraine is reported on in different societies around the world, partly in comparison to the war in Gaza. Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka and Karolina Pałka-Suchojad highlight various aspects of the war against Ukraine, emphasising feminist perspectives, as well as the militarisation of politics, images of masculinity among politicians, and Russia's attempt to present itself as a global superpower. Nadja Douglas, Míla O'Sullivan, Yuliya Yurchuk, Oleksii Vasyliuk, and Tetiana Skrypchenko

12 Matthias Middell and Steffi Marung, eds., *Spatial Formats Under the Global Condition* (De Gruyter Brill, 2019); Matthias Middell and Katja (Castrick-)Naumann, 'Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of Globalization', *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 1 (2010): 149–170; Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, 'World History in a Global Age', *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (1995): 1034–1060.

discuss the war in Ukraine in relation to the ‘feminist, post-/decolonial, ecological and societal dimensions of security and insecurity’, adopting a broader European perspective. David Mhlanga and Emmanuel Ndhlovu have compiled political science analyses on the consequences of the war for African societies, showing that it is understood there as a ‘global disruption’, notably due to its impact on sustainable development strategies and the global food system. Olena Palko and Manuel Férez Gil have provided translated sources, thematic discussions with experts, and analytical articles concerning the history of Ukraine from the early modern period to the present. By focusing on texts from Ukraine itself, their collection aims to give Ukrainians a voice in writing their own history. Mervi Pantti’s and Mette Mortensen’s volume analyses different levels and aspects of reporting on the war in Ukraine, while also offering comparative examples of foreign media coverage. Last but not least, Serhii Plokhyy, an American-Ukrainian historian, reconstructs the war’s evolution since 2014 and places it in the historical context of the Soviet Union’s collapse. In his epilogue, he discusses the consequences of the war for the establishment of a new world order.¹³

In all of these publications, a key difference from our book is the focus on a single issue or particular approach. In most cases, questions of reinterpreting globality do not play a prominent role. The most important distinction, however, is that none of these works is a reader documenting ongoing debates from a comparative perspective.

Themes in the Negotiation of Globality

Our collection of sources comprises six thematic clusters, each providing insights into a specific and recurring theme, along with a two-part epilogue. While the first three chapters focus on various aspects of world order, the last three concentrate on different facets of globalisation. However, as the

13 Jesse Owen Hearn-Branaman and Tabe Bergman, eds., *Media, Dissidence and the War in Ukraine* (Routledge, 2024); Agnieszka Kasińska-Metryka and Karolina Pałka-Suchojad, eds., *The Russia-Ukraine War of 2022: Faces of Modern Conflict* (Routledge, 2023); Nadja Douglas, Míla O’Sullivan, Yuliya Yurchuk, Oleksii Vasyliuk, and Tetiana Skrypchenko, *Emancipatory Dimensions of In:Security—Strategies of Coping with War Challenges in Ukraine*, KonKoop In:Security Report 1/2025, <https://konkoop.de/f/is-report-3/>; David Mhlanga and Emmanuel Ndhlovu, eds., *The Russia-Ukraine Conflict and Development in Africa: Implications for Sustainable Development* (Springer, 2024); Olena Palko and Manuel Férez Gil, eds., *Ukraine’s Many Faces: Land, People, and Culture Revisited* (transcript, 2023); Mervi Pantti and Mette Mortensen, eds., *Media and the War in Ukraine* (Lang, 2024); Serhii Plokhyy, *The Russo-Ukrainian War* (Allen Lane, 2023).

selected texts demonstrate, there are frequent thematic overlaps in the discussion of the two concepts.

The first chapter looks at 'International Organisations and International Law', which embody the rules-based international order of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Can this international order contribute to ending the war—and, if so, how? Or does the war instead mark an end to its validity? And if not an end, then perhaps an inevitable moment of change? If so, what direction would this change take? What alternative proposals for a future world order are being made?

The second chapter presents 'Postcolonial and Decolonial Perspectives', which situate the war within the context of global asymmetrical power relations that emerged during colonial rule and persist today. Ukrainian authors, in particular, use these lines of reasoning to denounce Russia's fatal claims and imperial policies on the one hand, and to criticise the long-standing neglect of knowledge production about Ukraine in Western Europe and the Anglo-American world on the other.

The third chapter, dealing with 'Rearmament, Neutrality, and Non-Alignment', zooms in on debates about how individual nation-states should rearrange their foreign and security policies. The resulting widespread rearmament has sparked discussions about the practices and possibilities of neutrality and non-alignment, while also seeming to revive Cold War strategies such as deterrence through rearmament or the establishment of geopolitical blocs.

The fourth chapter highlights 'Religious Solidarities' and related ideas of globality. Here, it becomes clear that, in a situation of war, religion is not only used to generate transregional solidarity but also to propagate religiously inspired concepts of global order. For example, the concept of the '*ruskii mir*' ('Russian world') serves as a guiding principle in Russia's current neo-imperial policy.

The fifth chapter zooms in on views regarding the war's effects on the world's 'Economy and Trading Routes'. In the spring of 2022, it suddenly became visible that Ukraine is one of the world's largest wheat suppliers and that disruptions to its exports were leading to supply shortages, rising prices, and even fears of hunger crises in several regions worldwide. At the same time, particularly in Europe, it was felt that energy supplies heavily depended on oil and natural gas from Russia. The European Union's (EU) economic sanctions against Russia have had far-reaching consequences for global trade and social cohesion, as has Russia's blockade of trading routes.

The sixth chapter, on 'Ecology', addresses debates on the war's impact on the environment and the climate. Experts have long highlighted the

ecological consequences of armed conflicts, and the war on Ukraine has raised public awareness of this dimension. Considerations range from the destruction of nature and the environment on battlefields to the ecological footprint of the surge in arms production and supply, including questions about the future of international cooperation to tackle climate change.

Other aspects of global interactions—such as flight, migration, and diasporas, which are caused or affected by the war—are not treated in separate chapters, but are addressed repeatedly throughout this collection.

The reader concludes with a two-part epilogue that reflects on events that occurred during our work on this collection and that have far-reaching consequences for the negotiation of globality. Its first part, under the heading ‘Ukraine and Gaza—Relations and Comparison’, addresses the Israeli government’s retaliation to the brutal Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, which has escalated into a war and genocide¹⁴ and something that strongly impacts the perception of the war against Ukraine. There are several reasons for this: firstly, since the International Court of Justice has confirmed and insisted on ‘the right of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide and related prohibited acts’,¹⁵ debates in the UN General Assembly have focused heavily on Gaza. Secondly, this war has further intensified critiques of what are considered unequal standards in the application of international law—critiques that had already been articulated since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Thirdly, issues of neo-imperialism and a longer history of colonisation are being addressed once again. While these points primarily concern perceptions and discussions outside of Europe and English-speaking North America, the war in Gaza contributed to a general shift in global attention. Sadly, Russia, a long-standing supporter of Hamas, stands to benefit from this shift in focus away from Ukraine.

The second part of the epilogue, under the heading ‘US Presidential Elections 2025—Global Consequences’, presents texts reflecting on the impact of Donald Trump’s second term on international relations and the world order, which, again, has implications for the perception and handling of the war in Ukraine.

14 This concludes the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, which was established by the UN Human Rights Council. It published its legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime on Genocide on 16 September 2025: Report A/HRC/60/CRP.3, <https://www.ohchr.org/>.

15 International Court of Justice, Summary of the Order of 26 January 2024, doc. no. 192-20240126-SUM-01-00-EN, 26 January 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203454>.

Selection of Sources

When we, the four editors, started collecting and selecting material for this global reader, we initially focused on the regions we are researching ourselves. These regions include Central and Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe, Turkey and Egypt (as parts of the Middle East), and Southern Africa. As a first step, we analysed a number of newspapers, academic journals, magazines, and online fora from these regions that comment on global politics. This enabled us to identify key themes within which the process of reinterpreting globality is unfolding. To find relevant publications and authors from parts of the world beyond our regional expertise, we consulted colleagues at Leipzig University and research institutions in Leipzig and drew on information provided by scholars we contacted internationally. Through these efforts, we compiled texts published in Arabic, English, French, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Turkish, and Ukrainian, as well as Chinese, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Among the themes we identified, some were to be expected. These include international law and international relations, often discussed in connection with postcolonial and decolonial critiques of power, as well as economics and questions of rearmament. Others, however, may be more surprising to some readers. Religion, for instance, plays a significant role in shaping global perceptions of the war. As a multi-religious society, Ukraine offers connecting points for religiously informed concepts of globality that extend far beyond its own borders.

Glimpses into the Negotiation of Globality

The collected texts provide insights into international perspectives on the global consequences of the war against Ukraine, particularly regarding whether the world order—comprising international power relations and the international legal order—will be fundamentally altered by the war, and how global connectedness is evolving. They reveal the potential contours of the future world order and the paths of future globalisations. More precisely, we can observe how their authors imagine or advocate for these futures. For what is presented as an analysis often also serves as an intervention aimed at influencing future developments.

From a broader perspective, some lines of continuity, parallels, and divergences emerge in discussions of various aspects of globality, as discussed below.

Temporal dimension of the debates. Among the texts presented in this reader, we can identify temporal conjunctures in topics and interpretations. The reactions in the first few months after Russia's large-scale invasion were still strongly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. While in texts from the US and Europe that appeared later, this no longer plays a major role, authors with African backgrounds, for example, see both events—the pandemic and the economic consequences of the Ukraine war—as part of a continuum of crisis (see below). A turning point has been the war in Gaza since October 2023, which has profoundly influenced the (non-)perception of the Ukraine war outside Europe and the Anglosphere, as well as the question of fundamental global change.

A turning point in global relations or just another breach of international law? There is a clear tendency in the European and US press to discuss the Russian invasion as a flagrant violation of international law and therefore to perceive the war as a watershed. However, in international comparisons, the view that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a defining moment for the global legal order is the exception rather than the rule. In societies that have already experienced the international order defined by power interests rather than rules, the argument that Russia's war of aggression subverts the legal international order, or even represents a historical turning point, is less convincing, as various examples in this reader illustrate. Realising this may help to 'provincialise'¹⁶ European reasoning and raise awareness of why one's own viewpoint is not shared globally. At the same time, even within Europe, opinions are far from uniform. Here, too, we can find the argument that the Anglo-American and European perception of the war is, in global comparison, exceptional—a position that is used to question the support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for Ukraine.

Global crisis experiences—caesura vs. continuum. A different perception of temporality is evident in the assessment of the war against Ukraine as a moment of global crisis. In the non-European world, the experience of the war as part of ongoing and overlapping global crises is widespread. Again, this divergent perception is linked to a lack of understanding as to why this war should be considered a global turning point. Instead, it is perceived as

16 The process of making something less central; a term borrowed from Dipesh Chakrabarty's influential *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

part of a broader crisis encompassing the 2008 financial crisis, the long-term effects of climate change, such as drought and hunger, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This perception is closely linked to efforts by states or groups of actors engaged in active, strategic repositioning—for example, Turkey as a ‘neutral mediator’—and the formulation of ‘new world orders’ that are, or should be, emerging now, such as ‘multipolarity’, the ‘Global South’ as a global actor, or a ‘Muslim world’ united in solidarity across borders.

Challenging power politics and double standards. One central argument in some texts concerns perceptions of US hegemony and the assessment that the US and its allies fail to comply with international law, acting in accordance with their own power-political interests and double standards. The accusation of double standards involves, on the one hand, the unequal treatment of armed conflicts (with a focus on Ukraine by European countries and the US, while ignoring other conflicts) and refugees (preferential treatment of Ukrainian refugees in Europe over others, especially those from the Middle East and Africa). On the other hand, the war in Ukraine is seen as part of a longer history of violent breaches of international law, such as the US interventions in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, as well as NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999.

Authors often link this criticism to their sympathy for Russia, or at least a rejection of active support for Ukraine. Such a framing thus situates the war within a continuum of American-Western power politics and associated experiences of frustration. This is particularly evident in relation to military–geostrategic interests, perceptions of a US-imposed unipolar world order, and economic interests. In this context, the BRICS group—currently comprising Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, the Russian Federation, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates—is often cited as a potential political and economic counterbalance to the US and its European allies.

The future of globalisation and decarbonisation. Our reader contains a variety of texts discussing the impact of the war on global energy supplies. A key question is how European countries' efforts to achieve CO₂ neutrality will affect their energy supplies. Another topic of discussion is how global decarbonisation of the economy could damage Putin's war chest, which depends on the sale of fossil fuels. Noteworthy are voices from China portraying the country as a stabilising force in the decarbonisation of industry. In contrast to the US's protectionist policies, China is also presented as a guardian of globalisation and free trade.

Use of language. The study of the texts in this reader raises awareness of how language shapes perceptions and conceptualisations of globality. At times, a technocratic, sometimes clichéd, political jargon (e.g., ‘winning narratives’ or ‘managing global risks’) is noticeable, particularly in statements from authors who describe themselves as part of ‘the West’. Others, by contrast, show that this way of depicting problems—and the proposed solutions (e.g., restoring confidence in ‘Western’ policy towards the so-called Global South by giving it the right ‘spin’)—are part of a wider issue at stake: namely, the attitude of the ‘West’ towards other parts of the world.

Many texts appeal to emotional registers, expressing impatience, frustration, and anger. When engaging with the articles, it is important to remember that many authors write under the impression of a profound (world) crisis. Their analyses and commentaries, however factual, are often charged with strong emotions such as anxiety, worry, powerlessness, and despair.

Circulation of concepts and local appropriation. The analysis of the texts collected in this reader shows that the same concepts and programmatic approaches—such as calls for decolonisation—take on very distinct meanings—and effects—depending on the country, region, and linguistic context. The synopsis illustrates common references to globally shared concepts such as international law and postcolonial approaches, but it is revealing to see how differently these concepts are appropriated. Sometimes, this leads to diametrically opposed arguments on the same foundation. In addition to a synchronous circulation of concepts, a diachronic circulation is also evident. The war in Ukraine acts as a catalyst for processes that began earlier, such as the renaissance of geopolitical patterns of interpretation from the Cold War era and, generally, a ‘new Cold War’ framework.

Altogether, the multi-perspectivity and multivocality of this reader reveal how differently actors view the world during this time of war in Ukraine. It sheds light on a variety of perceptions of globality, shaped by diverse political and social realities and world views. The same applies to the understanding of crisis. Whether one considers Russia’s war of aggression and annexation as a singular upheaval of the world order or perceives the world order to be in a prolonged and multiple crisis depends on differing interpretative frameworks. Here, too, it becomes evident that ‘crises’ do not exist objectively, but constitute a category of perception. The attempt to make one’s own interpretation of global crisis (or crises) more widely shared can be seen as one aspect of the negotiation of globality.

The question of power plays a crucial role in this context. Alongside the critique of power, we can also observe attempts to gain discursive power.

In many cases, the sources testify to efforts to impose specific ideas of order. When analysing these communicative processes, we can discern the emergence of an international 'intellectual laboratory'—a space in which journalists, academics, policy analysts, and political activists debate global power relations and seek to communicate their visions of globality to a broader audience.

Editing Principles and Notes on Translation

Our aim is to present a broad selection of sources that offer a wide range of perspectives, including a variety of text genres. Readers will therefore find both scholarly articles aimed at specialist audiences and pieces intended for a broader readership.

This broad scope presented several challenges when preparing our book. First and foremost were linguistic challenges, as translating the texts required extensive knowledge of various languages. In some cases, we sought advice from colleagues. Where required, the translation was submitted to the authors for approval.

When compiling the texts in this reader, we aimed to highlight discursive patterns in the negotiation of globality, as discussed in the introduction to each chapter. At the same time, we wanted the texts to speak for themselves as much as possible. We have therefore kept our editorial interventions to a minimum, apart from standardising punctuation. This also means that texts originally written in American English have not been adapted orthographically to the British English otherwise used in this reader. We have also refrained from making stylistic adjustments.

For each source, we provide information about the author and publication format, along with footnote annotations to aid understanding. Footnotes in the original texts are reproduced as endnotes and the original citation style has largely been retained. Additional explanations in the text provided by the authors are enclosed in parentheses, while our additions as editors are enclosed in square brackets. Hyperlinks in the articles are generally not reproduced; they are included as endnotes only when necessary for comprehension. Where page references for texts published in periodicals were available, these are indicated. Where texts were accessed via the LexisNexis database, this information is not included.

Another challenge concerned how we, as editors, should handle terms and judgements that we do not necessarily endorse or agree with. This applies, for example, to the term 'Global South', which we use in quotation marks

to clarify that it is a source term, sometimes used as a self-designation. Nor, of course, is the 'West' such a monolithic entity. This editorial stance of critical distance also applies to contested concepts, such as the idea of a 'Russian world' (*'russkii mir'*).

In addition to problematic terminology, which we cite but do not endorse, the sources also include assertions that we, as publishers, fundamentally do not support and which, in some cases, prove untenable. In such cases, we have provided a footnote referencing a verifiable rebuttal. We have only highlighted passages where statements are factually incorrect—for example, where research commissions have reached different conclusions. Beyond that, any obvious errors that might obstruct the authors' intended meaning have been corrected in consultation with them. Minor typos were corrected without comment, while significant changes have been marked in the few places where they were necessary.

Ways to Use This Reader

The selected sources can be read as standalone pieces. At the same time, this compilation offers added value by providing insights that extend beyond the individual texts. To this end, we have included introductions for each of the six thematic clusters in addition to the annotated sources. These introductions highlight connections between the respective texts and place the individual articles within a wider context. Readers may therefore choose to engage with this source collection by starting with a single text or by beginning with one of the thematic clusters and the accompanying introductions.

Through its structure, the reader introduces key topics in the study of globality and documents their dynamic negotiation. This makes it particularly well suited for use in academic teaching.

As explained above, this collection contains articles published between February 2022 and November 2024. This time frame begins with the perception of a threatened world order and ends amid shifting power structures and dynamics. This does not imply that, in the view of the editors and authors, these phenomena mark either the definitive beginning or the end of the war. With the annexation of Crimea in February/March 2014, Russia had already violated international treaties. Similarly, the re-election of US President Donald Trump, which coincides with the endpoint of this collection, may once again decisively affect the war against Ukraine and the related debates on its consequences for the world order, globalisation(s), and globality. The trajectories of these developments remain open as we finalise this book.

About the Volume Editors

Dennis Dierks studied history, Islamic studies, Turkology, and Slavic studies in Mainz, Dijon, and Vienna and received his PhD from the University of Jena. In 2024/25, he was a research associate at the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the history of remembrance, nationalism, revolution, and reform, as well as the global circulation of ideas since the nineteenth century. His latest publications include 'Nation-building and Nationalism in the Black Sea Region (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)', in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, edited by Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Troebst (2024).

Katja Castryck-Naumann is a senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and has headed the research training group 'Global Armenia/ns: Entangled Histories of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus' since 2025. After completing her training as a historian at the Universities of Leipzig, Edinburgh, and Vienna and earning a doctorate from Leipzig University, she worked in the 'East-Central Europe Transnational' project group (2008–2016) and in the 'Entanglements and Globalisation' department (2017–2025) at GWZO. She also served as spokesperson of the steering committee of the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA, 2020–2025). Her research focuses on the history of international organisations and transnational actors, transregional entanglements of East-Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the history of area studies and global history writing.

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and *Globalizing Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Economics from the 18th to the 21st Century* (2025, co-edited with Gilad Ben-Nun and Katja Castryck-Naumann).

Stefan Rohdewald has held the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University since 2020. From 2013 to 2020, he was Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Giessen. After completing his studies, assistantship, and doctorate in Zurich (PhD, 2004), he worked as a research assistant at the University of Passau from 2003 to 2012. His research focuses on the entangled histories of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, urban history, memory, and transconfessionality. From 2017 to 2024, he served as the chairperson of the DFG Priority Programme *Transottomanica: Eastern European–Ottoman–Persian Mobility Dynamics*.

Part 1

International Organisations and International Law

Abstract: The articles in this chapter offer insights into a broad spectrum of critiques concerning the implementation of international law, addressing not only Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine but also other armed conflicts. A further point of debate concerns the possibility and necessity of reforming international organisations such as the United Nations, with particular attention to the role of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Many of the contributions express frustration over unmet expectations regarding the application of international law, especially in relation to perceived double standards in its enforcement by international organisations and the international criminal justice system.

Keywords: UN, ICJ, refugee law, international order, double standards

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Introduction

Among the first reactions to the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation—and its recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as independent states—was the speech by Martin Kimani, the Kenyan ambassador, at the special session of the UN Security Council on the night of 21 February 2022. Kimani's address made headlines around the world, not only because he condemned Russia's actions as a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and thus a breach of international law, but also because he described the war as a renewed expression of a harmful trend in recent decades. Powerful states, including members of the Security Council itself, had repeatedly breached international law. 'The Charter of the United Nations continues to wilt under the relentless assault of the powerful.... In one moment, it is invoked with reverence by the very same countries who then turn their backs on it in pursuit of objectives diametrically opposed to international peace and security.' While the UN Charter obliges member states 'to settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered',² Kimani argued that this obligation has been profoundly undermined by powerful states rekindling the embers of empire in pursuit of territorial expansion. He concluded with a stark appeal and urgent plea: 'Multilateralism lies on its deathbed tonight. It has been assaulted, as it has been by other powerful states in the recent past. We call on all member states to stand behind the Secretary-General in asking him to rally us to a standard defending multilateralism.'³

Kimani's advocacy for upholding the international peace order—based on the principles of international law and the UN Charter, which embodies the multilateral regulation of international relations—helps explain the broad resonance of his speech. Perhaps most important for the global press coverage, however, was the Kenyan ambassador's unequivocal assertion that powerful states have been undermining and eroding the rules of the international order. This disregard for the sovereignty and policy preferences of smaller or weaker states has long been recognised in many parts of the world and is now facing growing resistance and criticism.

1 Martin Kimani, Statement to an Emergency Session of the UN Security Council on the Situation in Ukraine delivered 22 February 2022, UN Headquarters, New York, USA.

2 UN Charter, Article 2(3).

3 Kimani, Statement to an Emergency Session of the UN Security Council.

The international order established at the end of the First World War—grounded in international law and liberalism as well as multilateralism, and anchored in the UN and other international institutions—is normative in nature and has a dark side. As editors, we are aware of long-standing scholarship in peace studies, colonial and postcolonial studies, and the history of international law that has drawn attention to inherent asymmetries of power, imperial interests, and violence.⁴ We open this collection of sources with such critical voices because the international response to the war against Ukraine has intensified both criticism and questioning of the existing order. This criticism is also accompanied by proposals for reform. In this chapter, we present texts that offer insights into positions and arguments articulated in a broader debate on breaches of international law and the instrumentalisation of international institutions by states to advance their own interests. The selected texts highlight two aspects in this regard: firstly, growing doubts about the way in which the principles and rules of the international order are applied; secondly, comparisons between this war and other violent conflicts—most notably, Israel's actions in Gaza.

Experiences of Colonialism and Double Standards

International reactions to the war against Ukraine reflect expectations of international law and international organisations that are shaped by the historical circumstances in which these frameworks emerged, as well as long-standing frustrations with regard to their application. The legacies of colonialism and imperialism continue to resonate today, not only as memory but also through enduring colonial and neocolonial structures, and in the form of imperial ambitions and policies pursued from the twentieth century to the present. These realities provoke ongoing debates about double standards and diverging perceptions of the world order, particularly regarding the enforcement of international law.

To understand these debates, three aspects concerning the genesis and development of international law need to be taken into account. First, international law evolved from a means of regulating warfare—its primary function in early modern Europe and throughout the 'long' nineteenth century—into a body of law dedicated to maintaining peace. One of its core pillars today is the principle of the integrity of borders and territorial

4 Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870–1960* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

sovereignty, designed to guarantee peace. Crucially, this includes the protection of civilian populations, as codified in the humanitarian law of war. Second, intergovernmental organisations—especially the League of Nations (founded in 1919), the United Nations (1945), and the International Criminal Court (2002)—were created to monitor and enforce international law as a tool for peacekeeping. The Covenant of the League of Nations had already curtailed the previously unrestricted right of individual states to go to war (the traditional *ius ad bellum*), which had hitherto been considered a central element of sovereignty. This was followed by the general prohibition of aggressive war in the Briand–Kellogg Pact of 1928. The UN Charter of 1945 went further still, outlawing even the threat of force in relations between states. The third aspect concerns the establishment of institutions to help enforce international law after the Second World War. A significant milestone was the creation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague in 1945. As part of the United Nations, it adjudicates disputes under international law and provides expert legal advice. In addition, international criminal law emerged as a specific branch of international law, with the first steps towards formulating and enforcing its principles taken through the establishment of ad hoc tribunals responding to war crimes. These included the military tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo; the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, 1993–2017); and, following the genocide against the Tutsi, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR, 1994–2015). A turning point came with the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which prosecutes four core crimes: genocide; crimes against humanity; war crimes; and, more elusively, the crime of aggression.⁵

These developments naturally coincided with the expectation that international law would be applied fully to all UN member states and to all members of the institutions embodying it. Indeed, after the end of the Cold War, the humanitarian interventions authorised by the UN Security Council in Iraq, Rwanda, Somalia, Cambodia, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia between 1990 and 1994 signalled the enforcement of international law.⁶

5 For a concise overview, see Bardo Fassbender, Anne Peters, and Simone Peter, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law* (Oxford University Press, 2012)—in particular, the following articles: Anne Peters and Simone Peter, 'International Organizations: Between Technocracy and Democracy', 170–97, and Cornelis G. Roelofsen, 'International Arbitration and Courts', 145–69; Peter Jackson, William Mulligan, and Glenda Sluga, eds., *Peacemaking and international Order After the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

6 Venkateshwara Subramaniam Mani, 'Humanitarian' Intervention Today, *The Hague Academy Collected Courses Online/Recueil des cours de l'Académie de La Haye en ligne*, vol. 313, 2005, <https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/HACO/Ag789004145559-01.xml>; Rein Müllerson,

The conclusion of intergovernmental treaties after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was likewise seen as an expression of rules-based regulation in political reordering and evolving international relations.⁷

However, regarding the use of military intervention to enforce international law, contradictory developments emerged in the period that followed. On the one hand, the international legal concept of the ‘responsibility to protect’, supported by the UN, was developed. This concept requires individual states to protect their citizens from human rights violations, while allowing the international community to intervene if a state fails to fulfil its responsibility. On the other hand, trust in the reliability of international institutions was shaken by the absence of a UN mandate for NATO’s military intervention in Kosovo due to the use of the veto right by members of the Security Council, which blocked resolutions and actions. Moreover, the instrument of military intervention itself—justified on the grounds of preventing violence and promoting political order and democracy—has appeared increasingly problematic. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was undertaken with reference to earlier Security Council resolutions concerning Iraq but without its approval and on the pretext of combating what were later proved to be non-existent weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)—a justification that barely concealed the true political ambitions of the US-led alliance.⁸ It should also be borne in mind that, to this day, the US does not recognise the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court—neither do Russia, China, and India.⁹

In light of these developments, in the years following the end of the Cold War, the international order has been increasingly criticised for being unilaterally oriented towards US and Western European interests. Described in scholarship as ‘hegemonic internationalism’,¹⁰ a political alternative has been promoted by countries outside Europe and North America—especially

Ordering Anarchy: International Law in International Society (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2000), especially 251–364.

7 Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (Basic Books, 2014).

8 In direct reaction to these developments, see Brad R. Roth, ‘Bending the Law, Breaking It, or Developing It? The United States and the Humanitarian Use of Force in the Post–Cold War Era’, in *United States Hegemony and the Foundations of International Law*, ed. Michael Byers and Georg Nolte (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 232–263.

9 See, e.g., David Bosco, *Rough Justice: The International Criminal Court in a World of Power Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2014) and, with reference to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, James A. Goldston, ‘International Crimes and Double Standards: Old Wine in Many Bottles’, *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 22, no. 2 (2024): 241–262.

10 The term was coined earlier, during the late phase of the Cold War; see Fred Halliday, ‘Three Concepts of Internationalism’, *International Affairs* 64, no. 2 (1988): 187–198, here 193–194.

China and Russia—under the concept of multipolarity. More recently, the international alliance of the BRICS countries (originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has presented itself as a harbinger of this idea. Multipolarity combines several elements: the aspiration to overcome what is experienced as Western dominance and US unilateralism, but also—particularly in the cases of Russia and China—the cloaking of their own hegemonic ambitions in a term that seems emancipatory.¹¹

In the case of Russia, this imperial policy is characterised by exploiting situations of instability to expand its sphere of influence—for example, in West Africa or in Syria, where Russia provided military support to the Assad regime until it collapsed. At the same time, Russia intervenes forcefully in Soviet successor states as these states pursue emancipation from Moscow, challenging their borders and sovereignty. This policy began before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in response to separatist tendencies in neighbouring republics, and reached a new peak with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine from 2022 onwards.¹² These examples of powerful states' reluctance to recognise other countries as fully equal,¹³ and their pursuit of imperial interests, have also revealed the limits—and even dysfunctionality—of the law-based international order.

Postcolonial legal criticism has offered an interpretation that locates the root of this problem in the origins of international law itself.¹⁴ In contrast to the historical narrative that portrays the rise of international law as universal—a narrative that was the globally accepted norm in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries¹⁵—it argues that international law was established to create a clear division. Polities regarded as sovereign due to their capacity

11 See the second and third chapters of this reader for more details.

12 See, with a focus on post-Soviet parastates, Zeynab Bakhturidze, 'Russia's Policy Towards the Unrecognized/Partially Recognized Post-Soviet States', in *The Routledge Handbook of Russian International Relations Studies*, ed. Maria Lagutina, Natalia Tsvetkova, and Alexander Sergunin (Routledge, 2023), 342–355 and, with a broader geographical focus, Babak Rezvani, 'Russian Foreign Policy and Geopolitics in the Post-Soviet Space and the Middle East: Tajikistan, Georgia, Ukraine and Syria', *Middle Eastern Studies* 56, no. 6 (2020), 878–899.

13 Political theorists such as Herfried Münkler see this as a defining characteristic of imperialism; see Herfried Münkler, *Empires: The Logic of World Domination from Ancient Rome to the United States* (Polity, 2008).

14 See most recently, Patryk I. Labuda, 'Countering Imperialism in International Law: Examining the Special Tribunal for Aggression Against Ukraine Through a Post-Colonial Eastern European Lens', *The Yale Journal of International Law* 49, no. 2 (2024): 271–310. For a detailed discussion of the various approaches to postcolonial criticism, see the introduction to the second chapter.

15 For a classic account, see Wilhelm G. Grewe, *The Epochs of International Law*, translated and revised by Michael Byers (De Gruyter, 2000); the original German version was first published in 1984.

for stable governance were distinguished from those deemed incapable of such rule and, therefore, underserving of the right to self-government. Asserting the claims of the 'West' to power, this distinction is based on a culturally defined dichotomy between 'civilised' and 'uncivilised', between 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' societies and political orders. The so-called universalisation of international law thus amounted to the imposition of rules established by the 'West' onto other regions of the world, forcing these societies to conform to norms over which they had no influence. In this context, postcolonial theorists of international relations refer not only to international law in the strict sense, but also to parameters for democratic and economic development, which are likewise imposed on societies around the world.¹⁶ The debate on double standards in the application of international law—especially international criminal law—follows similar lines.

To sum up, on the one hand, international law provides instruments to prevent and contain the military escalation of international conflicts, prohibits imperial encroachment by states, and offers mechanisms for penalising violations. On the other hand, international law emerged in the context of empire, is imbued with colonial legacies, and has historically served as an instrument for the preservation of power. Furthermore, its enforcement has often been difficult and limited. The attempt to 'weaponise' or instrumentalise international law is evident not only in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but also in the actions of Putin's Russia, particularly in the implausible accusation of genocide against Russians in Ukraine.¹⁷ The partial and biased application of international law has led to profound frustration, which helps explain why debates about the war of aggression against Ukraine are so closely intertwined with the criticism of the practices and functionality of the international organisations that embody it.

The Articles

The articles in this chapter offer insight into the range of criticisms concerning the application of international law in relation not only to Russia's war

16 See the groundbreaking study Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and, in a more concise form, Antony Anghie, 'Towards a Postcolonial International Law', in *Critical International Law: Postrealism, Postcolonialism, and Transnationalism*, ed. Prabhakar Singh and Benoît Mayer (Oxford University Press, 2014), 123–142.

17 Malcolm Jorgensen, 'The Weaponisation of International Law in Ukraine', *Völkerrechtsblog*, 15 March 2022, <https://doi.org/10.17176/20220315-120930-0>.

of aggression against Ukraine, but also to other armed conflicts. These criticisms range from analyses of the historical origins of international law in the late nineteenth century—and its close connection to the imperialism of the time—to accounts of how great powers have repeatedly used international law, along with the international institutions that uphold it, to advance their own geopolitical interests. They also include comparisons that point to the challenges of ensuring the impartial and neutral application of international law.

Richard Gowan, a security expert and political analyst who works, among other places, for the International Crisis Group (Brussels), discussed in May 2022 the question of whether we are approaching a ‘San Francisco moment’—that is, whether the war against Ukraine could trigger a profound reform of international relations, comparable to the founding conference of the United Nations in 1945, at which ‘the rules of global governance [were rewritten] from scratch’. Especially in the early stages of the war, many speculated about the extent of its consequences and whether it might serve as a catalyst for changes to the current world order. Gowan belongs to those who doubted that such a broad reorganisation of international relations would occur. In his view, both the war itself and its perception are more limited in scope: ‘[M]any observers outside Europe remain sceptical that this war is really a global rather than regional concern.’ Yet, according to Gowan, the war is increasing demand for international cooperation—particularly in areas such as pandemic prevention, the fight against disinformation, and ‘arms control and confidence building in an increasingly confrontational international environment’. He sees potential for the UN to become an effective framework for dialogue and collective action in these domains. Given that the permanent members of the Security Council, wielding their veto power, are unwilling to reform the UN system, Gowan proposes bypassing these structural obstacles by establishing an ‘Emergency Platform’ to address global crises in a more inclusive manner. Organised along similar lines to the G20,¹⁸ this platform should, as highlighted in the UN’s own ‘Our Common Agenda’ report, include leaders ‘from Member States, the United Nations

18 The G20 is an informal intergovernmental forum established in 1999 that focuses on global economic issues. It also coordinates the activities of its members—19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, United Kingdom, United States, and Turkey) and two regional economic communities, the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU)—on matters such as climate policy, migration, women’s rights, education, and security issues, including those posed by terrorism.

System key country groupings,¹⁹ [and] international financial institutions'. Gowan's article is part of a broader discussion on the need to reform the UN, within which various proposals and views are being explored.

Rasna Warah (1962–2025), a journalist and contributor to *The Daily Nation*, Kenya's largest newspaper, who also worked for the UN, was among those who contributed to this debate. In an article published in the summer of 2023 on the online platform *Africa Is a Country*, she vehemently criticised prevailing attitudes in the 'West'—highlighting 'deep sympathy and support for Ukrainians who are being bombed and made homeless by Russia' while noting that 'Palestinians being killed and being denied food and water are seen as deserving of their fate'. She denounced the US for using its veto in the Security Council to block a resolution condemning Israel's actions in Gaza, which, according to Warah, amount to genocide. Warah called for a reorganisation of the Security Council to make it capable of preventing or ending wars. Such reform, she argued, could include the extension of permanent membership to countries such as India, Nigeria, and Brazil, and linking membership to the renunciation of nuclear weapons. If such reform proves impossible, she concluded, the Security Council should be dissolved.

Strong criticism of the unequal treatment of Ukrainian and Muslim war victims is also expressed in the following two articles. Jasmin Lilian Diab, Professor of Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University (Beirut), analyses the approach of 'Western' countries to war refugees from the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Africa on the one hand, and from Ukraine on the other. She recalls how, in 2021, Poland forcibly turned away refugees from the Middle East and Africa at its eastern border—'in what the United Nations termed an "appalling" border crisis'—how Hungary had already erected a border fence against refugees in 2015, and how the European Union as a whole sought to 'diminish its obligations under international refugee law' following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021. In stark contrast, she notes, the EU opened its doors to war refugees from Ukraine after Russia's attack on 24 February 2022. Diab concludes that 'international refugee law remains only as strong as the ... political will, interests, and fears' behind it, and that 'upholding international refugee law, as well as caring for the livelihoods and rights of refugees, is becoming an increasingly political and selective game of tag'. It is noteworthy that the

19 To facilitate the equitable geographical distribution of seats within UN bodies, the UN has formed regional groups of member states. There are currently five groups: the African Group; the Asia and the Pacific Group; the Eastern European Group; the Latin American and Caribbean Group; and the Western European and Others Group.

border crisis described by Diab in 2021 was preceded by the cynical threat and xenophobic rhetoric of Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, who vowed to ‘flood the EU with drugs and migrants’.²⁰ Russia and its local ally, Belarus, appear to have weaponised the desperate situation of refugees along the EU’s eastern border—both before and, even more so, after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Mohamed Abdelwahab Khafagi—legal historian, judge, and member of the Egyptian Council of State—also unambiguously outlines the imbalance of international justice towards Muslim peoples in his study ‘The Collapse of the UN System and the Imbalance of International Justice against Muslim Peoples—A Reading in the Rulings of International Justice’. Fatma Mabrouk summarises his study in an article for Egypt’s second-largest daily, *Al-Akhhbār*. Khafagi focuses in particular on the ICJ’s decision of 16 March 2022, in which it demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities in the case of Ukraine, while no such demand was made in relation to the war in Gaza. For Khafagi, this exemplifies the malfunctioning of international justice.²¹ Double standards also characterise the position of the European Commission, at least when measured against the words of its president, Ursula von der Leyen. Khafagi reminds us how she condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine while simultaneously assuring Israel of the Commission’s full support, despite its violation of the Palestinian right to self-determination and its genocidal actions in Gaza.

The Ukrainian voices reflected in this chapter also express frustration with the recognition and enforcement of international law—albeit based on different experiences.

Tetyana Bots, a journalist from Ukraine, offers an analysis of the second report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. The report summarises the findings of the Commission, established by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in March 2022, to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law following Russia’s full-scale invasion.²² Bots highlights the Commission’s

20 Joe Evans, ‘Belarus Dictator Threatens to “Flood EU with Drugs and Migrants”’, *The Week*, 21 May 2021, <https://theweek.com/news/world-news/europe/952979/belarus-dictator-threatens-flood-eu-with-drugs-migrants-avoid-sanctions>.

21 At least with regard to the situation in 2022, the study by Mohamed Abdelwahab Khafagi refers to the demands and statements of the IJC in that year. Since then, the ICJ has strongly condemned Israel’s military actions in Gaza and the West Bank on several occasions, as will be discussed below.

22 See the Commission’s website: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iic/hr-ukraine/index>; for the report, see <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g23/049/73/pdf/g2304973.pdf>.

confirmation of Russian war crimes and breaches of international law in general—humanitarian law and human rights in particular—including the crossing of the Ukrainian border by Russian forces, the bombing of energy infrastructure, the torture of civilians, and the deportation of children. With regard to the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, which had been under siege by Russian troops since 24 February and was fully captured in May of the same year, the Commission stated that it could not determine whether the shelling and siege of the city constituted a crime against humanity, as it had not been granted access to the city. According to Bots, this, along with the chairman's statement that no evidence of genocide against Ukrainians had 'outraged' the Ukrainian public. As she reports, Mykhailo Podoliak, an adviser to the prime minister, went so far as to accuse the UN of being 'saturated with Russian money [and] influence' and of 'often act[ing] as an informal lobbyist for Russia'. He further declared that following Ukraine's victory, 'it will be necessary to seek its reformatting'. The fact that the UN report was used for propaganda purposes by the Russian side, which presented it as if it exonerated Russia entirely, likely fuelled such strong reactions. At the same time, Bots points out that Ukrainian human rights activists stress that, despite the chairman's remarks, the report remains a valuable document that could help garner support for the establishment of an international tribunal.

A think piece by former British Foreign Secretary David Miliband, published in April 2023, addresses the criticisms reflected in the texts of Warah, Diab, and Mabrouk. He argues that the fact that '[s]ome countries contest the Western narrative about the causes of the war' on Ukraine is rooted in the 'anger at perceived Western double standards and frustration at stalled reform efforts in the international system'. This, he contends, is where the West needs to start if it is to regain international credibility, especially in the so-called 'Global South', whose support is urgently needed in an increasingly multipolar world order. According to Miliband, this task is particularly difficult for the US, which under Donald Trump's first presidency showed little interest in international cooperation on climate policy, human rights, and nuclear non-proliferation. Moreover, critics 'point to the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to claim that hypocrisy, not principle, is driving the West' and accuse the US 'of doublespeak when it comes to concern for civilians'—particularly in light of its support for Saudi Arabia in the war in Yemen. To counter this negative perception, Miliband argues that the 'West' must 'offer commitments to solidarity and equity in managing global risks, embrace reforms that widen the range of voices at the table in international affairs, and develop a winning narrative in an era when democracy is in

retreat'. In his view, '[t]hese actions would not only help sustain the global position of the West; they are also the right thing to do.' If the 'West' seeks to win the battle for global opinion and garner support for its stance on the Ukraine war, it must adopt a different narrative. Unlike in the past, the war should not be framed as a struggle between 'democracy and autocracy', but rather between 'law and anarchy'—a framing that, according to Miliband, would resonate more convincingly with much of the world. However, such a narrative would require the US to make a credible case for the international rule of law, for example, by ratifying the Rome Statute 'that created the International Criminal Court in 1998'.

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The articles in this chapter testify to a deep sense of disappointment with the way international law and institutions—particularly the United Nations—apply the rules of the global order. While the authors acknowledge the theoretical possibility of a more just international legal order (albeit with certain reservations), their recognition of such an order is contingent upon whether its enforcement aligns with their own sense of justice. Voices from Ukraine call for Russia's war of aggression to be met with the most severe judgment under international criminal law—namely, the charge of genocide. In contrast, contributions from authors based in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East express long-standing frustrations with what they see as double standards in the application of international criminal and humanitarian law. Their main criticism lies in the differential treatment of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, as well as the contrasting responses to war refugees from Ukraine and the Middle East. From this perspective, it is not the war in Ukraine but the war in Gaza that constitutes the most urgent conflict requiring intervention based on international law—or, at the very least, both conflicts should be addressed with equal urgency.

The articles in this chapter also illustrate the diversity of views regarding the reasons behind the lack of respect and enforcement of international law. Authors from outside Europe and the US criticise what they perceive as cultural hierarchies in the application of international law and as mechanisms of exclusion imposed by a hegemonic West, as well as the alignment of international institutions with the interests of particular great powers—or their subversion by them. Positions and assessments have evolved since the articles were first published. For instance, the ICJ's stance on the wars in Ukraine and Gaza now includes its ruling of 26 January 2024, in which it declared that 'Israel must take all measures within its power to prevent and

punish direct and public incitement to commit genocide against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip.²³ This does not diminish the value of reading these articles today; on the contrary, it underscores how dynamic the reflection on the global consequences of the war in Ukraine remains. It is worth engaging with this reflection because—as the following articles show—it concerns both the history and the future of the international order.

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23 See <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>.

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Stefan Rohdewald has held the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University since 2020. From 2013 to 2020, he was Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Giessen. After completing his studies, assistantship, and doctorate in Zurich (PhD, 2004), he worked as a research assistant at the University of Passau from 2003 to 2012. His research focuses on the entangled histories of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, urban history, memory, and transconfessionality. From 2017 to 2024, he served as the chairperson of the DFG Priority Programme *Transottomanica: Eastern European–Ottoman–Persian Mobility Dynamics*.

The Ukraine War and UN Reform

Richard Gowan

Editorial Note

This article is an extended version of a lecture given to the Geneva Centre for Security Policy on 3 May 2022 and was published on 6 May 2022, by the International Crisis Group¹—a Brussels-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) founded in 1995 and focusing on international conflict prevention.

The war in Ukraine has led diplomats, UN officials, and pundits to ask if we are approaching a ‘new San Francisco moment’: an historical juncture like 1945, when it is possible for states to rewrite the rules of global governance from scratch. There is little doubt that we will hear a great deal about the need to reform—or replace—the UN in the coming months and years, with an emphasis on making changes to the Security Council to avoid the sort of deadlock we have seen over Ukraine. But there are reasons to be sceptical about what this talk will achieve.

Instead, I will suggest that today’s major power tensions (not only between the West and Russia, but also with China) mean that only limited reforms to global governance are possible at the present time. Nonetheless, COVID-19 and the Ukraine war have highlighted some significant gaps in the international system that need urgent attention, including:

- Mechanisms for managing the global effects of unexpected shocks—whether pandemics, classical wars or natural disasters—on the international economy;
- Mechanisms for countering misinformation and disinformation (especially in cyberspace) that exacerbate crises of all types and may drive new conflicts;
- Mechanisms for arms control and confidence building in an increasingly confrontational international environment.

In outlining these three areas for reform, I will refer to ‘Our Common Agenda’ (i), a report that UN Secretary-General António Guterres released in September 2021 on the future of multilateralism. The report highlighted

1 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/ukraine-war-and-un-reform>.

the lessons of international cooperation—and failures to cooperate—during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was notably less focused on international peace and security issues. But it also highlighted some issues—such as the vulnerabilities of the global economy—that are even more relevant in light of the effects of the Ukraine war.

The UN Secretariat is now working on developing policy responses to the problems set out in the Common Agenda in advance of a Summit for the Future planned for September 2023. As part of this process, it is meant to deliver a New Agenda for Peace focusing on peace and security. In parallel, a High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (2) chaired by former Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson and former Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven is mulling over how to reshape the structures of global governance.

Before turning to these issues, I will briefly talk about how wars and crises have shaped thinking on global governance historically, and why I don't think we are at a 'San Francisco moment' now. I will then turn to the three issue areas I have identified in more detail.

Wars, Crises, and Thinking about Global Governance

Wars and crises make people think about global governance. Major wars create openings for major innovations in the international system. World War I gave rise to the League of Nations. The failure of the League and reaction to the horrors of World War II gave us the basic structure of the UN. In fundamental ways, the UN continues to function within the parameters set in San Francisco in 1945, not least thanks to the Security Council veto.

Smaller wars and crises may not have quite the same impact on the international system, but they can still force multilateral organisations and their member states to rethink how they cooperate. The UN Charter famously does not reference peacekeeping. Yet the Suez crisis and other Cold War conflicts led the UN's early leaders to develop blue helmet operations as one of the organisation's best-known tools. The spate of civil wars that followed the end of the Cold War—culminating in the Srebrenica and Rwanda catastrophes—led UN leaders to re-evaluate peace operations and the protection of civilians, launching a new generation of blue helmet missions in cases such as Liberia.

In some cases, a war or crisis can seem to presage major reforms to the international system, but this impression can prove misleading. An obvious example is the 2003 Iraq War, which inspired an enormous amount of soul

searching at the UN. In 2004 and 2005, Secretary-General Kofi Annan oversaw a series of discussions about the multilateral system's flaws that did lead to significant institutional innovations at the UN (such as the creation of the Human Rights Council and a new Peacebuilding Commission). It also led the General Assembly to adopt the idea of a 'Responsibility to Protect', belatedly responding to the organisation's failure to save lives in the Balkans and Rwanda in the 1990s.

For many states, the main lesson of the Iraq War was that the Security Council should be reformed and there was a lot of discussion of UN Charter reform in 2005. But the US, China and Russia had no interest in reform and killed this initiative. The Security Council has functioned without significant alteration for two decades since the Iraq crisis.

So, in simplistic terms: 1) major wars involving the superpowers can lead to fundamental change in the international system; 2) lower-level crises can lead to technical and operational changes in how international institutions work; and 3) some crises turn out to be wasted opportunities for reform. Where does the current Ukraine crisis fall on this spectrum and could it lead to a major renegotiation of the UN Charter, potentially including alterations to the Security Council's rules and composition?

The Ukraine War: A New San Francisco Moment?

The honest answer is that we don't know. The war looks like it may drag on for a prolonged period. Even if a cessation of hostilities proves possible in the coming months, we may face a lengthy standoff between Russia and Ukraine, and more broadly between Russia and the West. The longer this crisis goes on, the bigger its potential effects on international cooperation will become. Russian media are already framing the conflict as a proxy war with NATO. The US has declared that its goal is to weaken Russia by supplying Ukraine with weapons and EU members are working on decoupling themselves economically from Moscow, while also arming Ukraine. There is a risk that the war could escalate into a much broader and deeper confrontation (although if it climaxes in a nuclear exchange, debates about global governance reform will not be anyone's top priority).

Yet it is also worth noting that—contrary to some of my own pessimistic predictions (3) earlier in the course of the hostilities—the war has not completely disrupted the UN and international cooperation more generally. The UN Security Council has, for example, actually managed to keep passing resolutions on crises other than Ukraine, even though tensions between

Russian and Western diplomats are high. The Council has passed a significant new mandate for the UN to engage with the Taliban, for example, as well as for a new African Union force in Somalia. Russia has sometimes hinted at using its veto on issues other than Ukraine, but it has not yet done so. Nobody is sure that the Council can keep up this sort of 'business as usual' indefinitely in parallel with a long war in Ukraine. But the UN system may be more resilient than we sometimes give it credit for, perhaps because powerful member states genuinely believe it serves their interests. Attempting to introduce controversial reforms now might do more harm than good.

It is also noteworthy that many observers outside Europe remain sceptical that this war is really a global rather than regional concern. Some major G20 members, such as China and India, have chosen to adopt a passive approach to the war at the UN—calling for peace while abstaining on most UN resolutions on the war—while maintaining cordial relations with Russia. Others, such as Brazil and Mexico, have condemned Russia's aggression but not supported efforts to sanction Moscow or impose diplomatic penalties on the Russians. In their view, isolating Russia entirely will make a diplomatic solution to the conflict harder.

So, while the US and European leaders have often framed the war as a fundamental, even existential, test of the international order, this framing of the crisis is not universally accepted. Ukraine and some of its allies have called for reforms of the UN Charter and system to deter Russia from further aggression (including excluding Russia from the Security Council), but these measures are unlikely to succeed. China, meanwhile, has floated a new Global Security Initiative (4) prompted in part by the war, but it largely consists of well-known talking points from Beijing, including about the importance of state sovereignty, plus opposition to Western sanctions and 'bloc politics' (a shot at the US alliance system).

There have already been some attempts to harness the war as an opportunity for UN reform. Last month, Liechtenstein (which punches above its weight on matters of international law in New York, thanks to an activist ambassador) successfully tabled a General Assembly resolution (5) insisting that, when the P5² use their vetoes in the Security Council, the Assembly should then hold a debate on their blocking action. This is a good initiative that may raise the reputational cost of P5 vetoes. But in the grand scheme of things, it is a tweak to the existing UN system rather than a major reform.

2 P5 refers to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council who have the power of veto. These are: France, the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China, Russia, and the United States of America.

It is still very unlikely—almost impossible—that the P5 will accept real limits on their vetoes.

My overall reading of the situation is therefore that—absent a huge and probably catastrophic escalation of the war—this is not a ‘new San Francisco moment’ allowing for major reforms to the UN Charter or Security Council. To summarise my reasoning again: 1) The UN security architecture, despite failing Ukraine, is still functioning in a way that the League of Nations Council did not in the later 1930s; 2) a lot of non-Western countries do not see the war as an existential crisis that demands reform of the UN system; and 3) China, a major stakeholder in the UN, is adopting a conservative tone.

Nevertheless, my guess is that—as in the wake of the Iraq War—we will now see a prolonged set of debates about how the UN should be reformed. Unlike in the post-Iraq period, the US may be a more progressive voice in favour of reform, at least on the surface, as such an approach is a good way to embarrass Russia and China. As in 2005, really major changes to the global security system will almost certainly prove impossible. But that does not mean global governance will stay static.

Possibilities for Reform: Shock-Proofing the International Economy

If deep UN reform remains improbable, what sort of improvements to the international system are conceivable at present? To answer this question, it is useful to step back from the immediate problem of the war in Ukraine and take some other recent shocks into account.

The most obvious of these shocks is COVID-19. It is, after all, only two years since the pandemic wreaked havoc on the international economy. COVID-19 highlighted many of the vulnerabilities of the interconnected global economy. The disease had major knock-on effects on economic growth, supply chains, and food security worldwide. This experience shaped the thinking of the UN team that in 2021 drafted the ‘Our Common Agenda’ report, arguing that:

‘The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that we are more interconnected and interdependent than ever before in human history. International cooperation mitigated some of the harms caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the response to the pandemic also exposed serious gaps in the effectiveness of multilateral action when it is needed most. We cannot afford to ignore the gaps if we are to be ready for the potentially more extreme, or even existential, threats that may lie ahead of us.’

The Ukraine war, although a very different type of shock from COVID-19, underlined many of the same themes. Once again, food supplies are under strain and the economic knock-on effects of the war will hit many non-Western states that have no direct involvement in the conflict. The back-to-back experiences of COVID-19 and the war make a strong case for—as ‘Our Common Agenda’ argued—better international mechanisms for managing the effects of both man-made and natural shocks to the interconnected economy.

‘Our Common Agenda’ only started to sketch out what such mechanisms might look like (although naturally it went into more detail on the specific problem of global health). It included one idea that at first struck many as vague, but may be worth developing, for an Emergency Platform to address such global crises. This Platform would be a grouping of leaders ‘from Member States, the United Nations System key country groupings, international financial institutions’ and other actors that could convene and coordinate efforts to respond to unforeseen shocks to the international system. There is a parallel here with the G20, which first met at the leader level to coordinate a response to the 2008 financial crisis.

Despite the G20 precedent, it is easy to be cynical about calls for ‘better coordination’ in major crises. Multilateral organisations such as the UN do love to coordinate. The exact modalities, composition, and goals of the proposed new Platform are all a little nebulous.

But over the coming months, a variety of international bodies—including the G7,³ a divided G20, and the UN itself—will have to cobble together a response to global food price rises, energy issues and other economic effects of the Ukraine war. This exercise will reinforce the case for the sort of ‘emergency platform’ envisaged in the Common Agenda, or at least for international institutions to improve their protocols for crisis response and coordination. While the UN Secretary-General might like to be at the centre of such a process (and his office has been doing good work on assessing the global effects of the Ukraine war), it is also possible that the US, or a consortium of major financial powers, could take the lead.

3 The G7 (Group of Seven) is an intergovernmental forum comprising seven countries that discuss global political and economic issues. Membership is based on economic strength and commitment to liberal democratic values. The alliance originated from the 1973 oil crisis. It was formalised at the G6 summit in Rambouillet in 1975, with the participating countries being France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Canada joined in 1976. From 1998 to 2014, the group expanded to include Russia; however, following Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea, the country was expelled from the group.

I think this route may also be appealing for global governance reform, precisely because, as ‘Our Common Agenda’ notes, it would not involve creating ‘a new permanent or standing body or institution’. Instead, it would involve networking existing institutions and governments better. If the rules of the UN Charter make Security Council reform impossible—and P5 relations in the Council remain frigid—then Western governments in particular will look for non-institutional ways to manage the effects of crises, just as they reached for the G20 rather than a UN-led economic response in 2008.

In summary, my instinct is that the combined lessons of COVID-19 and Ukraine will create momentum for innovations around managing shocks related to conflicts and crises, rather than preventing or ending crises themselves. This may sound like a failure to address the core challenges to the international system, but it may be what is politically feasible at present.

Tackling Misinformation and Disinformation

Having highlighted some of the parallels between the effects of the COVID-19 crisis and the Ukraine war, we can also look at one further specific parallel: the flood of misinformation and disinformation associated with both crises. In 2020, false claims and quack cures for COVID-19 spread fast through cyberspace, making it harder for governments and international bodies to respond effectively. ‘Our Common Agenda’ lamented the ‘crisis of trust’ resulting from ‘a loss of shared truth and understanding’. During the Ukraine war, we have seen an all-out information war, with each side using social media to project its version of the conflict to international audiences.

Russia has used the Security Council itself as part of its information campaign, hosting meetings about alleged US bioweapons labs in Ukraine. This tack has left many diplomats bemused, but as I warned before the war (6), the point of such meetings is to score points on the internet, not in New York:

Aficionados of UN history often hark back to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when US Ambassador Adlai Stevenson brutally dismantled his Soviet counterpart’s arguments in a televised debate. Yet, in today’s fragmented media environment, neither the Americans nor the Russians are likely to score such a decisive victory. Ukrainian, Western, and Russian media and social media channels will all publish their sides’ preferred versions of the outcomes of Council debates.

But, if the UN is currently a victim (or sometimes even an amplifier) of misinformation and disinformation, it is possible that the institution could also play a role in mitigating the malign effects of false information. The UN launched a series of online initiatives to combat misinformation during the pandemic and 'Our Common Agenda' repeatedly emphasises the need to promote 'facts, science and knowledge' in an era of rumours, conspiracy theories, and falsehoods.

The UN is, as an avowedly impartial international body that still enjoys high opinion ratings in many parts of the world, potentially well placed to play a role in promoting verified information about both conflict and non-conflict related issues. Last year, reflecting on the lessons of COVID-19, Crisis Group suggested (7) that the experience 'could open up a new space for the UN in conflict management at a time when its more traditional tools, such as peacekeeping, appear to be on the wane'. We said the UN Secretariat should set up a dedicated cell focusing on countering conflict-related disinformation and misinformation. Given the scale of the problem, a mere UN Secretariat cell is unlikely to have all the answers. As my colleague Jane Esberg has noted (8), 'the UN will need to develop cross-sector partnerships, collaboration with local civil society and influencers, improved monitoring of online content across regions, and proactive efforts to offer factual messaging [to] mitigate the impacts of misinformation'. But this project could be a valuable area for UN engagement.

Arms Control and Confidence Building After Ukraine

So, there are potential paths forward for the UN (and concerned UN member states) to address the knock-on effects of future conflicts and to act as an arbiter in information wars. Yet, given the improbability of Security Council reform, is there a role for the organisation in dealing with the core business of peace and security in a highly divided world? If we look back to 'Our Common Agenda', we may think not. The report—while full of good things to say about inequality, climate change, and other global ills—is notably scanty on peace and security matters. This appears to have been a deliberate choice: the UN Secretary-General believed he had little political space to address security matters.

This calculation may have been sensible in light of COVID-19. But, in the wake of the Ukraine war, any discussion of global governance reform has to come back to peace and security issues. It is also necessary to recognise that many of the existing conflict management tools at the UN's

disposal—mediation, peacekeeping, and so forth—are not of much use when one of the P5 goes to war. Over the last 30 years, the UN has prioritised resolving civil wars—of late, primarily in Africa—and it has neither the expertise nor the strategic toolbox to respond to a war in Europe that has split the Security Council's veto-wielding members. It is possible, as I have noted (9) elsewhere, that a settlement between Russia and Ukraine might involve a UN peace observation mission. But such a mission would only be a minor part of the deal.

We need to think further about what sort of peace and security functions the UN can play in an era of major power competition and inter-state warfare. In a paper for the Council on Foreign Relations (10) last December, I argued that some elements of the existing UN system can still play a useful role at a time of major power rivalry, mainly on humanitarian matters:

Ambitions for international conflict management will be low: given the overall drift toward conflict mitigation and conflict containment described in this paper, most major power diplomacy around future conflicts will likely focus on minimising the harm caused (whether in humanitarian terms or with regard to terrorist threats, WMDs and other risk factors) rather than deeper efforts to identify political resolutions.

Humanitarian agencies will bear the brunt of conflict management efforts: given this likely emphasis on conflict mitigation and containment, international humanitarian agencies, such as the WFP⁴ and UNHCR,⁵ will be at the forefront of conflict management efforts. This will put these agencies under further financial and operational strain.

Despite the shock of the war in Ukraine, I think this analysis stands—Secretary-General Guterres has after all concentrated on humanitarian issues in Ukraine to date.

But, while conflict mitigation and containment are valuable services, the UN cannot ignore more fundamental strategic challenges. Despite saying relatively little about security matters, 'Our Common Agenda' does call for a second report ('A New Agenda for Peace'), with a focus on strategic affairs, including non-proliferation, effective control of conventional weapons, and regulation of 'new weapons of technology'. It emphasises, *inter alia*, the need to de-escalate cyber risks and place 'internationally agreed limits on

4 The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) was established in 1961 and is based in Rome. Its mission is to combat global hunger.

5 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (OHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency. Established in 1950, the organisation is based in Geneva and is responsible for protecting refugees as well as stateless and displaced persons.

lethal autonomous weapons systems'. These tasks are difficult, however, and it is not clear that major powers want the UN to play a more active role in dealing with such sensitive points.

Nonetheless, the Ukraine war has shown how fragile our current mechanisms for arms control can be (just as the Syrian War showed the limits of the norm against the use of chemical weapons). If the UN is to carry any weight in peace and security discussions going forward, it needs to at least address these strategic concerns. That does not mean trying to set up new institutions and treaty bodies. For now, the UN can:

- Convene and encourage discussions of new mechanisms for managing strategic risks and new technologies (starting with Track 1.5- and Track 2-type talks);⁶
- Provide a space where small and medium-sized states can build coalitions promoting norms of responsible use for new weapons systems, while reinforcing faltering existing arms control agreements on weapons like landmines and poison gas;
- Look for ways to reverse a recent decline in both UN-based and non-UN-based mechanisms for promoting transparency around military affairs and arms flows (11);
- Develop UN capacities for de-escalation in cyberspace—or in incidents involving other new weapon technologies—through specialised mediation and fact-finding;
- Encouraging UN research institutes, such as the well-respected UN Institute for Disarmament Research, to engage in research and advocacy for new cooperative arms control mechanisms, at a time when many UN states will focus hard on deterrence.

In addition, the UN may have a role to play in promoting confidence-building measures on a regional basis in some areas. The Secretary-General, for example, has a long-standing mandate to promote security cooperation in the Middle East. In a 2020 report (12), Crisis Group recommended a phased approach to building trust, starting with the creation of military hotlines and (after further steps) culminating in gestures, including 'prior notification

6 The two terms describe strategies for resolving conflicts. Track 1 diplomacy describes the strategies employed by state actors in traditional diplomacy, whereas Track 2 diplomacy refers to the approaches adopted by non-state actors, such as conversion, relationship building, and workshops designed to foster mutual understanding. Track 1.5 diplomacy is a combination of the two, involving both state and non-state actors.

of troop movements and military exercises, allowing adversaries to send military experts to observe such manoeuvres’.

These are only very initial ideas on what ‘A New Agenda for Peace’ might look like. The UN needs the help of security experts with technical expertise on fast-evolving issues like artificial intelligence—as well as the classic UN tasks, such as mediation—to help flesh out what a realistic agenda in this field might look like over the coming year.

Summary

In summary, there is a lot of work to do thinking about the future of global governance after the pandemic and the Ukraine war. We are unlikely to have a full picture of the way forward, even by the next year’s Summit of the Future. Everything I have said here should be taken as tentative. But, to summarise, I believe that 1) we are unlikely to see fundamental reforms to the UN Charter and Security Council in the near future; 2) we are more likely to see reforms to the mechanisms states can use to cooperate in response to future wars and associated shocks by economic, humanitarian, and other means; 3) the UN may have a useful niche role in dealing with misinformation and disinformation; and 4) the UN’s new security agenda remains opaque, but must reflect a profoundly challenging international environment. The UN is at a perilous moment—but peril can help one think harder.

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What Is the United Nations For?

Rasna Warah

Editorial Note

This article was published on the online platform *Africa Is A Country* on 11 July 2023.¹

It is astounding that the president of the US, the so-called leader of the Free World, could fly to Israel to offer more military support to a regime that has no qualms about committing mass slaughter of civilians in Gaza. President Joe Biden's offer of more military assistance worth billions of dollars to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has deeply dismayed not just the thousands of Palestinians in Gaza being killed by US weapons, but also the millions of people and several human rights organizations around the world who believe that Israel's actions in Gaza could amount to genocide.

To add insult to injury, Biden offered a puny USD100 million—a tiny fraction of the amount in military aid to Israel—to the more than two million Gazans whose houses are being bombed and who are now being denied basics such as food, water, and electricity by the occupying Israeli state. This goes to show where the US's priorities lie.

What the US president failed to recognize is that the Palestinians would not need this humanitarian assistance if Israel had not imposed a blockade on Gaza. The blasé attitude of the US government (and indeed of the Western media, which appears to have become a mouthpiece for US and Israeli propaganda) towards the slaughter taking place in Gaza clearly shows that there is a hierarchy among the world's war victims. So, there is deep sympathy and support for Ukrainians who are being bombed and made homeless by Russia but Palestinians being killed and being denied food and water are seen as deserving of their fate.

The hypocrisy of the US government is now clearly on full display. How could Vladimir Putin's actions in Ukraine amount to a war crime but the assault on Gaza—the world's largest open-air prison—and the denial of food, water, and electricity to a people whose every move is controlled by Israel not be seen as collective punishment, which is also considered a war crime? As someone on Twitter stated, the world has finally seen the true

1 <https://africasacountry.com/2023/11/what-is-the-united-nations-for>.

face of the US government—it has lost its moral authority to preach human rights and democracy to the world.

While the actions of Hamas cannot be condoned (killing Israeli civilians and taking them hostage are war crimes), there is little effort on the part of the US to understand why people who have been caged for decades might revolt against their captors. There is little attempt to acknowledge that Palestinians were turned into refugees on their own land by the Israeli state. And there is a huge blind spot when it comes to demanding accountability from Israel, which many have described as an ‘apartheid state’.

Even before the current crisis, Gazans had no control over their water and electricity supplies, which are controlled by Israel. Palestinians could not move freely within their territory or travel abroad. It is ironic that the Jewish people, who suffered unspeakable atrocities during the Second World War, are now inflicting similar atrocities on non-Jewish people. (Although it must be said that a sizable number of Jews within Israel and elsewhere have vehemently opposed Israel’s actions in Gaza.) Palestinians have essentially lost their right to full citizenship. They are being punished for demanding freedom and dignity. Let us look at it this way: If a victim of domestic violence kills her abuser, would she be deemed a murderer or would a court rule that it was an act of self-defense? If slaves stage a rebellion against their owners, would they be accused of insubordination? When colonized people take up arms to fight for their freedom, are they terrorists or freedom fighters?

What’s worse, the UN Security Council, which was created in 1945 specifically to prevent wars from occurring or escalating, has not been able to pass a resolution condemning Israel for its actions and calling for a ceasefire because the US—one of the five permanent veto-holding members of the Security Council that contributes up to 20 percent of the UN’s budget—vetoed a proposed resolution even though the majority of the Security Council members supported it. The question we must ask as members of the international community is: What is the point of having a UN Security Council when it cannot prevent wars?

The Power of the P5

The UN Security Council consists of 15 members, 10 of which are rotational non-permanent members elected for two-year terms. The non-permanent members may have a say in decisions made by the Security Council, but the ultimate decision rests with the five permanent veto-holding members,

namely the US, Britain, France, Russia, and China—also known as the P5. So, if one of the P5 members decides to go to war, to support war criminals, or to supply arms to a warring faction or state, there is nothing the rest of the members can do about it. Any resolution condemning these actions can be vetoed by a permanent veto-holding member.

The UN Security Council is, therefore, not a club of equals. The 10 non-permanent members of the 15-member Council do not pose a serious threat to the five veto-holding members of the Council although membership does give these countries the illusion of being influential. Take the case of Rwanda. This tiny Central African country was elected as a rotating non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1994, the very year the horrific genocide, which killed a million people, took place in that country. The Security Council did little to prevent the genocide. The P5 looked the other way while Rwandans were being massacred. And Rwanda, the non-permanent UN Security Council member, sat back and watched the genocide unfold before the world's eyes.

Another glaring example is the Iraq War. In March 2003, the US and Britain invaded Iraq—without unanimous UN Security Council approval—on the pretext that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein possessed ‘weapons of mass destruction’ and had links to the terrorist organization Al Qaeda. Both claims were found to be untrue. The UN Security Council could do absolutely nothing to prevent the invasion of Iraq; it could not even impose sanctions on the US and Britain, which, as veto-holding members of the Security Council, had imposed UN sanctions on Iraq after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Although the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had publicly expressed his disappointment about the decision by the US and Britain to go to war with Iraq, and had even declared that the war was ‘illegal’—as it had not been sanctioned by the UN Security Council and violated the UN Charter—there was not much he could do. The war went ahead despite widespread anti-war protests on every continent around the globe. The administrations of George W. Bush and Tony Blair, respectively, did not listen to the voices of the millions of people who were opposed to the war, even as the death toll in Iraq reached alarming proportions.

The fact is that the Security Council's permanent veto-holding permanent members have never really been committed to world peace because wars keep their military-industrial complexes going. It is not lost on many people around the world that the permanent members of the UN Security Council also happen to be the biggest arms manufacturers in the world. The US is the biggest arms exporter, followed by Russia, France, and China, with

Britain not far behind. These countries have a vested interest in conflicts and in selling arms to non-arms manufacturing countries in Asia, Africa, and the rest of the world. They have no moral authority to preach peace to the world when they benefit financially and geopolitically from war.

When wars occur in far-off places, arms manufacturers in these countries have a field day. Wars in former French colonies in Africa keep France's military-industrial complex well-oiled. Wars in the Middle East are viewed by British and American arms manufacturers as a boon for their arms industries. If there were no wars or civil conflicts, these industries would have fewer or no customers. Wars and other disasters also provide the UN an opportunity to fundraise for refugees and internally displaced people.

The UN's campaign in Yemen, for example, is not about ending the Saudi-led war against the Houthis, but about raising donations for the millions who are suffering as a result of the crisis. The UN, including the UN Secretary-General, views Yemen as a humanitarian crisis, not a political crisis. (Biden's offer of assistance to Gaza also ignores the political dimension of the humanitarian crisis.) No sanctions have been imposed on Saudi Arabia for going to war in Yemen because Saudi Arabia is a strong ally of the US and a big importer of US-made weapons. Any resolution to sanction Saudi Arabia would no doubt be vetoed by the US. And because humanitarian crises fill up UN agencies' coffers, UN humanitarian agencies are less focused on ending the political crisis—which would inevitably end the humanitarian crisis.

Reforming the Security Council

The crisis in Gaza has underscored the need for the UN Security Council to be more democratic and inclusive. While giving just five nations permanent seats and veto-holding powers at the Security Council might have made sense when the UN was founded, in a world where most of the world's population is concentrated in Asia and Africa, and where new regional powers are emerging, it is time to expand the Council, and include in it countries that are seriously committed to peace and stability rather than to wars and conflicts.

The UN Security Council, as currently constituted, mainly represents the interests of the winners of the Second World War, even though the world has changed considerably regarding geopolitics, demographics, and economic influence. Emerging economies such as India (the second most populous

country in the world after China),² Brazil, and Nigeria (both regional powerhouses) not only hold sizable populations but also are becoming important economically. Some of these countries even have nuclear capability. They and others should have a say in UN Security Council decisions. Moreover, today's most deadly wars are being waged by insurgents or terrorist groups, which have become transnational. So, new forms of international cooperation are required.

Countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (regions that hold the majority of the world's population) must demand to be included as permanent members of the Security Council. Most UN Security Council resolutions have to do with conflicts in Africa, yet African countries have little or no say in the passing of these resolutions, whether they be about imposing sanctions on a country, sending in peacekeepers to conflict zones, or deciding whether or not a country should be invaded.

Most importantly, membership should be allocated to those countries that have no vested interest in the arms industry and that have not waged war on other countries since the Security Council was established—countries that are genuinely committed to world peace. And in order to eliminate the threat of nuclear war, absence of nuclear capability should be a condition for permanent membership. Currently, such reform seems unlikely because the P5 would veto such a proposal. So, perhaps it is time to disband the Council altogether. There is no point in pretending that there is a body in the UN that is actually committed to preventing wars and human rights violations and has the clout and the will to do so. Israel's assault on Gaza has shown, once again, that the UN Security Council is ineffective when it comes to protecting the human rights of all people and preventing wars. Wars will continue as long as they serve the economic or geopolitical interests of the five permanent members of the UN, especially the United States.

The tragedy is that this war could fuel a wider war in the Middle East and beyond that might be hard to contain once it is unleashed. If that happens, the US must be held accountable for aiding and abetting an unjustified war that led to the escalation of conflict in the region and resulted in colossal casualties and human rights violations.

2 According to UN figures, India had the largest population of any country in the world in April 2023, prior to the publication of this article. See UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'India to Overtake China as World's Most Populous Country in April 2023,' 24 April 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/desa/india-overtake-china-world-most-populous-country-april-2023-united-nations-projects>.

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What Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Syria Have Taught Us About the Politics of International Refugee Law

Jasmin Lilian Diab

Editorial Note

This article was published in *TRC Journal of Humanitarian Action*, the journal of the Turkish Red Crescent, in 2022.¹

The Russo–Ukraine Conflict and Refugees of the Twenty-First Century

What could become Europe's largest humanitarian crisis since 2015—when more than 1 million refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan arrived at the European Union (EU) borders, prompting continent-wide political panic—is continuing to rapidly unfold. Following months of tensions, Russian forces launched what they referred to as a 'special military operation' (Financial Times, 2022) in Ukraine in late February 2022. Governments across Europe have since opened their borders to host hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians (Fallon, 2022) fleeing Russia's invasion. Several of these governments, which have historically taken an uncompromising stance toward refugees hailing from countries such as Syria and Afghanistan in recent years, have undertaken a decidedly different tone (Jakes, 2022) in pledging to both host and support their now refugee neighbors.

Merely three days into the conflict, an increasing number of humanitarian agencies proceeded to make official statements articulating their commitment to Ukrainian refugees, requesting that countries continue to open their borders to Ukrainians seeking safety and fleeing for their lives. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2022), more than 360,000 people have fled Ukraine into Poland and other neighboring countries in the wake of Russia's invasion. Meanwhile, as the conflict incessantly escalates, the UN agency has since warned that up to 5

1 Jasmin Lilian Diab, 'What Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Syria Have Taught Us About the Politics of International Refugee Law', *TRC Journal of Humanitarian Action* 1, no. 2 (2022): 39–44.

million of Ukraine's 44 million citizens (Berger, 2022) could become refugees if the attacks persist. Most individuals fleeing are women, children, and older adults—as men aged 18–60 years have been barred from leaving Ukraine (CBS News, 2022) after its president called upon Ukrainians to take up arms and defend their country (Jenkins, 2022) as the fighting in Kyiv escalates.

The UNHCR is continuing to work with governments in neighboring countries, calling on them to 'keep their borders open' (Latrech, 2022) to those seeking safety and protection. Neighboring Moldova has since opened its borders to Ukrainians in their unremitting support for people crossing the border with their 'humanitarian needs' (Epstein, 2022). Poland, which had taken a rigid stance against international migration flows in recent years, prepared eight reception points (Wadolowska, 2022) for refugees along its border with Ukraine. Hungary, which had also taken a similarly hostile stance (UNHCR, 2021a) to incoming refugees from countries such as Syria (UNHCR, 2021a) as recently as last year (2021–2022), pledged to open 'a humanitarian corridor' (Business Standard, 2022) for those fleeing Ukraine.

On Blame and Responsibility: Selectively Externalizing the Management of Refugees

Europe has long been a primary destination for mixed-migration (Eurostat, 2022) influxes. Since the early 2000s, the regulation of these influxes (European Council, 2022) has constituted an essential pillar of EU policies toward its neighboring countries and regions. In the post-2011 era, namely, following the reconfiguration of the EU's Southern Neighborhood following the Arab Spring (Vohra, 2022) and its subsequent migratory flows, this regulation framework was largely challenged and eventually destabilized (Seeberg, 2013). More specifically, unclear political transitions coupled with the violent conflicts that erupted in countries such as Syria (BBC News, 2022) and Libya (McQuinn, 2021) resulted in increased pressure at international borders and increasing (internal and external) displacement numbers (Reliefweb, 2021a). By 2015 (at the refugee crisis' peak), the EU had become a target for migratory flows on an unprecedented scale, with more than 1 million migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees having reached its borders irregularly through the Mediterranean Sea (Human Rights Watch, 2015) and the Balkan Peninsula (Cocco, 2017). The 2015 experience not only shifted the EU's overall capacity to respond, but it also shifted its priorities and the political will of many of its member states regarding placing the humanitarian needs of the migrants and refugees before their own.

In recent years, European countries have aimed to halt (in many instances, forcibly and violently [Kakissis, 2018]) the flow of what has largely been perceived as non-White and non-Christian (Islam, 2020) migrants and asylum seekers fleeing protracted conflicts and wars across the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the African continent. In late 2021, in what the United Nations termed an ‘appalling’ border crisis, Poland forcibly denied entry to asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa who became caught in a legal and political limbo as they attempted to enter the EU through Belarus (Reliefweb, 2021b). Amid the aforementioned 2015–2016 refugee crisis peak, the EU negotiated away its ‘problem’ through a strategic deal with Turkey, under which it allocated 6 billion euros to the latter for Ankara to prevent Syrian refugees from crossing into Europe (Wallis, 2020). In 2015, Hungary went as far as building a border fence to close off a major migrant route through which more than 500 people per day (predominantly from the Middle East and North Africa traveling through Turkey) were crossing (BBC News, 2015). Additionally, Hungary enacted a law (Human Rights Watch, 2018) making it a crime to assist immigrants who entered Hungary irregularly in applying for asylum through legal channels.

In contrast to a largely swifter response on the EU’s part amid recent developments in Ukraine, the Union’s response as late as months after Kabul fell to the Taliban in 2021 (and thousands were still attempting to escape Afghanistan in search of safety and refuge) was one of diversion and limited interference (Shankar, 2021). Despite the UNHCR warning that by the end of 2021, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan could lead to the displacement of over half a million more Afghans (UNHCR, 2021b), for EU member states, this statement did nothing but bring flashbacks of the 2015 refugee crisis, delaying a unified response on Afghan asylum (Shankar, 2021). With past experiences impacting their approach to Afghanistan, the European Commissioner revealed an EU plan to initiate a ‘regional political platform of cooperation with Afghanistan’s direct neighbors’ (Kuwait News Agency, 2021) to manage the migration crisis. Based on precedents, the EU’s asylum policy has typically been to externalize the management of refugees and diminish its obligations under international refugee law and the non-refoulement principle (Jeanty, 2022). The 22,000 individuals that the EU managed to evacuate from Afghanistan to its 24 member states selectively included (Jahnz, Berard & Bottomley, 2021) EU officials and their dependents, as well as Afghans who assisted the EU operations in the country.

In complete contrast to a number of conflicts around the globe, Russia’s attack on Ukraine has ignited a visible outpouring of support for those fleeing the violence. Although not part of the EU, the European Commissioner for

Home Affairs expressed that the EU was ‘well prepared’ to absorb Ukrainian refugees (Berger, 2022) as a matter of ‘unity’ and ‘solidarity’. This encompassed an unconditional (and largely uncommon) welcome from countries such as Poland and Hungary that outwardly resisted those fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East and Africa. For its part, Poland declared its border open (Brezar, 2022) to fleeing Ukrainians (even those without official documents), going as far as waiving its requirement (Brezar, 2022) of presenting a negative COVID-19 test or vaccination status. Even Hungary, often dubbed as one of Europe’s leading anti-migrant (BBC News, 2021) governments, declared that it was accepting all citizens (Ellena, 2022) and legal residents of Ukraine.

Greece, a major entry point for hundreds of thousands of people fleeing conflict from Syria and Afghanistan in recent years, also expressed its willingness to take in refugees (Panoutsopoulou, 2022) from Ukraine. Greece faced international condemnation (Human Rights Watch, 2020) from international human rights groups in recent years for its heavily documented pushbacks of asylum seekers from both its land and sea borders. Ireland announced that it was immediately lifting visa requirements (Gov.ie, 2022) for Ukrainians. The United States stated that it was providing emergency aid; since its announcement, thousands of soldiers from the US Army’s 82nd Airborne Division were deployed to Poland (Morris, 2022) to assist with preparations for the admission of more Ukrainian citizens.

The Politics of the Refugee Definition

There are certainly various motives and interests at the center of the ‘change of heart’ of some EU countries that had been notably hostile to the idea of asylum seekers crossing into their borders in recent years. If the refugee crises in Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Syria teach us anything, it is that international refugee law remains only as strong as the underlying political will, interests, and fears. It would be the latest test to international refugee law, as well as the non-refoulement principle, to see just how many Ukrainians will be displaced and what the EU’s response would be moving forward in its international obligations. While it remains increasingly difficult to assess how long the ongoing conflict will last, what can be certain is that the conflict will only continue to trigger refugee movements into Europe. The lowest predictions in terms of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine reveal 1 million displaced persons, but predictions estimate that this number could grow to 5 million—a reality that could lead to similar refugee numbers for

the EU as in 2015–2016 (Narea, 2022). A responsible EU migration policy that addresses its ethical responsibilities toward all people directly or indirectly affected by its foreign policy decisions, and one that reflects its core values, is largely overdue. While the Syrian and Afghan crises presented an important opportunity to start building an EU that upholds the rights of all human beings fleeing persecution, political interests and motives continue to take priority. The world's most recent refugee crisis reveals that upholding international refugee law, as well as caring for the livelihoods and rights of refugees, is becoming an increasingly political and selective game of tag.

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Egyptian Judge with Evidence: The Imbalance of International Justice. A Reading of International Justice Judgements

Qāḍin miṣriyyun bi-l-adillati: Ikhtilālu mīzāni l-‘adli l-dawliyyi. Qirā‘atu fī aḥkāmi l-‘adli l-dawlīyati

Fatma Mabrouk

Editorial Note

This article was published in *Al-Akḥbār* (The news), a state-owned, semi-official newspaper based in Cairo, on 8 February 2024.¹ It is the second best-selling daily newspaper in Egypt after *Al-Ahrām* (The pyramids).

The peoples of the world are wondering why the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has condemned military operations against some peoples, such as those in Ukraine, and not those against other peoples, such as those in the Gaza Strip in Palestine. This apparent contradiction prompted the Egyptian intellectual and judicial historian Judge Dr. Mohamed Abdelwahab Khafagi—vice president of the country’s State Council—to prepare an eminent study entitled ‘The Collapse of the UN System and the Imbalance of International Justice against Muslim Peoples—A Reading in the Rulings of International Justice’.

In it, the Egyptian jurist studied and compared the similar cases of rulings issued by the ICJ for Muslim peoples who were being subjected to genocidal war, including the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Rohingya Muslims, and reached surprising results that deserve to be considered in the thinking of this court with regard to the crisis of international law and its impotence, and the double standards of the West and the justice system itself.

1 <https://akhbarelyom.com/news/newdetails/4301238/1> / قاضٍ مصري - بالأدلة - اختلال ميزان العدل - الد

We present the first part of the Egyptian judge's study in two points about the double standards of international justice that rule against military operations in Ukraine and ignore them in Gaza; Israel threatens regional security, ignores interim measures, continues to exterminate Gaza, and destroys the temple of international justice.

Firstly: Do Double Standards of International Justice Stop Military Operations in Ukraine and Ignore them in Gaza?

Dr. Mohamed Khafagi, on the double standards of international justice on genocide, states that on 16 March 2022, the ICJ ordered provisional measures to protect the rights of Ukraine.

The Court ordered: first, that Russia must 'immediately suspend the military operations' it began on 24 February 2022 in the territory of Ukraine; second, the Court ordered that Russia must 'ensure that any military or irregular armed units that it may direct or support do not take any steps to further military operations'; and third, the Court unanimously ordered an additional measure that the parties refrain from taking any action that could aggravate or prolong the conflict or make it more difficult to resolve.

Thus, the ICJ went beyond Ukraine's requests to halt military operations based on genocide allegations, to demanding a complete cessation of Russian military activities in the country, saying that Russia must 'suspend the military operations it began on 24 February 2022' in the territory of Ukraine and ignoring the requirement that they be based on genocide allegations. Not only did it require the immediate suspension of military operations, it also ruled that any organisations or persons who may be under Russia's control or direction should not take any steps to further the military operations.

Finally, the Court also noted that both Russia and Ukraine must 'refrain from any action that may aggravate or prolong the conflict', which is broader language than that Ukraine had originally requested in its case against Russia.

Dr. Khafagi emphasises that the decision of the ICJ in the case of the genocide committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the population of the Gaza Strip did not warrant the cessation of military operations or a ceasefire, as had been demanded in the case of Ukraine. This was apparently due to the difference between the two cases: the reason for the genocide of the people of Palestine was their endeavour to obtain their right to self-determination—Gaza being in the Arab land of Palestine and occupied by Israel, which was committing the genocide; Ukraine, on the other hand, had

not been under ongoing occupation but it wanted to leave the cloak of the Soviet 'nation' by joining the European Union countries in a way that would harm the national security of countries in the post-Soviet region as a whole.

This difference in reasons actually makes Gaza the more urgent case for requesting protection, which is what Arab Muslim Gaza already needed via the cessation of military operations within it. The fact that the Court ruled to stop them in the case of Ukraine raises the suspicion that double standards dominate the thought processes of the ICJ, which is supposed to moderate the balance of power rather than tilting in favour of one side—which in turn leads to the belief that international law has become impotent law.

It is not only the ICJ that can be accused of double standards between two such similar cases but also the West: the president of the European Commission—Ursula von der Leyen, a German politician belonging to the Christian Democratic Union—condemned Russian attacks against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine at almost the same time that she expressed her firm support for Israel as it destroyed the last operating power plants in Gaza and made the Strip uninhabitable, denying the people of Palestine the right to self-determination.

The incapacity of international law has become a painful reality: it cannot fulfil the tasks for which it was created to achieve international peace and security between states after the Second World War. Will the fire of aggression in the broader Middle East be extinguished by a third world or regional war? This is what the peoples of the region cannot afford.

Secondly: Israel Threatens Regional Security, Ignores Interim Measures, Continues to Annihilate Gaza, and Destroys the Temple of International Justice

Dr. Khafagi says that Israel has ignored the interim measures and continues to exterminate the people of Gaza. This has damaged the international reputation and credibility of the United States, its greatest ally and main supporter, which supplies it with weapons of destruction. Israel's other friends are finding it very difficult to ignore the country's destructive aggression in Gaza; without them, Israel will remain largely isolated as it depends on the US and, to a lesser extent, on the UK for military support, munitions supply, Security Council veto power, and diplomatic weight.

There is no doubt that there is concern within the US administration about the methods used by Israel to continue the war and their negative repercussions on regional security and on the reputation and credibility of

the US itself, which claims to be the champion of the rule of law. Israel is demolishing the temple of international justice over the heads of the peoples that the Court was created to establish justice among in the first place.

The Egyptian jurist concludes that the Israeli occupation forces have become a source of regional tension in the Middle East by ignoring the provisional measures issued by the ICJ, and that this Court must restore confidence in its decisions—especially since regional security has been jeopardised by the non-implementation of its rulings due to its unjustified distinction between the cases of Ukraine and Gaza, ruling to stop military operations in the former case and failing to do so in the latter.

The right is clear, and peoples should not be deprived of their right to use available legal remedies to stop military operations, proving that the most heinous crimes have been committed in Muslim lands. The ICJ should have opted for the legal certainty of a ceasefire in the case of a people being subjected to extermination, as it has in analogous cases, so that its decisions do not create further political tensions between states and their peoples.

About the Author

Fatma Mabrouk is a regular contributor to *Al-Akhhbār*.

UN Commission Found No Evidence of Genocide in Ukraine: What Does the New Report Say and Why Did the Scandal Arise?

Komisiia OON ne znaishla dokaziv henocydu v Ukraini: Pro shto idetsia u novomu zviti ta chomu vynyk skandal?

Tetyana Bots

Editorial Note

This article was published in *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* (The Ukrainian week) on 17 March 2023.¹ *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* is a Ukrainian weekly magazine established in 2007 in the wake of the 'Orange Revolution'.

On the anniversary of the bombing of the Mariupol Drama Theatre, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (the official name of the agency) released a report with verified evidence of Russian war crimes. This report summarises the results of the Commission's work since its establishment in March 2022.

The investigations were conducted during 10 visits to Ukraine and 56 cities, towns, and settlements. The Commission also visited Estonia and Georgia, where it spoke to Ukrainian war victims. A total of 610 interviews with 595 people (348 women and 247 men) were conducted, in person and remotely, for the report. The Commission also examined the sites of destruction, graves, places of detention, torture, and remnants of weapons.

In the document, the experts analyse and confirm many Russian crimes—from the actual illegal crossing of the border by the Russian military to the shelling of energy facilities, torture of civilians in the occupied territories, and deportation of children.

¹ <https://tyzhden.ua/komisiia-oon-ne-znajshla-dokaziv-henotsydu-v-ukraini-pro-shcho-idetsia-u-novomu-zviti-ta-chomu-vynyk-skandal/>.

The report also confirms that the evidence collected shows numerous violations of international law and human rights, and that attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and the use of torture are equated with crimes against humanity. The document considers attacks on civilians to be war crimes.

At the same time, the Commission reports that since it had no access to Mariupol itself, there are insufficient grounds to conclude that the bombing and siege of the city constituted a crime against humanity. The report interviewed more than 30 people who were in Mariupol during the siege and bombing by the Russians. The interviewees described the explosions during this period as 'constant' and 'endless'.

The report also refers to 'a small number of violations committed by the Ukrainian armed forces, including alleged indiscriminate attacks and two incidents amounting to war crimes'.

It states, 'The Commission calls for a comprehensive approach to the accountability process, including both criminal prosecutions and the right of victims to truth, reparation and non-repetition'.

The [Ukrainian] public was outraged by the Commission's conclusions—in particular, the words of its chairman, Erik Møse. 'We did not find that there was genocide in Ukraine', Møse told reporters, adding that the team was following the evidence and that there were 'some aspects that may raise questions' about possible genocide.

Some political figures have publicly stated that such statements are inconsistent and that the report's findings ignore a genocide against the Ukrainian people. For example, Mykhailo Podoliak, an adviser to the prime minister, claimed on Channel 24 that the UN, like all international organisations, is 'saturated with Russian money, Russian influence and often acts as an informal lobbyist for Russia' and that after the victory, it will be necessary to seek its reformatting.

There are human rights activists who, in turn, emphasise that the report, despite the statements of the chairman of the Commission, is a valuable document that will help to force a vote for the establishment of an international tribunal. Olga Reshetylova, coordinator of the Media Initiative for Human Rights, writes that unconstructive criticism of the Commission's findings is similar to 'practicing the Russians' methodology'.

The Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security² reports that Russian propagandists are manipulating the UN report and

2 The Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security (Prezentovano Centr straterichnyh komunikacii ta informacii noi bezpeky, SPRAVDI) is a Ukrainian government

the fact that genocide in Ukraine has not been confirmed. The Centre's experts emphasise that genocide is a separate type of crime, and that the authors of the report did not set out to prove or disprove the genocide of the Ukrainian people. Distortion of the report's content can be used to claim that all crimes levelled at the Russians are proven in the pages of the document. It is also noted that the chairmen of the Commission did not deny the fact of genocide, but only noted that further investigation is necessary.

About the Author

Tetyana Bots is a graduate of the Department of Journalism at Uzhhorod National University and the Ukrainian Catholic University. She writes about political and cultural topics, with a focus on the war against Ukraine, for *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden*.

institution whose aim is, according to its mission statement, 'to counter disinformation'—'in particular information attacks of the Russian Federation', see SPRAVDI, 'About the Centre', <https://spravdi.gov.ua/en/about-us/>, accessed 17 July 2025.

The World Beyond Ukraine: The Survival of the West and the Demands of the Rest

David Miliband

Editorial Note

The article was published in the May/June 2023 issue of *Foreign Affairs*,¹ a New York-based journal focusing on American foreign policy and international relations, which is published six times a year. Miliband's article was part of a special section entitled 'The Nonaligned World'.

'Ukraine has united the world', declared Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a speech on the first anniversary of the start of the war with Russia. If only that were true. The war has certainly united the West, but it has left the world divided. And that rift will only widen if Western countries fail to address its root causes.

The traditional transatlantic alliance of European and North American countries has mobilized in unprecedented fashion for a protracted conflict in Ukraine. It has offered extensive humanitarian support for people inside Ukraine and for Ukrainian refugees. And it is preparing for what will be a massive rebuilding job after the war. But outside Europe and North America, the defense of Ukraine is not front of mind. Few governments endorse the brazen Russian invasion, yet many remain unpersuaded by the West's insistence that the struggle for freedom and democracy in Ukraine is also theirs. As French President Emmanuel Macron said at the Munich Security Conference in February, 'I am struck by how we have lost the trust of the global South.' He is right. Western conviction about the war and its importance is matched elsewhere by skepticism at best and outright disdain at worst.

The gap between the West and the rest goes beyond the rights and wrongs of the war. Instead, it is the product of deep frustration—anger, in truth—about the Western-led mismanagement of globalization since the end of the Cold War. From this perspective, the concerted Western response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has thrown into sharp relief the occasions

1 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/world-beyond-ukraine-russia-west>.

when the West violated its own rules or when it was conspicuously missing in action in tackling global problems. Such arguments can seem beside the point in light of the daily brutality meted out by Russian forces in Ukraine. But Western leaders should address them, not dismiss them. The gulf in perspectives is dangerous for a world facing enormous global risks. And it threatens the renewal of a rules-based order that reflects a new, multipolar balance of power in the world.

The West Apart from the Rest

The Russian invasion has produced remarkable unity and action from the liberal democratic world. Western countries have coordinated an extensive slate of economic sanctions targeting Russia. European states have increasingly aligned their climate policies on decarbonization with national security-related commitments to end their dependence on Russian oil and gas. Western governments have rallied to support Ukraine with enormous shipments of military aid. Finland and Sweden aim to be soon admitted to NATO. And Europe has adopted a welcoming policy toward the eight million Ukrainian refugees within its borders. All these efforts have been advocated by a US administration that has been sure-footed in partnering with European allies and others. The squabbles over Afghanistan and the AUKUS security partnership (a 2021 deal struck by Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States that irked France)² seem a long time ago.

Many in the West have been surprised at this turn of events. Clearly, so was the Kremlin, which imagined that its invasion would not provoke a strong and determined Western response. The West's unity and commitment are not matched elsewhere, however. At the beginning of the war, the UN General Assembly voted 141 to 5, with 47 absences or abstentions, to condemn the Russian invasion. But that result flattered to deceive. As the team of analysts at the International Crisis Group have noted: 'Most non-European countries that voted to deplore Russia's aggression last March did not follow up with sanctions. Doing the right thing at the UN can be an alibi for not doing much about the war in the real world.'

2 AUKUS is a military alliance that was formed in September 2021. The name is an acronym formed from the initials of the three participating countries: Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The agreement centres on the US and the UK's commitment to supporting Australia in developing and deploying nuclear submarines.

In a series of UN votes since the war started, around 40 countries representing nearly 50 percent of the world's population have regularly abstained or voted against motions condemning the Russian invasion. Fifty-eight countries abstained from a vote, in April 2022, to expel Russia from the UN Human Rights Council.³ According to the Economist Intelligence Unit,⁴ two-thirds of the world's population live in countries that are officially neutral or supportive of Russia. These countries do not form some kind of axis of autocracy; they include several notable democracies, such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, and South Africa.

Much of the fence-sitting is not driven by disagreements over the conflict in Ukraine but is instead a symptom of a wider syndrome: anger at perceived Western double standards and frustration at stalled reform efforts in the international system. The distinguished Indian diplomat Shivshankar Menon put the point sharply in *Foreign Affairs* earlier this year when he wrote, 'Alienated and resentful, many developing countries see the war in Ukraine and the West's rivalry with China as distracting from urgent issues such as debt, climate change, and the effects of the pandemic.'

On the Fence

Realpolitik has played its part in determining the positions of certain countries on the Ukraine conflict. India has traditionally been dependent on Russia for military supplies. The Wagner paramilitary company—the Russian mercenary organization now active in Ukraine—has worked with governments in western and central Africa to support their security and survival. And China, which is one of Russia's principal sources of support, is the largest trading partner of more than 120 countries around the world and has proved unforgiving of diplomatic slights.

But there are also other factors. Some countries contest the Western narrative about the causes of the war. For example, although Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has described the invasion as a 'mistake', he has also given credence to the argument that Russia has been wronged.

3 The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly responsible for monitoring human rights worldwide. On 7 April 2022, Russia's membership was suspended by a UN General Assembly resolution as a result of its war of aggression against Ukraine.

4 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is a British strategy consultancy company that is owned by The Economist Group, publisher of the business magazine *The Economist*. The EIU's portfolio includes country reports, economic forecasts, risk analyses, and industry reports.

‘Zelensky is as responsible as Putin for the war’, Lula claimed last summer in a statement that highlighted global ambivalence about the conflict.

The war has united the West, but it has left the world divided.

Many observers outside the West also perceive that impunity is, in general, the province of all strong countries, not just Russia. The United States is in an especially weak position to defend global norms after the presidency of Donald Trump, which saw contempt for global rules and practices in areas as diverse as the climate, human rights, and nuclear nonproliferation. Critics point to the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to claim that hypocrisy, not principle, is driving the West. And US support for the Saudi-led coalition’s war in Yemen, which spawned a humanitarian crisis in that country, is adduced as evidence of doublespeak when it comes to concern for civilians. It is also argued that the West has shown far more compassion for the victims of war in Ukraine than for the victims of wars elsewhere. The UN appeal for humanitarian aid for Ukraine has been 80 to 90 percent funded. Meanwhile, the UN’s 2022 appeals for people caught in crises in Ethiopia, Syria, and Yemen have been barely half funded.

On their own, some of these reasons for sitting on the sidelines might seem petty to Ukrainians fighting on the frontlines. But the wariness of supporting Ukraine must not obscure a bigger problem. The West has failed since the financial crisis of 2008 to show that it is willing or able to drive forward a more equal and sustainable global economic bargain or to develop the political institutions appropriate to manage a multipolar world. This failure is now coming home to roost. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the world was massively off track in achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs],⁵ which member states set with great fanfare in 2015. In 2018, four out of five fragile and conflict-ridden states were failing on SDG measures. World Bank⁶ figures for 2020 show that people born in

5 In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 development goals aimed at ‘ending poverty, to protecting the planet, and ensuring that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity’. These goals are: ‘No poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; [sustainable] industry, innovation, technology and [resilient] infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; [protecting] life beyond water; [protecting] life on land; peace, justice and strong institutions; [strengthening] partnerships for the goals’, see United Nations Development Programme, ‘The SDGs in Action’, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>, accessed 9 July 2025.

6 The World Bank is an umbrella term for the World Bank Group, a development bank based in Washington, DC. The group comprises the International Bank for Reconstruction

those places were 10 times more likely to end up poor as those born in stable countries, and the gap was growing.

Since then, as a result of protracted conflicts, the climate crisis, and the pandemic, the guardrails have come off altogether. More than 100 million people are currently fleeing for their lives from warfare or disaster. The UN reports that 350 million people today are in humanitarian need, compared with 81 million people 10 years ago. More than 600 million Africans lack access to electricity. The UN Development Program reports that 25 developing countries are spending over 20 percent of government revenues on debt servicing, with 54 countries suffering from severe debt problems. And the unequal access to vaccines to combat the pandemic—a gulf especially glaring during the early phases of the vaccine rollout in 2021—has become a poster child for empty promises.

Western governments have also failed to fulfill their commitments in other arenas. The UN's climate Adaptation Fund, established in 2001 to protect poor countries from the consequences of carbon emissions from rich countries, has not yet met its inaugural funding commitment of raising \$100 billion a year and is seen as a symbol of Western bad faith: all talk, no walk. The lengthy delays in putting it together have fueled the demand for a new fund to cover 'loss and damage' arising from the climate crisis. This new fund was inaugurated last year, but it is not yet funded. Yet another underfunded global initiative will only deepen the deficit of trust between rich countries and poor ones.

Hollow Solidarity

If the next two decades are like the last two, marked by the West's confused priorities and failed promises, multipolarity in the global system will come to mean more than greater economic competition. It will mean strengthened ideological challenges to the principles of Western countries and weakened incentives for non-Western countries to associate or cooperate with the West. Instead, liberal democratic countries that support a rules-based global system need to think and act with long-term strategic purpose as they engage with the rest of the world. China has been doing so since 1990.

Hard power in terms of military partnerships and trade cooperation will be critical in determining the West's relations with the rest of the world.

and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

But Western governments also need to attend to a number of soft-power issues, notably in three areas: to offer commitments to solidarity and equity in managing global risks, to embrace reforms that widen the range of voices at the table in international affairs, and to develop a winning narrative in an era when democracy is in retreat. These actions would not only help sustain the global position of the West; they are also the right thing to do.

The call for more solidarity and equity in managing global risks is fundamental to the current moment. Great-power competition is exacerbating global challenges to the extreme detriment of the poorest countries. The food crisis arising from the war in Ukraine, and the inadequate global response to it, is but one example. This trend makes the efforts of the Center for Global Development⁷ to apply a 'global public goods'⁸ lens to international development especially important. Such goods include programs to lower the risk of pandemics, mitigate climate change, address antimicrobial resistance, and combat nonstate terrorism and cybercrime. Investment in staving off these looming threats, however, suffers from a market failure: because all people benefit, not just those who pay, no one pays. According to the CGD, around 6 percent of the total US State Department budget over the past decade went to development-relevant global public goods, and that proportion does not seem to have increased over time.

Pandemics are a good example. In 2022, the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, which the World Health Assembly asked the World Health Organization (WHO)⁹ to establish and on which I served, published a comprehensive review of the global actions that would be required to prevent and mitigate future pandemics. The report estimated that the financial cost of pandemic prevention would be \$15 billion per year, less than half what Americans spend on pizza every year.

The most shocking revelation was that 11 high-level panels and commissions in 16 reports over the preceding 20 years had made sensible recommendations about how to prepare for, detect, and contain pandemics, but most of the recommendations had not been implemented. The Independent

7 The Center for Global Development (CGD) is a Washington, DC-based think tank that focuses on global development issues.

8 Global public goods, also known as global commons, are public goods that can be used worldwide and are characterised by the fact that no one can be excluded from using them and can be used by different individuals without hindering each other. Examples include climate change mitigation, financial stability, security, knowledge production, and global public health.

9 The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialised United Nations agency founded in 1948 and based in Geneva. Its mission is to coordinate international public health efforts. The World Health Assembly is the WHO's decision-making body.

Panel's conclusion was that this problem could be overcome only by encouraging leaders to mobilize a sustained whole-of-government commitment to pandemic preparedness. We suggested the creation of a Global Health Threats Council separate from the WHO (because pandemics are not just a health issue) with a mission to ensure that governments sufficiently prepare for pandemics, whether through effective surveillance systems or the timely sounding of alarms on outbreaks. This proposal should not be allowed to gather dust.

Support for refugees presents a further example of how global costs are shared unequally. Although many Western countries bemoan the influx of refugees, poor and lower middle-income countries host over 80 percent of them. Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan, Turkey, and Uganda all take in large numbers of refugees. Poland, currently hosting over 1.6 million Ukrainians, and Germany, with 1.5 million Syrians, are outliers among rich countries. Poor and lower middle-income countries receive limited recompense from richer countries for the responsibilities they bear and therefore have limited incentive to enact policies that promote the inclusion of refugees in work, education, and health systems.

Poor and lower middle-income countries host over 80 percent of refugees.

Two World Bank initiatives reflect a willingness to address the concerns of developing countries hosting large numbers of refugees, but they need to be scaled up significantly. The Window for Host Communities and Refugees [WHR] program promises to support meaningful medium- to long-term interventions that support low-income countries hosting refugees. Seventy-seven percent of WHR funds have been committed to African countries. But the program needs to be better resourced; expanded to include other multilateral development banks, such as the African Development Bank¹⁰ and the Islamic Development Bank;¹¹ and made more effective through coordination with bilateral sources of aid. Another World Bank initiative, the Global Concessional Financing Facility, does include other multilateral development banks and supports middle-income countries hosting refugees (for instance, the World Bank has allocated Colombia \$1.6 billion to help

10 The African Development Bank was established in 1966 and is headquartered in Abidjan. Its aim is to fight poverty and enable socio-economic advancement on the African continent by providing investments and loans to governments and enterprises.

11 The Islamic Development Bank was founded in 1975 and is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Its aim is to support the development of poorer countries in the Islamic world.

its efforts with Venezuelan refugees). But contributions to the fund are ad hoc and cannot meet the needs of host countries.

The climate crisis is the global risk that looms largest and presents the greatest test of the sincerity of Western countries' solidarity with the rest of the world. Wealthy countries need to spend trillions of dollars to decarbonize their economies, but they also need to support low-carbon development in poor countries and pay for the inevitable costs of adaptation to climate change already foreshadowed by current levels of global warming.

The appointment of a new managing director of the World Bank at the 2023 spring meetings is, therefore, of the highest importance. As former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers¹² has written, 'There is an urgent need for the US and its allies to regain the trust of the developing world. There is no better means of regaining trust than through the collective provision of large-scale support for countries' highest priorities. And there is no more rapid and effective way of mobilizing support than through the World Bank.'

The new leadership of the World Bank will need to make up for lost time. According to the analyst Charles Kenny, the bank's contributions as a proportion of the gross national income of borrowing countries fell from 4.0 percent in 1987 to 0.7 percent in 2020. The World Bank can and should do more. Its far too conservative approach to risk, its too limited range of partners (nongovernmental and governmental), and its culture and modus operandi need to be the focus of reform, alongside the proposals for new financing in Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley's Bridgetown Agenda [of 2022], which calls for a major new mobilization of funds through international financial institutions for countries grappling with climate change and poverty. The new managing director needs to not only raise more funds but also develop delivery systems that recognize that fragile and conflict-ridden states need to be treated differently from their more stable counterparts.

A Seat at the Table

In addition to crafting a more equitable way to address global risks, Western countries need to embrace demands from developing countries for a greater say in the international arena. Many countries resent the unbalanced

12 Lawrence Henry Summers (b. 1954) is an economist and professor at the Harvard Kennedy School. He served as United States Secretary of the Treasury from 1999 to 2001, and as director of the National Economic Council from 2009 to 2010.

nature of global power in today's international institutions. One recent example occurred during the pandemic. The WHO's Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator was an important initiative intended to drive global access to vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics. But representatives of low-income and middle-income countries were not meaningfully included in the governance of the program. This lack of representation hampered efforts to achieve the fair distribution of vaccines and the effective delivery of other health services.

The case of the UN Security Council veto, at the apex of the international system, provides a useful lens for thinking about how all international institutions need to rebalance the way they work to recognize the realities of modern power. Currently, the five permanent members of the Security Council—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—have the right to veto any resolution, in effect sidelining the other 10 members, many of which are low-income and middle-income countries.

Fundamental reform that would change the number of veto-holding states on the council seems unlikely. But the ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen provide telling examples of how impunity reigns when the Security Council is paralyzed by the veto or the threat to use it. A sign of the frustration regarding this issue is the 'veto initiative' passed by the UN General Assembly in 2022, which requires that when a country uses a veto in the Security Council, the General Assembly is automatically convened to discuss the matter at hand. In addition, more than 100 countries have signed on to a French and Mexican proposal, which I support, that calls for the permanent members of the Security Council to agree to refrain from using their veto in cases of mass atrocities. Some permanent members are already exercising restraint. The United Kingdom has not used its veto on any issue since 1989.

The proposal envisions that the UN secretary-general would identify cases that merit the suspension of the veto, based on a clear definition of 'mass atrocities'. Such a reform would immediately open the decision-making process in the council to more equitably include the views of the 10 elected members in addition to the five permanent ones. The United States has said it is worried about the potential politicization of the process for identifying atrocities. Although US officials are understandably concerned about the consequences of giving up the veto (albeit in limited circumstances), Moscow's repeated vetoes of resolutions on Ukraine in the past year should give Washington pause as to whether it has more to gain or to lose by refusing to consider limits on the veto.

A Look in the Mirror

In the battle for global opinion, narrative matters. The preferred Western framing of the war in Ukraine—as a contest between democracy and autocracy—has not resonated well outside Europe and North America. Although it is true that Ukrainians are fighting for their democracy as well as their sovereignty, for the rest of the world the invasion primarily represents a fundamental transgression of international law. So, too, do Russia's military attacks, which have targeted Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure.

There is a better alternative. Western governments should frame the conflict as one between the rule of law and impunity or between law and anarchy rather than one that pits democracy against autocracy. Such an approach has many advantages. It correctly locates democracy among a range of methods for the promotion of accountability and the curbing of the abuse of power. It broadens the potential coalition of support. It tests China at its weakest point because China claims to support a rules-based international system. It also sounds less self-regarding, which is important given the obvious problems plaguing many liberal democracies. A coalition built around the need for international rules is far more likely to be broader than one based on calls for democracy.

To defend the rule of law, however, Western countries must abide by it and subscribe to it. The US condemnation of Chinese breaches of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea—with respect to China's military installations on islands in the South China Sea, for example—would be far more persuasive if the United States ratified the convention. And although US Vice President Kamala Harris made a powerful call at the recent Munich Security Conference for the prosecution of war crimes in Ukraine, it would have been much more effective had the United States ratified the Rome Statute that created the International Criminal Court in 1998. Critics and adversaries of Western powers relentlessly cite these double standards. And it is not hard to see why.

It is worth asking whether it really matters how the rest of the world lines up on Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin, for one, said in a speech in June 2022 that he believes it does, arguing that in the wake of the war, 'new powerful centers have formed on the planet', a reference to the rise of powers such as Brazil, China, and South Africa. These changes, Putin claims, are 'fundamental and pivotal'. Meanwhile, China has launched a series of global projects under the rubric of its 'Community of Common Destiny Future for Mankind',¹³ including the vast infrastructure investment

13 The term is central to the foreign policy doctrine of the People's Republic of China propagated by the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping. The

program known as the Belt and Road Initiative, that reflect the changing global order.

Yet US President Joe Biden spent less than three minutes discussing the wider world beyond Ukraine in his State of the Union address in February, which was more than an hour long. It was a striking lacuna given his administration's creditable record: over 90 percent of humanitarian aid going to Somalia, for example, currently comes from the United States. An agenda focused on courting the rest of the world has little domestic traction, of course; that is not where the votes are. But other countries also have votes—not in US elections but in how American interests are perceived and advanced around the world. In the case of Ukraine, Russia's economy has been sustained despite Western sanctions by expanded trade with the non-Western world, new energy alliances, and new sources of weapons supplies. These ties matter.

As a geopolitical entity, the West remains a powerful and influential actor, more so with its newfound unity. To be sure, the relative shares of global income among Western countries will be lower in the twenty-first century than they were in the twentieth. But income per capita in Western countries remains high by global standards. The West's military and diplomatic strength is real. The alternative systems to democracy are repressive and unattractive.

At the same time, the demands from a variety of countries for a new deal at the international level are in many cases reasonable. Addressing them with urgency and in good faith is essential to building a global order that is satisfactory to liberal democratic states and their citizens. The war in Ukraine has allowed the West to rediscover its strength and sense of purpose. But the conflict should also help Western governments confront their weaknesses and missteps.

About the Author

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concept combines the idea of global interdependence with the claim that China's central role in world politics and the global economy 'could benefit the prosperity and well-being of populations around the world.' See Stella Chen, 'Community of Common Destiny for Mankind', *China Media Project*, 25 August 2021, https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/community-of-common-destiny-for-mankind/.

Part 2

Postcolonial and Decolonial Perspectives

Abstract: The selected texts in this chapter offer interpretations of the war within the context of global and transregional power relations. Drawing on postcolonial and decolonial arguments, the authors situate the war within the broader development of asymmetrical power relations between the ‘West’ and the colonised world. They reveal how the global history of colonisation resonates in the war against Ukraine. An introductory overview of the historical development of the concepts of postcoloniality and decoloniality helps the reader understand how the texts in this section engage with these frameworks, and how this engagement shapes interpretations of Russia’s war against Ukraine and contemporary configurations of global power relations.

Keywords: ‘Global South’, imperialism, colonialism, critique of global power relations

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Introduction

Postcolonial and decolonial studies have inspired analyses of power imbalances and dependencies not only globally, but also within Europe as inherently colonial. From this perspective, the war against Ukraine is understood as part of long-standing trajectories of empire-building and colonisation in Eastern Europe, a theme reflected in this section. At the same time, the articles presented here interpret the war within the broader global context of asymmetrical power relations between the ‘West’ (mainly Western Europe and the US) and the formerly colonised world. Through their contributions, we see how the global history of colonisation both resonates in and is actively connected to the war against Ukraine.

Postcoloniality and Decoloniality: What’s in a Word?

A brief overview of the history of these concepts helps to understand how the following texts engage with ideas of postcolonialism and decoloniality, and how these frameworks relate to interpretations of Russia’s war against Ukraine in the context of global power relations.

The distinctive uses of the prefixes ‘post’ and ‘de’ reflect different starting points for postcolonial and decolonial analyses. While ‘post’ emphasises the persistence of asymmetrical power relations, ‘de’ highlights the goal of overcoming them. Furthermore, research has pointed out that postcolonial and decolonial approaches were shaped in regions with differing colonial experiences. Pioneers of postcolonial theory, such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, draw on experiences of British (and, in Said’s case, also French) colonialism in the Middle East and South Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹ In contrast, discourses on decoloniality have emerged in Latin America, where European rule began as early as the fifteenth century. Authors such as Anibal Quijano, María Lugones, or Walter D. Mignolo therefore apply different concepts of temporality in their analyses of the connection between coloniality and

¹ See, especially, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

modernity.² One reason some decolonial theorists insist on distinguishing their approach from that of postcolonial studies is that English-speaking postcolonial discourse largely overlooks colonial oppression outside the Anglosphere.

For a long time, intellectuals in Eastern Europe struggled to find their place within debates on postcoloniality and decoloniality. The binary opposition between a so-called ‘Global South’ and ‘Global North’ left little room for acknowledging experiences of hegemony and domination specific to Eastern Europe, leading to frustration. On the one hand, these experiences stem from being subjected to ‘westsplaining’, which involves stereotyping cultures and societies as deficient, less developed, and therefore inferior. On the other hand, Eastern Europe has experienced various forms of imperial rule that have often resulted in peripheralisation, as well as the devaluation and even repression of local cultures.³

Postcolonial and Decolonial Debates in ‘Eastern Europe’

This dual experience of marginalisation explains why postcolonial and decolonial debates have been unfolding for some time in ‘Eastern Europe’ with an intensity comparable to those in the ‘Global South’. Imperial rule—not only in Prussia or the Habsburg Empire but even more so in Russia—is increasingly discussed as a form of colonial power. Numerous emancipatory post- or decolonial statements, which refer directly to geographically proximate hegemonial positions of the past or present and are interpreted as colonial, are characteristic of the highly dynamic negotiation processes taking place on the ground.⁴

The emergence of Ukrainian nationalism with its anti-imperial historical concepts since the mid-nineteenth century can also be understood in

2 Anibal Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’, *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 168–178; María Lugones, ‘Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System’, *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186–209; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations (On Decoloniality)* (Duke University Press, 2021).

3 Cf. Michael Müller, ‘In Search of the Global East: Thinking Between North and South’, *Geopolitics* 25, no. 3 (2020): 734–755; Jie-Hyun Lim, *Global Easts: Remembering, Imagining, Mobilizing* (Columbia University Press, 2022); Lela Rekhviashvili, Kasia Narkowicz, Nikolay Karkov, Zhivka Valiavicharska, and Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, ‘Special Issue: “Conjunctural Geographies of Post-socialist and Postcolonial Conditions”: Introduction’, *Connections: A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists*, 23 September 2022, <http://www.connections.clio-online.net/article/id/fda-133272>.

4 See Róisín Healy and Enrico Dal Lago, eds., *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe’s Modern Past* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

this context. The core narrative of Ukrainian national history created by Mykhailo Hrushevskyi around 1900 is a telling example. Hrushevskyi radically reinterpreted early modern Cossack history, deconstructing the colonial contextualisations imposed by both Russian and Polish historiography. In what might be described as a subaltern response to the challenge of foreign colonisation, Hrushevskyi rejected the delegitimising portrayals of the Cossacks as 'anti-cultural', instead presenting them as a source of 'creative energy' whose 'colonising and civilising action' aimed at 'Ukrainian self-determination'.⁵ Thus, beginning in 1900 and with renewed intensity since 1991, an initially anti-colonial and later postcolonial perspective was adopted to articulate Ukraine's relationship with Russia and the Soviet Union. From the outset, these perspectives have carried clear decolonial significance and analytical force.⁶ Today, Kazakh, Tatar, Chechen, Ukrainian, and other discussions link experiences in the Russian Empire—now increasingly framed as colonial and interpreted in decolonial terms—to those under Soviet rule.

These reception processes also reveal that there is often little distinction between postcolonialism and decoloniality when the arguments are operationalised. Nevertheless, the two approaches differ in important respects. While postcolonial analysis has traditionally maintained a strong focus on the cultural sphere, the concept of decoloniality was initially rooted in sociological thought and linked to analytical frameworks such as Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, which draws attention to the reproduction of economic inequalities. Perhaps the most significant difference between post- and decolonial approaches lies in their stance on how to overcome intellectual dependence on the 'West'. Theorists like Mignolo

5 Serhii Plokhyy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 188–190; Stefan Rohdewald, 'Ukrainian or "One's Own" History in Multiple Colonialities: Historiographical Perspectives on Ruthenia/Ukraine up to 1917', *Early Modern Statehood and Society in the Ukrainian Lands: Forms and Concepts*, ed. Yvonne Kleinmann, Miloš Řezník, and Volodymyr Sklokin (in preparation).

6 See Stefan Rohdewald, 'Ukrainische Geschichte dekolonial, transimperial und transregional vom Mittelalter bis ins 21. Jahrhundert. Eine Einleitung [Ukrainian history: Decolonial, transimperial, and transregional from the Middle Ages to the 21st century: An introduction]', in *Ukraine und Ukrainische Geschichte unter Beschuss. Historische Perspektiven im transepochalen und transregionalen Zugriff* [Ukraine and Ukrainian history under fire: Historical perspectives in a trans-epochal and transregional approach], ed. Stefan Rohdewald (Historische Mitteilungen [der Ranke-Gesellschaft] 33 (2022), 7–32; Tetjana Portnova and Andrii Portnov, 'Ukrainische Geschichte. Interpretations- und Erklärungsansätze', in *Osteuropa*, no. 6–8 (2022): 79–102; Andreas Kappeler, 'Great Russians' and 'Little Russians': *Russian–Ukrainian Relations and Perceptions in Historical Perspective* (University of Washington, 2003).

advocate for a decisive break with Western epistemologies—a position that postcolonial theorists do not endorse as radically. Postcolonial thinkers recognise the emancipatory potential of certain European traditions, such as Enlightenment philosophy, and argue that such a complete break would not be possible.⁷ As Bhabha contends, cultures are inherently hybrid due to continuous processes of exchange and appropriation, and they therefore cannot be hermetically separated from each other.⁸

Postcolonial and Decolonial Debates in the Context of the War on Ukraine

However, the idea of a radical break with the legacy of imperial domination and cultural colonisation gives the decolonial argument particular resonance in contemporary Ukraine, as literary scholar Tamara Hundorova demonstrates in her article. At the same time, she notes that proponents of such approaches in her home country are often unfamiliar with the complexities of post- and decolonial debates. Hundorova explicitly engages with post- and decolonial thinkers and the debates they have initiated. Other texts draw on post- and decolonial perspectives or incorporate elements of these discourses in their analysis without explicitly identifying their origins.

The section brings together newspaper and magazine articles alongside blog posts by writers from Ukraine, India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, as well as a conversation between two internationally renowned social anthropologists from India and China and an interview with an Indian politician and activist. Most of these contributions are not part of academic discourse, where the precise use of concepts would be expected. Rather, they are engaged responses to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and interventions in debates about the causes and consequences of the war. These interventions reflect a post- and decolonial critique of what their authors regard as imperialistic—or, at the very least, ignorant—approaches to international politics and knowledge production.

One example of such an anti-imperialistic critique is the interview with social anthropologists Biao Xiang and Ranabir Samaddar. Identifying as part of the global left, they focus their criticism on what they perceive as

7 For an overview of the development of post- and decolonial approaches and their relationship to one another, see Gurminder K. Bhambra, 'Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues', *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 2 (2014): 115–121.

8 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

Western—particularly American—imperialism. In their conversation, they lament that, in times of war, arguments against NATO are often dismissed as pro-Putin propaganda. At the same time, Samaddar acknowledges, what he calls ‘history’s irony’—that a nationalist like Russian President Vladimir Putin, ‘while nobody likes what he has done or is doing’, is the one who says to ‘Western domination’: ‘this cannot go on’.

A critically distanced position towards both the West and the war in Ukraine is also evident in the text by the British-based writer and filmmaker David Matthews, who describes himself as part of the African diaspora in Europe and the global ‘Afriritariat’. Drawing on historical experiences of racial discrimination, but also pointing to double standards in the treatment of people of colour versus white refugees from Ukraine, he argues that there is little reason for the African diaspora to align with Western solidarity for Ukraine. Yet this position does not imply support for the Russian cause either. Rather, Matthews seems to favour a kind of equidistance, partly because he notes the presence of neo-Nazis on both the Russian and the Ukrainian side.

A similar position is articulated in a text by Indian-born historian Vijay Prashad, published in the South African daily *Mail & Guardian*. In this article, he contends that the West’s interest in this conflict is ethnocentric. According to him, Western societies feel connected to Ukrainians under attack through ‘culture, religion, or skin colour,’ while the victims of other wars, in Africa and Asia, are largely ignored. Prashad argues that this is because people in the West tend to view military violence in countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq as more or less normal, while they are shocked to see war return to Europe. Although he points to the complexity of the war’s causes, he identifies the rise of post-Soviet ethno-nationalism and NATO’s eastward expansion as key contributing factors. At the same time, he insists that none of these developments justify the ‘bombing of a sovereign people’. Like Matthews, Prashad raises the question of whether the war in Ukraine can be understood as a ‘white man’s war’.

Another line of argumentation is found in texts that strongly reject any form of solidarity with Putin. This is particularly evident in an interview with Kavita Krishnan, a Marxist feminist who was one of the most prominent figures in the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) until her resignation in September 2022. Her departure was prompted by a fundamental disagreement with her party’s assessment of the war against Ukraine. The characterisation of Putin as a figure of resistance to Western imperialism, which she encountered in the Indian Communist Party, was intolerable to her because his regime is backed by individuals who—like the supporters of

the current Indian government (which Indian communists oppose)—belong to a global fossil fuel oligarchy. She also argues that Indian leftist intellectuals such as Vijay Prashad employ the same arguments against American unilateralism as the racist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin.

Finally, a historical deconstruction of the argument for pro-Russian partisanship is provided in an article by Hilary Lynd, a historian based in South Africa. Her piece explores the historical context of South Africa's neutral stance on the war in Ukraine and the African National Congress's (ANC)⁹ sympathies for Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin. The notion of a historical link between the ANC and Russia, rooted in the anti-apartheid struggle, relies on the highly problematic conflation of Russia with the former Soviet Union. This view overlooks the fact that other parts of the Soviet Union—most notably Ukraine—also supported the ANC. Moreover, Lynd argues, Soviet support was far from consistent. She shows that the narrative of an unbroken friendship between the ANC and Russia is part of Putin's manipulative foreign policy, which is grounded in the concept of 'imperial gratitude'. As Lynd explains, this concept plays a dual role in Russian foreign relations. On the one hand, it is directed towards Ukraine, which is expected to show gratitude for the civilising legacy of Russian rule by submitting to Russia's will. On the other hand, since Ukraine's desire for emancipation contradicts this demand for subordination, military punishment is presented as a fitting response. In relation to the so-called 'Global South', the same logic demands that gratitude for Soviet-era support during anti-colonial struggles be repaid through present-day political support for Russia's claims and actions against Ukraine.

Such a postcolonial interpretation of Russian imperialism aligns with the two texts by authors from Ukraine. Western ignorance of the true nature of Russian hegemonic aspirations is sharply criticised in an article by Maksym Vikhrov, a Kyiv-based journalist, which paraphrases an analysis by Estonian-born, Copenhagen-based political scientist Maria Mälksoo, who critiques dominant postcolonial approaches in the West for their primary focus on racism and the non-European world, often overlooking the reality of colonial oppression within Europe itself. Tamara Hundorova explores in her article how post- and decolonial paradigms are applied to the current situation in Ukraine. Tracing the evolution of the concept of decolonisation since it was first used in 1932, she shows how it initially referred to political independence

9 The African National Congress (ANC) was founded in 1912 in Bloemfontein, South Africa, and was the driving force against the apartheid regime after the country gained full independence in 1960. The ANC has been in power since 1994.

and the overcoming of economic dependency. Today, she argues, the focus has shifted towards cultural dimensions—particularly the need to challenge global asymmetries in knowledge production and the dominance of Western conceptual frameworks. As far as Ukraine is concerned, Hundorova contends that decolonisation must also address the Western construction of the European East and the way knowledge about Ukraine is produced. Even those Western scholars who claim to be ‘pro-Ukrainian’, she argues, often fail to engage with the work of Ukrainian scholars and continue to reproduce Western-centric paradigms. At the same time, the author laments the lack of a nuanced discussion of decolonisation within Ukraine itself. She criticises the tendency to reduce decoloniality to de-communisation and de-Russification efforts which, being largely limited to renaming places, amount to a superficial form of ‘topographical decolonisation’.

While the texts collected in this chapter reflect postcolonial and decolonial perspectives in their interpretations of the war against Ukraine, the views they offer on global and regional power relations diverge significantly. Although all texts share a critique of unilateralism and imperialism, they differ sharply with respect to who should be blamed for such aspirations—the ‘West’ or Russia. A second common theme is the critical interrogation of how knowledge is produced. Yet even here, references to post- and decolonial discourses yield starkly different conclusions. Scholars such as Biao Xiang and Ranabir Samaddar criticise the marginalisation of ‘Global South’ perspectives and voices in ‘Western’ discourse and claim that their criticism of NATO’s role in the war is distorted. In contrast, Hilary Lynd deconstructs the historical narratives that underlie the ANC’s support for Russia, showing how these narratives reproduce imperialist accounts of the past—some of which are counterfactual and originate in Russian propaganda. Maksym Vikhrov condemns ‘Western’ ignorance of Ukraine and Eastern Europe more broadly, echoing Maria Mäklsoo’s critique of the imperialist framing of Ukraine as a buffer zone. Tamara Hundorova goes further still, criticising not only Russian imperialism but also imperialist–paternalistic attitudes towards Ukraine in the ‘West’. Her article advocates for a broad decolonisation of knowledge, arguing that only through such a process can true equality be achieved.

As in the other chapters, the texts offer an opportunity to immerse oneself in diverse contexts of argumentation across different societies around the world. The range of viewpoints expressed in these texts does not yield easy answers to the question of how to assess the war in Ukraine and its global implications. Instead, it reveals an ongoing intellectual struggle to make sense of it. Despite their differences, the texts convey a shared sense of unease—often frustration, if not outright anger—towards ways of thinking,

speaking, and acting that are perceived as marked by 'Western' hypocrisy or ignorance.¹⁰ Moreover, these multivocal texts demonstrate that even within the societies of the so-called Global South, arguments grounded in postcolonial and decolonial perspectives are as varied as the interpretations of the war and its global consequences themselves.

About the Volume Editors

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10 At the same time, they reveal the difficulty of gaining an informed position in a landscape of contested and unreliable information. For example, Vijay Prashad's text which explicitly condemns violence against the Ukrainian people, adopts the language of Putin's Russia in referring to the democratic Euromaidan movement as 'the US-led coup in Ukraine in 2014'.

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Chimeras of Academic Consciousness: What Western Researchers of International Relations Did Not Understand About the Russian– Ukrainian War

Khymery akademichnoi svidomosti: Choho zakhidni doslidnyky mizhnarodnykh vidnosyn ne rozumily pro rosiisko-ukrainsku viynu

Maksym Vikhrov

Editorial Note

This article was first published in *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* (The Ukrainian week) on 22 March 2023.¹ *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* is a weekly magazine founded in 2007 in the wake of the 'Orange Revolution'. As a political and cultural magazine, reports on the war in Ukraine and international issues form a large part of its coverage. Some of its articles are also published in the English and French editions of the magazine. This article appeared in the Ukrainian edition in the 'World' ('Svit') section. The typographical emphasis is that of the original text.

'This is an imperial war in the world of nation-states, motivated by Russia's open denial of Ukraine's political sovereignty and the right of Ukrainians to exist as an independent nation.... In this conflict, the incompatible logics of sovereignty (Ukraine) and imperialism (Russia) are at odds', writes Maria Mälksoo,² a researcher at the Centre for Military Studies,

¹ <https://tyzhden.ua/khymery-akademichnoi-svidomosti-choho-zakhidni-doslidnyky-mizhnarodnykh-vidnosyn-ne-rozumily-pro-rosiisko-ukrainsku-vijnu/>.

² Maria Mälksoo was born in Estonia in 1979. She studied sociology at the University of Tartu (BA, 2002) and received her MPhil and PhD at the University of Cambridge. According to her presentation on the website of the University of Copenhagen, her research focuses on 'Critical Security Studies (ontological security, securitization of historical memory); political

Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, in the *Journal of Genocide Research*.³ To a Ukrainian reader, this statement may hardly seem sensational. The same cannot be said of Western researchers and theorists of international relations, whose approaches are now being tested by reality—and are not holding up well.

What kind of problems are we talking about? *First, there is the traditional inattention to the states of Eastern Europe.* According to Mälksoo, the Russian–Ukrainian war is ‘a moment that reveals the distinctly Eurocentric nature of theorising in international relations when it comes to the relative neglect of Eastern European ideas and the validity of the experience [of Eastern European states—author].’ According to Mälksoo, due to their own ‘intellectual laziness’, specialised researchers have not paid enough attention to the themes within world politics that have been considered of ‘lesser’ importance.

Second is the idea of limited sovereignty, hidden under the cloak of geopolitical ‘realism’ or ‘pacifism’. As Mälksoo writes, ‘the war has revealed some intricate, contradictory alliances between offensive realists who argue that the “law of anarchy” leaves some states less sovereign than others ... and pacifists of various stripes who fear that Ukrainians have rallied around the flag to unleash new waves of nationalism’. Both camps advocate for ‘a quick ceasefire and a Russia-sensitive settlement to end the war’, calling for Ukraine’s neutrality. However, as Mälksoo writes, this is only a ‘fig leaf’ to deny the right of Ukrainians to full state sovereignty.

According to Mälksoo, up until the period 2004–2022 (i.e., between the Orange Revolution and the outbreak of the full-scale Russian–Ukrainian war), Ukraine was seen in studies as a ‘territory under influence’ rather than as a subject of international relations acting independently, based on its own interests and according to its own plan. This rhymed well with the general perception of Eastern European states as not really being full-fledged subjects of international relations.

And third, there was a lack of attention to Russian/Soviet imperialism. According to Mälksoo, there was a widespread perception among Western scholars that ‘the label “postcolonial” was not sufficiently applicable to the

anthropology (liminality, rituals), and the political practice of deterrence, with a focus on NATO’s eastern flank’ (<https://researchprofiles.ku.dk/en/persons/maria-malksoo>, accessed 30 September 2024).

3 The *Journal of Genocide Research* is a leading international journal focusing on acts of systematic mass killing. It has been appearing since 1999 and is published by the Taylor & Francis Group. The author refers to the following article: Maria Mälksoo, ‘The Postcolonial Moment in Russia’s War Against Ukraine’, *The Journal of Genocide Research* 25, no. 3–4 (2023): 471–481.

former Soviet/Russian imperial space’. This is not least because leading postcolonial studies have focused on racial hierarchies, without concern for inequalities among white people themselves. Therefore, the question of the postcoloniality of the former subjects of the Russian Empire remains a difficult one for Western scholars to this day.

The Toxic Buffer-Zone Concept

But the problems described above cannot be considered purely academic. The mistakes of international relations theorists have paved the way for the emergence of bad policy ideas, such as starting negotiations with Russia for a ceasefire at any price. ‘Such proposals do not help the party under attack’, Mälksoo writes. ‘Instead, they serve to mitigate the understandable human fear of outsiders of the potential spread of the consequences of this tragic war beyond Ukraine, ultimately fuelling the idea of Ukraine’s limited sovereignty, keeping the country on a *de facto* colonial leash.’ Mälksoo believes that the idea of Ukraine’s neutrality is nothing more than a revival of the old idea of an Eastern European buffer zone designed to shield the West from the Russian threat.

These are indeed difficult times for the adherents of such thinking. Today, it is clear that the concept of buffer zones is neither fair (to the states that are assigned the role of a ‘buffer’) nor productive (to all those interested in a sustainable and functional system of international relations). The mere existence of the concept of buffer zones in Western political and academic thought whets the appetites of belligerent regimes. The latter find in this a confirmation of their own view of the world, according to which international relations are determined by the rule of the strong. It can be assumed that it was the Western view of Ukraine as a buffer zone that prompted Russian aggression. Obviously, Moscow expected that the international community—especially the collective West—would not make a tragedy out of a crumpled bumper and would agree to accept the new status quo.

The ‘Invisible’ Causes of War

Western military analysts’ predictions that Kyiv would fall within 72 hours of the Russian invasion have long since become a meme. However, it is important to understand the broader theoretical context in which such

conclusions emerged. And here again, we need to return to the theory of international relations.

Maria Mälksoo very accurately points out the existential nature of the Russian–Ukrainian confrontation. For Moscow, the researcher writes, ‘the political fate of Ukraine looks like the final test of the Russian brand of imperial nationalism: the Russian state and nation were conceived as imperial, and they must be constantly controlled, defended, and justified as such’. Moscow is talking about ‘correcting the allegedly erroneous cultural code of Ukrainians, which does not recognise the superiority of Russianness, the Russian nation, culture, history, and language—and therefore Ukraine’s belonging, as it were, by default, to the sacred political community of the “Russian world”’.

Again, nothing new. But, as Mälksoo writes, Western scholars have tended to ‘reduce the intra-European struggle to a “narcissism of minor differences”, neglecting to discuss Russian colonialism on a par with Western colonial practices in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean’. We can assume that it was the inability (or unwillingness) to see the existential nature of the Russian–Ukrainian confrontation that created the intellectual atmosphere in which the fierce resistance of Ukrainians and their willingness to make enormous sacrifices to defend their country came as a surprise.

In Search of a Solution

The fact that Maria Mälksoo’s article was published in an influential academic journal is an encouraging sign that the Western academic community is capable of recognising its own conceptual errors and working on them, albeit belatedly. The same goes for political practitioners. The classical arguments of ‘geopolitical realists’ like Henry Kissinger⁴ in favour of Russia becoming part of the world order have lost considerable weight. After all, it is increasingly clear that Russia has become an outsider not because the ‘major geopolitical players’ had a tragic misunderstanding over the ‘Ukrainian issue’. It is because Russia has for centuries nurtured aggressive foreign policy intentions, and not only towards Ukraine.

4 Henry Kissinger (1923–2023) was a German-American diplomat and political scientist. He served as US National Security Advisor (1969–1973) and as US Secretary of State (1973–1977) under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. As a theorist and practitioner, he was a proponent of the so-called ‘realist school’, which is sceptical of the ability of international relations to be governed by overarching norms and views foreign policy primarily through the lens of military and economic power.

For now, we will confine ourselves to stating the fact that Western international relations theorists will have to say goodbye to many old ideas about Ukraine, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and its imperial nature, as well as the myth that appeasement in the face of predators and reducing one's own arsenals will make the world safer. But how can we move from revising political theory to developing good, practical solutions?

According to Mälksoo, 'The international implications of Russia's problematic relationship with its past and its willingness to use violence in defence of its highly selective "state history" underscore the political need for a major structural programme of *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*⁵ [working through the past—author].' In her opinion, it should be not only about justice for those who have suffered from war crimes in Ukraine but also about 'further retrospective justice when it comes to reckoning with the broader legacy of the Soviet communist regime and Russian imperialism in general'.

There is no arguing with the validity of this statement. If Russian society does indeed exhibit a deep-rooted imperialism burdened by an unreflective communist–totalitarian legacy, as well as toxic mental layers of the post-Soviet era, this must be dealt with in some way. Otherwise, Russia will continue to generate violence and chaos, remaining a source of threat to its immediate and distant neighbours. The question is, who will implement the *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* programme in Russia and how exactly? By using this German term, Mälksoo refers to the practice of overcoming the imperial and Nazi legacy in Germany. But we remember that the thorough 're-education' of the Germans began after the military defeat and political collapse of the Third Reich, when the aggressor state was placed under external military, political, and economic control.

What about today's Russia? And the point here is not whether such a plan is feasible for a nuclear-armed state. To begin with, it is worth asking whether anyone is considering such a scenario in principle. Or does the West still cherish the hope that the 'good Russians' who may someday come to power in Moscow will do the work on themselves? These questions, of course, should be addressed not to Maria Mälksoo, but to the Western political establishment. The answers to these questions will help us to understand what international relations studies really are: a laboratory for practical solutions, a platform for scholastic intellectual exercises, or a workshop for

5 The term is difficult to translate; in English it is usually rendered as 'dealing with the past'. The term more commonly used in media and academic discourse is *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (i.e., coming to terms with the past).

the academic legitimisation of approaches that seem politically comfortable at a given moment in time.

About the Author

Maksym Vikhrov is a Ukrainian journalist based in Kyiv. He previously worked in the Russian-occupied Donbas region.

Ukraine: A Conflict Soaked in Contradictions

Vijay Prashad

Editorial Note

This article was published on 7 March 2022 in the South African weekly newspaper *Mail & Guardian* and produced by *Globetrotter*,¹ a project of the Independent Media Institute.² The *Mail & Guardian* was founded during the last years of the Botha regime and was known for its opposition to apartheid policies. Today it identifies strongly with the idea of the Global South, giving a voice to intellectuals from that part of the world.

Surprise and horror have defined the reaction to the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. That's probably because, although the intervention has followed the contours of a modern land war, it has also marked a break with the past in a number of ways. The world has become used to military interventions by the United States. This is, however, not a US intervention. That in itself is a surprise—one that has befuddled reporters and pundits alike.

Even as we deplore the violence and the loss of life in Ukraine resulting from the Russian intervention (and the neofascist violence in the Donbas), it is valuable to step back and look at how the rest of the world may perceive this conflict, starting with the West's ethnocentric interest in an attack whose participants and victims they believe they share aspects of identity with—whether related to culture, religion, or skin colour.

White Wars

War in Ukraine joins a sequence of wars that have opened sores on a very fragile planet. Wars in Africa and Asia seem endless, and some of them are rarely commented upon with any feeling in media outlets across the world or in the cascade of posts found on social media platforms.

1 <https://mg.co.za/article/2022-03-07-ukraine-a-conflict-soaked-in-contradictions/>.

2 <https://independentmediainstitute.org>.

For example, the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which started in 1996³ and which has resulted in millions of casualties, has not elicited the kind of sympathy from the world now seen during the reporting on Ukraine. In contrast, the startlingly frank comments from political leaders and journalists during the conflict in Ukraine have revealed the grip of racism on the imaginations of these shapers of public opinion.

It was impossible recently to get major global media outlets interested in the conflict in Cabo Delgado, which grew out of the capture of the bounty of natural gas by TotalEnergies SE (France) and ExxonMobil (US) and led to the deployment of the French-backed Rwandan military in Mozambique.⁴ At COP26,⁵ I told a group of oil company executives about this intervention—which I had covered for *Globetrotter*—and one of them responded with precise accuracy: ‘You’re right about what you say, but no one cares.’

No one, which is to say the political forces in the North Atlantic states, cares about the suffering of children in Africa and Asia. They are, however, gripped by the war in Ukraine, which should grip them, which distresses all of us, but which should not be allowed to be seen as worse than other conflicts taking place across the globe that are much more brutal and are likely to slip out of everyone’s memory due to the lack of interest and attention given by world leaders and media outlets to them.

Charlie D’Agata of CBS News said that Ukraine ‘isn’t a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilised, relatively European—I have to choose those words carefully, too—city, where you wouldn’t expect that, or hope that

3 This refers to the First Congo War, which took place from 1996 to 1997. While it was a continuation of the violence carried out by the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide who had fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then Zaire), it also marked the beginning of a series of wars in Central Africa that continue to this day. However, these conflicts receive little attention in the media, politics, or public discourse in Europe and North America.

4 The author refers to the ongoing guerrilla warfare in Cabo Delgado province of northern Mozambique, home to the country’s largest natural gas reserves. The conflict pits local Muslim insurgents against private ‘security companies’, including mercenaries from the Russian Wagner Group, who are fighting on behalf of the Mozambican government. Vijay Prashad—like many local analysts—argues that the conflict is less an attempt to establish a radical Islamic regime than a consequence of social injustice, see Vijay Prashad, ‘Multinationals and Oil Companies Are Imposing Their Greed on the People of Mozambique’, *Peoples Dispatch*, 11 September 2020, <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/09/11/multinationals-and-oil-companies-are-imposing-their-greed-on-the-people-of-mozambique/>; Vijay Prashad, ‘Rwanda’s Military Is the French Proxy on African Soil’, *Peoples Dispatch*, 9 September 2021, <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2021/09/09/rwandas-military-is-the-french-proxy-on-african-soil/>.

5 That is, the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference that was held in Glasgow from 31 October to 13 November 2021.

... [a conflict] is going to happen'. Clearly, these are the things one expects to see in Kabul (Afghanistan) or Baghdad (Iraq) or Goma (the Democratic Republic of the Congo), but not in a 'relatively civilised, relatively European' city in Ukraine. If these are things that one expects in the former cities, respectively, then there is very little need to be particularly outraged by the violence that is witnessed in these cities.

You would not expect such violence in Ukraine, said the country's deputy chief prosecutor, David Sakvarelidze, to the BBC, because of the kind of people who were caught in the crossfire: 'European people with blue eyes and blond hair being killed every day.' Sakvarelidze considers the Ukrainians to be Europeans, although D'Agata calls them 'relatively European'.

But they are certainly not African or Asian, people who—if you think carefully about what is being said here—certain world leaders and international media outlets expect to be killed by the violence unleashed against them by the global great powers and by the weapons sold to the local thugs in these regions by these great powers.

Worst War?

On 23 February 22, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres—in a heartfelt statement about the Russian military intervention in Ukraine—said, 'In the name of humanity do not allow to start in Europe what could be the worst war since the beginning of the century.' The next day, on February 24, with Russia launching 'the biggest attack on a European state since World War II', European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen condemned this 'barbaric attack' and said that 'it is President Putin who is bringing war back to Europe'.

'Bringing war back to Europe': this is instructive language from Von der Leyen. It reminded me of Aimé Césaire's⁶ *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), where the great poet and communist bemoaned Europe's ability to forget the terrible fascistic treatment of the peoples of Africa and Asia by the colonial powers when they spoke of fascism. Fascism, Césaire wrote, is the colonial experiment brought back to Europe.

When the US invaded Iraq in 2003, neither the UN secretary-general nor the president of the European Commission came forward to make any

6 Aimé Fernand David Césaire (1913–2008) was a poet, writer, activist, and politician. Born in the colony of Martinique, he is known as one of the founders of the anti-colonial *Négritude* movement, which sought a positive and assertive re-evaluation of black African culture.

immediate condemnation of that war. Both international institutions went along with the war, allowing the destruction of Iraq, which resulted in the death of more than a million people.

In 2004, a year into the US war on Iraq, after reports of grave violations of human rights (including by Amnesty International on torture in the prison of Abu Ghraib) came to light, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the war 'illegal'. In 2006, three years after the war had begun, Italy's Prime Minister Romano Prodi, who had been the president of the European Commission in 2003, called the war a 'grave error'.

In the case of the Russian intervention, these institutions rushed to condemn the war, which is all very well; but does this mean that they will be just as quick to condemn the US when it starts its next bombing campaign?

War Stenography

People often ask me, what's the most reliable news outlet? This is a hard question to answer these days, because Western news outlets are increasingly becoming stenographers of their governments (with the racist attitudes of the reporters on full display more and more often, making the apologies that come later hardly comforting). State-sponsored outlets in Russia and China now increasingly find themselves banned on social media sites. Anyone who counters Washington's narrative is dismissed as irrelevant, and these fringe voices find it hard to develop an audience.

So-called cancel culture demonstrates its limits. D'Agata has apologised for his comment about Ukraine being 'relatively civilised, relatively European' compared to Iraq and Afghanistan and has already been rehabilitated because he is on the 'right side' of the conflict in Ukraine. Cancel culture has moved from the chatter of social media to the battlefields of geopolitics and diplomacy as far as the Russian–Ukrain[ian] conflict is concerned.

Switzerland has decided to end a century of formal neutrality to cancel Russia by enforcing European sanctions against it (remember that Switzerland remained 'neutral' as the Nazis tore through Europe during World War II, and operated as the Nazi bankers even after the war). Meanwhile, press freedom has been set aside during the current conflict in Eastern Europe, with Australia and Europe suspending the broadcast of RT [Russia Today], which is a Russian state-controlled international media network.

D'Agata's reliability as a reporter will remain unquestioned. He 'misspoke', they might say, but this is a Freudian slip.

Calculations of War

Wars are ugly, especially wars of aggression. The role of the reporter is to explain why a country goes to war, particularly an unprovoked war. If this were 1941, I might try to explain the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II or the Japanese assumption that the Nazis would soon defeat the Soviets and then take the war across the Atlantic Ocean. But the Soviets held out, saving the world from fascism.

In the same way, the Russian attack on Ukraine requires explanation: the roots of it go deep to various political and foreign policy developments, such as the post-Soviet emergence of ethnic nationalism along the spine of Eastern Europe, the eastward advance of US power—through NATO—toward the Russian border, and the turbulent relationship between the major European states and their eastern neighbours (including Russia). To explain this conflict is not to justify it, for there is little to justify in the bombing of a sovereign people.

Sane voices exist on all sides of ugly conflicts. In Russia, State Duma Deputy Mikhail Matveev of the Communist Party said—soon after the Russian entry into Ukraine—that he voted for the recognition of the breakaway provinces of Ukraine, he ‘voted for peace, not for war’, and he voted ‘for Russia to become a shield, so that Donbas is not bombed, and not for Kyiv being bombed’.

Matveev’s voice confounds the current narrative: it brings into motion the plight of the Donbas since the US-driven coup in Ukraine in 2014, and it sounds the alarm against the full scale of the Russian intervention.

Is there room in our imagination to try to understand what Matveev is saying?

About the Author

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Is Ukraine Just a White Man's War? The Diaspora Sees Through Europe's Self-interest

David Matthews

Editorial Note

This article was published in the internet magazine *UnHerd* on 29 April 2022.¹ *UnHerd* describes itself as 'a platform to the overlooked, the downtrodden and the traduced; and to people and places that the world has chosen to forget'. A strong focus is on issues of migration and anti-racism.

Fourteen years ago, when Boris Johnson was a mere twinkle in the British electorate's eye, I wound up shadowing the then MP for Henley-on-Thames as he campaigned to become Mayor of London.² He won, of course, then bagged a second mayoral term and, while still mayor, acquired another safe Tory seat. Along the way he had a few affairs, sired several children, and said some rather horrid things about black people (1). Then he became prime minister. Say what you like about Johnson, he's a serial winner, albeit mainly of one-horse races.

One rare moment of excitement during that first mayoral campaign occurred when Johnson's team shipped in a bunch of Ugandan politicians and dumped them on the streets of south London to spice up the optics of an otherwise all-white campaign. Some years later, while on the Obama campaign trail, me and Suzanne Moore³ (2) were similarly used as effnik

1 <https://unherd.com/2022/04/is-ukraine-just-a-white-mans-war/>.

2 The author refers to the 2008 election campaign for the office of Mayor of London: Boris Johnson, a member of parliament since 2001, was nominated as the Conservative Party candidate on 27 May 2007 and won the election on 1 May 2008. He was re-elected on 3 May 2012.

3 Suzanne Moore (b. 1958) is a journalist who worked for the British daily newspaper *The Guardian* until 2020. Endnote 2 in this article refers to a text in which Moore explains her reasons for leaving the paper (another text on this subject is Suzanne Moore, 'Why I Had to leave *The Guardian*', *UnHerd*, 25 November 2020, <https://unherd.com/2020/11/why-i-had-to-leave-the-guardian/?=refinnar>.) The immediate cause was allegations of bullying, while the broader context was a debate about the relationship between traditional feminism and transgender issues. In this debate, Moore argues that the struggle for women's rights is linked to experiences that are uniquely female and rooted in female biology.

stooges at a John McCain⁴ rally in Richmond, Virginia. We were plonked just feet away from the presidential wannabe to add a multicultural couple to an otherwise sea of white.

Today, however, the fine line between racism, tokenism, and cynical opportunism is being revealed as the war in Ukraine enters its third month. Amid the exodus of five million people fleeing the Russian invasion, several expat African, Asian, and Middle Eastern students, as well as non-white Ukrainian nationals, have reported how the authorities are giving white citizens free passage out of the beleaguered country while holding back ‘foreigners’ (3). Having spoken to legions of black friends, relatives, and colleagues in my Caribbean bolthole, across the diaspora and back home in the UK, such accounts appear to confirm the Afro-cynical view that the Ukraine conflict is a white man’s war and one black people would do well to keep out of.

For many in the African diaspora, myself included, the sight of Poland’s EU commissioner pledging to shelter Ukrainian refugees in his own home,⁵ and of the UK government creating a ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme, and of the US opening its doors to 100,000 Ukrainians smacks of Eurocentric self-interest—a self-interest that reinforces a sense of black cynicism and resentment. As Trevor Noah⁶ (4) pointed out during one of his monologues on *The Daily Show* at the start of the war: ‘It is interesting that Eastern Europe has been so willing and able to accept a million people coming into their countries in just a few days, when, just recently, they didn’t seem to have any space for a different group of refugees.’

We’ve all seen countless images of Syrian refugees in convoy zigzagging their way across Europe in search of safe haven, while the EU pays off Turkey to keep them from getting to Greece. We’ve heard the Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki⁷ state publicly that ‘we will not be receiving migrants from the Middle East and North Africa in Poland’. We’ve seen

4 John McCain (1936–2018) was a US senator from 1987 until his death and the Republican candidate for president in 2008.

5 This refers to the statement by Janusz Wojciechowski (b. 1954), a member of Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), a right-wing populist and national-conservative political party in Poland, and EU Commissioner for Agriculture (2019–2024), a few days after Russia’s full-scale attack on Ukraine, that he was ‘ready to host Ukrainian refugees in his home’; see Eddy Wax, ‘Poland’s EU Commissioner Pledges to Personally Shelter Refugees’, *Politico*, 2 March 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-eu-commissioner-janusz-wojciechowski-to-shelter-refugees/>.

6 Trevor Noah (b. 1984), a South African comedian, actor, and writer, hosted *The Daily Show*, a late-night talk and news satire television programme in the US, from 2015 to 2022.

7 Mateusz Morawiecki (b. 1968) is a member of Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), a right-wing populist and national-conservative political party in Poland. He was prime minister of Poland from 2017 to 2023.

Hungary's 13-foot razor-wire fence stretching 115 miles along its border with Serbia designed to keep out refugees like wild dogs. And we've seen the gut-wrenching images of migrants' corpses washed up on our shores or packed into the back of container lorries like dead meat, while successive prime ministers galvanise the sort of 'hostile environment' immigration policies that led to the Windrush scandal and the bizarre outsourcing of asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Helping to prosecute this 'narrative' is a Western news media which black readers, viewers, and listeners have become all too adept at decoding for dog whistles and subtexts and racial bias that don't seem to matter in the context of expressing solidarity with Ukraine. 'It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed', Ukraine's Deputy Chief Prosecutor, David Sakvarelidze (5), told the BBC. 'This isn't Iraq or Afghanistan.... This is a relatively civilised, relatively European city', reported CBS foreign correspondent Charlie D'Agata (6). 'Just to put it bluntly, these are not refugees from Syria; these are refugees from neighbouring Ukraine. These are Christians, they are white, they're ... um ... very similar to the people that live in Poland', intoned NBC News correspondent, Kelly Cobiella (7). 'Now the unthinkable has happened to them. This is not a developing, third-world nation. This is Europe', gushed one ITV 'reporter' (8).

Add to this the weight of history, Europe's discriminatory migration policies, and the existence of various neo-Nazis (9) on both sides of the frontline, and it comes as no surprise that very few black people have been inspired to take up arms and join President Zelenskyy's International Legion of Ukraine. There are two notable exceptions: Malcolm Nance, a 61-year-old former US intelligence officer and ex-MSNBC analyst, and Ben Grant, a former Royal Marine and eldest son of Tory MP Helen Grant, have both signed up to the Legion.

While Nance has been tweeting furiously, giving interviews and posing for macho photos since he took off for Ukraine over a week ago, little has been heard of 30-year-old Grant since he left for the frontline in early March. Even in the case of Nance, despite his relatively high profile, the comparative lack of interest in both his and Grant's welfare—from blacks and whites alike—further illustrates a growing and widening 'not our war' indifference that black people caught earlier but one suspects will soon become the British norm.

If 'black Twitter' and the global Afritariat are anything to go by, Robert Downey Jr. donning blackface in *Tropic Thunder*⁸ is more likely to get a

8 In this 2008 action film spoof, the actor Robert Downey Jr. (b. 1965) plays an Australian actor who slips into the role of a black character and imitates African-American slang. This was

round of applause on the streets of Harlem or Brixton than either Nance or Grant. The historic ill-treatment of black personnel in the US and British militaries is something the diaspora isn't about to forget in a hurry, not least because even tokens such as Nance and Grant are so thin on the ground that black people literally see themselves as having no stake in the war, despite the ripple effects of rising fuel and food prices affecting them as much as anyone else.

Whether it's tokenism, racism, or plain old indifference, the uncomfortable truth is that black whataboutery concerning the West's interest in the sanctity of Ukrainian life over that of Afghanis, Iraqis, Yemenis, or Congolese belies a romantic view of Russia as my enemy's enemy is my friend. This is, of course, naive. Yet, to paraphrase Muhammad Ali's (10) apocryphal draft dodging line: 'No Russian ever called me nigger.'

Having grown up during the Cold War, the son of parents who toiled under the British colonial yoke, at the very least I speak for a generation that believed that the only bulwark against American imperialism, or the suppression of black sovereignty, or European neo-colonialism, or support for British and South African apartheid was the existence of a nation with the balls to stand up to Western decadence. But life has moved on. It's time Russia showed more heart and less balls, and at the very least called a ceasefire. Perhaps it'll end up being nothing more than a token gesture, but at least it will be one the diaspora can support.

Notes

- (1) <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/23/africa/boris-johnson-africa-intl/index.html>.
- (2) <https://unherd.com/2022/04/how-the-guardian-enables-owen-jones/>.
- (3) <https://frontline.thehindu.com/dispatches/ukraine-conflict-african-students-face-missiles-and-racism/article65396180.ece>.
- (4) <https://www.indy100.com/politics/trevor-noah-ukraine-refugees>.
- (5) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pU-8gKaUO_Y.
- (6) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/charlie-dagata-cbs-apology-ukraine-iraq-b2024265.html>.
- (7) https://x.com/emad_badi/status/1497998023477051393?lang=en-GB.
- (8) <https://x.com/arwaib/status/1497901710827835398?lang=en>.

criticised as reproducing the racist practice of blackface, where white actors paint their faces black to imitate black people based on racist stereotypes.

- (9) <https://unherd.com/2022/06/the-truth-about-ukraines-nazi-militias/>.
- (10) <https://slate.com/culture/2016/06/did-muhammad-ali-ever-say-no-viet-cong-ever-called-me-nigger.html>.

About the Author

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The Russia–Ukraine War: A View from the Southern Left

Ranabir Samaddar and Biao Xiang

Editorial Note

This conversation between Ranabir Samaddar and Biao Xiang first appeared in the scientific journal *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* in 2023.¹ The journal is published by Routledge and has a clear-cut postcolonial approach.

Introduction

Was the European Left too preoccupied with concerns about ‘Western’ imperialism to anticipate ‘Russian’ expansionism, or to understand changes in the forms of imperialism in the neoliberal era? How should we understand the ‘silence’ of the Global South regarding the war—a silence which has apparently disappointed the West—particularly in relation to sanctions on Russia? Finally, what lessons can the Southern Left draw from the war? To reflect on these questions, Biao Xiang invited Ranabir Samaddar to have a conversation in Halle, Germany, on 15 March 2022. This article is a transcript of that interview. It has been edited, and in parts expanded on, for clarity. A video recording of the conversation is available at: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLh-qNAAKxUdXW9iL8XFq2PZlwom4jhUD9>.

The Historical Unconsciousness of the European Left

Biao Xiang: Ranabir, what’s your observation of the responses from the European Left towards this war? As you know, there are a number of debates going on—and some are saying that the European Left was too preoccupied with US imperialism and NATO expansion to understand Russian imperialism. So there is a worry that this war may discredit some thinking on the Left, and that will give more space to a new conservatism. They say, ‘I told

1 Ranabir Samaddar and Biao Xiang, ‘The Russia-Ukraine War: A View from the Southern Left’, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 24, no. 1 (2023): 174–180.

you so, we Europeans still need America to provide the global order.' So what would your advice to the European Left be?

Ranabir Samaddar: I think this war will lead to a different situation [from before]. The war is not only about redrawing the map of Europe, the borders of Europe. It's a question of deciding how you take Russia forward. It's also a question of deciding what will be the future of NATO or European security. And it's also a question of finally confronting the financial power of the United States. Economic sanctions have become a part of war. You know, there were sanctions on Iran, on Iraq, on many countries. The power and the experiences of imposing all those sanctions have been now assembled at one point to show that this is a part of war. This is producing a kind of new scenario that I do not think that the European Left, or for that matter the Left globally, is prepared for. If you ask me, I take an opposite view [to the idea that the Left has been too preoccupied with Western imperialism]. Rather, we have understood very little of the strength of imperialism in the neoliberal time. Sitting in Europe, sitting in a European country in the heart of Western Europe, to say that the European Left has been deficient is not a pleasant thing to say. But, on the other hand, tell me how many times in the last 10 or 20 years that the European Left has demanded that NATO be completely disbanded? After the Warsaw Pact was disbanded, what was the need for NATO? And if NATO was and is crucial for Western Europe's security, okay, fair enough. But why did NATO intervene in Afghanistan? Why did it intervene in Libya? How would you justify the bombing of Belgrade? And say that Kosovo had a plebiscite and therefore Kosovo has to be immediately given independence?² That's exactly the same thing that Russia is saying, that the Russian-speaking people had their own referendum, and they should therefore be given autonomy and now independence.³ Let me bluntly say the European Left was too engrossed with the idea of the EU—and was oblivious of the fact that corporate interests, military interests were behind the making of the EU. The economic union was incomplete without its financial might and military might. The European Left had been too committed to the idea of the European Union. This brings me back to the old question: Is debate about the nation question over in Europe? And

2 Samaddar's remarks refer to NATO interventions in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2001, in Libya in 2011, and the recognition of the Republic of Kosovo, which previously belonged to Serbia, by most NATO states in 2008.

3 This remark refers to sham referendums, which were held from 23 to 27 September 2022 in the Russian-occupied parts of eastern Ukraine. These were used to justify the annexation of the region on 29 September. On 12 October, the UN General Assembly condemned this as illegal.

did the European Left give enough importance to the way in which NATO was operating? I do think that these are new situations. We thought we were done with the past, but these new situations are bringing the ghosts of the past back into our lives. How many European Left thinkers had really thought about the historical consequences of 1989? And if you read Chinese history, and you know this history much better than I, China today has to grapple with its past. It cannot shut its eyes and say, well, whatever is gone. No, it has to make its own rapprochement, to reconcile with its own past. What [in the past] is good? What is bad? What is to be kept? What is to be changed? I read with interest the Chinese president's speech on the occasion of the party's 100th anniversary celebration. Who am I to say whether what he said was right or wrong—but I am fascinated with the way in which the party leadership tries to grapple with its past.

Biao Xiang: A kind of historical consciousness....

Ranabir Samaddar: Yes. The question is: Where is the historical consciousness of the Western Left with regard to Russia or 1989? So, today, when suddenly this Russian nationalist ruler says that Russia is not dead, and that he's going to invoke pre-1989 Russia, the Western Left finds itself in shock. Why does this Russian nationalist today have to blame Lenin [for 'creating' Ukraine]? And why does he have to say that the Russia of the past has to be brought back? It takes a nationalist ruler to tell NATO and Western Europe to say this far and no further. This is history's irony, that while nobody likes what Putin has done or is doing, why does it take a nationalist to say to Western domination that this cannot go on and begin the clash. I think this whole new question, including the issue of economic sanctions, was never confronted scientifically by the Left. This is why during the Greek crisis, you could see the domination of Greece by the Eurozone, the European Bank, the European Commission, all those things along with the IMF,⁴ they finally silenced whatever was attempted in Greece in terms of restructuring the economy along non-neoliberal lines. It's not the fault of the European Left alone, but of all of us [the entire Left]. I think we have to

4 The International Monetary Fund (IMF), established in 1944 and based in Washington, DC, serves as the United Nations' financial agency. One of its main tasks is to ensure stability in exchange rates. The IMF can grant loans to countries with insufficient currency reserves when they face balance-of-payments problems. However, the conditions attached to these loans have been widely criticised in financially weaker countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. These conditions are seen as a means of enforcing neoliberal economic policies that align with the interests of dominant global economies, such as the US and EU member states.

consider very hard what is new in this situation, and did we do enough to respond to the new situation? Lenin had a famous saying—it's not enough to know what the new features are, like the war, but that we have to 'bend the stick' to our purpose. Bend it. This is what being the Left means. It is not enough to say what is happening. How do you bend it to your cause of peace, to your cause of democracy, to your cause for protecting people's lives, livelihood, welfare, etc.?

Where is the Mass Peace Movement?

Biao Xiang: Can I push a little further? One key mistake of the European Left is the loss of historical consciousness, in a way kind of falling into the trap of the so-called 'the end of history'. As if after 1989, everything was moving towards a happy liberal world. Apart from that, what are the other key mistakes that the European Left have made? I'm thinking, what do we mean by the simplistic dream of European integration? I mean: European integration at the cost of the negation of local interest, or the lack of understanding of the economy, and too much emphasis on the rule of law and human rights? Can you discuss this a little more?

Ranabir Samaddar: You have already anticipated my answer. In his famous book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Piketty⁵ clearly shows that the postwar years actually contributed to the rise of incomes in Western European countries. And these were also the years of the social welfare state, years of rising state expenditure, and decades of 'the rule of law' etc., everything. And the Left [today] is a product of that time. In many ways, they became disconnected with the Left of the pre–Second World War era. There is an interesting book by Perry Anderson,⁶ *Considerations on Western Marxism*. Perry Anderson shows that up until the Second World War, the fulcrum of Marxist thinking, Leftist thinking, was in Eastern (including

5 Thomas Piketty (b. 1971), an economist and a professor of economics at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (École des hautes études en sciences sociales, EHESS), whose research focuses on global wealth inequalities.

6 Perry Anderson (b. 1938) is a historian and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is a leading New Left intellectual whose work focuses on what he calls 'Western Marxism'. In contrast to the former state-socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and other regions of the world, which were based on the ruling ideology of Marxism–Leninism, Anderson describes Western Marxism as characterised by a separation between philosophical reflection and political practice.

Russia) and Central Europe, where political leadership, philosophical thinking, and ideological thinking all went hand in hand. Gramsci⁷ is a kind of figure who stands in the middle, neither to the West, nor to the East. But then the whole drive of philosophical thinking moves to the West. Marxism relapsed into scholarly thinking. The European Left made peace with social welfarism. But today, neoliberalism has changed everything. Even when the Left protested in a big way against the wars in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, they never saw the European interventions in these wars as integral part of that Europe which they loved very much. So it's a kind of self-engrossed mentality. Lenin wrote a fascinating pamphlet called *On the United States of Europe*. He wrote that those who dreamt of European unity, without ensuring that it would be the unity of the European toilers and European working people, were oblivious of the fact that such European unity was bound to be a cartel of the European financiers and magnates of capital. And coming to our time, for example Tony Benn,⁸ the famous British trade union organizer and Labour Party leader, tried to draw up a different manifesto for Europe in the 1980s. He did not agree that the UK should join this European project. The Swedish Labor Movement tried to draw up a different manifesto for the European Union too, but later surrendered to political pressure from the Right and the Center. I don't want to go into details, all I want to say is that the Left has not questioned this Europe enough. Today, we have to rally for dialogue between Ukraine and Russia. It is the duty of Europe not to further militarize the situation, but to bring about some kind of ceasefire settlement, and mobilize European voices, citizens' voices on how to make a rapprochement possible. Where is that effort here? Where is that independent peace campaign by the Left? If you remember, in the wake of the threat of nuclear war in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, doctors, physicists, scientists of the United States and the USSR—they all joined hands. [They said] whatever our states say, we want peace. We will not allow [the war] to happen.

7 Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), a Marxist philosopher, was one of the co-founders of the Italian Communist Party in 1920 and served as its general secretary from 1924. He was persecuted for his political beliefs in fascist Italy and was imprisoned in 1926. Gramsci died shortly after his release in 1937. During his imprisonment, he wrote the influential *Prison Notebooks*, in which he attempts to conceptualise, among other topics, the role of cultural hegemony in legitimising and stabilising the capitalist state.

8 Anthony Benn (1925–2014), a leading figure on the left wing of the Labour Party, a member of parliament from 1950 to 2001, and a minister in the two governments of Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite his important role within the Labour Party, he never became its chairman.

Biao Xiang: Today, reality seems to be going in the opposite direction—almost certainly there will be worldwide re-militarization.

The ‘Silent’ South

Biao Xiang: This war takes place in Europe, but its implications will certainly be global. How has the Global South responded to this war? And how should we understand their responses? Can you tell us how the Indian public responded to the war and, in particular, how the Indian Left responded?

Ranabir Samaddar: Indian newspapers, by and large, draw their stories and reports from Western media. So you do not find much of, let’s say, what is the Chinese response, or the Russian response, or other South Asian countries’ response. The Indian media establishment is so Western oriented that it’s not surprising it reacts that way. The Indian media’s attention has also been self-centric, by which I mean that it has devoted quite an amount of space and time to the implications of the Indian government’s stand when it abstained from voting in the Security Council, as well as in the General Assembly. Media reports and analyses have endlessly discussed the question: Does India stand to lose or does India stand to gain? On the Indian Left’s position, I think that reflects the position, or, let us say, the discomfiture of the Global Left. On one hand, the Indian Left cannot say what Russia is doing is right. On the other hand, the Left also knows that if it simply stops by saying that it is Russian expansionism, then of course it condones what NATO and the West are doing, and the continuous militarization of Eastern Europe. And because India knows that, in the past, America had similar kinds of military alliances in this region like the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, the Left, like the Global Left, is in a state of extreme discomfiture. I have read one political weekly of a major Indian Left party which said: No to NATO, No to Putin. That in a way sums up the stand of the Indian Left. Now, if you ask me how much bite this slogan has, I think, if it had been raised earlier, probably this would have had much more bite. As time progresses, the bite is lost. But at least in my understanding, that is by and large the attitude of the Indian Left. This brings me to a more important question which is: What is the response of the Global South? In a way, and pardon me for saying so, the Left’s response is already antiquated. Given the march of globalization and the change of time, the Left has to reinvent itself. There is no global peace movement led by the Left, as there was, say 50, 60, or 70 years ago, when

E. P. Thompson⁹ and others led campaigns against nuclear weapons and all that. That was a global peace movement. But that is not there today. Also, neoliberalism has done away with that kind of global scenario. But something else that you said is important. And I would say that the silence of the Global South on the Ukraine conflict is a significant fact. Tell me, why do I have to take sides? You know, there was a famous saying by Julius Nyerere¹⁰: 'When the elephants fight, the grasshoppers die; when the elephants make love, the grasshoppers die.' Why do I have to take sides? If a large section of the world says we have nothing to do with this, why should we not welcome it? Not everything in the world has to be globalized. When the West sees there is a quarrel between, say, two countries in sub-Saharan Africa or two countries in Asia, do they take sides? No. They become the referee. So all I'm trying to say is that there is a new meaning in claiming neutrality, in being non-aligned. There is a new meaning in invoking the past of the nonaligned movement. Let's recall the non-aligned movement led by Tito,¹¹ Nasser,¹² Nehru,¹³ and others. The Global South has to refuse to be a party [to the game]. We should not easily say that the war is good or bad. We have to ask, why is Europe taking a moralistic viewpoint? [Through] these sanctions, the West has made the economy part of warfare. Not only that. If Russia is accused of endangering the lives of common Ukrainians, [what about] all these sanctions that impoverish the common Russian, the common Iranian, or the common Iraqi. There was a UNICEF or UN study showing that thousands of children in Iraq had become malnourished, and many children had died because of ill health.

9 Edward Palmer Thompson (1924–1993) was a historian, peace activist, and central figure in the British New Left movement, which was particularly influential in Western Europe and the US in the 1960s and 1970s. The New Left sought to formulate political alternatives to the established social democratic mass parties in Western Europe and to state socialism in Eastern Europe, and expressed a wide range of views within the socialist spectrum.

10 Julius Nyerere (1922–1999) was a prominent activist against British colonial rule. After the country's independence, he served as its first prime minister (1961–1962) and then president of Tanganyika (1962–1964). He was also president of the newly renamed country, Tanzania (1964–1985). He established himself as a socialist political theorist.

11 Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) led the communist Partisan resistance during the Second World War. He subsequently became the leader of socialist Yugoslavia until his death.

12 Gamal Abdel Nasser (Djamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir; 1918–1970) served as prime minister of Egypt (1952–1954). He then became president, a position he held until his death. He was head of state of both Egypt and Syria during the political union of the two countries in the United Arab Republic (1958–1961).

13 Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) was a resistance fighter against British colonial rule in India, which ended in 1947. He then became India's first prime minister, a position he held until his death.

Baby food did not reach them. Iraq and Iran were completely stripped of their assets and couldn't earn anything. So if Russia is accused of waging war, why shouldn't these sanctions be similarly accused of attacking the common people, the civilians? So to think that the Global South does not understand the politics of sanctions is to bring back the old colonial way of thinking, that we know much better than you people. Also, sanctions are extremely discriminatory. Where are the sanctions on Israel for killing so many Palestinians, whether in Gaza or in the West Bank? What about the manufactured charge that Saddam Hussein was developing nuclear and chemical weapons and the subsequent war against Iraq? So the history of responsibility and power is an extremely, extremely discriminatory history. And no section of the world is more aware of that than the South. To think from the angle of the South means to think from the margins, to step outside and then see what is happening, to interrogate what is being given to you as the truth. This is true of any critical knowledge. So I think there is much to understand from the response from the Global South. If the Global South thinks in a 'selfish' way, isn't Western Europe thinking of the South in a 'selfish' way?

World War or Global Wars?

Biao Xiang: Yes, the South as a method for global rethinking. This is also a very hopeful message that you have given us—basically the Global South is adopting a 'weapon of the weak'. They are trying to empty out the global hegemony by refusing to join one side or the other. Now I'm thinking, why has the hegemonic power been successful? It was easy to understand during the Cold War. The two hegemonic superpowers could capture smaller states and make them their vassal states, and the smaller states would depend on them [the superpowers]. But after the Cold War, how has hegemony been successful in capturing the Global South? Put in a different way, how can the Global South develop more capacity to refuse to be part of the global game? How can we empower the refusal strategy?

Ranabir Samaddar: This is a very important question. I would give two tentative answers. First, the world looks more and more like the nineteenth century, when you had different power centers. And you therefore had this whole theory of the balance of power—you had different treaties and alliances, secret treaties, secret alliances, and so on. The great power game of the nineteenth century operated through practicing colonialism—the

Germans, the Austrians, the French, the British, the Dutch, all the great powers were playing against each other. They all conspired against Napoleon. Now we have a parody of Napoleon and Stalin in whatever Putin is doing—so Europe has ganged up against him. Therefore, in the multipolar kind of scenario, you cannot actually say that ganging up will not happen. America is trying to bypass what you call ‘old Europe’ to gain control over new Europe, which is Eastern Europe. The British have gone out of Western Europe, and now they’re either completely following the American tune, or, at the same time, they are also trying to build a new bridge with Eastern Europe. And Western Europe now understands that it has to strike its own path. It has to emerge as an autonomous power—it cannot do that, unless it is a military power. So ganging up will happen. So, I would rather say that instead of looking at it from the angle of hegemony, which is an important theory, we must look at the new reality. I think what is much more important is that we take note of the centrality of the role of the financial power of the West. That’s one answer. The second is that you could not have had the non-aligned movement without the presence of socialist China and the Soviet Union. Today, where is that inspiring presence? First of all, China doesn’t follow that theory anymore. I don’t think that China has any policy or any politics of organizing or facilitating a separate voice for the South. I don’t think China looks at it in that way. Also, China’s politics is a kind of mercantilist policy. It thinks only of trade and economy—the Belt and Road Initiative, etc.—as if politics is determined by that. But politics is determined only half by that, the rest is not. Even the economic game is not completely managed by mercantile rules and by trade and logistics alone. China has no ambition of turning BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa] into a political bloc. China never claimed that it’s a political bloc. And Russia, in any case, is still struggling to cope with the consequences of [the period from] 1989 to 1992. And even though it has some stability of leadership today through Putin, and it has improved quite a lot after the massive de-industrialization and great loot of Russia during Yeltsin’s¹⁴ time, the [post-1989] disaster was so great that it will take another 20 or 30 years [to stabilize]. Also, we have to understand that Russia cannot reenact the Chinese way of development: You can’t make Russia the factory of the world anymore. The world has changed. China did it at a time when this strategy was successful. But it will not be similarly successful anywhere and at any time. It was a specific historical moment and came against the backdrop of a specific national

14 Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin (1931–2007) served as the president of Russia from 1991 to 1999.

and global history. Inasmuch as the East and the West are being remade in the neoliberal time, the South is also being remade. The Global South will also have to be reimagined or reconfigured. But interestingly—I know this is a provocative remark—it is war that will remake the South, not so much economy. War will continuously force the South to face some of the questions that it wants to avoid. Whatever you call Nehru or Zhou Enlai¹⁵ or Tito or Nasser, they all came out of the Second World War. They were all sons and daughters of decolonization and they were all sons and daughters of long liberation fights against colonialism. That is gone. So today, in the remaking of national economies, how will interests coalesce? How will that united front emerge? Is this agenda not as crucial as the things we are discussing now? In that sense, I do think that the Global South, by refusing to play the game of the North, is actually giving a message about how to respond to the war. You see, the idea of a world war is a very Western concept. Do we call the European war of Napoleon's time a world war? No. The First World War is called a world war. But it happened only in Europe. It didn't happen elsewhere. Colonies remained colonies. You may say that we call it World War One because it changed the world order, [as] the League of Nations came after the war. But then the Napoleonic Wars also changed the nineteenth century through the Congress of Vienna, the Holy Alliance, etc. The Second World War was, in some ways, a greater war. But the Second World War was many wars. At the time when the Second World War was taking place, Indian freedom fighters were saying 'no' to British rule—we had our 1942 Quit-India Movement. Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam wanted to strike out a different path too: We know that he had to fight the Japanese, but equally the French. Africans had nothing to do [they had no stakes in taking sides], because the British were as colonial as the Germans or the Italians. So the idea of a world war is a very Western way of looking at things. Actually, we shall have [the concept of] 'global war', which means there will be mini-wars, many mini-wars taking place. The end to the legacy of World War does not mean saying, then let us have a general, noble peace for humanity for 1,000 years. But it means very precisely dissolving this monolithic concept of war and shifting our understanding to the 1,000 wars that are happening. So, if you can localize war, you are able to prevent world war. Neoliberalism has done away with the earlier monolithic ideas. The new thinking must accept this reality, must encourage us to frame our responses to the situation in a new way.

15 Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) was the first prime minister of the People's Republic of China, serving from 1949 to 1976.

Biao Xiang: This shows clearly that the political must start with the analytical. So, first of all, we have to see the world in a different way, then we can find new space and devise new strategies for interventions to 'bend' the reality in a way that will facilitate our purpose. Thank you very much, Ranabir.

Ranabir Samaddar: Thank you. Your questions were very penetrating.

About the Authors

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Ukraine and the Indian Left: An Interview with Kavita Krishnan

Rohini Hensman

Editorial Note

This interview was published in the biannual journal *New Politics*,¹ which was established in 1986 and sees itself as an independent socialist forum for dialogue and debate.

Kavita Krishnan, a Marxist feminist who had been for three decades a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation,² a member of the Politbureau, leader of its women's wing (the All-India Progressive Women's Association), and a prominent spokesperson of the party, suddenly quit these posts and the party itself in early September 2022. Many admirers were unclear about what had happened and why, although from her subsequent statements and articles it became clear that the reason was a disagreement with the party's position on the war in Ukraine.

On April 10, 2023, she was interviewed by Rohini Hensman on her departure from the party and her differences with it.

Rohini Hensman: As the spokesperson of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation and of its women's wing AIPWA,³ you had the privilege of being widely reported when you took positions that were shared by many socialists and feminists. Can you explain what made you resign from this position?

1 Rohini Hensman: 'Ukraine and the Indian Left: An Interview with Kavita Krishnan', *New Politics* 19, no. 3 (2023), https://newpol.org/issue_post/ukraine-and-the-indian-left/.

2 The Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation (CPI[ML]L) was formed in 1974 after a group that rejected the Leninist concept of revolution and parliamentary democracy split from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM). After abandoning its opposition to parliamentary elections in the 1980s, the party has contested Indian parliamentary elections since 1996. The party is currently represented in the parliaments of several Indian states, but not in the Lok Sabha, India's lower house of parliament.

3 The All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) is the women's organisation within the CPI(ML)L.

Kavita Krishnan: The differences with the CPIML, to which I had belonged for three decades, came to the fore following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. I did not actually intend to resign from leadership positions in the party or AIPWA. To begin with, I had been sure that there was room in the party to openly debate the approach to the Ukraine war, and to acknowledge and analyze the growing convergence between anti-democratic political projects as articulated by Putin, Trump, Xi Jinping, Modi, and many others. It became clear that my confidence was misplaced when the party told me I couldn't remain a party leader if I wrote anything expressing my views on this subject, whether in the party magazine or outside it. I had assumed that I could remain a party member—and did not in fact realize I had lost my membership until two days after the fact.

The party leadership's position was that the invasion of Ukraine was a remote event, requiring nothing but a token statement condemning Russia's invasion and stating solidarity with Ukraine—while emphasizing the alleged United States and NATO role in creating the conflict and then perpetuating it.

They also said the left cannot 'identify with' Ukraine and advocate for its victory as we did with Vietnam (or even Afghanistan or Iraq). The reason? The latter were resisting the US, which is the foremost imperialist power. We could not advocate for an outright defeat for Russia at the hands of Ukraine, because such a defeat would weaken Russia as a 'multipolar' power challenging US hegemony.

Their position was that 'regardless of the internal character' of the governments of Russia and China, the left must welcome them as powers that enable a 'multipolar world' (1). Any wider discussion of this question, they felt, was a distraction from the 'national priority' of resisting Modi's fascist policies in India.

Rohini Hensman: So, what were your arguments for why the left should support Ukraine in the ongoing war, including supporting their request for arms?

Kavita Krishnan: I had argued that we should support any resistance to injustice, regardless of what relationship that state had to the US, and that our solidarity should be for the survival and victory of struggling people resisting injustice—not for the survival of despotic states whose only merit is that they are not the US. I was very distressed that instead of countering Putinist disinformation that flooded the public sphere in India, the party was rehabilitating such propaganda even in its own publications.

For instance, an editorial in our weekly publication said that in annexing Crimea in 2014, Putin was ‘retaliating’ for the ‘toppling of the elected Yanukovych⁴ regime’ by the US (2). This was published, overriding my strenuous efforts to present facts on the Maidan Revolution. I was eventually allowed to write a single signed article on Ukraine in our party magazine (3)—but it was made clear that this opportunity would not happen again.

Rohini Hensman: Internationalism is a key tenet of revolutionary socialism. How do you respond to Indian left parties terming the question of Ukraine an ‘international’ one, and therefore not a priority for the left in India?

Kavita Krishnan: My central argument with my party was in fact that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was not a remote issue—its outcomes would have profound consequences for India and the world, indeed, for the survival of the planet. Events since have only affirmed the validity of my concerns.

Let me explain. We know that Narendra Modi’s rise was paralleled by the rise of businessman Gautam Adani, and that any analysis of Modi’s politics is inseparable from an analysis of his crony capitalists, foremost among them being Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani.⁵

The Hindenburg report has revealed that Adani’s business empire stands on a foundation of brazen fraud. The Adani empire had transactions with VTB,⁶ the Russian state-owned bank popularly called ‘Putin’s piggybank’ (4). A member of parliament from the Congress Party, Jairam Ramesh, drew attention to VTB’s role in a deal reportedly supervised personally by Putin and Modi, where four Indian public sector units paid an inflated price for a 49.9% stake in a subsidiary of Russian energy giant Rosneft, which bought up a Gujarat-based oil refinery from Essar for at least twice as much as it was worth. He commented on ‘a suspicious pattern in which public sector units overpay a Russian firm for an oil asset, which, in turn, overpays a politically connected private Indian firm for another energy asset’ (5).

4 Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovych (b. 1950) was the pro-Russian Party of Regions’ president of Ukraine (2010–2014). Following months of mass protests against his leadership, known as the Euromaidan movement, he fled to Russia in February 2014 and was subsequently declared deposed by the Ukrainian parliament. These events are described as the Revolution of Dignity in contemporary Ukraine, while pro-Putin circles characterise them as a coup d’état.

5 Mukesh Ambani (b. 1957) is an Indian entrepreneur and chairman of Reliance Industries, a conglomerate that focuses on the petrochemical and textile industries. Gautam Adani (b. 1962) is an Indian entrepreneur and chairman of the Adani Group, one of India’s largest logistics companies, operating ports and airports; it is also India’s largest coal producer and trader.

6 VTB (an abbreviation of Vneshtorgbank) is Russia’s second-largest credit institution and is majority state-owned.

Former US President Donald Trump and his associates have also been investigated for conflicts of interest arising from their dealings involving VTB and another Russian bank Sberbank, associated with Russian oligarchs (6). A Chinese businessman is closely involved in the dubious transactions of members of the Adani family and business empire, and implicated in Adani's coal procurement scams as well as allegations of Adani's violation of UN sanctions to sell petroleum products to North Korea (7). There is another company, Elara Capital, with links to Mauritius and London, including Jo Johnson, a British MP and brother of former PM Boris Johnson, who is a co-owner of an Adani defense firm (8).

In India, opposition parties have predictably framed their questions about Modi crony Adani's transactions involving individuals and state-owned entities in Russia, China, and North Korea in terms of the implications for India's national security, as well as for public sector assets including banks, which in turn affect the savings of ordinary Indians. At the time of this interview, Indian left parties have conspicuously avoided any acknowledgement of Russian, Chinese, or North Korean linkages with the Adani scam, only mentioning Elara Capital, linked with London and Mauritius and the UK's Conservative Party (9).

Another close crony of Modi's is the tycoon, Mukesh Ambani. Since the invasion and the sanctions imposed by the United States and its European allies on Russia, India has become one of the biggest buyers of Russian oil (10). Who in India is actually profiting from these transactions? According to a report, 'Nearly three-quarters of cheap Russian oil is bought by private refiners, [Mukesh Ambani's] Reliance Industries and Russia-controlled Nayara Energy' (11). Essentially, these companies make millions laundering Russian crude which they then sell to the United States and European countries that imposed the sanctions in the first place (12).

Fossil-fuel oligarchs are at the heart of authoritarianisms worldwide, and these in turn are the reason the earth is hurtling to destruction. Modi's power rests on his two cronies Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani: both fossil-fuel oligarchs, one profiting from the invasion of Ukraine and the other with deep links to dubious Russian and Chinese financial entities (13). Russia is a fossil-fuel oligarchy, with Putin the biggest oligarch of them all. Authoritarian rulers, politicians, business tycoons, and oligarchs—including those in the US, Russia, Europe, Saudi Arabia, China, and India—are part of a global financial and political web with fossil fuels at its center. There is growing evidence of cooperation among far-right and authoritarian forces as part of a shared political project to discredit and dismantle the very concept of some minimum democratic values and standards that are universally accepted in principle (14).

The foremost ideologue of this project is Russian fascist Aleksandr Dugin⁷ (15). It is startling to find that Dugin as well as American and European far-right figures invoke the same moral panic over ‘Kaliyuga’ (the overturning of caste/gender hierarchies and the resulting miscegenation—mixture of castes—of which unnatural and monstrous beings are born) that has a prominent place in Hindu-supremacist ideology (16). Dugin has global connections, including to Chinese state universities and think tanks, American far-right politics, a liberal Indian journal, as well as Hindu supremacists.

How does the Indian left explain the rise of the global far right and its relationship with the rise of Modi? They say that ‘global capitalism is mired in deep crisis and uncertainty and it is seeking a way out of this crisis through war and fascist consolidation and thorough undermining of bourgeois democracy’ (17); that ‘the current phase of fascism has emerged in a context of global neoliberalism’ (18); that Adani and Ambani are ‘homegrown billionaire capitalists ... deeply integrated with imperialism’ and an expression of crony capitalism ‘which Vladimir Ilyich Lenin had defined as the economic essence of the imperialist stage of capitalism’ (19).

Are these timeless generalities adequate to describe, let alone explain, the political economy of the rise of global authoritarian and far-right politics and its relationship with the political economy of Hindu supremacist politics in India? I find it incredible that the CPIML and other Indian left parties should speak of the ‘national priority’ of fighting fascism in India, while shutting their eyes and stopping their ears to any specific, concrete evidence that sheds light on the political economy of fascism in India, for fear that it might challenge formulas from a century ago that they hold dear.

Rohini Hensman: You do not, then, agree with those who say that this is a proxy war started by the United States and NATO using Ukraine to rebuild their hegemony, and therefore support for Ukraine is actually support for unipolar US imperialism?

Kavita Krishnan: For me, the invasion of Ukraine was the catalyst that brought long-simmering concerns and questions together with a blinding clarity, and I could suddenly see them as they are, with all their interconnections, shining a light on exactly how our world has changed.

Geopolitics (especially in its Realist avatar of ‘polarity’ that has become common sense on the political Right, Left, and Center) is a distorting lens which prevents us from seeing political changes in the world. It is marked

7 For more on Aleksandr Dugin’s ideological thinking, see the introduction to chapter 3.

by the growing convergence of global and Indian anti-democratic projects (and their leaders and ideologues), projects backed by fossil-fuel oligarchies across countries and continents, that threaten the very survival of our planet. This ought to be our primary concern, rather than to protect an imaginary ‘multipolarity’. Most of the global left, across the range of its diverse streams, is speaking a language of ‘multipolarity’ which is hard to distinguish from that shared by global despots like Putin, Xi, and Modi, and their ideologues like the RSS (the right-wing Hindu supremacist paramilitary organization) and Dugin, and their anti-democratic projects.

The burden of these despotic arguments is that minimum standards and values of democracy, human rights, and civil liberties are the ideology of a tiny but powerful Western elite, which they set up as ‘universal’ and with characteristic imperialist arrogance seek to impose on the majority of people in the Western countries as well as the rest of the world. The majority, they claim, in Western countries as well as the rest of the world are waging a freedom movement to throw off the yoke of values imposed by an elite liberal ‘unipolar’ and unilateral clique—values which defy the god-ordained laws of nature and the natural hierarchical order. Such resistance is punished by the Western elite with ‘cancel culture’, which in the case of ‘civilizational states’ takes the shape of sanctions and finger-wagging on democracy and rights. But, they claim, the world will surely liberate itself from liberal hegemony dictated by unipolar Western power—and establish instead a multipolar world.

Prominent figures on the Indian and international left make arguments that are disturbingly similar.

In the April 2020 issue of the Indian journal *Seminar*, Aleksandr Dugin wrote that “The multipolar world order [is] based on the principle of plurality of civilizations against the false pretensions of so-called “universality” of “Western values” and “inevitability” of the Western way of progress and development.’ He also described Modi’s rise as a multipolar triumph.

China’s President Xi Jinping wrote, “The United States and other Western countries ... package values of freedom, democracy, and human rights as “universal values” and promote them globally to confuse people’ (People’s Daily, September 2, 2021) (20).

In a Joint Russia–China statement issued in Beijing on February 4, 2022, a short while before the invasion of Ukraine, President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin said,

[We] call on the international community to respect cultural and civilizational diversity. Every nation has its own unique national features,

history, culture, social system and level of social and economic development, human rights should be protected in accordance with the specific situation in each country and the needs of its population (21).

S. Jaishankar, BJP⁸ leader and Minister for External Affairs, Government of India, said, 'Each country approaches issues of democracy, governance and human rights from their history, tradition and societal context. We do not believe the efficacy or the quality of democracy should be decided by others' (Washington, September 28, 2022) (22).

Vijay Prashad, a prominent figure on the international left, said in a talk posted on YouTube on September 30, 2022,

Why is the US so threatened by the idea of multi-polarity? It's extraordinary, this kind of messianic sense that US values need to be spread around the world because they are superior to all other values. This idea that other people cannot govern themselves, that the US must generalize its values all over the planet—this arrogance comes from this evangelical belief that US values are better, and everybody must conform to the US system. Multipolarity [is a] threat to this US-dominated 'rules-based order' as they like to call it (23).

The statements above come from persons that identify as 'left' as well as those who identify as 'right'. They all make arguments that are disturbingly similar. They argue that minimum standards and values of democracy, human rights, and civil liberties are just the ideology of a tiny but powerful Western elite, which they set up as 'universal' and with characteristic imperialist arrogance, seek to impose on the majority of people in the Western countries as well as the rest of the world. Rulers should get to define 'democracy' and 'human rights' in keeping with values specific to their country or civilization, rather than answer to a 'rules-based order' where the rules are based on the values of the United States.

In short, despots like Trump in America, Putin in Russia, Xi in China, and Modi in India describe multipolarity as their prerogative to determine and enforce the internal character of their nations and spheres of influence, regardless of any broad 'universal' standards of democracy, rights, and liberties. And the left feels obligated to protect 'multipolar' regimes (a euphemism for regimes seen to be hostile to the US) 'regardless of their internal character' (24).

8 The Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP) is a Hindu nationalist party in India, of which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a member.

Rohini Hensman: What is your response to people on the left who criticize your position as one that has abandoned socialist goals in favor of liberal democracy, such as the ‘universal standards of democracy and human rights’ which you defend?

Kavita Krishnan: The minimum standards of democracy, rights, and entitlements—and the legal obligation of states to comply with those standards—were never gifted by ‘enlightened liberal’ states and their ruling classes. They were wrested from those rulers by courageous people’s movements. Most people are attracted to left movements precisely because they have rightfully earned ethical credibility for their courage in defending justice even when such positions challenge majoritarian prejudices or passions as well as draconian state power, and doing so knowing that it will result in persecution.

The left has a paradoxical relationship with these standards. Socialists have been inseparable from many of these movements in many parts of the world, and have as a result suffered persecution ranging from political witch hunts, criminalization of their very ideas, incarceration and execution for thought crimes, political assassinations, all the way to mass massacres of people for the crime of being socialists.

But states that have ruled in the name of socialism have rejected these standards as counterfeit, serving only to give capitalism a liberal mask. Claiming to be answerable not to these liberal pretensions but to a higher form of socialist democracy, these states proved to be among the most illiberal in modern history, notorious for political witch hunts, criminalization, incarceration, execution, and massacres for thought-crimes or other equally arbitrary pretexts.

Left movements that disavow Stalinism have distanced themselves from the anti-democratic legacy of socialist states, arguing either that such states were never truly socialist or that such crimes were aberrations and mistakes, doubtless unfortunate and indefensible, but which cannot take away from the superior performance of such states on other democratic criteria—such as welfare measures for their citizens, support for colonial and post-colonial countries, or resistance to US imperialism.

I think that both these arguments are disingenuous. Whether or to what degree such states were or are truly socialist is something socialist parties may argue over. But such arguments are something internal to socialist movements, and cannot in any way be the metric for defining or assessing such states.

We must assess and judge socialist states just as we assess and judge any other state. I think it’s time we get rid of the question about which system

or which form of state affords a better life and thus a better democracy to people. It's time to stop arguing about which form of state is more democratic. States are not where we should look for democracy. No form of state or government or economy is equivalent to democracy.

Democracy is not a form of state, fixed in form: it is a fluid process in which people argue, disagree, work together, to identify and fight for ever better democratic goals. So, the yardstick I favor to judge a country or society is: how free are people to fight for greater democracy? How free are people to set democratic goals for their society (disagreeing and arguing and making compromises and decisions in a messy and disorderly process) and fight for those goals?

A state that calls itself 'socialist' may 'provide' food, clothing, shelter but suppress and criminalize the right to organize, protest, dissent; it may disallow an independent press, judiciary, and opposition. Citizens in a capitalist state that calls itself a 'liberal democracy' may be unable to actually avail themselves of the rights recognized by their constitution—the right to vote, stand for elections, organize, and have their voice be heard in the free press—because they are disenfranchised and dispossessed by structural inequality, poverty, oppression, and hunger.

Both states may have policies of mass incarceration and surveillance that are overtly or covertly racial.

Trying to measure which form of state is more democratic is pointless because the premise of such an exercise is false: it implies that we are willing to be satisfied with the state's own standards, and aim to defend that state or form of state. People who do not have to worry every day about food, clothing, or shelter ought to be more free to organize, protest, question the state; in fact, to be the opposition without which no country can call itself a democracy. People's struggles have forced capitalist states to formally recognize bare minimum standards of democracy, rights, and liberties; and this formal recognition is all that 'liberal democracy' is. The thing is, people's struggles count those formal recognitions (universal adult suffrage, desegregation, the eight-hour day, the right to unionize, protections from racial and caste-based dehumanization, for instance) as wins—because these give them stronger grounds to demand that the state be accountable to those standards.

China joins Russia in discrediting those bare minimum standards and refusing to acknowledge these as 'universal standards'. A report by a think tank associated with the Chinese state, titled 'Pursuing Common Values of Humanity—China's Approach to Democracy, Freedom and Human Rights,' says that 'the Western notion of democracy characterized by competitive

elections between multiple parties and the separation of three powers—executive, legislative, and judicial’ results in ‘social disorder, political turmoil and repeated setbacks in economic and social development’ (25). China, the report states, favors a model where democracy is defined as ‘good governance’—i.e., ‘where government, in the process of decision-making, should always keep in mind the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people, solicit and listen to the opinions of the people, serve the people’. In China, the report states, ‘happiness is the ultimate standard of human rights’. The report reproduced the Eight ‘Whether or Not’ Criteria on Democracy listed by Xi Jinping: the rights to dissent, protest, organize, and challenge the government are absent from these criteria.

Some on the left like to describe the USSR—and China—as ‘state capitalist’ and not socialist. The party to which I had belonged recently summed up its critical assessment of China with this comment: ‘the Chinese claim of building socialism with Chinese characteristics is increasingly becoming a euphemism for what should be described as capitalism with Chinese characteristics’ (26). These timid formulations seem to imagine they are daring ones. And they are just as absurd as claims that attack the concept of ‘healthcare for all’ as a harbinger of totalitarian rule.

The truth is that China is ‘capitalism with totalitarian characteristics’. Basic democratic standards in capitalist democracies have been won by ‘political turmoil’ and ‘social disorder’—that is, by people’s struggles. And it is these turbulent and disorderly struggles that continue to defend these hard-won democratic standards, rights, practices, and institutions that far-right and authoritarian forces are intent on demolishing. China’s outright rejection of these standards does not just disqualify it as a ‘socialist state’, it disqualifies it as a democracy, and qualifies it to be termed a totalitarian tyranny.

Rohini Hensman: Would you like to say anything about how you see your future, now that you are no longer in CPI (ML) Liberation?

Kavita Krishnan: I am not certain of how I see my future. But I do see my present with great clarity. Ideologically and politically, I am, as always, committed to struggles for a more just and democratic world. And I believe that anyone who shares this commitment, must with the greatest urgency defend universal standards and values of democracy. Not because these standards and values represent the highest human aspirations—but because they are the minimum democratic qualifications. The acknowledgment of these minimum standards and values as ‘universal’ has been wrested from

the powerful by the struggles of the powerless all over the world. It has not been imposed by a coterie of 'Western elites'. There is no ceiling or cap on democracy—and if we reach for the sky, we must at the same time defend the democratic ground under our feet—ground that we won—from those that are rapidly eroding it.

Notes

- (1) Dipankar Bhattacharya, 'On the Current Juncture in India and the International Context,' *Liberation*, Sept. 27, 2022.
- (2) 'Stop Russia's War on Ukraine! End US–NATO Expansionism!' *ML Update*, vol. 25, no. 10 (1–7 Mar. 2022).
- (3) Kavita Krishnan, 'Ukraine: Aspects of the History and Politics of Russia's Invasion,' *Liberation*, Mar. 22, 2022.
- (4) 'Congress Asks 3 Questions on Adani Group's Links with Global Kleptocratic Network,' *Moneylife*, Feb. 22, 2023; Open Secrets, 'VTB Capital: The Russian Bank That Took Mozambique for a Ride,' *Daily Maverick*, May 19, 2021.
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The Politics of Imperial Gratitude

Hilary Lynd

Editorial Note

This article was published on the internet platform *Africa Is A Country* on 14 March 2022.¹ According to its self-description, '*Africa Is a Country* is a site of opinion, analysis, and new writing on and from the African left.'

The night before he commanded Russian troops to invade Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin gave a speech that faulted Ukrainians for failing to express gratitude and fraternal loyalty to Russia. Bombing Ukrainian cities and targeting Ukrainian civilians is hardly a sound way to evoke thanks or brotherhood, but Putin aims to make the cost very high indeed for spurning Russia's ostensible friendship. As they respond to the invasion, African countries have had to weigh Russia's value as a potential friend. Their responses have varied, from Kenya's condemnation of Russia's actions to Eritrea's support for them. South Africa has taken a stance that avoids antagonizing Russia, refusing to name or condemn the invasion while calling for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine.

Putin is not seeking to resurrect the Soviet Union, but to undo what he considers a foundational Soviet mistake: granting a limited degree of self-determination to Ukraine. In attacking Ukrainian sovereignty, Putin expects support from Russia's allies, including countries like South Africa that are part of BRICS (an association of major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). The Russian government's ability to exert pressure has important economic and geopolitical dimensions, but the vocabulary used to solicit support is saturated with history and emotion. Russian generosity in the past, so the story goes, demands South African gratitude and cooperation in the present.

By now, you know the basics: in 2014, Russia annexed Crimea—part of independent Ukraine—and began backing separatist paramilitaries in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region. In a televised speech on February 21st of this year, Putin interpreted Ukrainian history as a series of lies and betrayals that weakened and manipulated Russia. On February 24th, Russia launched airstrikes in Kyiv as it initiated a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Putin seems

1 <https://africasacountry.com/2022/03/the-politics-of-imperial-gratitude>.

to have radically overestimated popular Ukrainian desires for the kind of 'liberation' on offer from Russia; the tenacity of Ukrainian resistance has stunned the world.

On February 22nd, on the cusp of renewed crisis, South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor called for peaceful dialogue and moving 'the process forward without accusing any party'. The department's updated statement on February 24th, which called for a withdrawal of Russian troops, nevertheless refused to identify Russian aggression, instead using the carefully actor-free phrase 'escalation of conflict'. 'We call on all parties', it read, 'to resume diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the concerns raised by Russia'. Even that mild statement from Pandor's ministry has raised the ire of President Cyril Ramaphosa and the African National Congress (ANC), who reportedly see it as too strongly condemning the attack on Ukraine. On March 10th, Ramaphosa called Putin and then thanked him on Twitter for providing 'an understanding of the situation that was unfolding between Russia and Ukraine'. Putin, according to Ramaphosa, expressed appreciation for South Africa's 'balanced approach'. Lindiwe Zulu—an alumna of the Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow and currently the chair of the ANC's Subcommittee on International Relations—cited the 'relationship we have always had' as a reason why 'we are not about to denounce' South Africa's friends in the Russian government. The ANC continues to endorse dialogue while a war rages. South Africa is to toe the Russian line.

But the past is more complicated than official Russian and South African statements suggest.

Here's a look at what they don't say.

The Soviet Union's support for the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) in exile is well known. The first black South African to visit the Soviet Union requesting assistance in fighting apartheid was Pandor's father, Joe Mathews. Reports in Russian archives document his numerous conversations with Soviet officials in the early 1960s. As Matthews later put it: 'We looked at historical analogies and became convinced that you had to have some power or other backing you, otherwise you wouldn't be able to launch a sustainable armed struggle.' Between the early 1960s and the late 1980s, the Soviet Union assisted the anti-apartheid struggle with money, arms, military training, education, weapons, diplomatic support, food, books, medical care, international transport, and more.

Today, it suits both the South African and Russian governments—now economic partners in BRICS—to view Soviet support for the ANC and SACP as basically Russian. Yet the Soviet Union was bigger than Russia. In fact,

by the late Soviet period, only about half of its population was ethnically Russian. Non-Russian parts of the Soviet Union played important roles in the anti-apartheid struggle as well. Ukraine, especially so.

Ukraine was one of two Soviet republics to have its own representation at the UN (the other was Belarus). While the Permanent Mission of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) by no means had foreign policy independence, Ukraine prominently advocated for measures against the apartheid government. In 1962, with a powerful declaration of support from the Ukrainian SSR, the UN General Assembly recommended stringent diplomatic, economic, and military sanctions against the South African government. Year after year, the Soviet Union supported draft resolutions recommending sanctions, and year after year, Western powers vetoed those resolutions. In 1985, the Ukrainian mission to the UN endorsed comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, stating that 'South Africa's disregard of United Nations decisions, its illegal occupation of Namibia, its ceaseless acts of aggression, its State terrorism and threats against independent African states, the continual build-up of its military capacity and its plans to produce nuclear weapons constitute a direct threat to international peace and security.' If you have heard similar language recently, it's almost certainly been used to describe Russia's actions.

While ANC and SACP leaders went for specialized political training in Moscow, many outside the leadership studied in Ukraine. Beginning in the early 1960s, several thousand African students came to the Soviet Union annually. Over 30 percent of them studied in Ukrainian institutions. The first cohort of ANC students to pursue university degrees in the Soviet Union began their studies in Kyiv in 1962, and several remained in Ukraine for four more years. On his way to a degree in national economic planning, for example, Sindiso Mfenyana (future secretary to parliament) performed choral harmonies to adoring Soviet audiences, took a boat cruise down the Dnipro River to the Black Sea, and organized informal discussions with students from other national liberation movements. Living in Kyiv, students took note of Ukrainian complaints about Moscow's policies and attitudes. Mfenyana remembered that 'Ukrainian students in class were quite vociferous about the Ukraine being the breadbasket of the Soviet Union and yet the best of their produce was hardly visible in their shops, but was in abundance in the state capital, Moscow.' Political activist and scholar Fanele Mbali was also in the first ANC group, studying national statistics in Kyiv. Mbali observed that though Ukraine 'came second only to the Russian Republic', 'relations between the Ukraine and Russia were somewhat strained' due to the proud nationalism of Ukrainian leaders

and their sense that Ukraine was feeding the whole Soviet Union without benefiting Ukrainians.

It wasn't only students who went to Ukraine. Of the ordinary soldiers in uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK, the ANC's armed wing) who trained in the Soviet Union, most went to Ukraine. Between 1963 and 1965, according to historian Vladimir Shubin, 328 recruits received military training near Odesa, on the Black Sea coast in Ukraine. In the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union opened a training center for guerrilla fighters in Perevalne, in the Crimean peninsula. In 1969, after Tanzania expelled MK, the Soviet Union relocated most of the force to Crimea. Many MK veterans fondly remember the local women who cooked and cleaned for them, treating the young soldiers with hospitality and affection. Military trainees were significantly more removed from local society than their student counterparts, and they usually did not learn much Russian. Many made no distinction between Ukrainians and Russians, who were all Soviet white people speaking similarly unfamiliar Slavic languages.

The same Ukrainian nationalists who had made an impression on Mfenyana and Mbali also complained about how Ukrainian contributions to African training and education were undervalued or erased. Instead, Russians absorbed all the status and gratitude associated with Soviet aid. Ivan Dziuba, author of the dissident Ukrainian text *Internationalism or Russification?*, captured this frustration, lamenting that Ukrainians had not 'received a single word of thanks from those Asian and African peoples'. As historian Thom Loyd has demonstrated, multiple imperial hierarchies overlapped in Soviet Ukraine. Ukrainian nationalists resented Russian arrogance and rejected the notion that Russians were developmentally superior or naturally fated to rule. At the same time, Ukrainian nationalists saw themselves as advanced, European, and worthy of African gratitude.

The premise of Soviet generosity was laced with harmful racial stereotypes. Official and unofficial Soviet culture considered Africans to be backward and poor. In the romantic politics of the early 1960s, Soviet perceptions of Africans as backward encouraged a socialist version of a civilizing mission, in which a benevolent Soviet mentor provided guidance and resources to needy African pupils. Amid the disillusionment of the 1980s, perceptions of backward Africans instead fueled a new kind of prejudice that saw poverty and violence as inherent features of African society that no amount of Soviet education or aid could displace. Popular racism, always present in Russia, Ukraine, and other parts of the Soviet Union, got much, much worse amid the political reforms and economic collapse of the late 1980s.

When Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev [in office 1985–1991] spoke of a ‘common European home’ from 1987 onwards, it was implicitly understood that the Soviet Union was shedding its commitments to the Global South as it turned to embrace the West. Ukrainians voted for independence in December 1991, and the Soviet Union dissolved quickly thereafter. In the Soviet Union’s last years, when popular revolt against apartheid intensified and the South African government instituted multiple states of emergency, Soviet foreign policy did an about-face. Rejecting their previous support for armed struggle, Soviet officials advocated dialogue and negotiated settlement. More radically still, the Soviet Foreign Ministry began to question and dismantle its opposition to the National Party government. Between 1988 and 1991, the intelligence services of the Soviet and apartheid governments developed a cozy relationship. In 1990, the Soviet Union began enthusiastically pursuing sanctions-busting trade deals facilitated by the apartheid government and arms dealer middlemen. In February 1992, after the Soviet Union had finally disintegrated, South Africa established diplomatic relations with post-Soviet Russia. All of these actions infuriated the ANC, which had counted on continued Soviet support.

On February 28th, as attacks on Kyiv intensified, the Russian embassy in South Africa celebrated the 30-year anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. A statement released by the embassy celebrated a long, unbroken history of Russian support for the ANC, from exile to government. The statement carefully omits the period in the early 1990s when Russian governments preferred the National Party to the ANC, as well as the late 1990s when the ANC regarded post-Soviet Russia as a powerless has-been in global politics. It was economic ties, in particular mining interests, that drove the ANC to rediscover Russia. After nearly a decade of delays and cancellations, Nelson Mandela² visited Moscow in 1999. ‘We received enormous assistance from the Soviet Union, the assistance we could not get from the West’, said Mandela. ‘Russia should have been the very first country that I visited, and I have come to pay that debt now.’ Credit for supporting the exiled ANC accrued to Russia alone among the Soviet successor states.

Russian officials counted on the gratitude of South Africans who had lived, trained, and studied in the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, they were

2 Nelson Mandela (1918–2013) was a prominent member of the ANC and a central figure in the struggle against apartheid. He served as president of South Africa (1994–1999). In 1993, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his contribution to the peaceful dismantling of the apartheid regime.

often disappointed. In one instance, Russian arms manufacturers expected the ANC government to purchase Russian fighter jets instead of British or Swedish, a deal which did not materialize. It was only later that Putin's government began in earnest to cultivate a myth of solidarity among ANC alumni, deliberately obfuscating the enormous ruptures between the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. Independent Ukraine has had an even more fraught relationship to the Soviet past, and—according to Liubov Abravítova, Ukraine's ambassador to South Africa—never prioritized building connections with African alumni.

Loyalty to Russia in the ANC—and in the South African government—revived after South Africa's accession to BRICS in 2010. While its track record is mixed, the idea of a bloc of regional powers standing up to the Western-dominated unipolar world order has had durable appeal. Recent years have seen increased Russian efforts to cultivate relationships on the African continent, including at the first Russia–Africa Summit on the Black Sea in 2019. In 2014, when the UN General Assembly voted on a resolution protecting Ukraine's territorial integrity, South Africa joined 27 other African countries in either abstaining or voting no. On March 2nd of this year, in light of the recent invasion, the General Assembly again tabled a resolution on Russia's actions in Ukraine. This time, 28 African countries voted in favor and 17 abstained or voted no. South Africa was among the abstentions.

In the past few weeks, Russian information and disinformation services have hammered on the narrative that Russia is Africa's loyal friend while Ukraine is full of racists and Nazis. Many of the 16,000 African students who were in Ukraine at the beginning of the conflict have tried to flee to neighboring countries. In transit and at the borders, they have faced serious racial and national discrimination, being—sometimes literally—shoved aside to prioritize Ukrainian refugees. Russia Today, the Russian government's English language news service, has gleefully reported on racism at the Ukrainian border. Such discriminatory practices have given succor to those who wish to diminish Ukrainian suffering, reinforcing rather than rejecting the Western press's habit of downplaying the suffering of other dehumanized populations.

Throughout the Cold War, apartheid propaganda—with help from sympathizers in the West—portrayed the ANC and SACP as the Soviet Union's playthings, puppets, and proxies, with no legitimate independent existence. The ANC and SACP demanded recognition for themselves as legitimate political actors and for South Africa as more than just another theater of the global Cold War, rebutting their opponents' treatment of

them as nothing more than a front for Moscow's superpower ambitions. But recent statements from the ANC and SACP regard Ukraine's democratically elected government in exactly the same way, only here Ukraine is a front for US-led NATO imperialism. Asked to clarify if the ANC sees Russia as an aggressor, Lindiwe Zulu named NATO as the responsible party for making Russia feel threatened. 'The aggressor is US imperialism', argued SACP Deputy Secretary General Solly Mapaila. 'Russia has to defend itself.' And Ukraine? Ukraine's existence—and the political desires and interests of Ukrainians—are simply irrelevant to a vision of politics that consists only of bad American imperialists and those who fight back. The suggestion is that imperialism is only imperialism if Americans do it.

To be sure, some justifications for solidarity with Ukraine are flawed. Why should South Africans defend an idea of the West that has defined itself by excluding and subordinating people of color? Why defend an idea of democracy that has offered cover for a series of imperialist military adventures by the United States? One need not endorse these ideas—or all parts of the Ukrainian nationalist project—to express solidarity with human beings who are being shelled in an unprovoked attack. Likewise, there are good reasons to be critical of NATO expansion, and we should evaluate carefully the West's role in escalating tensions. But Russia's government bears responsibility for the huge moral leap to initiating this war—a war that may be impossible to win.

In the face of war, ANC leaders appear enthralled by the idea of repaying a historical debt. In addition to fudging a history that is more complicated than meets the eye, this stance plays into a neo-imperial way of thinking. Though Putin's Russia differs from the Soviet Union in most important respects, one continuity is a powerful narrative of innocence abroad and an expectation that Soviet (then Russian) benevolence would generate gratitude and loyalty among those in need. Gratitude—or the expectation of it—stabilized an imperial hierarchy: Russian givers claimed superiority over and obedience from non-Russian recipients. Wrote the anthropologist Bruce Grant, 'While the gift of empire may ultimately be unilateral, it sets in motion a remarkably effective means of establishing sovereignty over others, hinging on a language of reciprocity that requires little or no actual reception among the conquered.' From the 1990s to the present, one consistent Russian imperial lament is that non-Russians within the former Soviet sphere and in the world at large are insufficiently grateful for all of Russia's generosity.

Ukrainians have rejected Putin's claim to their allegiance. South Africa's leaders, with much less at stake, have not.

About the Author

Hilary Lind holds a PhD in history from the University of California, Berkeley. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research focuses on ideas of race and blackness in the Soviet Union, and regimes of ethnic and racial difference in the Soviet Union and South Africa.

The Decolonisation and Provincialisation of Europe: Should We Go Beyond ‘Topographical Decolonisation’?

Dekolonizatsiia i provintsiializatsiia Evropy: chy varto vykhodyty poza ‘topohrafichnu dekolonizatsiiu’?

Tamara Hundorova

Editorial Note

This article was published in the Ukrainian cultural magazine *Krytyka* in 2024.³ The aim of the journal is, according to its mission statement, ‘to provide in-depth analysis and substantial historical, political, and cultural context for the current situation in Ukraine’, seeking ‘to participate in the global debate around key issues concerning the world today, while also articulating Ukrainian emphases and perspectives’. Founded in 1997 by George Grabowicz, Professor of Ukrainian Literature at Harvard University, it is based on the model of *The New York Review of Books* and *The Times Literary Supplement*.

The notion of decolonisation, actualised by the war in Ukraine, not only truthfully describes what is happening on the eastern margins of Europe but also expands its meaning by adding a post-socialist context.

The Russian–Ukrainian war put an end to the phantom community that had been called the post-Soviet space. Although this name formally referred to all former Soviet republics, it was most often used to describe the territory of the three countries that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union: Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. At the same time, the term ‘post-Soviet’ symbolically supported the continuation of the narrative of the ‘common cradle’ and ‘three fraternal peoples’, which was basic to Soviet

3 Tamara Hundorova, ‘Dekolonizatsiia i provintsiializatsiia Evropy: chy varto vykhodyty poza “topohrafichny dekolonizatsiiu”? [The decolonisation and provincialisation of Europe: Should we go beyond “topographical decolonisation”?],’ *Krytyka*, no. 3–4 (2024): 32–35.

ideology. With the beginning of the full-scale invasion, this narrative lost its significance, and its imperial nature became clearly evident. Not only metaphorically, but also in reality, Ukraine's history, culture, and right to independent existence are being taken away from it.

It is not surprising that one of the main concepts after 24 February 2022 was 'decolonisation'. This word, which is still unknown to most Ukrainians, has proved to be the most appropriate for the current geo-cultural and political situation in Ukraine. Decolonisation as such has a long history, and has been discussed since the 1960s. Actualised by the war in Ukraine, this concept not only truthfully describes what is happening on the eastern margins of Europe but also expands its meaning by adding a post-socialist context.

Decolonisation: The Migration of a Concept

Outlining the history of the word 'decolonisation', Raymond Betts⁴ notes that it was first used in 1932, although it acquired its political, ideological, and legal meaning after the Second World War and was associated with the collapse of old empires and the emergence of separate independent states. Among the various definitions, decolonisation has also been described as 'the negation of white male civilisation'. It has been associated primarily with national movements and the emergence of independent states—and in these cases the concept is expanded to include, among other things, economic, cultural, and socio-political phenomena.

It is usually accepted that there were two stages of decolonisation in the twentieth century. From the end of the Second World War until 1955, it covered the Middle East and Southeast Asia, resulting in the emergence of independent India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, Burma, and other countries. The next stage—after 1955—was marked by the spread of decolonisation to Africa and the declaration of independence of Algeria, Tunisia, Guinea, Morocco, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Congo, etc. The history of decolonisation is somewhat different in the Caribbean region, where its first stage dates back to the end of the eighteenth century when Haiti gained freedom by rebelling against French rule, while the second wave came in the 1960s and 1970s.

4 Raymond F. Betts (1925–2007) was a Professor of History at the University of Kentucky and focused on European imperialism. Hundorova refers here to the following book: Raymond F. Betts, *Decolonization* (Routledge, 2004).

The beginning of the twenty-first century, in particular the Russian–Ukrainian war, actually heralds the third stage of decolonisation and points to its migration to Europe itself. Postcolonial criticism is also migrating here. Since its emergence in the 1980s and later, during the period of its spread, postcolonial studies have been limited to the Third World, non-Western world, and small literatures. However, over time, there is a need to expand the concept of postcolonialism globally, and its sphere of influence includes other previously ignored regions such as Eastern Europe. At the same time, we are talking about a ‘change in the centre of gravity of the field’, as [literary scholar] John McLeod calls it, when it comes to the need to move beyond the exclusively English-speaking imperial experience. The researcher generally correlates the future development of postcolonial studies with the study of ‘other European empires and their legacies’ that shaped ‘European colonialism’ and made it one of the variants of colonialism.

Thus, postcolonialism is now moving beyond the English Literature departments where it was born. Discussions are beginning not only about British colonialism but also about other variants of the phenomenon: French, Portuguese, German, Italian, etc. This migration of postcolonial studies also leads to the recognition of various mixed variants of colonialism and problematises different types of imperialisms, including those in post-communist Eastern Europe. Thus, the development of contemporary post(de) colonial studies leads to the denial of the universality of the concepts of ‘empire’, ‘imperialism’, ‘colony’, ‘colonialism’ and the search for variants of these phenomena and processes. This tendency to distinguish between universal and common experiences enshrined in these concepts allows us to go beyond the common perception that a colony as such should be very distant from the metropolis, and that an empire has only a repressive function.

In fact, there are different types of empires. According to Alexander Morrison, the most typical archetypal variants of empire are British and French; the German, Belgian, and Danish empires are also close to them, while the Japanese and Chinese empires imitate European models. The Spanish and Portuguese empires are perceived more as early modern forms; the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires are often overlooked because they were ‘landed, dynastic agglomerations, and in the case of the latter two, only marginally “European”’, as the researcher notes.

Such a consideration means that it is necessary to analyse the Russian Empire as something other than a typical European empire. Among its

features, Andreas Kappeler⁵ identifies its 'social and, in the long run, cultural integration of other societies through cooperation with non-Russian elites', which distinguishes these relations from typical colonial ones. Another manifestation of this relationship is the growth of a 'Eurocentric sense of Russian superiority towards nomads, Muslims, and Asians in general', which led to a lack of understanding of the social structures and customs of the peoples Russia colonised in the East.

However, Russia's imperial strategies in the nineteenth century became more distinct and brought it closer to other European empires. Economic factors (e.g., the discovery of oil in Transcaucasia) began to play an increasingly important role in Russia's colonisation policy. Another important feature was the growing distance between the metropolis and the colonised peoples. This distance is primarily geographical: although Russia remains a continental power, 'the new subjects in Transcaucasia and Central Asia, separated from Russia by high mountains and deserts, were no longer its immediate neighbours', as Kappeler notes. Ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural differences between the conquered peoples and the Russians are also growing, amid a 'Eurocentric sense of Russian superiority to all Asians'. In general, according to Kappeler, the concept of 'imperialism' can be applied to Russia only from the late nineteenth century, when 'it took an active part in the competition of European powers for Asian markets'.

There are also ongoing discussions about whether postcolonial approaches can be applied to the post-Soviet experience, although there are many supporters of the idea that, as [literary scholar] David Moore argues, 'the term "postcolonial", and everything that goes with it—language, economy, politics, resistance, liberation and its hangover—might reasonably be applied to the formerly Russo- and Soviet-controlled regions post-1989 and -1991, just as it has been applied to South Asia post-1947 or Africa post-1958'.

Discussions about the distinction between postcolonial and decolonial studies are also becoming a sign of the times. For example, one of the theorists of decolonialism, Walter D. Mignolo, sees decolonial optics as an alternative to postcolonial theory, which is primarily 'in fact a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism'. He argues that postcolonial theory focuses on the European experience; does not take into account the optics of other regions, such as the Caribbean; analyses primarily the experience of British imperialism; and relies on the ideas of poststructuralism,

5 Andreas Kappeler (b. 1943) is a historian of Eastern Europe focusing on Ukrainian history and the imperial dimensions of Russian and Soviet history. Hundorova refers here to his groundbreaking study *The Russian Empire: A Multi-ethnic History* (Routledge, 2014).

deconstructionism, and postmodernism developed by European intellectuals themselves.

Along with 'decolonialism', Mignolo also introduces the concept of 'decolonisation'. Whereas decolonialism refers to 'specific moments of political struggle to send the conquerors back home', decolonisation aims to restore the structures of knowledge that were deformed by colonial power and 'delegitimise the colonial power matrix'. He states:

Decolonisation is a two-faced concept. On the one hand, it points to the analysis of coloniality, the dark aspect of modernity. On the other hand, it points to the construction of a decolonial future. In the first case, it is analytical and theoretical. In the second, it is utopian.

Decolonisation is hermeneutical and epistemological, involves revising the main narratives and categories of knowledge developed by the West, rethinks the phenomenon of modernisation, and can be a long-term process. But most importantly, it does not imply a complete break with the coloniser but rather a push back against it—i.e., decentralisation.

Decolonisation as Provincialisation

But it is not only the migration of postcolonialism that has led to the expansion and change in the meaning of decolonisation. In academic circles, decolonisation is no longer associated with war, i.e., it has lost its military connotations, and does not mean armed conflict as it did in the days of Frantz Fanon,⁶ author of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), in which he noted that decolonisation is always violence. The understanding of decolonisation has moved into the realm of cultural and intellectual resistance—although there are increasingly strong voices, including in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, contending that decolonisation is not just a metaphor that can be applied to any process, from education to the kitchen. It is based on painful experiences and complex problems of overcoming dependence and subjugation.

In an interview in August 2022, one of the founders of decolonisation theory and subaltern studies, Dipesh Chakrabarty, pointed out that decolonisation is now perceived primarily as a movement within academia

6 Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), a political activist born in the French colony of Martinique and one of the intellectual pioneers of the concept of decolonisation.

aimed at revising the so-called Western canon, which embodies the highest achievements in literature and culture in general. In the academic space, decolonisation implies a change in the canon, which in fact means resistance to the dominant Western discourse.

Chakrabarty, as the author of the idea of the 'provincialisation of Europe' (the title of his book published in 2000: *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonialism and the Critique of History*), insists that the Western canon discriminates against other cultures, and the Western historical narrative is 'a variation of the dominant narrative that can be called "the history of Europe"'. However, every country has its own history, which—as in the case of Asian and African nations—often does not coincide with the European one. In other words, Eurocentric historical optics, according to decolonialists, do not take into account the distinctive non-European histories of other regions. Moreover, 'Europe' acquired a universal meaning in the offices of historians and philologists. The 'provincialisation of Europe', according to Chakrabarty, means decentralisation: the recognition that there is not one 'Europe' but many 'Europes', 'real, historical and imagined'.

This scholar speaks of Eurocentrism from the perspective of India, but from within Europe itself the issue of provincialisation seems no less relevant. In the end, Chakrabarty himself acknowledged that his work had stimulated interest not only in other non-European countries but also among 'other Europeans' within Europe itself. Europe is different, he clarified, when it comes to 'the place of non-European immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe, the question of Turkey's membership of the EU, and the place of post-socialist Eastern Europe'.

According to [cultural scientist] Lars Jensen, the 'provincialisation of Europe' also means provincialisation within Europe. The researcher himself, for example, speaks of the 'provincialisation of Scandinavia'—especially after 1700. His idea is that there is no single European historiography but rather different responses to modernisation, colonialism, and nationalism in different countries and regions within Europe itself. At the same time, the outskirts of Europe, which were not recognised as the centre of the West, are struggling for the right to belong to the universally named 'European culture'. The Scandinavian nations, as 'full-fledged European countries', have been persistently seeking to position themselves 'closer to European metropolitan culture'.

However, Ukraine has to fight for the right to belong to these 'full-fledged European countries'. Being located between Europe and Asia, it was constructed by the West as its 'Other'. The twentieth century was particularly marked by the struggle of Ukrainian intellectuals and politicians for the

right to be part of European modern history. For Mignolo, 'going beyond the Western canon' can be understood in terms of 'breaking away' from this canon through 'borderline thinking'. Growing attention to 'border thinking' in recent years is evidenced by the interest in the idea of the borderland, which allows us to decentralise the concept of 'European identity' and make it plural. This is true, in particular, in the case of Ukraine. When [the Ukrainian-American historian] Serhii Plokhy argues that 'Europe is an important part of Ukrainian history, just as Ukraine is a part of European history', he adds the argument that 'located on the western edge of the Eurasian steppe, Ukraine has been the gateway to Europe for many centuries'. Moreover, it is 'the result of the interaction of two moving borders: one between the Eurasian steppes and the Eastern European forest-steppe, and the other between Eastern and Western Christianity', he clarifies.

Decolonisation—particularly with its emphasis on revising the dominant Western canons of history and culture, which has gained popularity in the Third World—may seem unnecessary for Ukraine, but it is not. Since the Enlightenment, as [the American historian of Eastern Europe] Larry Wolff argues, Europe has been opening up its Eastern European margins, orientating them and perceiving them as its 'Other'. The classification of Ukraine as a non-historical nation and Ukrainians as stateless people implicitly meant incomplete modernisation in its Western version and relegation to the margins of European civilisation.

Criticism of Eurocentrism from the Ukrainian perspective means, first of all, acknowledging a different experience of modernisation. In particular, it means breaks and pauses in the chronology and different waves of modernisation in Ukraine compared with the main European centres. In addition, there are differences in the processes and nature of modernisation in different regions of Ukraine itself—such as Western Ukraine, which was part of Austria-Hungary, and Eastern Ukraine, which was part of Russia.

Another feature of the modernisation process was denationalisation and the absence of a national elite, since, according to Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytskyi,⁷ 'the educated strata of society—the nobility, the young bourgeoisie and the vast majority of the intelligentsia—stood on the platform of Russian state-national and cultural-national affiliation', while in the West these processes were influenced by Polonisation and Germanisation. The lack of a leading national elite influenced the formation of high culture. It has

7 Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytskyi (1919–1984) was a Ukrainian-born historian and political scientist who was one of the founders of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) at the University of Edmonton.

become commonplace to imagine that there was no James Joyce, Marcel Proust, or T. S. Eliot in Ukrainian culture, and thus that Ukrainian literature did not have a full-fledged European modernism. The question of different 'European modernisms' rather than one universal Western modernist canon that others should follow is also an aspect of the 'provincialisation of Europe'.

It can be said that in Ukraine, the 'provincialisation of Europe' was initiated by Mykola Khvylovyi⁸ when he proclaimed his orientation towards a 'psychological Europe'. He interpreted this rather arbitrarily as a cultural and psychological category, as the 'Other'. As if confirming Chakrabarty's thesis about different 'Europes', Khvylovyi wrote: 'You ask which Europe? Take what you want: past—present, bourgeois—proletarian, eternal—changeable.'

Khvylovyi's provincialisation was picked up and continued by Yuriy Shevelev.⁹ In post-war Europe, he spoke of the relativity of the opposition between the 'centre' and the 'province' and, in a discussion with Arnold Toynbee, insisted that Europe needed to see other peoples with different histories, located on the margins and frontlines, who could lead it out of the post-war crisis. 'But when old centres decline, they are replaced by peripheries with new national values, which become new centres', Shevelev argued, opposing Eurocentrism and pointing to new forces on the border between Europe and Asia. In solidarity with the 'Asian renaissance' of Khvylovyi, Shevelev even called for 'Europe's orientation towards Ukraine'.

After all, as Mykola Riabchuk¹⁰ has noted, throughout the twentieth century, 'Ukraine has been desperately trying to convince itself and the whole world that it is "Europe", not "Russia", not "Asia"'. Both on Euromaidan and during the Russian–Ukrainian war in Ukraine, the country has clearly demonstrated its desire to be part of Europe and the European values of democracy and freedom. Belonging to Europe and the European geo-cultural space is one of the most powerful ideas of national self-identification in Ukraine. However, this does not eliminate the elements of criticism of Eurocentrism that can be read in the history of intellectual and political

8 Mykola Khvylovyi (1893–1933) was a one of the most prominent poets, writers, and activists in early Soviet Ukraine who sought political and cultural emancipation from Russia. He committed suicide in 1933 in protest against Stalinist repression.

9 Yuriy Shevelev (1908–2002)—also known under his anglicised name, George Shevelov—was born in Kharkiv, emigrated to the US in 1952, and became Professor of Slavic Philology at Columbia University in 1958.

10 Mykola Riabchuk (b. 1953) is a Ukrainian political scientist, journalist, and writer and co-founded the journal and publishing house *Krytyka*.

thought in Ukraine and are echoed in the ideas of Panteleimon Kulish's¹¹ 'farm philosophy', Mykola Khvylovyi's 'Asian renaissance', Yuriy Shevelev's 'reckoning with Europe', Yurii Andrukhovych's 'Eastern European revision', and other historiosophical ideas and concepts. This only means that decolonisation, which is much discussed today, has its own prehistory in Ukraine.

Toponymic Decolonisation

All these subtle differences and strategies are rarely discussed in the Ukrainian context. In general, in Ukraine, as a former post-Soviet region, decolonisation takes on a special meaning: it has distinct anti-colonial ideas and is primarily associated with decommunisation—i.e., getting rid of ideological narratives, symbols, and signs of the Soviet past that have a distinct imperial orientation. Decolonisation in Ukraine is not a theoretical process but rather a spontaneous, practical one, and therefore does not fully coincide with the understanding of decolonisation in the West. A clear indication of this is the misunderstanding of the idea of the cancelling of Russian culture not only in the West but also in the Global South. After all, the complete negation of imperial culture—despite the anti-imperialist pathos of decolonisation theory—is not its goal. In contrast, decolonisation in Ukraine is aimed at de-Russification and implies a complete break with the empire, its language, culture, and history. Decolonisation in Ukraine also uses anti-colonial ideas more explicitly and actively than elsewhere. For example, in the wake of decolonisation in Ukraine, there is a steady interest in works imbued with a distinct anti-colonial pathos, such as *Troubadours of the Empire: Russian Literature and Colonialism* by the Polish-American Slavic scholar Ewa Thompson.

Decolonisation in the Ukrainian way is also not connected with criticism of Eurocentrism, as it may contradict Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration, which is a distinct geopolitical goal today. That is why decolonisation in Ukraine does not refer to the 'provincialisation of Europe' in the sense of fitting national history and culture into the traditional narrative of the West. Meanwhile, the classification of Ukraine as a non-historical nation and Ukrainians as stateless people implicitly meant incomplete

11 Panteleimon Oleksandrovych Kulish (1819–1897) was a Ukrainian writer, poet, folklorist, ethnographer, and historian. He is best known for developing an early version of the Ukrainian alphabet, which is named after him and known as Kulishivka.

modernisation in its Western version and relegation to the margins of European civilisation.

However, decolonisation has become a political, cultural, and intellectual rallying cry for today's Ukraine. Back in May 2022, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory initiated a series of discussions with historians, cultural studies experts, and philosophers entitled 'De-Russification, Decommunisation, and Decolonisation in Public Space'. From the title of the discussion, decolonisation appears to be the last in the revisionist series, and the issues discussed relate primarily to the problems of de-Sovietisation and decommunisation without much attention being paid to the problem of decolonisation as such.

It seems that a lack of understanding of what decolonisation is and means today causes a number of complex conflicts. In Ukraine, decolonisation is primarily reduced to the elimination of the consequences and traces of the colonial past, including the removal of Russian authors from textbooks, renaming of streets, removal of Soviet symbols, and boycotts of Russian culture—i.e., it is identified with anti-colonialism. The addition of the concept of 'decolonisation' to a number of concepts such as 'de-Russification' and 'decommunisation' is primarily explained by anti-colonial logic. It is about erasing not only traces of the Soviet past but also symbols of Russian imperial domination.

In April 2023, the law 'On the Condemnation and Prohibition of Propaganda of Russian Imperial Policy in Ukraine' was adopted. The explanatory note to the law states, in part, that 'Ukraine needs its own history, its own values, not those invented in Moscow or in Ural bunkers somewhere! Therefore, de-communisation should be followed by de-imperialisation or decolonisation'. Decolonisation in general is reduced in the law to 'the full restoration of Ukrainian historical and national toponymy, distorted beyond recognition and erased from our map by the former totalitarian regime'. In fact, the reduction of decolonisation to the 'decolonisation of place names' took place in the summer of 2022, when on 18 July, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [i.e., the Ukrainian parliament] adopted as a basis a draft law on amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On Geographical Names' regarding 'decolonisation of place names and regulation of the use of geographical names in Ukrainian settlements' (draft law no. 7253). The lawyers explained that 'the phrase "decolonisation of toponymy" in the title of the draft law indicates an incomplete process of getting rid of the imperial heritage'.

There is a lack of analysis in Ukraine of what the phenomenon of decolonisation means and what its forms and mechanisms are. It is no coincidence that since the beginning of the Russian–Ukrainian war, there

have been statements about the ‘informationally poor “decolonial” analysis’ of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Most of the time, ‘decolonisation’ simply means ‘de-Russification’. As Tetyana Khutor explains, decolonisation in Ukrainian means that

[f]or centuries, Russia has considered Ukraine nothing more than its colony, emphasising this in every possible way in political, legal, social, and cultural manifestations. At the same time, its main task was to make everyone, and especially us, believe in Russian greatness and our inferiority. Therefore, the next step after decommunisation should be decolonisation.

Researchers who use the concept of ‘decolonisation’ in its Western sense rightly emphasise that ‘the study of the existing culture of (former) colonies requires certain qualifications and sometimes a completely different optics (methodology)’, as Ilya Levchenko points out. At the same time, decolonisation can become a trap for national consciousness, others say, because the liberation movement of the colonised often falls into the trap of dependence on the coloniser. All transformations take place under the slogan ‘Away with the coloniser!’—and thus they continue to remain in the orbit of the former metropolis, notes Danylo Sudyn. Thus, the national historical narrative becomes dependent on the narrative of the coloniser and is actually subordinated to it.

There are also reasonable warnings about the uncritical assimilation of decolonising ideas such as the ‘provincialisation of Europe’ developed by representatives of decolonial criticism. This is represented primarily by Spanish-speaking immigrants from South America and the Caribbean, whose focus is on the modernisation of Europe through the use of colonial resources and the development of alternative canons to the West. Such ideas, when transplanted to Russian Eurasian soil by anti-Western figures such as Aleksandr Dugin, can become a dangerous form of new imperialist thinking.

Complex Issues of Decolonisation

To what extent do contemporary theories of decolonisation resonate in Ukraine and, conversely, what does the Ukrainian experience add to contemporary debates on decolonisation? It is worth noting that decolonisation in Ukraine is not limited to debunking Russian imperial narratives but also raises questions about the nature of knowledge and Western universal

narratives. In this context, Volodymyr Viatrovych's¹² response to Timothy Snyder's lecture series on Ukrainian history, which was based on the problems of colonisation, is quite eloquent. As we know, the famous American historian has consistently supported Ukrainian interests and represents a Ukraine-centric perspective in the Western academic world. However, the Ukrainian historian notes the dominance of the Western-centric paradigm in Snyder's lectures, the lack of a Ukrainian position, and the insufficient involvement of Ukrainian historiography.

In other words, Viatrovych interpreted Snyder's position in terms of the re-colonisation of the Ukrainian academic field by the West, and called the perception of the American historian's lectures in Ukraine 'a typical postcolonial reaction'. According to Viatrovych, it is based on a complex of colonial 'inferiority' manifested through indignation—'how dare a foreigner (the word used was even harsher—stranger) take up our history!'—and admiration—'Snyder himself (!) at the very University of Eila (!), how dare you criticise. We can only be grateful for this.' Finally, the transfer of postcolonial and decolonial methodology to Eastern Europe is seen by some researchers in the region as intellectual colonisation by the West. In particular, Polish scholar Dariusz Skurczewski argues that 'Central and Eastern Europe is a kind of "no man's land" that has no representation and does not speak with its own voice, but which can and should be discursively captured—just as the West captured the Orient in its books, travel diaries, political letters, and scientific works.'

While for Central and Eastern European intellectuals the spread of Western ideas in their region is associated with discursive capture, for Western decolonial critics it is associated with the strengthening of the West itself and its 'universalist' narratives to the detriment of pluralism. Another factor that affects the credibility of decolonisation is the use of this concept for political purposes by certain states. For example, even Putin is now using decolonial rhetoric. He calls Russia an ally of decolonial countries, helping to overcome colonialism in Africa and Asia, and claims that Russia itself is now waging a 'national liberation war' in Ukraine against 'Western racists and colonisers' who seek to subject it to a 'rigid scheme of total depersonalisation' and want to destroy it as a 'civilisation'. He thus declares Russia an ally of Asian and African countries in their anti-colonial struggle.

Thus, the situation with decolonisation is complicated not only by the fact that it receives different interpretations depending on the ideological

12 Volodymyr Viatrovych (b. 1977) is a historian and politician, and was director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance from 2014 to 2019.

context and state policy, but also by the fact that it continues to be linked to criticism of Eurocentrism and to de-Westernisation. But even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe is still struggling to find its place in European history—and liberal democracy, which is perceived as a universal Western value, ignores or even understandably opposes nationalism, which is still a relevant ideology in the region. That is why the idea of the ‘provincialisation of Europe’ has supporters here as well.

It is also quite telling that for decolonisation theorists, such as Mignolo, the Russian–Ukrainian war is an attempt to restore the unipolarity of the world. Criticism of Eurocentrism within the framework of decolonialism, in his opinion, has made the movement towards a multipolar world irreversible. ‘De-Westernisation has stopped the West’s easy stroll towards the Westernisation of the planet’, Mignolo argues in his article ‘This is a change of epochs, not an era of change’, which he delivered in January 2023. Paradoxically, Mignolo includes Russia—along with China, Iran, India, and Turkey—among the so-called ‘recalcitrant’ countries which are balancing ‘on the edge between two worlds’. In his opinion, it is they who have begun to implement the policy of de-Westernisation and the struggle for multipolarity. Consequently, ‘China and Russia are destroying the international world order controlled by NATO and the UN’, but this is not because they are ‘attacking the Western world order’ but because ‘they simply do not obey’, ‘they do not attack’ but ‘defend themselves against the claims of Western structures’. Instead, Mignolo associates the Ukrainian position with the opposite trend: with the processes of re-Westernisation, i.e., with the restoration of the unipolarity of the West. Thus, the leading theorist of decolonialism calls Ukraine’s neocolonial struggle for independence in the war started by Russia a ‘point of no return’ in deterring de-Westernisation.

All these and other discussions and aberrations show how complex the strategies and processes of decolonisation, in which Ukraine has become involved, are today. We are witnessing how decolonisation is spreading to the Eastern European region, and Ukraine is joining the decolonisation process and making adjustments to it—not only academic but also political and ideological ones, first and foremost. One of these adjustments is the focus on criticising other empires, including the Russian one. Decolonisation in Ukraine is clearly aimed at de-Russification and decommunisation, and its tools are the topographical revolution and the revision of historiographical narratives and cultural canons. However, discussions on decolonisation in Ukraine already include dialogue with representatives of Africa, Asia, and Central and South America, and decolonial discourse is becoming more prominent in the academic field in Ukraine. An important impetus

for expanding this dialogue is the recognition that Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has strengthened the decolonisation discourse not only in Ukraine and the region, but also beyond.

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Part 3

Rearmament, Neutrality, and Non-Alignment

Abstract: The texts in this chapter offer reflections on deterrence and related foreign policy strategies, that is, strategies that focus on state-level foreign policy planning yet have broader implications for the future world order and global relations. Some texts discuss the limits of policies of neutrality, which become precarious when the rules-based international order is increasingly called into question. At the same time, the Cold War is often used as a reference point. This is evident not only in the resurgence of debates on rearmament, but also in the revival of the concept of non-alignment, which is seen in many non-European contexts as an opportunity to adopt an independent stance in a world order characterised by imperialist rivalries.

Keywords: deterrence, 'new Cold War', BRICS, block confrontation

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Introduction

Deterrence through armament is a political strategy with a long tradition that became a hallmark of the Cold War. As we witness a revival of twentieth-century geopolitical patterns, this strategy is once again being discussed, also in response to the war on Ukraine. The same applies to strategies of neutrality and non-alignment with military alliances and power blocs, whether adopted as a matter of principle or in response to acute military conflicts. This chapter offers reflections on deterrence, neutrality, and non-alignment as foreign policy strategies. While all these approaches pertain to foreign policy planning at the state level, they are equally relevant to the future world order and global relations.

Whether the future will bring a further increase in armaments and military spending remains uncertain, but it is highly likely. Nonetheless, the fact that the war on Ukraine is fuelling unilateral policies such as rearmament will shape the course of international relations in the years to come. The same applies to strategies of neutrality and non-alignment. The latter approach, in particular, is presented as a counter-strategy to power politics based on antagonistic or hierarchical logics. Interpreting the war in Ukraine as a conflict between imperialist powers and their allies, as some of the texts in this section do, is accompanied by discussions of non-alignment as an alternative form of foreign policy that is intended to shape the emerging world order.

Concepts of Neutrality and Non-Alignment—The Circulation of Ideas

Neutrality is a key concept in efforts to secure peace and contain conflict, encompassing issues such as the (im)possibility of mediating roles in international politics and conflicts, as well as strategic options for ‘smaller states’.¹ In international law, neutrality means non-participation in a military conflict and impartiality towards the warring parties. In return, the

¹ For the history of concepts of neutrality, see Michael Bothe, ‘The Law of Neutrality’, in *Handbook of International Humanitarian Law*, ed. Dieter Fleck (Oxford University Press, 2021), 602–633; Dominik Geppert and Udo Wengst, eds., *Neutralität—Chance oder Chimäre? Konzepte des Dritten Weges für Deutschland und die Welt 1945–1990* [Neutrality—Opportunity or chimera? Concepts of a third way for Germany and the world, 1945–1990] (Oldenbourg, 2005).

neutral country expects it will be spared negative consequences resulting from the military conflict. In the cases of Switzerland and Austria, two European examples discussed in the texts below, neutrality is presented as a long-standing position. It is not seen as an ad hoc strategy but as an institutionalised stance, informing foreign policy, with roots going back to early modern Europe. As both a legal concept and political practice, neutrality has become a subject of controversy in scholarship. Some legal scholars argue that it is incompatible with the UN Charter and its principle of collective security, since an aggressor violating the obligation of peace under international law should be held accountable.²

It is not surprising that in times of war, ideas and viewpoints concerning neutrality are intensely discussed and revisited. Interestingly, this goes hand in hand with a diachronic and synchronic circulation of ideas and local adaptation.³ A telling example is the view that the world has been experiencing a new cold war since February 2022, which is part of a broader revival of analytical concepts that were influential during the twentieth-century Cold War. Aleksandar Gajić, a political scientist at the Institute of European Studies in Belgrade, draws, in his article on neutrality, on the works of Nicholas Spykman (1893–1943), a political scientist and key advocate of the containment policy, and Sir Halford John Mackinder (1861–1947), a geographer and theorist of geopolitics.⁴ From Mackinder's thought, Gajić especially picks up on spatial concepts such as a Russian-controlled Eurasian 'Heartland' and a European coastal area—the so-called 'Rimland'—exposed to expansionist pressures from both the continent's interior and from the sea. These theories informed Cold War mental maps, including the global strategic thinking of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1923–2023) and the diplomat and political advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928–2017).⁵ Yet,

2 Stephan Hobe, *Einführung in das Völkerrecht* [Introduction to international law] (Narr Francke Attempto, 2020), 616.

3 For a local adaptation and linkage to the sphere of economy, see Viktor Orbán, 'Speech at the Conference "Európai Versenyképesség. Magyar Gazdasági Semlegesség [European competitiveness, Hungarian economic neutrality]"', National University for Public Services, Budapest, 25 September 2024, <https://miniszterelnok.hu/en/viktor-orbans-vortrag-an-der-nationalen-universitat-fur-den-offentlichen-dienst-auf-der-konferenz-europaische-wettbewerbsfahigkeit-ungarische-wirtschaftliche-neutralitat/>.

4 Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942); Nicholas Spykman, *The Geography of Peace* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944); Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Holt, 1919; Serbian translation: Halford Džon Mackinder, *Demokratski ideali i stvarnost: Studija politike obnove* [Metaphysica, 2009]).

5 Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Routledge, 1996).

Gajić also engages with Aleksandr Dugin's (b. 1926)⁶ *The Foundations of Geopolitics*,⁷ one of the most significant contemporary sources of inspiration for a Eurasian-oriented Russian neo-imperialism—an ideology marked by a disturbing fascination with fascism. Since the Serbian translations of the works Gajić references were completed before 2022, the reception of these ideas began well before Russia's full-scale invasion. At the same time, they have taken on renewed significance since then.

As an approach to foreign policy, 'non-alignment' also reached its peak during the Cold War period. Unlike neutrality, it is not only intended to keep a state out of war, but also to position it outside of conflicting power blocs through the articulation of alternative ideas concerning socio-economic development and world order. The origins of 'non-alignment' can be traced back to the anti-colonial liberation struggles of the 1920s and 1930s; however, it gained significant momentum after the Second World War. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formally established at two pivotal gatherings—the Asian-African Conference (Bandung, 1955) and the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries (Belgrade, 1961). During this period of heightened Cold War tensions and a wave of decolonisation, five heads of state—Sukarno of Indonesia,⁸ Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana,⁹ and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia—initiated the movement. It rapidly garnered support from numerous former African and Asian colonies that had recently gained political independence and were seeking to defend their sovereignty, particularly in light of interference by the US and USSR

6 Dugin began as a self-taught scholar in the late Soviet Union. Through extensive reading, he developed a Russocentric counter-concept to Western modernity, combining Orthodox and Stalinist anti-Westernism, Great Russian nationalism, and Eurasianism. His political theology incorporates ideas from National Socialist pseudoscientists and geopolitics, as well as the religious views of the esotericist René Guénon (1886–1951) and concepts borrowed from Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). In the 1990s, he experimented with establishing a National-Bolshevik Party. From 2008 to 2014, he led the Centre for Conservative Studies at Moscow State University, which he founded. For a more comprehensive contextualisation of Dugin's ideology and its political use in contemporary Russia, see Marlene Laruelle, *Ideology and Meaning-Making Under the Putin Regime* (Stanford University Press, 2025).

7 Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki (geopolicheskoe budushchee Rossii)* [The foundations of geopolitics] (Arktogeia, 1997), Serbian translation: *Osnovi geopolitike, knj. 1: Geopolitička budućnost Rusije* (Ekopres, 2004).

8 Sukarno (1901–1970) was the first president of Indonesia (1945–1967), after the country's liberation from Japanese occupation and the end of Dutch colonial rule.

9 Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972) was the prime minister of Ghana (1952–1957), while the country was still under British colonial rule. He led his homeland to independence in 1957. He then served as Ghana's first president until 1966.

in the context of the global Cold War. The establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964 was a closely related development, as the organisation's task was to facilitate decolonisation of the world economy—especially the removal of structural inequalities in world trade—and thereby to support the development of the so-called developing countries. Both NAM and UNCTAD played a key role in the negotiation of the New International Economic Order, adopted by the United Nations in 1974. By then, NAM had developed into an international organisation with around 120 member states that planned their cooperation as well as their representation of interest in the UN at regular summits.¹⁰

References to NAM and the concept of 'non-alignment' in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine take different forms, ranging from reminders of great-power politics to recollections of solidarity in the so-called 'Global South'. Particularly noteworthy is the diachronic and synchronic 'travel' of the concept.¹¹ Definitions from the 1960s are taken up in contemporary reflections, which—when reprinted—(re)circulate in turn. To give but one example: the article by Nontobeko Hlela, a researcher and publicist from South Africa, is based on the reappropriation of a definition of non-alignment originally formulated by Tito and Nehru in a joint communiqué issued during the Yugoslav president's state visit to India in 1954.¹² Her piece was first published by *Globetrotter*, an online forum that describes itself as an 'international news syndication service for the people of the Global South' and counts among its main contributors Vijay Prashad, a leading intellectual of the so-called Southern Left. It was later republished in the British socialist newspaper the *Morning Star* and other left-leaning online media. Some time afterwards, it was mentioned in a study by the Russian Foreign Office on strategic cooperation between Russia and the African continent. Regarding 'Africa's position on the Russian–Ukrainian crisis', the study notes that 'some African states, less blinded by the hawkish foreign policy of Washington and Brussels, are reluctant to criticise Moscow and

10 Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927–1992)* (Brill, 2018); Nataša Mišković, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boškovska, eds., *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi–Bandung–Belgrade* (Routledge, 2014); John Toye and Richard Toye, eds., *The UN and Global Political Economy: Trade, Finances and Development* (Indiana University Press, 2004); Jürgen Dinkel, Steffen Fiebrig, and Frank Reichherzer, eds., *Nord/Süd. Perspektiven auf eine globale Konstellation* [North/South: Perspectives on a global constellation] (De Gruyter, 2020).

11 Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (University of Toronto Press, 2002).

12 On the history of the communiqué's origins, see Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Phase of the Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953–1957* (Routledge, 2011), 131–133.

join anti-Russian sanctions'.¹³ Hlela's essay is cited as evidence that political pressure exerted by the US and its allies 'has already revived discussions in African political circles about bringing back the Cold War-era Non-Aligned Movement to avoid being dragged into a new era of confrontation between the West and Russia'.¹⁴

The Articles

Rearmament

The first article in this chapter was written for the Paris-based political magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* by Bruno Tertrais, a political scientist at the Institut Moutaigne in Paris who specialises in security issues. In his piece, he traces waves of global rearmament in the 1990s, a period that marked the end of collective disarmament. Tertrais identifies three key turning points: the American experience of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 in 2001, after which the US more than doubled its defence budget; the beginning of Vladimir Putin's third presidential term and Xi Jinping's rise to power in 2012, followed by significant increases in defence spending in Russia and China; and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as the terror of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Tertrais also highlights that European defence budgets have significantly increased in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022—a development he describes as a '*Zeitenwende*' ('turning point')—as Europe begins to catch up with developments that began almost a quarter of a century earlier in other parts of the world. This shift implies a profound transformation in European political culture: it brings an end to the paradigm of 'peace through economic interdependence', which had long been a cornerstone of European security policy. The author concludes that increased defence spending can serve as a means of securing peace—unless it is linked with expansionist goals, as in the case of Russia and China. In such contexts, he argues, it becomes a threat.

Neutrality in Europe and the Middle East

In his article for *Le Monde diplomatique*, the essayist Fabian Scheidler discusses the historical ambivalence of Austria's policy of neutrality and critically

13 M. G. Troianskii, O. G. Karpovich, G. M. Sidorova, and R. N. Shangaraev, *Rossiiia–Afrika: Strategicheskoe sotrudnichestvo* [Russia–Africa: Strategic cooperation] (Diplomaticheskaiia akademiia MID Rossii, 2023), 226–227.

14 Ibid., 230.

assesses it in the light of the experience of Russia's war of aggression. Beginning with the Austrian State Treaty of 1955,¹⁵ Scheidler traces the development of Austria's neutrality policy. Central to this was the doctrine of 'engaged neutrality', developed in the 1960s by the Social Democratic foreign minister and later chancellor, Bruno Kreisky (1911–1990). It signified a proactive foreign policy, including diplomatic engagement with the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and with the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). As part of this approach, Austria became a driving force behind the establishment of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). According to Scheidler, this process ultimately led to 'this middle-sized country [playing] an outsized role in international affairs'. At the same time, he argues that the principle of perpetual neutrality, while formally maintained, has been significantly diluted in many areas since the 1990s. Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995 and its participation in the EU's Battle Groups and the European Peace Facility marked a decisive stage in this process.

In view of this, Scheidler describes Austria's political stance towards the war in Ukraine as ambivalent. On the one hand, Austrian participation in missions in Ukraine was rejected by the government, citing the country's long-standing principle of neutrality. On the other hand, the defence budget was doubled in 2025 as part of an alignment with NATO's stance. The debates in Austria triggered by the war on Ukraine are therefore complex: polls continue to show broad public support for neutrality, with some voices even calling for the 'Austrian model of neutrality' to be applied to Ukraine, while others advocate for Austria's accession to NATO.

The article by Eric Gujer, editor of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, offers a critical examination of Switzerland's neutrality policy. He opens with the ironic observation of the country's deep-rooted reluctance to respond to the demands of a constantly changing world, before moving into a historical analysis. Swiss neutrality, he argues, has never entailed abstention from adopting a clear position between rival global powers and ideologies. Despite its proclaimed neutrality, Switzerland saw itself as part of the Western European and Atlantic alliance during the Cold War, including a strong political alignment with NATO and the predecessor institutions to the European Union. According to Gujer, only after the end of the Cold War's bloc-based confrontations did the

15 The Austrian State Treaty of 1955 declared the re-establishment of Austria as a fully sovereign state and the complete withdrawal of the occupying forces of the victorious powers of the Second World War—i.e., the US, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France—from Austrian territory. It is directly linked to the declaration of Austria's permanent neutrality, which took place in October 1955 after the withdrawal of the last occupying forces.

ideals of strict neutrality and sovereignty gain broader acceptance in Swiss foreign policy. However, he is critical of this notion and of the popular slogan of a 'Global Switzerland' envisioned as a kind of European Singapore—an idea which echoes the rhetoric of the so-called Brexit campaign in the UK. Gujer argues that recent shifts in global politics, where the law of the jungle increasingly prevails, have hit Switzerland hard, as a small country heavily reliant on the acceptance of a rules-based international order. In what he describes as 'a change of era similar to the end of the Cold War', he calls for a 'modern neutrality' for Switzerland—one in which the country refrains from alliances and direct involvement in wars, but clearly aligns itself with the 'Western community' and actively contributes to 'preventing Putin and his ilk from reshaping the world according to their authoritarian will'.

A very different notion of neutrality comes to the fore in an opinion piece by Muhammet Güler, a political scientist based in Indonesia, writing for the international Turkish newspaper the *Daily Sabah*. It deals with the danger of a nuclear escalation of the war. The author criticises Russia's aggressiveness but also accuses Western NATO allies of 'destructive and provocative actions' referring to NATO's eastward expansion, which he sees as a serious mistake. However, a 'superiority mindset' prevented the 'West' from heeding Turkey's warnings about this process. Had these alerts been taken seriously, Güler claims, not only the war in Ukraine but also the military conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Libya, Syria, and Iraq in recent decades could have been prevented. Given the war's enormous potential for escalation, Güler argues that a 'neutral, reliable, and strong mediator' is needed. In his view, Turkey could fulfil this role, with the strength of its mediating position stemming from its military's status as a 'stunning powerhouse among NATO allies'. The concept of neutrality that Güler develops here is that of mediating equidistance, and he observes a similar attitude in China's political leadership with regard to the war in Ukraine.

The article by Aleksandar Gajić, published in the Belgrade-based academic journal *Srpska politička misao* (Serbian political thinking), outlines another understanding of neutrality. Gajić views the war in Ukraine as a clash of civilisations—the outcome of which could reshape the global distribution of power. Drawing on traditional approaches to geopolitics and using concepts such as 'Heartland' and 'Rimland', he interprets both the war in Ukraine and Serbia's current position. Like the American geopolitician George Friedman,¹⁶ Gajić believes that Russia's security fundamentally depends

16 George Friedman (b. 1949) has been a prominent figure in American public discourse for several decades, both as an author and as the head of various strategic consulting firms. He is

on control over Ukraine. He sees Serbia as a pivotal country in the Balkans, a region where great power interests have historically intersected. One possible strategy for Serbia to preserve its political independence, he argues, is to balance these competing interests while maintaining a neutral stance. Historically, Gajić traces this approach to the policy of non-alignment that Serbia pursued as part of socialist Yugoslavia. Today, he maintains, Serbia continues to follow a neutral path by upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity while simultaneously refusing to participate in economic sanctions against Russia. In this regard, Serbia aligns with the majority of countries worldwide, which, according to Gajić, either remain neutral or express sympathy towards Russia. He argues that the West's anti-Russian stance in the war on Ukraine is globally an exception. Gajić regrets that Serbia has not been able to take on a role similar to Turkey's as a mediator in the conflict. Therefore, in his view, it is vital for Serbia to maintain strong ties with Russia, because of prevailing public sentiment in the country and, more importantly, Serbia's energy dependence on Russia. Moreover, Russia supports Serbia's position on Kosovo—unlike the US and most NATO countries. Against this backdrop, Gajić contends that the Balkan state must continue its policy of neutrality while simultaneously strengthening its military deterrence capabilities.

Prospects of NAM

Two articles by South African and Indian publicists, Nontobeko Hlela and Kshitij Shandilya, broaden the perspective beyond Europe and the Black Sea region. They explore non-alignment as a practice of non-involvement in international conflict.

In his article on contemporary Indian foreign policy, Kshitij Shandilya summarises the history of NAM and emphasises its crucial role in the decolonisation process and in maintaining 'international stability and security'—paraphrasing a brief overview from the website of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.¹⁷ Echoing the ministry's presentation, he cites guiding principles such as respect for international law and the UN Charter, non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states, a commitment to the peaceful resolution of inter-state conflicts, and the '[r]ecognition of the equality among all races and of the equality

known for making bold 'geopolitical' predictions about the future. For instance, in his book *The Coming War with Japan* (St. Martin's Press, 1991), he forecast a military conflict between the US and Japan following the end of the Cold War—an event that never occurred.

17 Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 'History and Evolution of Non-Aligned Movement', 22 August 2012, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/20349/History+and+Evolution+of+NonAligned+Movement>.

among all nations, both large and small'. Drawing a line to the present, he portrays the Indian government's refusal to take sides in the war on Ukraine as a success in keeping 'the spirit of NAM alive' in a situation where, as he puts it, 'the Russia–Ukraine conflict [has] again brought the world to the doorstep of a new cold war', with the US and NATO on one side and Russia and China on the other. Despite considerable pressure from the US and European countries to change its voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly—where India abstained on a resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine¹⁸—and to support economic sanctions against Russia, India has held its position. According to Shandilya, this stance reflects a commitment to national interest. To him, there is no contradiction between pursuing strategic national interests and promoting India's rise as a global superpower on the one hand and the goals of NAM on the other.

Nontobeko Hlela also uses the aforementioned UN resolution on Ukraine as a starting point for her reasoning, which focuses on 'Western' criticism of South Africa's abstention. She regards some of this criticism as racialised and condemns the failure to acknowledge its underlying motives. According to her, 'There is seldom any acknowledgement that nonalignment, in this case refusing to be aligned with the United States and its allies or with Russia, can be a principled position, as well as an astute tactical engagement with geopolitical realities.' Quoting a 1954 definition by Josip Broz Tito and Jawaharlal Nehru, she describes non-alignment as a 'positive, active and constructive policy that, as its goal, has collective peace as the foundation of collective security'. Unlike Shandilya, who frames non-alignment in the context of a single country's national interest, Hlela sees it as a tool for empowering the 'Global South' collectively within international politics. Despite comprising 80 percent of the world's population, countries of the 'Global South' are, she argues, treated by the 'West' as 'veranda' children—reduced to watching others make global policy decisions and scolded when they deviate from expected norms. To amplify the voice of the Global South, Hlela calls for the revitalisation of NAM and the articulation of shared political goals which would have immense potential: China and India are economically strong and technologically innovative, while Africa is rich in 'natural resources that are needed for the mushrooming AI and cleaner energy industries'. For Hlela, financial autonomy is essential to win economic wars—such as those she believes the US has waged against Cuba and Venezuela and is now waging against Russia. The latter case, she warns, is particularly dangerous because

18 United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1, adopted on 2 March 2022. For the text of the resolution, see <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/ES-11/1>.

‘[t]he economic weapons being built against Russia will be available to be used against other countries that have the temerity not to toe Washington’s line’. Hlela calls also for resistance to the polarisation that, in her view, the US has fostered by escalating a ‘new cold war’ with Russia and China. She insists on unwavering adherence to international law—not only when it aligns with Western interests, and she considers the BRICS alliance (in 2022: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) as a platform with much potential for cooperation and resistance from within the ‘Global South’.

Foreign Policy Strategies in Latin America

The final two texts in this chapter offer insights into Latin America’s foreign policy outlook—both from within the region and from outside. In both, the war in Ukraine is regarded as a pivotal moment for the current world order. Against this backdrop, they discuss various strategic approaches to international relations, with neutrality and non-alignment playing prominent roles. Both contributions also address the role of international organisations, international law, and the global economy.

The first text adopts a comparative political science approach. Ariel González Levaggi and Pilar Martínez Otero of the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina (Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina) in Buenos Aires analyse the positions of Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela in international politics following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. They begin with the observation that, ‘among academics, experts and policymakers, there are different views on Latin America’s place in an increasingly multipolar world: active non-alignment, active neutrality, strategic autonomy and alignment’. As their analysis shows, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico exhibit a blend of the first three strategies, marked by pragmatism and rooted in longer-term foreign policy orientations. This has led these countries to condemn Russia’s war of aggression at the UN General Assembly, while adopting more cautious stances within the Organisation of American States¹⁹ and rejecting economic sanctions against Russia. By contrast—and again due to long-standing international policy orientations—Colombia and Venezuela demonstrate clearer alignments to the war against Ukraine: Colombia, with the US, and Venezuela, with Russia.

The second text is an interview with Andrii Melnyk (b. 1975), a career diplomat, conducted by Paulo Silva Pinto for the Brazilian online newspaper

19 The Organisation of American States (OAS) is a regional association of North and South American states. Founded in Bogotá in 1948, the international organisation is headquartered in Washington, DC.

Poder360. Melnyk has served as Ukraine's ambassador to Brazil since 2023, having previously held the same post in Germany from 2014 to 2022. The conversation has a notable backdrop: in May 2022, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, then a presidential candidate for Brazil's Workers' Party, told *Time* magazine that Ukrainian President Zelenskyi was 'as responsible as Putin for the war'. When asked about this statement in the interview, Melnyk declined to comment. Instead, he expressed appreciation for Brazil's support in condemning Russia's attack on Ukraine at the UN General Assembly. Looking ahead, Melnyk outlined a vision of Brazil playing a more constructive role with regard to the war in Ukraine. While recognising Brazil's neutrality, he called for the country to offer stronger support for Ukraine. One possible avenue, he suggested, could be through Brazil's membership in BRICS: by leveraging its relationship with China, Brazil might help pressure Putin 'to end the war'. According to Melnyk, such an outcome would also serve to preserve China's own interest, namely its global economic interests, which hinge on a rules-based world order that Russia is violating.

The Brazilian government's apparent reluctance to entertain such a role was one reason why Melnyk adopted a more outspoken tone in the weeks following the interview. About six weeks later, he responded sharply when Lula da Silva, during a joint press conference in Brazil with French President Emmanuel Macron, remarked that he was less concerned about the war in Ukraine than the governments of Germany and France because the conflict was taking place many thousands of kilometres away. Melnyk condemned the statement as shameful and as a failure to recognise that Russia's invasion constituted a violation of international law. He added, 'It seems that people [in Brazil] live on another planet,' and continued, 'Regarding the war, it's a very sad fact that nobody wants to talk about it. They simply avoid it because it's inconvenient. Unfortunately, very unfortunately, Ukraine here in Latin America is absolutely alone.'²⁰

About the Volume Editors

Dennis Dierks studied history, Islamic studies, Turkology, and Slavic studies in Mainz, Dijon, and Vienna and received his PhD from the University of Jena. In 2024/25, he was a research associate at the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern

20 Ana Carolina Curvello, 'Embaixador da Ucrânia critica nova fala de Lula sobre a guerra [Ukrainian ambassador criticises new Lula speech on war]', *Gazeta do Povo*, 3 April 2024, <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/republica/embaixador-da-ucrania-critica-nova-fala-de-lula-sobre-a-guerra/>.

Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the history of remembrance, nationalism, revolution, and reform, as well as the global circulation of ideas since the nineteenth century. His latest publications include 'Nation-building and Nationalism in the Black Sea Region (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)', in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, edited by Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Troebst (2024).

Katja Castryck-Naumann is a senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and has headed the research training group 'Global Armenia/ns: Entangled Histories of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus' since 2025. After completing her training as a historian at the Universities of Leipzig, Edinburgh, and Vienna and earning a doctorate from Leipzig University, she worked in the 'East-Central Europe Transnational' project group (2008–2016) and in the 'Entanglements and Globalisation' department (2017–2025) at GWZO. She also served as spokesperson of the steering committee of the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA, 2020–2025). Her research focuses on the history of international organisations and transnational actors, transregional entanglements of East-Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the history of area studies and global history writing.

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Stefan Rohdewald has held the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University since 2020. From 2013 to 2020, he was Professor

of Southeast European History at the University of Giessen. After completing his studies, assistantship, and doctorate in Zurich (PhD, 2004), he worked as a research assistant at the University of Passau from 2003 to 2012. His research focuses on the entangled histories of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, urban history, memory, and transconfessionality. From 2017 to 2024, he served as the chairperson of the DFG Priority Programme *Transottomanica: Eastern European–Ottoman–Persian Mobility Dynamics*.

If We Arm Ourselves, It's to Avoid War

Si on s'arme, c'est pour éviter la guerre

Bruno Tertrais

Editorial Note

This article was published on 8 June 2023 in *Le Nouvel Observateur*,¹ published in Paris, and one of France's largest-circulation news magazines. Its political orientation can be described as centre-left.

Global military budgets are rising sharply against a backdrop of war in Ukraine and a potential conflict between the United States and China. Has the period of global demilitarisation come to a definitive end?

The war in Ukraine is just the latest step in a longer process. The first turning point in this global rearmament came after the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001, when the US defence budget nearly doubled in the early 2000s. The second came around 2012, with the re-election of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the rise of Chinese President Xi Jinping—that year, Asia's military spending exceeded that of Europe. Then, in the mid-2010s, two shocks hit Western countries in quick succession: Russia's annexation of Crimea and the rise of the Islamist threat with ISIS.² Since February 2022, we have been experiencing a fourth turning point. This mainly concerns Europe, with Germany and Poland making particularly intense budgetary efforts. Looking back, we can say that the world experienced a decade of disarmament in the 1990s, followed by successive waves of rearmament in various parts of the world. For Europe, the enchanted interlude lasted 25 years.

1 Bruno Tertrais, 'Si on s'arme, c'est pour éviter la guerre [If we arm ourselves, it's to avoid war]', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 6 June 2023, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/monde/20230608.OBS74252/bruno-tertrais-si-on-s-arme-c-est-pour-eviter-la-guerre.html>.

2 ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) is an Islamist terrorist organisation that claims to have established a caliphate based on Sharia law in the imagined succession of the Prophet Muhammad. It has repeatedly succeeded, and continues to succeed, in bringing large areas under its control in regions with weak or collapsing state structures, such as Iraq, Syria, and the countries of the Sahel.

What strikes you most about the current turning point? It ought to be the shift in attitudes in Germany, which, according to Olaf Scholz,³ is experiencing a *Zeitenwende*, or 'turning point', brought about by the shock of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. When you know how strong political and bureaucratic forces are in that country, you realise how much the logic of rearmament is also affecting people's minds. More than just new military spending, we are witnessing a major cultural shift: the idea that 'trade prevents war', that peace can be preserved through economic interdependence—the cornerstone of European integration—is disappearing. In Brussels, too, the use of the European Defence Fund to provide military assistance to Ukraine is a sign of a major paradigm shift. But we must not forget that the notion of a 'geopolitical Europe' proposed by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen predates the invasion of Ukraine, and that the Commission has been describing China as a 'systemic rival' since 2019. We are not discovering afresh today that we live in a world of power relations.

A year ago, French President Emmanuel Macron spoke of the need to 'commit France to a war economy'. Where are we now? A significant effort will be made under the next military programming law (\$413 billion over the period 2024–2030), but France has had to make trade-offs. Rather than focusing on a strategy of mass and volume, its defence and security policy is making efforts across the entire military spectrum—from outer space to the depths of the sea. France could have committed itself massively to 'the East' in order to be perceived as a major player in the defence of Europe's borders, but it made a different choice. This is for geographical reasons: it is much further from Russia than it was from the Soviet bloc, and it already defends Europe's southern borders. But it is also because it has a presence on every continent, which explains why its investments extend beyond Europe. There are also geopolitical reasons: France believes that as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it has a role to play in maintaining international peace. It has therefore chosen to cultivate its status as a global power rather than become a leader in the defence of Eastern Europe.

Has France thereby delegated the defence of Ukraine to other powers such as Germany or Poland? Poland rightly sees itself as Europe's first line of defence, a role that was assigned to West Germany during the Cold War. It could become Europe's leading air and land power within the next 10 years if it completes its acquisition programme. Warsaw believes that in the medium and long term, there will be a major, even existential, military

3 Social Democrat Olaf Scholz is a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and was chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (2021–2025).

threat in the East. Hence its decision to invest in 'mass' and in military equipment that could be used in a high-intensity conflict.

New high-level military players have emerged over the past two decades: India, for example, now has the third largest defence budget in the world. Is this not a sign of global geostrategic tension? What we have not seen for a very long time is the simultaneous existence of several revisionist, even neo-imperialist, powers with the means to achieve their ambitions. That said, there is not necessarily a direct link between increased military spending and the level of global threats. This increase is also linked to the economic rise of new powers and the expansion of areas of conflict. Many countries in Asia and the Middle East are also spending more because they can afford to buy or even produce high-tech weapons, which was not the case 30 years ago. We are also seeing 'status' spending: if Brazil wants nuclear submarines, it is not to wage war on Argentina but primarily to demonstrate its power. Moreover, volume says nothing about military effectiveness! I often compare today's Russia with what was said about Iraq in 1990: Saddam Hussein's⁴ army, described as the fourth strongest in the world, collapsed in the face of the international coalition.

Does such an increase in military spending increase the risk of conflict—or is it, rather, a guarantor of stability through the balance of power?

This is an old question to which there is no simple answer. Unless there are immediate ambitions—as is the case, for example, with China in its neighbourhood or Russia with regard to Ukraine—defence spending is primarily intended to keep the peace. We arm ourselves in order to deter and to prevent war. It cannot be said that more weapons automatically increase the risk of war. And the notion of an 'arms race'—in that a particular nation is arming itself primarily to always have a little more than its adversary—is especially misleading today. A detailed study of the logic behind armament shows that internal dynamics are generally the most important factor. What is happening in the neighbouring country is more often used as a justification after the fact for military spending. Furthermore, it is difficult to talk about a 'race' today because the processes of armament or rearmament are slower than they were during the Cold War. If it is a race, it is a very slow one.

It seems that defence budgets are being increased amid relative indifference on the part of public opinion. How can this be understood?

4 Saddam Hussein (Saddām Ḥusain 'Abd al-Madḥid at-Tikrītī, 1937–2006) was the head of state of Iraq (1979–2003). Following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, he was overthrown, imprisoned, and, in 2006, sentenced to death by an Iraqi court for the mass violence he had committed against the country's Shiite population in 1982.

There is indeed no major opposition in Europe to this rearmament effort. This could mean two things. Either Europeans understand that we are now in a very different world from the one we were in 10 years ago and accept these expenditures out of a sense of realism. Or they believe, after COVID-19, that public money is 'magic' and that we can do whatever it takes in all areas. There is also the idea that defence spending is not a waste for the economy, that it has significant spillover effects in terms of jobs, technology, and exports. This is particularly true for France, given its policy of independence from the United States. It is this policy that has enabled France to excel in electronics, communications, and aerospace—not to mention nuclear power, even though the civilian and military sectors are now very separate.

Are we, therefore, likely to see a new boom in nuclear armament? We are witnessing both the maturation of Asian nuclear arsenals and the end of the nuclear disarmament process in Russia, Europe, and the United States. On the American side, there is even a temptation to increase the size of the nuclear arsenal due to the perception of a dual threat from China and Russia in 10 years' time. The United Kingdom announced two years ago that it was raising the ceiling on its arsenal. France has not made any announcements for the moment. But on the issue of nuclear proliferation, I am not overly pessimistic given the high normative, legal, and technological barriers to acquiring a nuclear arsenal today.

Where is the risk of conflict greatest at present? Probably in East Asia, with a possible conflict between China and Taiwan. The US wants to limit the risk of territorial gains by Beijing in its maritime environment—and, above all, an invasion of Taiwan—while seeking to show that it does not want war. But the paranoia of the Chinese elite, whether real or exaggerated, resembles that of the Soviet elite, who were convinced that NATO would attack the USSR. That is a risk factor.

On the other hand, in Europe, I find it hard to imagine that Moscow could believe that NATO is about to attack Russian territory. For Europe, the biggest unknown is the consequences of a possible breakdown of the transatlantic contract. Let's imagine that in January 2025, the new US president—[Donald] Trump, or a Trumpist—decides to break this contract, or that the US suddenly finds itself embroiled in a major military conflict in East Asia. Europeans would then be forced to make a radical effort to ensure the essential defence of their continent. I don't think they are psychologically ready for this, and especially not the Germans. The French have habitually maintained that the Americans would not always be there to defend Europe: after being wrong so often, we [the French] may one day be right. In any case, these issues are far from receiving the attention they

deserve. Even if the probability of a Chinese attack on Taiwan in the short term is extremely low, it remains too high. The indirect consequences for us would be significant.

About the Author

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Austria: Neutral for How Much Longer?

Fabian Scheidler

Editorial Note

This article was published in *Le Monde diplomatique*, September 2023.¹ *Le Monde diplomatique* is a monthly newspaper published in France, Germany, and other countries in the respective national languages. Its reporting focuses on international politics, society, and culture.

Austria embraced ‘permanent neutrality’ in 1955 as a condition of Allied troop withdrawals, enabling it to play an outsized role in international affairs. Now, Austrian neutrality is being put to the test.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, heated controversy broke out in Austria over its neutrality. In May 2022, around 40 military, economic, and literary figures, including the influential novelist Robert Menasse, published an open letter calling for a ‘serious, nationwide discussion’ (1). Russia’s aggression, the signatories wrote, made remaining neutral ‘not only unsustainable, but dangerous’. They didn’t suggest that Austria follow Finland and Sweden into NATO but they didn’t rule it out either.

Since then, local mainstream media have fuelled the ongoing debate over Austrian foreign policy. What lies ahead? Should the country supply weapons to Ukraine, allow the transit of military equipment, train Ukrainian soldiers, or join demining operations? Is Vienna’s neutrality, a cornerstone of its international posture since 1955, on shaky ground?

Statements from the four major parties of the National Council (the lower house of parliament)—the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), the Greens, and the far-right national conservative Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)—suggest that neutrality still has a rosy future. After Russia rolled into Ukraine, Chancellor Karl Nehammer (ÖVP)² declared, ‘Austria was neutral, Austria

1 Fabian Scheidler, ‘Austria: Neutral for How Much Longer?’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, September 2023.

2 Karl Nehammer was chancellor of the Federal Republic of Austria (2021–2025).

is neutral, and Austria will also remain neutral. As far as I'm concerned, the discussion ends there' (2). Apart from the liberals of the New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS), parliament's smallest party, no one openly questions the status quo. And polls suggest that the usual 70–80% of the population supports it.

But what exactly does this neutrality look like? Defenders and opponents alike admit that, in practice, the rigid rule gets bent. For decades, Austria's governments have tolerated NATO planes in their airspace, just as they allowed American tanks passage during the 1991 Gulf War.

Behind the façade of a steadfast principle, the concept of neutrality has evolved. Like Germany, Austria was divided into four occupied zones after the Second World War. It dodged partition (the fate of its larger neighbour) by hammering out a deal with the Soviet Union in spring 1955, which guaranteed the country full sovereignty in exchange for a promise of 'permanent neutrality'. Called the Moscow Memorandum, the pledge was a prerequisite for a state treaty brokered with the Soviet Union, US, UK, and France that codified the country's independence (3). Parliament passed the Constitutional Law on the Neutrality of Austria that October, and the Allied troops withdrew.

More than Just Military Alliances

Germany could have taken a similar path. In 1952, Stalin proposed that the Western powers trade reunification for a commitment to remain neutral. The offer was seriously considered by some leaders of the Christian Democratic Union (the CDU, which governed the Federal Republic at the time), including Jakob Kaiser,³ then minister of All-German Affairs. But Chancellor Konrad Adenauer⁴ and the US both resisted. West Germany joined NATO the same year that Austria pledged its permanent neutrality.

The era's debates over neutrality went beyond military alliances; in both Austria and Germany, they touched on economic policy as well. The CDU's leftist faction took the middle road between Anglo-Saxon capitalism and a Soviet-style planned economy: its 1947 Ahlen Programme called for

3 Jakob Kaiser (1888–1961), a resistance fighter against National Socialism, was a founding member of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany and a minister in the first two West German post-war cabinets (1949–57).

4 Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967) was a politician in the Catholic party Zentrum during the Weimar Republic and, as a member of the CDU, served as the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949–63).

nationalising key sectors under the banner of 'socialism through Christian responsibility'. Adenauer and the Allied Powers worked to muzzle supporters so as to keep West Germany's major businesses in private hands—especially in those of Nazi collaborators and profiteers like the Quandt (BMW), Porsche-Piëch (Volkswagen), and Flick families⁵ (4).

Austria's story could not be more different. Two major 'nationalisation acts' socialised banks, essential industries, and the energy sector in 1946–1947; cooperative and public ownership have more central than in Germany, and, to this day, nearly half of Vienna's apartments belong to cooperatives or public institutions—versus just a quarter in Berlin.

The widely celebrated embrace of neutrality became a pillar of Austria's identity, and remains associated with one figure: Bruno Kreisky, who served as undersecretary of state (1953–1959), foreign minister (1959–1966), and chancellor (1970–1983). A Social Democrat, Kreisky forged a technique later called 'active' or 'engaged' neutrality (5), visiting Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary in the 1960s—a first for a Western foreign minister. In so doing, he paved the way for Germany's policy of *détente*, soon implemented by that country's chancellor, Willy Brandt (1969–1974), a close friend of Kreisky's from their shared exile in Sweden during the Second World War.

Kreisky was also instrumental in arranging the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), held between July 1973 and August 1975 in Helsinki and Geneva, as well as in writing the Helsinki Declaration (signed 1 August 1975);⁶ the conference and declaration both shaped the *détente*'s institutional framework. When the CSCE became the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1995, it set up shop in Vienna—already home to numerous United Nations agencies that Kreisky had helped bring to Austria. Being a diplomatic hub offers Austria not only international kudos but also a sort of 'negative security assurance' (a commitment by nuclear-armed states not to carry out a strike on a non-nuclear state).

5 The last-named entrepreneurial family held shares in companies in the mining and armaments industries and maintained close ties with the Nazi regime. This led to Friedrich Flick being sentenced to seven years in prison by an Allied war tribunal in 1947, but he was released early in 1950. The Flick family continued to be one of the most important business families in the Federal Republic of Germany and maintained lucrative political connections.

6 The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was an intergovernmental gathering based on the 1973 Helsinki Conference, in which almost all European states—i.e., member states of the Warsaw Pact, NATO, and neutral states—participated with the aim of securing peace in Europe. It was merged into the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1995.

Support for the Non-Aligned

The worldly Austrian chancellor took a hands-on approach in the rapprochement between Israel's government and Yasser Arafat's⁷ Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which culminated in the 1993–95 Oslo Accords. Like neutral peers such as Sweden—whose leader, the social democrat Olof Palme, was another of Kreisky's friends—Austria stayed close with the non-aligned movement and supported its call for a new international economic order. In short, this middle-sized country has played an outsized role in international affairs.

As the Greens, founded in 1986, would later do, the SPÖ (led by Kreisky 1967–1983) refused to join the European Economic Community (EEC) for both economic and foreign policy reasons. But Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, another Social Democrat, applied for membership in 1989. In its opinion on Austria's application, published in July 1991, the European Commission lamented 'rigidities', 'definite tendencies towards corporatism', and the public sector's 'relatively low' productivity—all of which would 'threaten the [country's] competitiveness'. It also deemed Austria's neutrality a 'specific problem'.

After Austria joined the EU (1995), the government largely laid these reservations to rest: it launched a massive privatisation plan in the 1990s and 2000s and complied with the EU's structural adjustment programme, sacrificing its relative economic independence in the process.

Furthermore, despite its neutral stance, Vienna committed to full and active participation in the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP). Although the 'Irish clause'⁸ of the Treaty on European Union states that European defence policy 'shall not prejudice the specific character of [that] of certain Member States',⁹ in practice Austria joined the EU's combat groups as well as the European Peace Facility, a fund widely criticised for exporting weapons to troubled areas. In 1990, the country's authorities even

7 Yasser Arafat (Yāsir 'Arafāt, 1929–2004) was chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, founded in 1964, from 1969 until his death, and its first president (1996–2004), following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords.

8 Paragraph 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), also known as the Lisbon Treaty, gives EU member states that are neutral or non-aligned—such as Ireland (hence the name 'Irish clause') and Austria—the option to opt out of EU mutual defence in the event of an attack on the EU.

9 'Article 42(7) TEU: The EU's Mutual Assistance Clause', *Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, October 2022, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Article%2042%287%29%20TEU%20-The%20EU%27s%20mutual%20assistance%20clause.pdf>.

unilaterally declared several articles of the Austrian State Treaty obsolete in order to legitimise participation in EU military structures; the Soviet Union cried foul, but Western powers kept mum.

The debate over the foreign policy framework came back with a vengeance with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Various interpretations of the neutrality principle coexist within Austria's ÖVP–Green government. For instance, Defence Minister Klaudia Tanner (ÖVP, conservative) opposes helping Ukrainian demining operations, while Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen (former Green Party member and armed forces commander-in-chief) openly supports them. All parties currently in the government do see eye to eye, however, on one objective: the massive rearmament of the Austrian armed forces, whose budget is to double by 2025.

Europe as an 'Armed Peace Project'

Outside of the main parties, discussions go even further. Economic lobbyist Günther Fehlinger leads a small minority demanding that Austria join NATO, a campaign that isn't gaining much popular or political traction. Other neutrality opponents call for shoring up European defence systems and increasing Austrian involvement in them. Robert Menasse, for example, told me he would like to see a sovereign Europe as an 'armed peace project' prepared for self-defence—but for this to be possible, the 'myth of Austrian neutrality' would have to be dispelled. Menasse opposes Austrian participation in NATO because it could drag the country into conflicts between superpowers. His goal is quite the opposite: to outgrow dependence on the US.

For neutrality supporters—like Gerald Oberansmayr, of Solidar-Werkstatt Österreich (Solidarity Workshop), a Linz-based pacifist organisation—further integration with an increasingly militarised Europe that could behave like an imperial and neocolonial power is not the answer.

University of Vienna political scientist Heinz Gärtner also leans towards a diplomatically sovereign Europe. An advocate for returning to engaged neutrality, in March 2014 he proposed an Austria-like neutral status for Ukraine to avoid an impending war; not long after, Henry Kissinger suggested the same. This stance, which then foreign minister Sebastian Kurz made government policy in 2014, was soon abandoned—under NATO pressure, Gärtner thinks.

The golden age of engaged neutrality has clearly passed. Granted, Austria played a major role in establishing UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons (TPNW) during the 2010s, against NATO's wishes. But on most other issues, the country has kept in step with EU and NATO positions. The Ukrainian government's March 2022 offer of a ceasefire agreement, which would have entailed giving up its application for NATO membership, did not get active support in Vienna. And Austria did not engage with efforts from Turkey, Israel, Brazil, India, and several African countries to end the fighting.

And yet, rising tensions between the West, on one hand, and Russia and China, on the other, plus the threat of a nuclear face-off, mean that European countries appear both independent and trustworthy to their non-aligned Southern counterparts. As Heinz Gärtner points out, 'thinking in terms of blocs has always blocked thinking'. Rather than ramping up a new arms race—be it within the Atlantic framework or the European one—he suggests investing in institutions, along the lines of the OSCE, that can bridge blocs.

Austria was once an expert at such bridgebuilding. Now it's more focused on walking the fine line between formal neutrality and integration into Western military bodies. Last June, Chancellor Nehammer announced that his country would participate in Sky Shield, the air defence project developed by European NATO members. This, while celebrating neutrality almost in the same breath.

Notes

- (1) 'Prominente fordern ernsthafte Diskussion über Verteidigungspolitik [Prominent figures call for serious discussion of defence policy]', *Der Standard*, Vienna, 22 May 2002.
- (2) 'Nehammer: Österreich bleibt neutral [Nehammer: Austria will remain neutral]', *Kurier*, 8 March 2022, kurier.at/.
- (3) At the request of the Western Allies, however, neutrality was not explicitly mentioned in the state treaty.
- (4) See David de Jong, *Nazi Billionaires: The Dark History of Germany's Wealthiest Dynasties* (Mariner, 2022).
- (5) The term 'engaged neutrality' was coined by Heinz Gärtner. See Heinz Gärtner, ed., *Engaged Neutrality: An Evolved Approach to the Cold War* (Lexington, 2017).

About the Author

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War in Ukraine, War in the Middle East: But Switzerland's Denial of Reality Is Breathtaking

Krieg in der Ukraine, Krieg in Nahost: Doch die Realitätsverweigerung der Schweiz ist atemberaubend

Eric Gujer

Editorial Note

This is the text of a speech given by the editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) at the general meeting of the newspaper's public limited company on 13 April 2024, and published in the NZZ on 17 April 2024.¹ The NZZ is one of the most eminent German-language newspapers as regards foreign reporting.

The Swiss are known for being able to do almost anything. They can make cheese, they can make money, but can they also conduct foreign policy? The question is not as harmless as it sounds.

The year 2024 is a horror year. Russia seizes the initiative in the war in Ukraine. Authoritarian powers attempt to destroy the Western-dominated order. Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea form the axis of authoritarianism, not unlike the old Axis powers. The chamber of horrors that is the US presidential race is casting doubt on America's reliability. Truly a year of horror!

For the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, security is defined not in economic or social terms, but in military and foreign policy terms. We are experiencing a change of era similar to the end of the Cold War. And now, of all times, the Swiss are approving the 13th AHV pension.² They want everything to stay as it is. Social security—and nothing else. The

¹ Eric Gujer, 'Krieg in der Ukraine, Krieg in Nahost: Doch die Realitätsverweigerung der Schweiz ist atemberaubend [War in Ukraine, war in the Middle East: But Switzerland's denial of reality is breathtaking]', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17 April 2024.

² This refers to the provision in the Swiss Federal Constitution that a 13th pension payment (Alters- und Hinterlassenenversicherung, AHV) must be provided from 2026 onwards, in addition to the existing twelve pension payments.

Swiss are not particularly interested in the change of era. This denial of reality is frightening.

Do we understand what is happening in the world? It's a tough question. To answer it, we should turn to an expert, former Foreign Minister René Felber.³

When the Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA, Switzerland's foreign ministry) was bombarded with questions about how the Federal Council⁴ viewed this historic turning point.

The FDFA responded with the following communiqué: 'It is impossible for Federal Councillor Felber to comment on all political events to journalists. After all, something important happens almost every day.'

What does it matter to the Swiss government if a sack of potatoes falls over or a wall comes down somewhere near Moscow? Switzerland is reluctant to engage in foreign policy and is also reluctant to be disturbed by world history.

The Country Has an Allergy to Foreign Good-for-Nothings

This phenomenon, which I would call the quintessentially Swiss allergy to foreign good-for-nothings, is not new. In the 1860s, it was not Russia but Bismarck's Prussia that disrupted the European order.

The Federal Council therefore decided to set up an embassy in Berlin—'provisionally', as it cautiously put it. The task was to fall to Joachim Heer, the president of the Glarus cantonal government.

He complained that he could serve his country better in his 'modest position in his home canton' than in Berlin. But the Federal Council remained stubborn, Heer complied, and the mishap took its course.

No sooner had he arrived in Berlin than Heer fell ill with an allergy to foreign scraps of paper. After three weeks, he sent a dispatch home saying that he was 'in the full and true sense of the word homesick and longing to return from the noise of this foreign world to the tranquillity of my beloved Glarus'. The Federal Council hastily granted his request. I don't think anything has ever been decided so quickly in Bern since then.

Incidentally, the episode did not harm Heer. A few years later, he was elected to the Federal Council. We can learn four things from this Prussian

3 René Felber (1933–2020) was a politician and member of the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP). He was a member of the Swiss government, the Federal Council, and served as head of the Department of Foreign Affairs (1988–1993).

4 The Federal Council (Bundesrat) is the Swiss Confederation's federal cabinet.

interlude: Swiss foreign policy likes to start with a provisional arrangement, it is peppered with misunderstandings, and it occasionally ends in a hangover; above all, however, an allergy to foreign scraps of paper qualifies you for higher office.

We are gradually gaining an understanding of how Swiss foreign policy works. To be on the safe side, I will quote another document from the FDFA. Because documents don't lie, especially when they come from the federal administration.

In 1963, too, something important happened almost every day. For example, the assassination of John F. Kennedy. For the first time, the federal government sent a federal councillor abroad to attend a funeral.

The federal administration responded to such decisiveness in the way it always responds to decisiveness—with a dismissive memo: 'The Swiss have a horror of overly mobile people and political chatter; they also do not like to have sand thrown in their eyes. Let us therefore remain true to our serious and discreet policy, which is not suited to spectacular visits.'

'A horror of political chatter'—if only the federal government in Bern would remember these words when it delights us with ever new regulations and laws.

Meanwhile, the federal councillors are eagerly visiting other countries. Some of these trips are spectacular, such as when a federal councillor boards a sports plane and pays a flying visit to France. When he then also enters restricted airspace, we can proudly say: Other countries should try to emulate Switzerland's spectacular diplomatic travels!⁵

The Handling of the Army is a Declaration of Bankruptcy

So there is a lot of travelling going on, and yet much has remained the same. The allergy to foreign scraps of paper and foreign judges is still virulent. The longing for the tranquillity of the beloved Glarus region is still one of the typical characteristics of the Swiss character. People want to keep to themselves and be bothered as little as possible, especially not by the EU. 'Felber's curse', according to which something important happens every day, continues to present Switzerland with seemingly unsolvable problems.

5 This anecdote concerns Alain Berset (b. 1972), a politician and member of the Swiss Social Democratic Party. He was a member of the Federal Council and headed the Federal Department of Home Affairs (2012–2023). In 2022, he was forced to land by French air police while flying a private sports plane after accidentally entering restricted airspace.

It has been two years since Russia invaded Ukraine. Yet Switzerland has still not revised its rules on arms exports. Other countries cannot demonstrate their solidarity with Ukraine using military equipment purchased in Switzerland—not to mention Swiss solidarity with Kyiv.

The army is dramatically underfunded. No wonder, then, that the head of the army, Thomas Süssli, warns: ‘According to current plans, we will lose the army with its mechanised resources.’ The army will cease to be an army because it lacks weapons. No one surpasses Bern in casually declaring bankruptcy in this way.

The army has been pointing out the underfunding for a long time. No one cared, not the government, not parliament, not even Viola Amherd.⁶ She left it to the army chief to take the rap. Cleverness is a virtue in politicians, but irresponsibility is not.

But perhaps this is just a Valais quirk. People from Valais are reluctant to communicate with ‘non-Valaisans’ and ‘Grüezini’.⁷ In fact, the Federal Council seems to consist entirely of seven Valaisans. It steadfastly refuses to explain what strategy Switzerland should adopt in response to this historic change. Let’s look on the bright side: the Federal Council is terrified of political chatter.

Something important is supposed to happen almost every day? Nonsense! Switzerland believes that it is none of its business if Putin conquers Ukraine and dictates his terms to the continent. What a fallacy! A new ice age in Europe will be much more expensive than a few weapons for the Swiss army.

The Swiss Confederation has learned the hard way that it can expect little good from the major powers. It therefore stands aloof and cherry-picks the best bits. I mean that as a compliment. It tries to assert its interests while giving as little as possible to the big players—whether they be Napoleon, the Habsburgs, or the EU.

History shapes our country. That is why every agreement with the EU has a hard time finding a majority. It is not about the European Court of Justice or wage protection. The details are secondary. The dispute is a war of beliefs—as is so often the case when historical influences are at play. The relationship with the EU touches on the primal trauma of a small country: the experience of becoming a pawn in the game of foreign interests; the fear of losing sovereignty.

6 Viola Amherd (b. 1962) is a politician and member of the Swiss centre to centre-right political party Die Mitte (The Centre). She was a member of the Federal Council (2018–2025) and headed the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection, and Sport.

7 After the customary greeting in German-speaking Switzerland, ‘Grüezi’ (hello), German-speaking Swiss people who are not from the canton of Valais are referred to as ‘Grüezini’. Gujer’s remarks allude to provincialism and scepticism towards the outside world.

In wars of belief, words are fought over fiercely. Whether you say Framework Agreement 2.0 or Bilateral [Agreements] III⁸ makes it instantly clear which camp you belong to.

If Gottfried Keller⁹ were to write *Romeo and Juliet in the Village* today, the fathers of the two lovers would still be enemies. One would angrily proclaim 'Bilateral III', the other 'Framework Agreement 2.0'.

Switzerland is sometimes a big Seldwyla.

The Bilateral Framework Agreement 3.0—I hope this formula does justice to all positions in the room—requires a waiver of sovereignty. This was already the case with the bilateral agreements. At that time, however, Brussels demanded less than it does today. The mood in Switzerland was also different.

During the Cold War, the country aligned itself with NATO and the EU in order to avoid being crushed between the blocs. Geopolitically, there was no neutrality, and Switzerland saw itself as part of the West. It had a firm foundation of values. Neutrality was therefore relative. That changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall. With the end of the blocs, the country gained freedom of action and became accustomed to the idea that neutrality and sovereignty were absolute. The feeling of belonging to a community of values faded.

In the meantime, new blocs are emerging—China, Russia, India, the USA, and even the EU—and they are flexing their muscles. All states are sovereign, but some are more sovereign than others. The EU will not make any further concessions. We are learning a lesson about what it means to be a second-rate power and to be treated as such.

However, the most important thing to know about Swiss foreign policy was recognised long ago by the great British liberal and scholar Isaiah Berlin.¹⁰ He divided all people into hedgehogs and foxes: 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.'

The hedgehog has an ideal to which it subordinates everything else. The fox, on the other hand, knows all the tricks. It finds its way better in the complexity of the world. In return, the hedgehog tends to remain true to itself and its principles.

8 This refers to the ongoing negotiations between Switzerland and the EU since 2022, aimed at updating and expanding the agreements reached between 1972 and 1999 (known as 'Bilateral Agreements I') and in 2004 (known as 'Bilateral Agreements II').

9 The Swiss writer Gottfried Keller (1819–1890) was one of the most important representatives of German realism in the nineteenth century. His works include the satirical novella cycle *Die Leute von Seldwyla* (The people of Seldwyla), and the novella *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (Romeo and Juliet in the village).

10 Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997) was a philosopher and an important figure in post-war English-speaking liberalism, which distanced itself from contemporary revolutionary Marxism–Leninism.

Switzerland is a hedgehog. That does not mean prickly isolation. No other country is more internationally connected. No, I mean mentally.

We subordinate everything to one big thing and are stubborn and rigid as a block in foreign policy. Our big thing is, of course, our relationship with the EU. There is a deep-seated aversion to foxes and other 'overly mobile people', as the memo on the first foreign trip of a federal councillor so nicely puts it.

The hedgehog says I need the perfect EU agreement because I don't know what crazy ideas Brussels will come up with next. The fox says I don't need the one perfect agreement, but as many reasonably good ones as possible. The future is open, so I want different options.

In their own way, both are right. They just have very different views of the world.

In the Federal Council, Alain Berset was a fox. A hellraiser, yes, but also a skilled politician who knew how to pull all the strings. Perhaps Albert Rösti¹¹ is emulating him. He moves just as skilfully between all fronts. Only in terms of the hellraiser factor is there still room for improvement.

Rösti's party, the SVP, is the perfect hedgehog party. It has only two issues: migration and the EU. Everything that goes wrong is the fault of one or the other. Crowded trams, congested roads, high rents, bad weather—it's all down to foreigners and bureaucrats in Brussels.

The SVP is also the most successful party in elections. We are, after all, a nation of hedgehogs. Nowhere is this clearer than in foreign policy. Here, we focus entirely on Europe.

Should Switzerland Join NATO?

There are plenty of other issues to deal with. Can we still afford an autonomous national defence? If not, what will be the consequence: joining NATO and abandoning neutrality? How will Switzerland act in a world where the law of the jungle prevails once again? A small country is dependent on the rule of law. But Russia and China are ruthlessly asserting their power interests.

Do we have the courage to cultivate our strength: clever cherry-picking? We tend to shoot ourselves in the foot. Our rigorous hedgehog morality often takes precedence over our own interests. In the free trade agreement with Indonesia, palm oil production was almost more important to voters than

11 Albert Rösti (b. 1967) is a Swiss politician and member of the right-wing populist Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP). Since 2022, he has been a member of the Federal Council and head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications.

our export opportunities. The agreement only narrowly survived the vote. In the corporate responsibility initiative, evil corporations were pilloried.

Will this mixture of cheap morality and a saturated affluent society catch on? We will see when we vote on the trade agreement with India. Child labour is even easier to exploit than palm oil or the exploitation of developing countries.

There are no free trade agreements and no understanding with the EU without approval by direct democracy. That much is clear. What is completely unclear, however, is what will happen if we end up with neither.

A wall can break away without the whole house collapsing. But if the further development of free trade and relations with the EU are abandoned, prosperity is at risk. Left-wing propaganda against exploitation and right-wing propaganda against Brussels, protectionism by farmers and protectionism by trade unions reinforce each other. In the end, the majority is united in its aversion to foreign influences.

That is why the idea of a global Switzerland remains a pipe dream. Switzerland will not become a second Singapore, which prefers the freedom of the global markets to the stuffiness of Europe. Because hedgehogs like neither the EU nor free trade.

Since 2022, neutrality and thus the foundation of Switzerland's foreign policy identity have been in crisis. Armed neutrality is a joke due to a lack of weapons. Everyone pays lip service to the army. But when the phalanx of lobbyists torpedoes rearmament in order to save their subsidies, what then? If parliament proves incapable of setting spending priorities, what then? Will the bourgeoisie be prepared to relax the debt brake or raise taxes?

We are approaching the point where it really hurts. But politicians and citizens are closing their eyes.

We don't just want to be neutral, we also want to be a little important. To this end, God created good offices. He knew that his Swiss people had two passions: building tunnels in the mountains and mediating in the world.

Ignazio Cassis¹² is campaigning for a conference on Ukraine. Neither the Russians nor the Chinese consider Switzerland neutral because Bern is participating in the sanctions. Beijing is reluctant to come to the Bürgenstock.¹³ Moscow is not involved anyway. But without Russia, there can be no

¹² Ignazio Cassis (b. 1961) is a Swiss politician ('Die Liberalen', Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei, FDP) and has been a member of the Federal Council since November 2017, where he is head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Cassis was president of the Swiss Confederation in 2022.

¹³ The International High-Level Conference on Peace in Ukraine took place on 15 and 16 June 2024 at the Bürgenstock Resort, which is situated above Lake Lucerne in Switzerland.

peace. A peace conference without the warring parties is pretty pointless. It merely serves to boost the host's image.

We are too neutral for NATO; we are not neutral enough for Russia and China. If no one else really respects our neutrality, it is not a protection but a burden.

Our ideal is a neutral small state that stays out of all disputes. But that is becoming increasingly difficult. If we don't go to the disputes, they come to us. The globalised world knows no redoubt.

After the atrocities committed by Hamas, Europe is shaken by attacks and anti-Semitism. At times like these, we pray that the noise of the outside world will not disturb the peace and quiet of our beloved Glarus. Switzerland is reluctant to ban Hamas for fear of provoking it. But cowardice never helps against terrorists.

At the same time, Switzerland often acts as a self-important do-gooder in the Middle East. In 2003, Micheline Calmy-Rey¹⁴ decided to mediate between Israelis and Palestinians. The so-called Geneva Initiative lasted 20 years, cost £20 million (Swiss francs) and achieved nothing. This is a warning sign for Cassis's Ukraine summit and a fine example of how the supposedly selfless Swiss diplomacy sometimes bursts with self-confidence.

Four Proposals for a Modern Neutrality Policy

The Gaza war shows how neutrality can be biased. The UN relief agency UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) is turning out to be a henchman of Hamas. It even recruited UN personnel for its murderous activities. The head of the relief agency is Swiss, like his predecessor, and vacated his position at the UN under unclear circumstances. This did not prevent the International Committee of the Red Cross—another icon of neutrality—from promoting him to its top position. No one is outraged by this disreputable symbiosis.

Switzerland cannot find a clear stance on the UN relief agency, which leaves unclear the issue of whether it benefits the oppressed civilians or the terrorists more. In the UN Security Council, Switzerland sides with Arab states against Israel. It takes the side of enemies of freedom and cowers

Convened by Switzerland at Ukraine's request, the conference aimed to find ways to end the war against Ukraine.

14 Micheline Calmy-Rey (b. 1945) is a politician (Social Democratic Party of Switzerland). She was a member of the Federal Council and head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (2003–2011).

before terrorists, but shows lukewarm half-heartedness when Ukraine defends Europe's freedom. This is how neutrality is reduced to absurdity.

Karin Keller-Sutter¹⁵ provided a contemporary definition of neutrality when Credit Suisse [CS] went under. She said: 'Switzerland had to assume responsibility beyond its own borders.' Had Bern not acted, the collapse of CS would have shaken the international financial markets.

For a brief moment, the Federal Council wielded considerable foreign policy power. It used it wisely by improvising and deviating from the FINMA (Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority) script. Its 'too big to fail' rules were a typical hedgehog idea, a big deal—namely, absolutely watertight banking regulation. Unfortunately, the idea did not work, and the government understood that. Note: when it comes to money, the Swiss are, for once, foxes.

Responsibility beyond national borders: this would be a good guideline for a neutrality policy. It just needs to be implemented consistently—and not only when naked self-interest dictates it, as in the case of Credit Suisse.

Modern neutrality is not rocket science. Four simple rules are enough: 1. Switzerland does not enter into any alliance commitments. 2. It does not participate directly in wars. 3. The government decides on arms deliveries and other day-to-day political issues in accordance with the national interest. 4. Switzerland is committed to the Western community and actively contributes to preventing Putin and his ilk from reshaping the world according to their authoritarian will.

But the Federal Council is made up of seven hedgehogs. They are terrified by the complexity of the world. At the same time, the seven hedgehogs are clever. They know that their people do not appreciate foxes or overly agile people. So, everything in foreign policy remains as it is. The status quo undoubtedly has the appeal of comfort. All you have to do is ignore the important things that happen in the world every day.

About the Author

Eric Gujer is a journalist and author. He has been editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* since March 2015.

¹⁵ Karin Maria Keller-Sutter (b. 1963) is a liberal politician and a member the Swiss Party 'Die Liberalen'. She has been president of the Swiss Confederation since 2025. She was previously head of the Departments of Justice and Finance.

Who Is Neutral and Who Is Wrong in [the] Ukraine War?

Muhammet Ali Güler

Editorial Note

This article appeared on 1 April 2022 in the *Daily Sabah*,¹ which is the largest of the three major English-language newspapers in Turkey. Like the Turkish-language edition of *Sabah*, the *Daily Sabah* is close to the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), the party of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine is a serious threat to global peace. Several times, the Kremlin had directly and indirectly hinted at using nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Without a doubt, that would be a total disaster. Russian President Vladimir Putin's statements show that Moscow will get more aggressive.

In this context, a neutral, reliable, and strong mediator will positively change the course of this human-made calamity. Turkey, as the Black Sea neighbor for both sides, appears as a key mediator. The country's neutral position works as a de-escalation strategy in this conflict as the Turkish military is a stunning powerhouse among NATO allies. According to some Western minds, Turkey's presence in the alliance is the first military resistance line where the Turkish military would take part in trench warfare. However, Ankara stands firm with its neutral position while embracing humanitarian and constructive policies and engaging with all sides.

Why Ankara Is Neutral

Some media platforms are covering this war as if it's going on between Russia and Turkey instead of Ukraine because of the Turkish drones, previously purchased by Kyiv and now used on the ground. [On the] [c]ontrary, the purchase of drones was just a part of a bilateral trade made within international law norms. That means the drones used by Ukraine are not 'Turkish' at the moment but 'Ukrainian'.

1 <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/who-is-neutral-and-who-is-wrong-in-ukraine-war>.

Turkey has been fighting against the terrorist groups PKK² and Daesh³ for years. What sort of weapons and equipment do these terrorists use against Turkey, including in Iraq and Syria? Weapons made in Sweden, Russia, the United States, France, China, Germany, and so on. The list is long. For example, the most common weapon used by the PKK is the Russian-made AK-47, officially known as the Avtomat Kalashnikov.

Meanwhile, NATO's expansion in Europe was a mistake. The current tacit issues among NATO members are visible. Going head to head with Russia without solving the existing problems in the alliance has surfaced hypocrisy and deepened the thought that Turkey is on one side and other members on the other. Several times, Ankara warned the NATO allies and called for a collective stance; however, they didn't respond. Now, unfortunately, the war is on the European continent. We have seen this scenario in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Libya, Syria, and Iraq.

A Message to [the] West

On the other side, the Russia–Ukraine war should be a lesson for Westerners to put away their superiority mindset and adopt an equal and mutual approach. The Western reputation is already in tatters because of their double standards toward crises in Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan.

We also see in the Ukraine crisis that the Western policy of 'donating money' to third countries to prevent the influx of refugees is also meaningless, impractical, and useless.

What we see in general is that NATO's inactivity, neglect, and immobility in the Middle East and Crimea have encouraged Russia to finally test NATO's integrity and capability at home. It's really time for Western-dominated alliances to change the destructive and provocative actions to prudent, collective, and facilitating movements for all.

2 The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Kurmanji: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, PKK) is an underground organisation and guerrilla group founded in Diyarbakır in 1978. Its goal is to secure national autonomy for the Kurdish ethnic group within a decentralised Turkey. The PKK is classified as a terrorist organisation by Turkey and the EU, but not by the UN. The group's leader, Abdullah Öcalan (b. 1949), who has been imprisoned in Turkey since 1999, called for the PKK's dissolution and an end to armed struggle in February 2025.

3 Daesh, from the Arabic *Dā'ish*, is the acronym of Dawla al-Islāmiyya fī al-'Irāq wa ash-Shām (usually translated into English as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [ISIS]), an Islamist terrorist organisation which, at the height of its power during the Syrian civil war, controlled large parts of the country and areas in north-western Iraq.

Asia in the Ukraine Crisis

My impression is that Japan and South Korea acted faster than some in Europe even in imposing the sanctions on Russia. This is not because the two countries are pro-war nations but due to the China factor. They will expect the same swift action from their Western allies when needed.

There are persistent calls for China to also take the West's side against Russia in the crisis. [The] Chinese may think that there is a need for a solution but why must it be the way Westerners want? From my point of view, Beijing will just watch the strategic moves of both sides and observe the outcomes, which will enable the Chinese leadership to evaluate the Western and Russian maneuvering power. It is unlikely to see China's active engagement in the conflict—whether positive or negative like a superpower. This position is described as non-interfering and neutral by Beijing and silent by the West. Beijing will most likely watch till the last moment, benefitting the most from it.

About the Author

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Serbia's Geopolitical Position After the Start of the War in Ukraine: Neutrality and Strategic Deterrence in a Crisis Context

Geopolitički položaj Srbije nakon otpočinjanja rata u Ukrajini: Neutralnost i strateško odbraćanje u kriznom kontekstu

Aleksandar Gajić

Editorial Note

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Introduction: On the Geopolitics of the Conflict in Ukraine

The beginning of the 'special military operation' on the territory of post-Soviet Ukraine as the second, more radical phase of the conflict between Russia and the West—after the first, during the period 2014–2022 (Zarić and Budimir 2022, 78–104)—represents a titanic geopolitical competition between two different geopolitical and civilisational concepts in the space of the Eastern European part of the Heartland. It also poses a 'complex political, security and economic problem of international relations in modern history' (Kolarski 2022, 78). This conflict has the potential to lead to a radical transformation of the whole of international relations and global

¹ Aleksandar Gajić, 'Geopolitički položaj Srbije nakon otpočinjanja rata u Ukrajini: Neutralnost i strateško odbraćanje u kriznom kontekstu [Serbia's geopolitical position after the start of the war in Ukraine: Neutrality and strategic deterrence in a crisis context]', *Srpska politička misao* 80, no. 2 (2023): 53–74.

geopolitics, i.e., a completely different global distribution of power. The Balkan area, with Serbia at its centre—both as a link between the western and central parts of Rimland and the Eastern European Intermarium² as part of the repeatedly planned ‘cordon sanitaire’, through which Russia is being pushed back and a geopolitical penetration into the depths of the continental Heartland is being prepared—has not only always been a seismograph of continental geopolitical movements but also a space in which the consequences of all these movements regularly manifested themselves. However, in order to comprehensively explain Serbia’s position in the contemporary context, it is necessary to first understand the geopolitical framework of the contemporary conflict in Ukraine.

The territory of Ukraine is the western lowland part of the Eastern European Heartland, which forms a link (east–west) between the Central European Rimland and the vast expanse of Russian Eurasia, partly flanked by an enclosed sea [the Black Sea]. (Konyvtar 2014). This space historically represents a ‘troubled frontier’, a borderland (as the name Ukraine implies) of the Heartland, where the powers of the Heartland compete with expansionist incursions from the ‘periphery’. Ukraine’s current situation is a new and different manifestation of its old ‘border situation’, which it has often experienced throughout its history. In geostrategic terms, Ukraine is part of the ‘Russian world’—its ‘soft underbelly’—and is a contested space between expansionists from the West (exponents of Euro-Atlanticism) and Eurasian continentalists from the ‘heart of the mainland’ who try to stop and contain them. Under Russian supremacy, Ukraine is seen as ‘anchoring’ Russian power all the way to the Carpathian Mountains. These mountains do not prevent penetration, but they cannot be overcome easily. If Ukraine is under the influence or control of Western powers, the Russian and Belarusian ‘southern flanks’ are wide open along an arc that stretches from Poland’s eastern border and along the Sea of Azov almost to Volgograd in the south, a distance of more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometres), more than 700 of which lie along Russian possessions. For Russia, Ukraine thus represents a question of fundamental national security. In the case of the Western powers, Ukraine only has value if a Western power seeks to take action and defeat Russia, as the Germans attempted to do in the Second World War (Friedman 2013). Current positions and goals of the great powers regarding Ukraine and the conflict taking place there are clear (see Rutland 2015, 129–140): ‘For Russia, Ukraine represents a key security zone that under

2 Two key terms in the geopolitical thought of Nicholas Spykman and Sir Halford Mackinder. On this, see the introduction to this chapter.

no circumstances must become an area from which the European part of Russian territory can be threatened. In this sense, it must either remain at least a neutral “buffer” between Russia and the powers of the European Rimland or be reintegrated (in different ways and in several stages) into the newly emerging continental alliances initiated by Russia.... The US, i.e., the Atlanticists, has completely opposite goals: they want to maintain their positions in a weakened EU and at all costs prevent any rapprochement of key EU countries with Russia (Engdahl 2010). That’s why they have pushed the EU into further eastward expansion (since it frustrates Russian integration plans) and, at the same time, desire to continue long-standing tensions and destabilisation. While the EU, and some of its members in particular, have an economic interest in a stable Ukraine (although some envisage it as part of the EU and some do not) and in improving economic cooperation with Russia despite the negative sentiments and perceptions of Russia and Russians, the Atlanticist goal is a situation of long-term instability and crisis that, through skilful conflict management, would permanently separate, confront, and weaken both the EU and Russia’ (Gajić and Rajić 2022, 132).

The Geopolitical Position of Contemporary Serbia and Its Impact on Foreign Policy Strategy

The geopolitical position, in short, represents the spatial positioning of a political subject (usually a state) in geographical circumstances—that is, in the existing environment and influences. It reflects the connection between the spatial position (place) and the influence of geographical and political factors on it. These factors include: the geographical position of the country, its military–strategic position, its wider regional political and security context, and its internal political order. Contemporary geopolitics observes each political subject through four basic aspects of its geopolitical position: first, the geographical aspect (consisting of geographical position and the position of physical–geographical conditions in relation to state borders); second, aspects of the political environment (the regional distribution of political power); third, aspects of the global distribution of power and its geopolitical structures (the distribution of the great powers, their military–political alliances and their expansion, withdrawals, and places of contact and confrontation [‘shatterbelts’]); and fourth, the intra-political aspect (the aspect of political order, the character of the government, the constitutional order, economic development, etc.). Observing all four aspects of Serbia’s geopolitical position, the following can be clearly seen. From

the political and geographical point of view, Serbia is located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula, along whose length extends the main road route through this part of Europe (the Moravian–Vardar valley) that connects the area of the Pannonian Plain with the Mediterranean, forming a kind of core: the interior (hinterland) of the easternmost European peninsula.

Serbia's regional environment consists of a number of Balkan and Central European states, most of which were founded on the ruins of the former Yugoslavia, a state structure into which Serbia brought its own statehood and its greatest military victories. From the west, north, and east, Serbia is surrounded by countries that are members of the EU and NATO, and from the south and southeast by NATO members that aspire to full legal membership in the EU. Relations are complex due to a series of historical disputes and mutual pretensions to the areas that the Serbian people have been inhabiting for many centuries. This antagonism is mostly induced from the outside, as a result of geopolitical competition of the 'great powers' representatives of the 'four great spaces' that converge in the Balkans, and which spill over into their local civilian representatives, i.e., their state creations, and which are often instrumentalised for the realisation of the broader geostrategic goals of their patrons. 'The differentiation of the surrounding states largely coincides with the religious and cultural-civilisational orientation of the main nations in the states: the Roman Catholic states in the region gravitate towards their Western civilisational core—the Central European geopolitical option, but also the currently superior Atlanticists; countries with a Muslim majority are oriented towards the Orient, more precisely Turkey as the most present regional power of this orientation, and Orthodox states—towards Russian continentalism (if they are not subjugated, directly or subtly, by Atlanticists)' (Gajić 2022, 128).

The third aspect of the geopolitical position (and certainly the most important aspect, in terms of meaning) concerns Serbia's position in relation to global geopolitical structures. As the Balkan Peninsula is the southern perimeter of the 'Mediterranean keyhole' (Brzezinski) located at the junction between the western (European) and central (Middle East) parts of the Rimland—the coast of the Eurasian mainland that separates its continental core, Heartland (Russia), from access to the world's seas—this area represents an area of frequent historical upheavals ('shatterbelt') due to the constant competition of great powers under varying geopolitical circumstances. There are four powers in question—representatives of three cultural and civilizational types: the West, which seeks to penetrate from Central Europe to the Eastern Mediterranean; the Orient, which from the area of the Eastern Mediterranean tends to expand to the north-west; Euro-Asia, which aspires

to penetrate the Mediterranean from the heart of the land mass; and the Atlanticists, also belonging to Western civilisation, who control the world's seas and prevent the establishment of a hegemonic land power that could threaten their existing supremacy. Because of long-term geopolitical conditions, the Balkans (with Serbia at its heart) has tended to act as an obstacle rather than a bridge between different civilisational formations and the areas they cover. The instability of geopolitical circumstances, caused by the constant confrontation between the 'great powers', made it impossible to establish permanent and stable (and, above all, independent) indigenous states, including a Serbian state. All of them had to align their existence to a large extent with the interests of the 'great powers', fitting their vital interests in with the latter's strategies of action. Nevertheless, the relative independence of the Serbian state has always been a thorn in the side of the interests of the 'great powers'.

The fourth aspect of the geopolitical position relates to the internal circumstances of the territorial political subject/state. It is manifested in the forms of political organisation and the characteristics of the government, in the constitutional and legal organisation, economic flows and the like. It represents the historical outcome of both external influences and the internal long-term development process in a given geographical area, i.e., the state-building heritage with all its positive and negative characteristics. It is quite obvious how much external (geo)political influences have had an impact on the constitutional, legal, political, and economic conditions in Serbia throughout its history, including in the final, post-Yugoslav period after the restoration of state independence. This is particularly evident both in economic activities (the dependence of the Serbian economy on foreign direct investments and financial investments) and in internal political (in)stability.

Overall, the geopolitical position plays a major role both internally and externally, especially in the adoption and implementation of foreign policy strategies used by countries the size of Serbia. These comprise the following strategies: maintaining balance through association against a potential threat, joining a great power ('bandwagoning'), adopting a position of neutrality, or resorting to a 'hedging strategy'. The first two strategies (are alternative, mutually exclusive) and are a direct consequence of the lack of power of small states in the face of the actions of the larger and more influential ones: small states, as individually weak, join forces with other countries in order to create a balance of power in relation to the "great power" from which security threats come to them or, on the other hand, join the bandwagon [of] a "great power" that threatens them and thus eliminate the realisation of this thread, with the inevitable provision of a series of

concessions' (Gajić 2022, 124). The hedging strategy takes advantage of the favourable opportunities that make it possible to avoid adopting a binding policy towards other countries and their alliances, developing ad hoc, pragmatic, and mutually beneficial relations with everyone while striving to minimise the risk of confrontation with any of the great powers. The fourth option is to pursue a policy of neutrality. This arises due to the reluctance of small states to align themselves with mutually antagonising blocs, and to conditions (primarily geopolitical) that allow them to maintain an equal strategic relationship—that is, independence from the confronting poles of power. In the best-case scenario, this strategy will achieve permanent neutrality. 'Instead of resisting entering into political-defensive alliances, a permanently neutral state undertakes not to be part of any future armed conflict, and to pursue a sufficiently restrictive foreign and security policy during a period of peace, which will be able to convince all other states that it will maintain its status during an armed conflict. Thus, the chosen approach is exactly the opposite of the usual one; the state practically renounces the possibility of using force as an element of foreign policy and promises to resort to it solely for self-defence' (Novaković 2019, 243).

The choice of military neutrality, as well as the (predominant) foreign policy strategy of neutrality, conditions, i.e., narrows the options for, those countries to develop their own strategic deterrence approach—that is, it excludes the possibility of creating military alliances with other countries (more appropriate to balancing strategies) as a way to deter potential aggressors from a planned attack. In this case, deterrence as 'practically discouraging or restraining someone—in world politics, usually a state—from taking unwanted actions, such as an armed attack' (Ratković 1981, 355)—that is, 'readiness to respond militarily and strike in the event that the other side attacks, thereby forcing the other side to abandon the original plan' (Igrutinović 2022, 40)—boils down primarily to increasing one's own combat capabilities and improving the combat readiness of one's military forces (that is, increasing their 'hard' power). In this case, the element of power (which is self-aggrandising) becomes crucial in the equation of the concept of deterrence, which, broken down into its basic elements, reads: (a) power; (b) the threat of the use of force; (c) the existence of risk; (d) the deterrent of the adversary; (e) the preservation of security (see Morgan 1983, 9).

Balancing for the sake of survival has been the basic foreign policy strategy of all Serbian states throughout history, including within both Yugoslavias,³

3 This refers to the first Yugoslav state of the interwar period, which did not formally adopt the name Yugoslavia until 1929, and to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was

but this role was strengthened in times of the bipolar division of the world during the Cold War, in which the country played a role of a mediating and non-aligned power between the blocs. When the need for such a state and its mediating role disappeared in the final decade of the last century, the state disintegrated in a series of civil wars followed by foreign military intervention. Serbia, which resisted disintegration, was turned into a pariah of the international community and exposed first to sanctions and later to foreign military intervention. In this period, the Serbian people were labelled as an unreliable, disruptive factor and an obstacle to full control of the region, so their pacification took place by settling the vital interests of their neighbours at the expense of Serbian ones (territorial, economic, demographic, etc.) (Stepić 2004, 144; Stepić 2012, 11–40). ‘Thus, towards the end of the Cold War, with the beginning of the pronounced dominance of the superpower in the unipolar period of the world order, the “Balkan geopolitical knot” (see Stepić 2001) again became a confrontational arena for regional actors with the prominent help and support of the “great powers”. As the only remaining superpower, the United States maintained its military presence and influence in the Balkans after the military phases of the conflict ended, after which a period of “frozen conflict” entered most of the Balkan region. However, the processes that have been taking place at the global level since the beginning of the twenty-first century have led, frankly speaking, to the temporary placement of the Balkans on the sidelines of US interests, which until then completely dominated both global and regional issues’ (Zarić and Budimir 2022, 80). To this day, the US continues to strategically control the entire environment of Serbia, including its southern province, where KFOR⁴—the UN-led armed forces—has a peacekeeping mandate.

When the second strategic orientation of the Serbian state, balancing through association, did not lead to success, the state would turn to its antipode—bandwagoning on the back of the dominant power. It is in this way that Serbia has historically become a vassal (whether open or covert) of the Byzantine Empire, the Ottomans, and even the Austro-Hungarian Empire (at the time of the so-called ‘Secret Convention’ in 1881). A similar situation occurred at the beginning of the twenty-first century, after 5 October.⁵ On

founded in 1943 and broke up in the early 1990s. A state named Yugoslavia, consisting of the remaining republics of Serbia and Montenegro, formally existed until 2003.

4 The Kosovo Force (KFOR) was formed under NATO leadership in 1999 to maintain peace after the Kosovo War.

5 On 5 October 2000, Slobodan Milošević, then president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (comprising Serbia and Montenegro), was peacefully overthrown after months of mass protests

this occasion, Serbia decided that it would do more harm than good to pursue further resistance, and resorted to the strategy of joining the camp of its hitherto aggressors by commencing EU accession talks and developing a partnership cooperation with NATO. All this was done in order to minimise security risks and achieve certain benefits through cooperation. However, this approach only led to a partial improvement in relations. Furthermore, European integration, which has slowed down over the intervening time, enabled the leading Western powers to continue pursuing their policy of conditioning and achieving their geopolitical goals at Serbia's expense. Therefore, at the end of 2007, the Serbian parliament voted in favour of military neutrality for the first time, gradually adopting a 'strategic evasion' policy based on the 'four pillars of Serbian foreign policy' (see Gajić and Janković 2012, 175–198) and incorporating elements of neutrality. Despite the continuation of the declarative policy of association, as evidenced by Serbia's cooperation in negotiations with the Kosovar government in Priština under the 2013 Brussels Agreement, as well as the partial commencement of European accession (negotiations having begun in April 2013, screening completed in March 2015, and a number of chapters opened between 2015 and 2019), the change of government in Belgrade in 2012 marked a counterpoint. This was characterised by a sudden improvement in relations with Russia and China, as well as an increase in those countries' investment presence and foreign policy support, which has taken on some elements of a strategic partnership. In military terms, neutrality was manifested in not joining military alliances despite raising the degree of military cooperation with NATO to the highest possible level, but also in military cooperation and exercises with Russia (Gajić 2022, 134–135). It seemed that Serbia, despite its unambiguously proclaimed orientation of joining the EU, in practice was increasingly moving towards a balanced strategy of 'fiddling' with elements of a strategy of general neutrality. Events in Eastern Europe, especially since the beginning of the 'special military operation', have, however, stopped these trends.

In the next part of this study, we will try to confirm our hypothesis that it is possible to maintain the current policy of military neutrality, as well as the foreign policy strategy that moves between neutrality and a strategy of evasion alongside a simultaneous strengthening of deterrence capabilities, despite changed (undoubtedly for the worse) geopolitical circumstances.

against electoral fraud by his regime. The opposition alliance that took power launched a new policy agenda for democratisation and integrating Serbia into the EU.

Isolated and Surrounded: Serbia's Current Position

For many years before the start of Russia's 'special military operation' in Ukraine, and especially since the annexation of Crimea (2014), the EU and the US (i.e., the bulk of what is colloquially referred to as the 'collective West') viewed with disdain the deepening of Russia's cultural, political, and economic ties with the Balkans—primarily with Serbia, at its centre (Benchev 2019). Particularly negative sentiment was aroused by Russian investments in the region's energy, banking, and construction sectors, which were perceived as part of a strategy of tying the Balkan countries to each other for the sake of their gradual geopolitical reorientation towards the East. Of course, such an influence has been characterised as 'malign' (Politika 2017), while its consequences have been considered destabilising—i.e., undermining or, at the very least, slowing down and delaying the European integration processes, including the Euro-Atlantic ones (accession to NATO) (see Weber and Bassuener 2014). While it was clear that Russia neither aspired nor was able to become the dominant power in the Balkans but only wanted to increase its presence, the prevailing view in the West for almost the entire previous decade was that the rise of Russian influence must be stopped and removed. Turning to the Ukrainian problem as a priority, the leading countries of the 'collective West' have paid considerable attention to defending their strategic positions in the Balkans, and Serbia in particular. On the one hand, this is what the EU has been doing lately: despite the 'enlargement fatigue' encountered since 2018, the Union has again begun to make efforts to intensify its strategy of tying the region to itself in order to dispel the impression that 'European integration' has died or has been extremely slowed down (this is, above all, the purpose of the so-called Berlin Process). This has been done primarily through the transformation of practically all the countries in the region into candidates for full membership in the EU, although negotiations with some have either not yet started or have opened only a very small number of negotiation chapters/clusters. On the other hand, the rapid inclusion of Montenegro and North Macedonia (after the latter state's change of name following the 'Prespa Agreement' with Greece and the flawed referendum in that country; Vankovska 2022, 87) clearly indicates that issues of classic, 'hard' security are a priority in this part of Europe—a region that is seen as a 'black hole' in the southern European area or, more precisely, a grey area in the relatively homogeneous Euro-Atlantic system into which its main geopolitical rival must not be allowed to encroach.

The beginning of a new phase of the conflict in Ukraine after 24 February 2022 essentially lowered a new Cold War-style 'Iron Curtain' across

the European continent, even more drastic than the one from the time of the classic Cold War: practically the entire EU and most of the countries of the non-integrated Western Balkans joined the US-led Euro-Atlantic camp in sanctioning and trying to isolate the Russian Federation and provide comprehensive military and economic assistance to Ukraine to combat the Russian situation by means of armed intervention in the eastern part of the country. All the countries of the 'collective West' and a number of other states aligned with it have built a seemingly monolithic anti-Russian front—in contrast to most of the rest of the world, which has remained either neutral or with more or less pronounced sympathy for Russia. Ten packages of sanctions against Russia have been introduced, with very modest results in the weakening of the Russian side, while a pro-war, anti-Russian narrative has prevailed in the media sphere. Significant financial and military aid poured into Ukraine, without which the regime in Kyiv would have been helpless to continue the armed struggle during the first year of the conflict.

In the new circumstances, militarily neutral and politically oriented towards the strategy of 'evasion', Serbia found itself in an extremely thankless position: alone in its neutrality and surrounded by NATO countries and the 'collective West', and with good relations with the Russian Federation and a clear, pro-Russian historical–cultural heritage and orientation on the part of the vast majority of its citizens. And most importantly, existing relations with the Russian Federation are of vital interest to Serbia because, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia is able to prevent the accession of the breakaway southern Serbian province, Kosovo and Metohija,⁶ to the United Nations as an independent state. This makes Russia a key ally of Serbia in its efforts to stop international recognition of Kosovo's independence, which is a key territorial problem and Serbia's national priority (Anastasakis 2022). A breakdown in relations with Russia would also mean the dissolution of this vital alliance. Additionally, Serbia's dependence on Russian gas and oil would put it in an extremely difficult energy situation in the event of the Balkan country signing up to Western sanctions. For these reasons, Serbia, although a candidate country for accession to the EU, refused to apply punitive measures against Russia in 2014 and to align with EU foreign and security policy on this issue. Some analysts attribute this balancing by Serbia to the lack of a 'compromise solution' on the issue of Kosovo, but also to the low probability of Serbia's imminent accession to

6 This is the official Serbian term for the province that declared independence as the Republic of Kosovo in February 2008, but which Serbia still considers to be its territory.

the EU due to the clear opposition of a number of the Union's own member states to further enlargement.

A similar situation was repeated after 24 February: despite expectations in Brussels, Belgrade waited for two full days to present its official position, and despite increased diplomatic and media pressure from the West to join the sanctions with their condemnation of Russian aggression it refrained from doing so. Serbia's National Security Council met twice in the months after the start of the new conflict in Ukraine and took the position that Serbia adheres to the principles of international law and supports Ukraine's territorial integrity, but that it will not join the sanctions against Russia. The Serbian president reiterated the same in March at the UN General Assembly, stressing that sanctions are not an option since Serbia must protect its vital national interests. However, Serbia, after the controversial accusations surrounding the Bucha massacre,⁷ voted to suspend the Russian Federation from the UN Human Rights Council. Serbia's principled stance against sanctions as a misguided tool in achieving foreign policy goals (since it had itself been under long-standing sanctions at the end of the last century) was not met with understanding in the West. On the contrary, the condemnations and accusations of Serbia continued.

Over time, the pressure on Serbia to join the sanctions began to weaken, both because of the knowledge that Serbian sanctions would have zero effect on Russia and severe (primarily energy) consequences for Serbia itself and because of the likely realisation that Serbia could play the role of a small but significant mediator between the West and Russia once the main conflicts in Eastern Europe came to an end. In the end, Serbia not only persisted in its position but—after a new, very favourable short-term gas engagement with Russia—remained the only country in Europe (with the exception of Belarus and Turkey) that maintained its direct air traffic with Russia and, also, the only country in which Russian media influence (RT and Sputnik) was not extinguished by coercive state measures. On the Serbian media scene, all sides in the conflict can still be heard. Insisting on these positions, experts continued to explain both the April parliamentary elections in Serbia (in which the majority of the electorate is pro-Russian) and the need for Russian gas during the upcoming heating season, even long after their successful completion (Kolarski 2022, 96).

As in 2014, at the time of the annexation of Crimea, the countries surrounding Serbia took a completely different position. Deeply divided

7 The Bucha massacre refers to war crimes committed during the Russian occupation of the Kyiv suburb of Bucha in the spring of 2022, during which over 400 civilians were killed.

on ethnic and entity issues,⁸ their attitude towards Russia in these new circumstances has further polarised relations between the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e., the representatives of the three constituent peoples in joint institutions. In Montenegro, despite the problems of securing the necessary parliamentary majority, the government (of Prime Minister Dritan Abazović) has reluctantly joined all restrictive measures in line with the EU's packages of individual and economic sanctions against Russia. The same, wholeheartedly and without much difficulty, was done by North Macedonia and Albania, which, in addition, voted against Russia in UN institutions each time and closed their airspace to planes from Russia (Kolarski 2022, 101–102).

However, not only did all these countries (with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which only declaratively joined without determining specific measures) join the EU sanctions but, in support of the pressure on Serbia to impose sanctions as well, they began to insinuate that Serbia was a 'Russian player' and a Trojan horse in the Balkans whose foreign policy threatened regional stability and security. The secessionist government in Priština went the furthest by making constant provocations during further negotiations on the normalisation of relations with Belgrade, desiring to present Belgrade's reactions as a form of acting on orders from Moscow and thus, with the accompanying Manichaean media pattern, to obtain an alibi for further inaction. The reason for this is understandable: since some of the former Yugoslav republics (and provinces) have acquired their political and territorial subjectivity mainly at the expense of the Serbs and/or Serbia, in the same manner they are trying to win the support of the great powers favourable to them in the context of the new Cold War European geopolitical confrontation and thus achieve their goals, again to Serbia's detriment. These insinuations have merely fuelled the anti-Serb media and lobbying circles in the West to reassert their old plans to 'finish the job in the Balkans' (see Weber and Bassuener 2014) in order to thwart 'Russian infiltration'—first of all by reaching a 'comprehensive agreement' that would see Serbia *de facto* renounce Kosovo and Metohija, then, secondly, by replacing EUFOR (the European Union Force Bosnia and Herzegovina) with NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to secure the unity of this

8 This refers to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, according to the constitution enshrined in the Dayton Agreement, consists of two entities: the Bosniak–Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic of Srpska (RS). The political leadership of the RS currently does not recognise the jurisdiction of the central Bosnian–Herzegovinian courts, public prosecutors, or police over the territory of the RS.

country. Meanwhile, the process of European integration would be used as a way of accelerating the harmonisation of the foreign and security policies of the candidate countries with those of the EU (the already established CFSP), in accordance with the negotiating Chapter 31.⁹ In the same way, the energy policies of the candidate countries would be disengaged from energy ties with Russia through the processes of energy diversification, etc.

The Geopolitical Perspective of Persevering in Neutrality

There is no doubt that the war in Ukraine has caused a continental, tectonic, geopolitical disturbance that has significantly affected the current situation in the Balkans, from the economic and energy vulnerability of the countries in the region through to the impact on very complex and strained regional relations, especially those concerning the issue of state sovereignty—i.e., territorial integrity and the issue of (changing) borders. Consequently, all of this has been reflected in aspects of the way foreign policy is conducted in these countries, as well as in questioning the meaningfulness of their current foreign policy strategies.

It is undeniable that the new, difficult opportunities arising from the latest bloc confrontation, into which practically the entire European continent has been drawn, greatly reduce the room for manoeuvre in conducting an independent, elastic, non-aligning, or 'evasive' foreign policy. Burdened with the problem of its territorial integrity (i.e., the problem of Kosovo and Metohija), its relationship with the immediate environment, and the influences of the great powers present in this area, Serbia undoubtedly has a narrowed space of action for taking its current course—military neutrality and 'wriggling' between no-alternative accession to the 'collective West' through European integration and attempts at a balanced attitude towards all four pillars of its foreign policy (the EU, US, Russia, and China). Additionally, aggravated relations with individual neighbours and the 'one-bloc' environment not only increase potential for conflict—i.e., the possible threat of the use of force—but also require approaches to forcing 'expanded deterrence' (see Igrutinović 2022, 40–41) with the necessary increase in independent forms of hard, military power—i.e., additional investment in increasing one's own combat capabilities that would achieve the greatest possible deterrence effect.

9 This refers to the chapters of the *acquis communautaire*—the body of existing EU rules that a candidate country must adopt, implement, and enforce. Chapter 31 contains provisions relating to foreign, security, and defence policy.

As the Ukrainian geopolitical earthquake fundamentally changes not only the role of the EU in the modern world but also the entire structure of existing international relations, especially those between the 'big players', and affects the perspective of further redistributions of global power, Serbia is forced to weigh carefully what prospects persisting with the current strategy, or possible modifications of it, could yield.

The current insistence on military neutrality and non-commitment to sanctions against Russia is self-evident and self-justified: energy needs and, in particular, Russia's allied position in the UN Security Council regarding the resolution of the Kosovo problem are things that Serbia, since there is no real alternative to these forms of assistance, should not give up. Although they have not completely abandoned their pressure on the Balkan country to join the sanctions, Western geopolitical actors are also aware of this.

That is exactly why the exponents of the 'collective West' are playing on the intensification of pressure on another—for them, more important—issue than the imposition of sanctions on Russia: security coverage of practically the entire area of the Balkans in their geopolitical arrangement by insisting on reaching a final agreement between Belgrade and Priština. In this way, the breakaway Serbian province would gradually verify its independence legally and factually and be integrated into Western military and security engagements, after which Serbia and other Serbian lands would be drawn into the same process. Since the precedent of the illegal secession of territories from internationally recognised states in the context of the secession of parts of Ukraine and their annexation to Russia is regarded as potentially exerting a 'boomerang effect', Westerners want an agreement between their two sides (Serbia and Kosovo) that would validate this 'special case' and cease to be a precedent for other similar situations on the basis of the right to self-determination. The problem, of course, is that they want to impose this agreement to the detriment of Serbia without taking into account of, or paying little attention to, minimal Serbian interests. These pressures are accompanied by constant provocations, any of which might escalate into crises and for the sake of which Serbia is required to grant not only partial but comprehensive concessions equal to the abandonment of territorial sovereignty guaranteed by UN Security Council Resolution 1244.¹⁰ A genuine crisis escalation, however, is not in the interest of the 'collective West' because

10 Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council (UNSCR 1244), also known as the Kosovo Resolution, was adopted on 10 June 1999. Following the Kosovo War, it regulates the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the deployment of the international security force KFOR.

it would force it to intervene—a development that would, in the media, be seen as an equivalent (albeit smaller in scope) to the Russian military engagement and remind the rest of the world of the illegal intervention in 1999,¹¹ which is being ‘repaired’ in the same way. The Russian side does not relish the prospect of such an escalation either, because Serbia, the only well-intentioned state entity west of it on the European continent, would be humiliated again in such a development of events and, in the long run, forced to be ‘pushed’ into it by the enemy camp. In the circumstances described, multidimensional action is required to calm the situation and eliminate the reasons for issuing threats and raising the potential for conflict in the form of ‘extended deterrence’, through simultaneous readiness for dialogue and clarification of problematic situations—especially unfounded accusations and imputations. Simultaneously strengthening one’s own military capabilities through the further development of one’s defence industry, improving its production capacities, and purchasing new weapons (primarily from countries that are not involved in the current conflict in Ukraine) may be enough to achieve the full effect of strategic deterrence, at least in the medium term.

In the given circumstances, Serbia has no choice but to try, in what reduced room for manoeuvre it has, to maintain its current position of military neutrality and to continue to ‘swing’ between the East and the West, pointing out that such a position recommends it for the role of mediator between the antagonised camps in times when everyone understands that it is imperative to reach some kind of broader agreement and de-escalate the geopolitical confrontation. Such a role, on a much wider scale and with greater reach, is currently being played by Turkey, and it is a pity that neither its dimensions as a state nor its internal circumstances and regional relations allow Serbia to play a similar geopolitical game more strongly. Taking into account the vital interests of the ‘great powers’; the reduced conflict potential across the Balkans, due primarily to the systemic economic and military weakness of local actors; and the latter’s limited ability to draw large numbers of people into petty confrontational schemes through independent moves—as well as the Serbian state’s relative ability to increase its strategic deterrence capabilities by expanding them in relation to its immediate environment—it is possible that Serbia will persist in its ‘seeming neutrality’ until after the war is over.

Serbia’s further perspectives and geopolitical situation in the Balkans largely depend on the outcome of the war in Eastern Europe, as well as on

11 The author refers to the bombing of targets in Serbia during NATO’s ‘Operation Allied Force’ (24 March–10 June 1999).

the post-conflict arrangement between East and West. In this regard, it does not matter whether that conflict ends in a stalemate, or a partial or complete Russian victory (Zarić and Budimir 2022, 97–98).

In the first two cases, even if Russia's borders are moved to the Dnipro, a new Cold War 'Iron Curtain' will separate Serbia from its historical ally and most likely force it to 'drown' in its Euro-Atlantic environment, being pressured from all sides. In other words, accession will be replaced by 'wriggling' and neutrality, and thus a strategic threat against which there will not be sufficient deterrence capacity will be eliminated. The cost, however, will be enormous because this kind of accession will require a renunciation of vital national interests that will be painful even if done indirectly—especially those concerning territorial integrity and sovereignty. And what is even more unfavourable, in such a sequence of events Serbia will become (un)willingly placed on a globally confrontational side. Let us recall that, in the new circumstances, EU accession has a completely different geopolitical and geo-economic context to that of the previous three decades. The Ukrainian conflict has turned it into an independent structure with declining economic and overall development potential, pushing it to the forefront of confrontations with the Eastern Allied colossi.

However, in the event of Russia's strategic victory, which includes its breaking out on the Danube Delta, this international river will become the lifeblood for the connection between the 'surrounded' Serbia—that avoids, at least partially, its isolation and 'swallowing up'—and Russia. And more importantly, such a war outcome opens up the possibility of starting a new process in Central and Southeastern Europe to bring about changes from within, in the countries there, which will lead to their gradual geopolitical reorientation and emancipation from the Atlanticist geopolitical camp.

In other words, Serbia's European integration perspective (except at the rhetorical level) with the start of a 'new Cold War' with cooperation in Ukraine becomes extremely out of place, and the strategy of neutral, balancing 'wriggling', although difficult and resembling 'tightrope walking', is growing into a vital imperative for Serbia. Regardless of the fact that this means dealing with a whole series of provocations and means of pressure, the fulfilment of which will inevitably lead to a 'comprehensive settlement' that, under the guise of a compromise, will entail losses, giving in would mean surrendering to a camp that is becoming increasingly weaker in global relations and at the same time defending its positions in the Balkans by enriching itself at the expense of Serbian interests. There is no reason to believe that this will not continue to happen in the future—especially since the harsh, often uncontrollable reactions of the West on the territory of the

whole of Europe will persist not only during but also after the end of military operations in Ukraine, and because they will be aimed at completely cutting off any possibility of influence by either Russia or China in the areas of the 'old continent'. In spite of all this, the only real and meaningful alternative is to continue to persevere in the current position, because only in this way can Serbia exist in the long term, even at the cost of being a lonely 'island' for a while, until the permanent change of international conditions in a multipolar dimension.

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Memo to the Global South: It's Time to Reboot the Non-Aligned Movement

Nontobeko Hlela

Editorial Note

This article was published on 6 May 2022 in the online journal *The Elephant*,¹ in response to Western criticism of South Africa's abstention on a UN resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *The Elephant's* website is committed to the ideal of Pan-African solidarity and, according to its mission statement, 'aims to be at the centre of dialogue, community building, and speaking truth in a quest to rethink the African condition to guarantee a life of inclusivity and dignity for all'.

In South Africa, the domestic criticism has been extraordinarily shrill, and often clearly racialized. It is frequently assumed that abstention means that South Africa is in support of the Russian invasion, and this is either due to corrupt relations between Russian and South African elites, or nostalgia for support given to the anti-apartheid struggle by the Soviet Union, or both.

There is seldom any acknowledgment that nonalignment, in this case refusing to be aligned with the United States and its allies or with Russia, can be a principled position, as well as an astute tactical engagement with geopolitical realities. As two founding figures in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Yugoslavia's then President Josip Broz Tito² and India's then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru,³ said in a joint statement signed on December 22, 1954, 'the policy of non-alignment with blocs ... does not represent "neutrality" or "neutralism"; neither does it represent passivity as is sometimes alleged. It represents the positive, active and constructive policy that, as its goal, has collective peace as the foundation of collective security'.

1 Nontobeko Hlela, 'Memo to the Global South: It's Time to Reboot the Non-Aligned Movement', *The Elephant*, 6 May 2022, <https://www.theelephant.info/opinion/2022/05/06/memo-to-the-global-south-its-time-to-reboot-the-non-aligned-movement/>.

2 Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was the leader of the communist partisan groups fighting against the fascist occupation of Yugoslavia during the Second World War. He shaped the country's political destiny from 1945, initially as head of government and then, from 1953, as president.

3 Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) was a resistance fighter against British colonial rule in India and served as the country's first prime minister from 1947 to 1964.

The Global South houses more than 80 percent of the world's people, yet its countries are systematically excluded from any decision-making in the international organizations that make decisions in the name of the 'international community'. For decades, countries of the Global South have been advocating for the United Nations to be reformed so that it moves away from the zero-sum game of the Cold War mentality that continues to drive it. Gabriel Valdés,⁴ Chile's then foreign minister, said that in June 1969, Henry Kissinger told him, 'Nothing important can come from the South. History has never been produced in the South. The axis of history starts in Moscow, goes to Bonn, crosses over to Washington, and then goes to Tokyo. What happens in the South is of no importance.'

Jaja Wachuku,⁵ then a Nigerian foreign minister, posed a still urgent question to the UN's 18th Session on September 30, 1963: 'Does this Organization want ... [the] African States to be just vocal Members, with no right to express their views on any particular matter in important organs of the United Nations ...[?] Are we only going to continue to be veranda boys?' Global South countries are still 'veranda boys' watching the adults make the rules and decide on the path that the world must take. They continue to be lectured and chided when they do not do as expected.

It is time for a revitalized NAM. The NAM will only succeed if the leaders of the countries in the Global South put their egos aside, think strategically on the global scale and put their considerable human capital, natural resources, and technological ingenuity to better use. The Global South has an ascendant China, the second-biggest economy in the world. It has India, one of the leading countries in medical care and technological innovation. Africa is rich with a growing population and the natural resources that are needed for the mushrooming AI and cleaner energy industries. However, these resources are still extracted for profit to be accumulated in far-off capitals while Africa and much of the Global South remain underdeveloped, with millions still stuck in the desperation of impoverishment.

A renewed NAM has real potential if time is taken to build new institutions and to build buffers against the economic warfare that the United States has been waging against countries like Cuba and Venezuela and is now unleashing on Russia. Financial autonomy is critical.

4 Gabriel Valdés Subercaseaux (1919–2011) served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile (1964–1970).

5 Jaja Anucha Ndubuisi Wachuku (1918–1996), Nigeria's first foreign minister after independence from British colonial rule.

BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has a bank, and for the 16 nations of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) there is the Development Bank of Southern Africa; yet the reserves of the countries joined to these projects are still kept in the United States or European capitals. This is the time for leaders within the Global South to wake up and realize that given the type of economic warfare that is currently being let loose on a country like Russia, weaker countries across the Global South have no meaningful autonomy.

This is the time to rethink how we conduct politics, economics, and foreign policy when it is clear that the West can decide to decimate entire countries. The economic weapons being built against Russia will be available to be used against other countries that have the temerity not to toe Washington's line.

BRICS has been disappointing in many respects, but it has opened some space for Global South countries—with their many differences in creed, culture, political, and economic systems—to find a way of working together. The rejection of intense pressure to bend their collective knee at the United Nations Security Council is an encouraging example of the Global South rejecting the assumption that they should remain permanent 'veranda boys' (and girls).

As the United States rapidly escalates its new cold war against Russia and China, and expects other countries to fall in line, there is now an urgent imperative to reject this cold war mentality of wanting to divide the world along old acrimonious lines. The Global South should reject this view and call for the respect of international law by all countries. It makes a mockery of the concepts of human rights and international law when they are only invoked when it is those countries whom the West dislikes or disagrees with who break them.

Only by standing together and speaking with one voice can the countries of the Global South hope to have any influence in international affairs and not continue to be just rubber-stampers of the positions of the West.

The Non-Aligned Movement needs to be confident and bold and not seek permission from the West. NAM leaders need to understand that they are there to serve their people and protect their interests and not allow the temptation of being included in the 'big boys club' to sway their stance on issues. They need to constantly keep in mind that they have been kept as 'veranda boys' for far too long, and unless they truly take their destiny into their hands, they will forever be at the foot of the table, with their people eating only the scraps from the wealth accumulated by the global economy, much of it from the exploitation of the South.

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How India Has Kept the Spirit of NAM Alive

Kshitij Shandilya

Editorial Note

This text was published on 22 June 2022 in the online journal *The Kootneeti* (Sanskrit for diplomacy),¹ which reports on diplomacy and foreign policy in English, Spanish, and Hindi.

Introduction

In the recent geopolitical scenario, India has truly shown the world that neutrality is a sign of great strength and has made a loud proclamation to the world about its independent and sovereign foreign policy. The Russia–Ukraine conflict again brought the world to the doorstep of a new cold war. The world has again begun to witness a massive polarization in the form of the power blocs, the same way it was during the previous Cold War. Today, once again one part of the world is being led by the USA and NATO, while, on the other hand, we see the rise of the military might of China and Russia. However, even in such a polarized atmosphere, which has heightened during the ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict, India has managed to stay neutral and has through great diplomatic skill kept the spirit of the NAM, the Non-Aligned Movement, alive.

Brief History of the NAM

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was founded at the height of the Cold War, with the fall of the colonial order and the fights for the independence of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and other parts of the world. Early on in the history of the Non-Aligned Movement, its activities played a significant role in the decolonization process, which eventually helped numerous peoples and nations achieve freedom and independence and led to the establishment of dozens of new sovereign states. The Movement

1 <https://thekootneeti.in/2022/06/28/how-india-has-kept-the-spirit-of-nam-alive/>.

of Non-Aligned Countries has consistently contributed significantly to maintaining international stability and security (1).

Although ideas were put forward for an international order that sided neither with the US-led NATO bloc nor with the countries of the Warsaw Pact led by the then Soviet Union at several conferences, it was the Bandung Conference of 1955 that laid a solid foundation for the NAM. The conference was held at Bandung, Indonesia, and it laid down 10 principles that became the guiding principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, which were:

- Respect for fundamental human rights and the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
- Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
- Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.
- Non-intervention or non-interference in the internal affairs of another country.
- Respect of the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- Non-use of collective defence pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers and non-use of pressures by any country against other countries.
- Refraining from carrying out or threatening to carry out aggression, or from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
- Peaceful solution of all international conflicts in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- Promotion of mutual interests and of cooperation.
- Respect for justice and international obligations.

The Non-Aligned Movement came into existence at the Belgrade Conference of 1961. The then heads of state and government[.] Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, India's Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Indonesia's Ahmed Sukarno, and Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, who later served as the movement's founding fathers and iconic figures, played a crucial role in the establishment of the NAM (2).

India has always stood up for neutrality and ascertainment of independent ideas and policy-driven decisions. In a world driven by the influence of power and hegemony during the Cold War, India and the NAM showed that though newly independent, the new nation-states of Asia, Africa, and Latin America do have the capabilities of carving their own paths, they

have the capabilities of creating their own destinies and not get influenced by the power politics of the power blocs. The Non-Aligned nations have historically demonstrated their capacity to put aside their differences and find a basis for action that promotes cooperation and the upholding of their shared ideals. The Bandung Principles continue to inspire the ideas of an international order, driven by respect for sovereignty and the independent identity of every nation and not by power or hegemony.

How India Continues to Keep the Spirit of NAM Alive

India faced a diplomatic confrontation during the ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict when pressure was built upon by the United States and other Western nations to publicly condemn Russia for the Russia–Ukraine conflict and for disturbing the international order. The message from the West was three-pronged—India would change its stance at the UN, where it abstained from voting on resolutions against Russia, not increase its purchase of Russian oil, and not use the rupee–rouble-based payment mechanism that could subvert ‘backfilling sanctions’ (3). India did not bow to Western pressure and continued with its independent, neutral stance. This was clear when the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov received a red-carpet welcome in New Delhi and had a cordial meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi (4). India knows best what concerns its foreign policies and what lies in the nation’s interests. The attitude of the West became apparently clear, all it wanted was that India join its club and thereby compromise on its own national interests. India’s Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar exposed the duplicity of the West with respect to buying Russian oil and gas. Dr. Jaishankar said,

It is interesting because we have seen for some time what looks almost like a campaign on this issue. I was just reading a report today, that in the month of March, Europe has bought, I think, 15 percent more oil and gas from Russia than the month before. If you look at the major buyers of oil and gas from Russia, I think you’ll find most of them are in Europe. When oil prices go up, I think it’s natural for countries to go out and look for what are good deals for that thing (5).

The pressure from the West was profoundly clear from the usage of language by the US Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh who said that there could be ‘consequences’ for countries like India (6). However, India

marched on and maintained its neutral status. It seems as if the West cannot digest this fact: How can India, which happened to be a colony and a foreign-dominated country till the last century, stand up on its own feet and carve its own destiny in the world? How can India, which is regarded as a Third World country by the West, rise up as an emerging superpower? No matter what perception the West might have, India was, is, and will always continue to uphold the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned approach of India's foreign policy is what makes it unique in this power-driven world. India is already a strong regional power and will one day stand as a major superpower. At the time of his visit to New Delhi, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had said [this] while appreciating India's stance. He said, 'Indian foreign policies are characterised by independence and the concentration on real national legitimate interests.'

It is also not that India has kept quiet on the issue of human rights violations in Ukraine. India did condemn the killings in Bucha city of Ukraine by the Russian forces and the same was also welcomed by the United States, which for quite a while had been critical of India's stance (7). India's representative to the United Nations T. S. Tirumurti in his statement had condemned the Russian killings in Bucha. He said, 'We unequivocally condemn these killings and support the call for an independent investigation' (8). India has since the start of this conflict always urged for opting [for] the path of dialogue and diplomacy for reconciliation between Russia and Ukraine and ending this bloodshed. All this shows that India cares for a peaceful international order while maintaining strict neutrality which is a character[istic] of the spirit of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Conclusion

The Non-Aligned Movement continues to guide the world, with its summits taking place at regular intervals. The last summit took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2019, and the next summit is scheduled to take place at the end of 2023 in Uganda (9). Through this neutral stance, while voicing against the human rights violation in Ukraine and not bowing to the Western pressure, India has made it clear that its foreign policy shall never leave any stone unturned in upholding the Bandung Principles for a peaceful and a united world.

India, whether it holds the presidency of the NAM or not, surely does spearhead this great movement every time through its own foreign policy decisions. Today, the world needs India. This new India is resilient, powerful,

and has all the capabilities of becoming the world leader or the Vishwa Guru. Today's India is not known as the land of only the snake charmers, elephants, and tigers but as the nation which knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.

Notes

- (1) <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?20349/History+and+Evolution+of+NonAligned+Movement>.
- (2) <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?20349/History+and+Evolution+of+NonAligned+Movement>.
- (3) <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/in-the-middle-on-indias-role-in-russia-ukraine-crisis/article65293799.ece>.
- (4) <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/in-the-middle-on-indias-role-in-russia-ukraine-crisis/article65293799.ece>.
- (5) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/ChanakyaCode/despite-western-pressure-india-maintains-its-neutral-approach-towards-russia-ukraine-conflict-opportunity-to-end-hostilities-deserves-urgent-consideration/>.
- (6) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/ChanakyaCode/despite-western-pressure-india-maintains-its-neutral-approach-towards-russia-ukraine-conflict-opportunity-to-end-hostilities-deserves-urgent-consideration/>.
- (7) https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/us-senator-welcomes-india-s-condemnation-of-bucha-killings-in-ukraine-122040700081_1.html.
- (8) https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/us-senator-welcomes-india-s-condemnation-of-bucha-killings-in-ukraine-122040700081_1.html.
- (9) <https://mfa.gov.az/en/news/no26721>.

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The War Between Russia and Ukraine: Latin America and the Caribbean at a Global Crossroads

Guerra Rusia-Ucrania: América Latina y el Caribe en una encrucijada global

Ariel González Levaggi and Pilar Martínez Otero

Editorial Note

The article was published in the *Anuario Mexicano de Asuntos Globales* (Mexican year-book of global affairs) in 2022, the journal of the Isidro Fabela Institute of International Studies at the Universidad del Mar's Huatulco campus in Oaxaca.¹

24 February [2022]: Between the Acceleration of Global Transition and Debates in Latin America

On 24 February, the world changed forever. Russia launched a military intervention against Ukraine on a scale not seen in Europe since the Second World War. In this context, Russia's military intervention in Ukraine reflects the end of US primacy and the birth of regionalised multipolarity. Although the world has not been a panacea over the last three decades, the use of force has been regulated (albeit not always with the best criteria) by Washington. The role of 'world police' was used to punish violations of international law, as in the Balkan Wars, or to overthrow hostile regimes, as in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Following the abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan, this situation had begun to change in parallel with the rise of China and the return of Russia.

The international order is facing a new era. As essayist Fareed Zakaria (2022) asserts, the Pax Americana has come to an end. At the same time,

1 Ariel González Levaggi and Pilar Martínez Otero, 'Guerra Rusia-Ucrania: América Latina y el Caribe en una encrucijada global [The war between Russia and Ukraine: Latin America and the Caribbean at a global crossroads]', *Anuario Mexicano de Asuntos Globales* 1, no. 1 (2022): 253–272.

an international transition towards strategic competition between the great powers is taking place (González Levaggi 2022). The geopolitical earthquake caused by the Russian invasion takes us back to situations not so long ago when military force prevailed over economic considerations. From a military point of view, we are facing a conventional war in which the Russian Federation has encountered strong resistance from the Ukrainian armed forces, which have prepared for a conflict of this nature. On the other hand, in line with its military doctrine, Russia has been increasing its firepower on the ground as its advances have slowed. This is doubly dangerous, as we are facing an increase in civilian casualties and the destruction of urban infrastructure, such as the conquest of Mariupol, while tensions with the West are rising. In the future, analysts fear that Russia will use a tactical nuclear weapon to break Ukrainian resolve and deter any attempt by NATO to expand military cooperation.

As a result of its intervention in Ukraine, Russia has distanced itself from the West. Latin America therefore faces an international environment currently characterised by deglobalisation, inflation, and the negative impact on the global economy of both the post-COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions against Russia.

The international order is under geopolitical pressure and increased competition between the major powers. In this context, Russia is one of the key players in the international system, whether through its actions in the Eurasian space, its military capabilities—especially in the nuclear and ballistic fields—or its role as a destabilising agent on the international security agenda. From Russia's perspective, the world is moving towards a multipolar, post-hegemonic and post-American order, while the coercive use of force remains a fundamental tool, both for forcing changes in its sphere of influence in Eurasia and in its relationship with NATO, and for shaping a new world order. This, in turn, gives rise to the configuration of alternative spaces and blocs that challenge the liberal order and Atlantic primacy.

Russia perceives itself as a great power in a polycentric world (González Levaggi 2020). In this logic, ties with the Global South and Latin America are seen as a vehicle for reinforcing recognition of its status as one of the nodes of global power, as well as for diversifying its relations beyond the West and advancing a pragmatic agenda in economic and strategic terms. Historically, Russia and Latin America have a long tradition of relations, but they have never been as close as in the last two decades. Putin's presidency has been characterised by a strong political initiative towards the region and the promotion of friendly ties with Latin American and Caribbean countries, whether due to political affinity, as in the case of Venezuela, convergences

in the vision of the future of the international order, as in Brazil, or simply a pragmatic agenda based on mutual benefit.

Russia's presence has not gone unnoticed in the region's debates. The war in Ukraine is at the centre of foreign policy debate in most of Latin America (Sanahuja, Stefanoni, and Verdes-Montenegro 2022), while this debate is taking place in a context in which the region is discussing how to deal with the rise of China and the emergence of new global actors (Serbin 2022). Among academics, experts, and policymakers, there are different views on Latin America's place in an increasingly multipolar world: active non-alignment, active neutrality, strategic autonomy, and alignment. The first option advocates a position equidistant between the White House and Beijing and seeks to deepen regional integration and more active diplomacy in the Global South (Fortin, Heine, and Ominami 2021). A second perspective advocates taking economic advantage of the competition between China and the United States, focusing on a neoliberal, open, and regionalist approach (Bywaters, Sepúlveda, and Villar Gertner 2021). The strategic autonomy approach emphasises diversification, regionalism, the promotion of democracy, multilateralism, and soft power policies (Actis and Malacalza 2021; Tokatlian 2022). These foreign policy options differ in tone but not in substance. There is almost total consensus in the region not to get involved in the new competition between major powers, while seeking opportunities for economic development and strategic alliances with other countries.

Finally, alignment requires choosing between the United States and China, although this option is marginal in Latin American foreign policy debates and often has an important ideological component. Strong pro-democratic and liberal affinities tend to favour a special closeness to the United States and the Western world, but there are also growing pro-Chinese sympathies, for example, in Venezuela and in some sectors of the Latin American leftist movements.

Against the backdrop of these debates, this article aims to review the main Latin American responses to the Ukrainian crisis that began on 24 February 2022. To this end, the cases of Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela will be analysed. In this regard, these countries' ties with Russia, their positions in international and regional forums and vis-à-vis international figures will be examined. The first three countries have adopted a more pragmatic and less forceful stance in their condemnation, with a mixture of balanced positions and a search for compensation. In contrast, Colombia and Venezuela are at opposite ends of the spectrum, with the former aligning itself with the Western position and the latter with the Russian discourse.

The Tightrope Walkers: Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico

Argentina in the Alberto Fernández Era

As far as Buenos Aires is concerned, Russia's invasion of Ukraine challenges international values and principles such as territorial integrity and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, which are recurring themes in its diplomatic discourse. However, the Russian–Ukrainian conflict has placed the South American country in an uncomfortable position between openly condemning Russia to satisfy the interests of the White House or demonstrating a degree of autonomy to safeguard its ties with a strategic Eurasian partner. Relations between Russia and Argentina have intensified over the last two decades. Noteworthy examples include the Strategic Partnership signed in 2008 and upgraded in 2015 to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, both promoted during the terms of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina).² The latest agreement includes a number of priority areas such as energy, mining, metallurgy, pharmaceutical machinery, high technology, software, and IT services, among others (Declaración Conjunta, 23 April 2015). Although with different political nuances, high-level dialogue with Russia as a strategic partner has not lost momentum, but progress on the bilateral agenda has been interrupted by political changes. In January 2018, President Mauricio Macri³ visited the Kremlin for talks with his counterpart, Vladimir Putin. In the joint statement to the press after the visit, he stated: 'I am here to express the importance that Argentina attaches to this strategic relationship, to this strategic and global partnership between our two countries' (Casa Rosada Presidencia, 23 January 2018). However, the political dialogue agenda made little progress on strategic issues during this period, although trade relations once again exceeded \$1 billion, an achievement that satisfied both sides.

For his part, in the weeks leading up to the invasion, President Alberto Fernández⁴ visited the Kremlin and highlighted the close ties between the two countries, especially given their close cooperation during the pandemic. Argentina was the first Latin American country to register the Russian vaccine (Sputnik V, 23 December 2020) and the first to promote local production of Sputnik vaccines through a partnership between the private Argentine laboratory Richmond and the Russian Gamaleya Institute (Perfil, 4 June 2021; Sputnik V, 20 April 2021). In this regard, Alberto Fernández

2 Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (b. 1953) was president of Argentina from 2007 to 2015.

3 Mauricio Macri (b. 1959) served as president of Argentina from 2015 to 2019.

4 Alberto Fernández (b. 1959) was president of Argentina from 2019 to 2023.

stated: 'You were there when the rest of the world did not help us' (Casa Rosada Presidencia, 3 February 2022). Likewise, showing affinity with the multipolar conception of the world, Fernández added: 'During the first stage of our governments, from 2003 to 2015, we tried to free ourselves from the embarrassing straitjacket in which Argentina found itself with the United States, and there we were able to move forward with the signing of the strategic integration agreement.... I am determined that Argentina will open up to other countries, and I believe that Russia has an important place in this' (*ibid.*). Despite this, the Sputnik V vaccine ranked fourth in terms of the number of doses supplied.

In the context of the invasion of Ukraine, Argentina initially condemned Russia in a timid manner, but the rhetoric intensified as the conflict progressed, both in international and regional forums. On 24 February 2022, the presidential spokesperson announced Argentina's position on the conflict, which included rejecting the use of force, condemning the war, and adhering to the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, although she avoided words of condemnation towards Russia (Casa Rosada Presidencia, 24 February 2022a). On 25 February, Argentina abstained in the extraordinary session of the OAS⁵ that decided to 'strongly condemn the illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation' and called for 'the immediate withdrawal of the military presence and the cessation of any other military action in that country' (Gobierno de Guatemala, 25 February 2022). Although the following month it voted in favour of the organisation's Permanent Council resolution condemning Russia and urging it to withdraw its forces and resume dialogue, given the deterioration of the humanitarian situation (US Mission to the OAS, 25 March 2022). In this case, its position is consistent with its votes at the UN, where it voted in favour of the first resolution (1) of the 11th emergency special session of 2 March 2022, which demands that the Russian Federation immediately end the illegal use of force in Ukraine, and a second resolution (2), in which the General Assembly recognises the military offensive by the Russian Federation in Ukraine and its humanitarian consequences, and demands that Moscow immediately cease its hostilities against Ukraine.

However, in April, during the vote in the United Nations Human Rights Council on the suspension of Russia's membership (3), Argentina decided to abstain when voting on Russia's suspension as a permanent observer

5 The Organisation of American States (OAS) is a regional association of North and South American states. Founded in Bogotá in 1948, the international organisation is headquartered in Washington, DC.

of the OAS, even though the reasons for the suspension were similar to those of the Council: the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and human rights violations. The tougher tone, the presence of the United States in the regional forum and Argentina's motivation to make its voice heard against regional hegemony may be some hypotheses that explain the votes. However, the Argentine president, in his capacity as president of CELAC⁶ and 'Latin American spokesperson', decided to approach France, Germany, and Spain and began a tour of Europe motivated 'by our concern about the evolution of the armed conflict, which has consequences not only for the countries involved in the conflict, but also global consequences that are very important to us' (Casa Rosada Presidencia, 12 May 2022b), highlighting Latin America's role as a food supplier, its commitment to dialogue, the transnational nature of the conflict and its condemnation of Russia. Argentina maintained this position during its participation in the G7 (Casa Rosada Presidencia, 17 June 2022c). Likewise, in June this year, it attended the High-Level Dialogue on Global Development, held virtually within the framework of the BRICS, where speculation began about the country's possible accession to this multilateral forum.

Condemnation of the invasion, calls for negotiation and reflections on the international consequences of the conflict are commonplace in presidential discourse, but the force of these statements, especially in relation to the condemnation of Russia, is weakened at the regional level. In fact, in his closing speech at the CELAC-CAF⁷ seminar 'The Future of Integration: Unity in Diversity', held at the Kirchner Cultural Centre, Fernández stated, '[A]fter the pandemic, we are witnessing the inexplicable nature of a war such as the one that has been unleashed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Where, moreover, there are a kind of passive promoters of war, who do not send troops, but do send weapons and allow the whole area to heat up, the conflict to intensify and lives to continue to be lost. No longer as a consequence of a virus, but as a result of human decision' (Casa Rosada Presidencia, 19 August 2022e). This is an ambivalent position in which condemnation does not imply a break with historical ties with Russia, much less a condescending stance toward Western sanctions against Moscow. At the same time, there is a clear distinction between the positions taken by

6 The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was established in Caracas in 2011 as an alternative to the Organisation of American States (OAS), with the aim of curbing the US attempts to exert dominance. With the exception of the US and Canada, all OAS member countries belong to CELAC, as do Nicaragua and Cuba.

7 The Latin American Development Bank (CAF, Portuguese: *Corporação Andina de Fomento*, Spanish: *Banco de Desarrollo da América Latina*) was founded in 1968 and is based in Caracas.

United Nations bodies, which are critical of Russia's actions, and those taken by the Organisation of American States, which are less forceful.

Between Agrochemicals and Elections: Brazil

In the case of Brazil, the reaction was very pragmatic and gradually turned into a suspicious neutrality. The country's close economic ties with Russia have created tensions between its strong defence of the principles of international law and its economic security. In this context, the role of agrochemicals is essential to understanding the Bolsonaro government's position. While Brazil remained aligned with the United States under Trump, 'with the arrival of Biden, Bolsonaro has lost his ability to engage in dialogue with the United States' (Sanahuja et al. 2022, p. 7). Furthermore, the 2022 presidential elections, in which Bolsonaro was defeated by Lula da Silva, increased the danger that a Russian retaliatory measure could further complicate the electoral landscape (Sabino 2022).

As for its economic and trade links with Russia, trade has not been interrupted despite the war, and imports of agrochemicals from Russia have increased. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OCE) in July 2022, Brazil exported \$168 million and imported \$929 million from Russia; between July 2021 and July 2022, Brazilian exports increased by 46.3%, while imports increased by 117%. In terms of trade, Brazil refused to impose sanctions on Russia and, in fact, in June, Jair Bolsonaro, in a telephone conversation with his Russian counterpart, confirmed the mutual intention to constantly strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries, which includes ensuring the uninterrupted supply of fertilisers to Brazilian farmers (Presidencia Rusa 2022).

Returning to the days leading up to the conflict, on 16 February, Bolsonaro embarked on an official trip to Moscow to meet with his counterpart and strengthen trade ties. There, Putin not only highlighted Brazil as Russia's main Latin American partner, but the two leaders also discussed bilateral agreements favouring the energy, environment, defence, science and technology, education, and culture sectors. Of course, there was also time to talk about fertilisers and increased Russian supplies to Brazil (Fleck 2022; La Opinión, 16 February 2022).

After 24 February, pragmatism and neutrality with regard to the war became clear. As stated by Victor do Prado, senior member of the International Trade and Global Economy Unit at the Brazilian Centre for International Relations (Cebri), 'Brazil, at heart, is pursuing its own interests' (Diário la República, 16 June 2022). While the president's stance was clear, criticism of Bolsonaro's position began to emerge.

On the one hand, Anatoliy Tkach, from the Ukrainian embassy in Brazil, stated that the president was misinformed about the war and that the stance on the war means more than supporting Ukraine, it means supporting democratic values and the principles of international law (Fleck 2022). On the other hand, Brazilian Vice President Hamilton Mourão did not hesitate to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and call for an immediate armed response following the invasion.

This statement did not go unnoticed. On 24 February, Bolsonaro, in his weekly social media broadcast, although without mentioning the vice president, but making clear reference to him, explained, 'The person who talks about these issues (the war between Russia and Ukraine) is called Jair Messias Bolsonaro, and anyone who has doubts should consult the Constitution' (DW, 25 February 2022).

In international organisations, Brazil has achieved a difficult balance (Richmond and Petrocilo 2022). During the 2022–2023 period, Brazil is a member of the United Nations Security Council and has therefore been actively involved in the frustrated debates (due to Russia's veto) on 21, 23, and 25 February to pass a resolution on the crisis (Sanahuja et al. 2022). However, it voted in favour of the resolution (4) calling for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly, although it called for extreme caution in the debate, anticipating the global consequences of the conflict (United Nations 2022a). As for its behaviour during the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly, it voted in favour of the resolutions condemning Russia's aggression and invasion of Ukraine. It should be noted, however, that during the meetings, Brazil, beyond condemning Russia, 'urged all actors to reassess their decisions regarding the supply of arms and the application of sanctions, particularly those that could affect the global economy in such critical areas as food security' (United Nations 2022b). Ronaldo Costa Filho, Brazil's representative to the United Nations, also stressed the need to act with caution before imposing any sanctions (Richmond and Petrocilo 2022). It is important to mention that, with regard to Russia's suspension from the United Nations Human Rights Council, Brazil decided to abstain.

During the BRICS Heads of State Summit, Brazil made no special mention of the war, although it did mention that it is promoting economic integration with the rest of the bloc (Barlett 2022). As for its behaviour in regional bodies, Brazil opted for abstention. It decided not to endorse the OAS Permanent Council's statement of 25 February. Similarly, in March, it abstained from voting in favour of the Permanent Council's resolution on the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the condemnation of

Russia for human rights violations, and in April, it abstained from voting on Russia's suspension as an observer member of the OAS. Finally, in a clear shift towards a more neutral position, at the end of September, Brazil abstained (along with China) in a new Security Council vote condemning the 'illegal referendums' in the annexed regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia.⁸

Zigzagging and Non-intervention: Mexico

Unlike the two previous cases, Mexico does not have close political or trade ties with Russia. However, as in the Argentine example, joint work in the context of the pandemic could explain its lukewarm reaction on the eve of the war (Sanahuja et al. 2022, p. 7). In 2021, Russian–Mexican cooperation in the health sector focused on three main areas: an agreement for the packaging and filling of the Sputnik V vaccine in Mexico, the possible registration of Sputnik Light (the single-dose version of the Russian vaccine) with Cofepris (the Mexican national authority) and the signing of the Political Consultation Plan, which is intended to be a roadmap for deepening bilateral dialogue and collaboration over the next four years on a wide range of economic, cultural, and political issues (Gobierno de México 2021). Mexico was the first country in North America to register the Russian vaccine (Sputnik V, 3 February 2021), while the production of Sputnik vaccines on Mexican territory also demonstrated a willingness to cooperate, as the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and the Mexican pharmaceutical company Laboratorios de Biológicos y Reactivos de México (BIRMEX) collaborated to package the vaccine in Mexico (Sputnik V, 5 June 2021).

As for the official position on the war, on 23 February, López Obrador,⁹ in his morning press conference, responded that Mexico's stance on the possible invasion was one of non-intervention and self-determination of peoples, and took the opportunity to launch an anti-imperialist speech, without specifying any target beyond 'hegemonic nations' (El Financiero, 23 February 2022). While issuing this statement on the invasion, Mexico, like Brazil, participated in the frustrated debates seeking a resolution on the invasion in the UN Security Council, as a non-permanent member.

In this context, the Mexican delegation to the UN insisted on an end to hostilities and urged Russia to comply with its recent statement that it would not invade Ukrainian territory. It also based its condemnation of Russia's actions

8 See chapter 2, footnote 32.

9 Andrés Manuel López Obrador (b. 1953), also known by his initials AMLO, was president of Mexico from 2018 to 2024.

on 'the invasions of its country by the United States and France, noting that it lost a large part of its territory' (United Nations 2022c). Regarding its voting behaviour, Mexico voted in favour of the resolution calling for the convening of special extraordinary sessions of the UN General Assembly. However, like Brazil, it decided to abstain on the aforementioned resolution proposing Russia's suspension from the Human Rights Council. Paradoxically, it has voted in favour of the Human Rights Council resolutions (5) on the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine as a result of the invasion.

In regional forums, unlike Argentina and Brazil, which were much more lukewarm and reluctant to condemn Russia at the start of the invasion, Mexico supported the February 2022 statement by the OAS Permanent Council, which 'strongly condemned the illegal, unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation'. The same was true of the resolution on the deterioration of the humanitarian situation (US Mission to the OAS, 25 March 2022), although it decided to abstain from withdrawing Russia's observer status in the OAS (US Mission to the OAS, 21 April 2022).

Presidential statements are vaguer. Behind the presidential statements lies the principle of non-intervention enshrined in Article 89, paragraph 10, of the Mexican Constitution. Similarly, although Marcelo Ebrard, Minister of Foreign Affairs, did not hesitate to strongly condemn the invasion (Gobierno de México, 4 March 2022), AMLO seems to seek the perfect balance between the principles of non-intervention and peaceful resolution of disputes with the condemnation of interventions by all hegemonic powers in general, in order to maintain 'friendly relations' with all those involved in the conflict, which casts a shadow of ambiguity over Mexico's actions in general. For example, on 23 February 2022, López Obrador called for non-intervention and self-determination for peoples. Two days later, once the invasion of Ukraine was complete, he declared that Mexico's position would be to 'condemn any invasion by any power ... in this case Russia, but the same would apply to China or the United States' (CNN Español, 25 February 2022). Regarding sanctions, on 1 March, AMLO stated that 'we are not going to take economic reprisals, because we want to maintain good relations with all the governments of the world and we want to be in a position to talk to the parties in conflict' (Gobierno de México, 1 March 2022). Nor has he refrained from condemning the 'double standards' of the West in censoring tweets more favourable to the Russian position (*ibid.*). Finally, it is worth mentioning that Mexico has been actively involved in humanitarian aid. In fact, it has participated in joint trilateral coordination initiatives with the United States and Canada (Gobierno de México, 14 May 2022) and in bilateral initiatives with the United States (Gobierno de México, 21 April 2022).

Towards the Extremes: The Responses of Colombia and Venezuela

The Western Partner: Colombia

Colombia stands out as one of the United States' favourite allies, given that its cooperation agenda covers a wide range of issues related to the economy, the environment, human rights, and, above all, security. In fact, Iván Duque was the first South American leader invited by Biden to Washington, as part of the celebration of 200 years of diplomatic relations (Mathus Ruiz 2022).

This 'special relationship' is historic. With Uribe and Pastrana in power, the diagnosis of the Colombian situation—the weakness of the state and institutional precariousness, together with the rise of armed groups and drug trafficking—led to the maintenance of an 'indispensable' relationship with the United States (Tickner 2008, p. 67), which includes economic cooperation through a free trade agreement and alignment on the international stage (Tickner 2008). It should be noted, however, that the end of the guerrilla movement and the war on terrorism have considerably cooled enthusiasm for this relationship. As for its relationship with NATO, under the government of Manuel Santos, in 2017, 'the agreement between the Republic of Colombia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on cooperation and information security' was signed, with the aim of modernising and harmonising the Colombian Armed Forces with international standards (Ubaque 2022). In fact, at the end of 2021, Colombia signed new cooperation and training agreements with NATO covering eleven areas, including security and climate change (De la Hoz 2022; Ubaque 2022), and agreed with the European Union (EU) on greater cooperation in the fight against transnational crime (Ubaque 2022). Finally, Joe Biden officially declared before Congress that Colombia is a strategic ally that is not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Infobae, 27 April 2022d).

Even before the invasion, Russia was viewed with hostility. On the one hand, Colombian Vice President Martha Lucía Ramírez affirmed Russian influence in the protests of 2019 and 2020. On the other hand, the Ministry of National Defence believed in Russian interference in the national strike of 28 April 2021 and in attacks on the Colombian state's cybersecurity. Furthermore, considering Russia an ally of Venezuela, it is understandable that Colombia seeks to 'constantly align itself with the political discourse of the Atlantic Alliance bloc (Canada, United Kingdom, United States, etc.) against the enemies of open Western democracies' (Ubaque 2022).

Unlike the three cases mentioned above, Colombia openly condemned the Russian invasion. The country's close ties with the United States and even NATO are key to understanding its reaction. In fact, they condition

the Russian–Colombian relationship, which, in particular, has no relevant aspects or joint agenda for ongoing cooperation. In fact, according to the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the latest agreements and legal instruments between the two countries date back to 2010 and refer to visas for nationals of each country (Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Colombia and the Government of the Russian Federation on the Conditions for Visa Exemption for Reciprocal Travel by Nationals of the Republic of Colombia and Nationals of the Russian Federation, signed on 24 September 2010) and legal assistance (Treaty between the Republic of Colombia and the Russian Federation on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed on 6 April 2010).

On 24 February, as expected, then President Iván Duque,¹⁰ from the Casa de Nariño,¹¹ categorically rejected Russia's attack on the Ukrainian people (Herrera 2022). For its part, both in international and regional bodies, it has not hesitated to vote in favour of condemning the Russian invasion. It is worth mentioning that Colombia is one of the 22 countries that on 21 March requested the resumption of special emergency sessions to examine the humanitarian consequences of the aggression.

It is interesting to note that Colombia's vice president and foreign minister stated that her votes are directed against 'the leadership that has deliberately chosen to stand on the wrong side of history out of a personal and delusional nostalgia for an imperial past that will never return' (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Colombia 2022). The personal accusations are in line with the position of US Democrats, who are particularly wary of Russia due to suspicions of interference in the elections.

It should be remembered that, in the midst of the conflict, the presidential elections in Colombia resulted in victory for Gustavo Petro,¹² which increased uncertainty about the position on the war (Mathus Ruiz 2022). During his election campaign, the leader of the Pacto Histórico¹³ distanced himself from outright rejection, considering that Colombia's problems were much more important than those of Europe: 'Ukraine doesn't matter, we have to focus on Colombia' (Infobae, 25 February 2022c). However, on 3 March, during the presidential debate, Petro made clear his condemnation of the war between Russia and Ukraine: 'We reject the invasion of Ukraine, just as we

10 Iván Duque Márquez (b. 1976) was president of Colombia from 2018 to 2022.

11 The Casa de Nariño is the residence of the president of Colombia.

12 Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego (b. 1960) is the current president of Colombia (since 2022).

13 The Pacto Histórico por Colombia (Historic Pact for Colombia) is an electoral coalition comprising parties from the left of the political spectrum.

reject war between empires that are fought using weak countries as a stage, without touching each other' (Semana, 8 March 2022). The working agenda between the United States and Colombia remains in place, and the White House is showing a clear willingness to work with the new government. However, when it comes to the war, effusiveness and reactivity seem to be waning in favour of eminently Colombian issues.

Political and Ideological Affinities: Venezuela

For its part, Venezuela reacted in a manner completely opposite to Colombia's position. Along with countries such as Nicaragua, Cuba, and Bolivia, Venezuela is one of Russia's 'main partners in the region, and its distancing from the United States tends to be rewarded with Russian support in various areas, such as diplomacy, health and finance, as well as intelligence and defence' (Sanahuja et al. 2022, p. 7). In a paradigm of 'symbolic reciprocity', Rouvinski asserts that 'Russia's new experiences in Latin America are characterised by growing tension with the United States and vigilance on the part of some extra-regional actors, starting with China' (Rouvinski 2022, p. 18).

With the arrival of Hugo Chávez to the presidency, an energy, geopolitical, diplomatic, and military alliance was established with Russia. Since the first bilateral meeting between President Hugo Chávez¹⁴ and President Vladimir Putin in 2000, cooperation and high-level ties have deepened and distanced themselves from the United States. The late Venezuelan president made eight trips to Russia in nine years (Rodríguez 2019). The relationship continued despite Chávez's death. Nicolás Maduro seems to understand perfectly the need to align himself with Russia within the framework of the symbolic reciprocity mentioned above. In fact, Russia has become Venezuela's most important ally on the international stage, given its firm support against the Trump administration's initiatives to remove Maduro from power. (Rodríguez 2019). In this regard, in the context of the pandemic, Venezuela was the first country in Latin America to receive the Russian vaccine (Telesur, 2 October 2022). Before the invasion of Ukraine, Maduro had already expressed his support and welcomed Russian political figures to his country. In this regard, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov visited Caracas on 16 February 2022 and, after his meeting with Venezuelan Minister of Petroleum, Tareck El Aissami, expressed his desire for both countries to expand their cooperation, which currently consists of 20 agreements in different areas (Infobae, 16 February 2022a). In this

14 Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías (1954–2013) served as the president of Venezuela from 1999 until his death.

context, Maduro spoke on national television a few days before the conflict, stating that Ukrainians ‘have preferred to join the plans of aggression against Russia, that is what is happening there and what President Putin has been denouncing ... that they intend to surround Russia, point all NATO weapons at Russia so that at some point, when conditions are right, they can attack and destroy Russia’ (DW, 23 February 2022). And, of course, he made clear his unconditional support for Vladimir Putin in his just actions to ‘defend peace’, with Russia’s recognition of the independence of the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic (Infobae, 22 February 2022b).

Since the start of the conflict, in terms of official statements, Venezuela has demonstrated its support for and alignment with Russia’s position and rhetoric, although it has been unable to exercise its vote in the United Nations General Assembly due to non-payment of national dues. On the other hand, in the case of the OAS Permanent Council statement, Venezuela voted in favour of the condemnation (US Mission to the OAS 2022), although this is because Venezuela’s representative to the OAS does not represent the government of Nicolás Maduro, but rather the self-proclaimed Juan Guaidó, who has held the position of interim president of Venezuela since 2019 and continues to be recognised by a considerable number of countries.

Amid global geopolitical tensions, the White House initiated a lukewarm rapprochement with Caracas. In early March, a high-level US delegation visited Caracas with the aim of discussing a wide range of issues and advancing an agenda that promotes well-being and peace (EFE, 9 March 2022). It should be noted that sanctions against Venezuela have not been lifted, although two US prisoners have been released and there is an agenda for rapprochement focused mainly on energy interests. Undoubtedly, ‘this US measure is part of an attempt to mitigate Russia’s influence in the region by lifting some of the oil sanctions on Venezuela, while increasing its supply of crude oil and gas, which would help alleviate upward pressure on prices in international markets’ (Sanahuja et al. 2022). They also demonstrate pragmatism on the part of the Latin American country, whose internal tensions are making themselves felt.

Final Conclusions

Faced with the new global dynamics in general and the Russian–Ukrainian conflict in particular, the Latin American region has presented positions that balance support for a rules-based world with pragmatic actions that express its particular interests, avoiding programmatic alignments or

direct involvement in competition between the great powers. However, more extreme reactions aligned with particular interests are more likely and evident in special cases such as Colombia and Venezuela. Ultimately, we find positions (such as those of Argentina and Brazil) that, although they coincide with the Western position in multilateral forums, have been critical of the application of sanctions, less cooperative with the positions of the United States within the framework of the OAS, or have even issued disparate statements. Beneficial trade with Brazil in the field of fertilisers and common global perspectives on a multipolar world have been key factors in explaining its ambiguous position on the war. Close cooperation in the context of the pandemic and political discourse have also highlighted Mexico's zigzagging rhetoric and actions. Finally, countries such as Colombia and Venezuela maintain their traditional closeness to the United States and Russia, respectively, in pursuit of the protection of their vital national interests. Although changes in government (Colombia) and the rapprochement with Washington (Venezuela) seem to show some lukewarmness, positions appear to continue favouring their historical partners.

Notes

- (1) General Assembly Resolution 11/1 'Aggression Against Ukraine' A/RES/ES-11/1 (2 March 2022). Available at: [N2229340.pdf \(un.org\)](#).
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Ukraine Wants Brazil to Ask China to ‘Force’ Russia to Stop the War

Ucrânia quer que Brasil peça à China para ‘forçar’ Rússia a parar guerra

Paulo Silva Pinto

Editorial Note

This article was published in the Brazilian online newspaper *Poder360* on 24 February 2024.¹

Ukraine’s ambassador to Brazil, Andrii Melnyk, 44, has asked the Brazilian government to broker talks with China to help end the war in the country. Russia’s invasion of eastern Ukraine is two years old this Saturday (24 February 2024). Russia currently controls 20 per cent of the country’s territory.

‘I think China could play a crucial role in persuading or, I would even say, forcing the Russians to stop this war’, Melnyk said in an interview recorded on Thursday (22 February). He has been in Brasília since September 2023.

The ambassador said that he had presented the demand to the Brazilian government and that it had been signalled that this could be discussed with the Chinese directly or in meetings with other countries. Melnyk also said he hoped that the Brazilians would send aid to Ukraine in the form of armaments or other items. ‘The Ukrainians are asking me why the Brazilians aren’t helping us, because it’s a common cause for the good of humanity’, he said. Melnyk also hopes that Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba will be invited to Brasília. The request has already been made to the Brazilian government, but there has been no response. The ambassador hopes to restore the close relationship between Brazil and Ukraine that existed during the second term of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who visited Kyiv in 2009.

¹ <https://www.poder360.com.br/internacional/ucrania-quer-que-brasil-peca-a-china-para-russia-parar-guerra/>.

Read extracts from the interview below:

Paulo Silva Pinto: This Saturday (24 February 2024) marks two years since Russia invaded Ukraine and led to the current conflict. What are the prospects for the war?

Andrii Melnyk: The main thing is that the people are still committed to fighting for a state and resisting this military aggression. What is at stake for us is our very existence. It is the existence of the Ukrainian state. It's the existence of Ukrainian culture and our identity, because (Vladimir) Putin still wants to destroy the state, culture, and nationality. If someone asks me whether Ukraine would be ready to sacrifice some territories that are now under Russian occupation, my answer is that about 20 per cent of our soil is under Russian occupation. My answer to my Brazilian friends is: compared to your country, it would be like the state of Amazonas and Acre. Would you be ready to give in? We can't just give up this part of your territory for an empty promise of peace that may never happen. The government has been in action for two years. Parliament is functioning. Last year we even had a small positive performance after a big drop in 2022, the first year of the war. The situation is difficult because Russia has the second largest army in the world. Russia has a huge military complex, with hundreds of factories building new weapons. It has millions of soldiers who can be mobilised and deployed in Ukraine. We have a very strong enemy. But once again, justice and the law are on our side. We are fighting for our independence and we hope that our Brazilian friends will help us achieve this goal, which is to liberate not just the territory, which seems abstract, but the people. The Ukrainian loss of control over Avdiivka,² a stronghold, is causing Russian groups to push deeper into Ukrainian territory. Of course, Russia has enough capacity, people, and weapons to advance, but the question is what price Russian soldiers pay. They've been trying for months, basically since 2014, because this war started 10 years ago, when Russia occupied Crimea. Then the war started in the eastern part of Ukraine. Avdiivka was a free city near Donetsk and there was one of the biggest fortresses in Ukraine. The Russians couldn't take it. They did. But they paid. Even according to their own estimates, at least 16,000 soldiers died in that battle. That's Russian data, not ours. We estimate at least double the number of people who died for the capture of the city. The Soviet Union fought a war in Afghanistan for 10 years

2 Avdiivka is a city in the Donetsk Oblast in eastern Ukraine. On 17 February 2024, it was captured by Russian forces.

and the official casualties were 15,000 soldiers. The Soviet Union lost the war in Afghanistan because it had to withdraw. (Mikhail) Gorbachev had to withdraw troops from Afghanistan at the end of the 1980s. That was one of the main factors why the Soviet Union collapsed as a state, because it wasn't possible to talk about the victims. Now that we have the internet, everyone knows what's going on. Of course, the Russians are ready to sacrifice tens of thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousands of soldiers in order to push on, but Ukraine is ready to defend this front line, which is 1,300 kilometres long. Yes, they've had successes. But the lives of the soldiers don't matter to Putin. He wants to achieve results. He wants to get on with it, basically. He wants to take over Ukraine. We hope that sooner or later Russian society will wake up, and that the wives and mothers of those soldiers who were sent without any respect and without any training to this war, only to die on the battlefield or be wounded, that there will be consequences. We will hear the voices raised in Russian society itself. I think it's a victory, but it's a Pyrrhic victory—Pyrrhus (a Greek king who lived from 318 BC to 272 BC) won the battle but lost the war.

Paulo Silva Pinto: How many Ukrainian soldiers were killed in the Battle of Avdiivka?

Andrii Melnyk: Our government's position since day one of this war has been not to publicise our casualties, but I can assure you that they are nothing like the casualties that Russia has had to endure in this war. The Ukrainians who have died and been injured are the most terrible thing. We value that. We want to protect the lives of the soldiers and that's why the decision was made to withdraw the troops. We wouldn't fight to the last soldier. We were keeping Avdiivka as a fortress. There hadn't been any citizens there for a long time. They had to abandon the city. The military situation had reached the point where it no longer made sense to hold on to the city.

Paulo Silva Pinto: Ukraine depends on an extra \$60 billion in aid from the United States, which Congress is resisting approving. Without it, will the Ukrainians be able to resist?

Andrii Melnyk: If we have to compare the whole situation, if we look at the first days, weeks, and even months of this Russian invasion, two years ago, at that time, we didn't have any Western weapons. Nothing. There were American weapons, but they weren't used. They were sent by the decision of President (Donald) Trump in case Russia started the invasion. But we didn't

have any modern weapons from Western countries. Just the willingness of the people to resist. Over time, our friends in the West paid attention to us. They saw that Ukrainians don't want to give up, they love their country. During 2022, we received the necessary weapons. So, honestly, I wouldn't want to speculate on what will happen if Congress doesn't agree and supports Ukraine with this amount. Of course, I still hope that a solution can be found in the House of Representatives in the coming weeks. But even if something can change, our US allies have been, and I would like to emphasise this, the biggest supporters of Ukraine so far in terms of arms, and also in terms of financial assistance. Our European friends, they all look at the situation very carefully and realise that there will be no other way for them to be there. If there are changes from the Americans, we hope that they won't happen in the case of the European Union. Personally, I am convinced that we will increase our European allies' contribution so that Ukraine is not left alone. Our friends, particularly those in Europe, understand the situation Ukraine is facing due to the Russian aggression. This is not a good prospect for them because nobody knows which country Putin will target next. There have been strong signs that Putin will not stop with Ukraine. Other countries are at risk too: Moldova, Georgia, and even NATO countries like the Baltic States and Poland. That's why, from the point of view of our European friends, but also from the point of view of the Americans, there is no other way but to help the Ukrainians in this fight.

Paulo Silva Pinto: If Donald Trump wins the US elections, will it be worse, better, or the same compared to what it has been with Joe Biden?

Andrii Melnyk: Again, I don't want to speculate. We don't know. It will be the will of the American people. We don't know who the next president of the United States will be. Our experience not only in the last two years, but also before, since the annexation of Crimea, is that we have always had bipartisan support in the US Congress. The Republican Party and the Democratic Party supported Ukraine. This consensus in society was crucial. We have resisted and survived until now, we believe not only because of the empathy our American friends may have for this war, but also because of the values we have been fighting for. For freedom, for democratic rights, but also for their own national interest. I don't think it would be a good decision to leave Ukraine alone in this fight. The entire security balance in Europe, and also in the world, could change. And that's not what our friends want. That's why we're confident. Regardless of the next president, the support of the United States will continue. We have the same cause.

Paulo Silva Pinto: What is your assessment of the Brazilian government's actions or lack of actions in relation to the conflict?

Andrii Melnyk: We still hope that our Brazilian partners will understand that although this war seems so far away, 12,000 km from Brasília, although the feeling of insecurity here is different compared to our neighbours in Europe, this war can—and will—have repercussions for Brazil too if Putin manages to destroy the rules that were created after World War II. Notions of international law, the Vienna Charter,³ are the foundations for prosperity. Brazil is now trying to build a fairer world where the voices of the Global South are heard. So we think this should be kept in mind when taking a position in this war. For the time being, the Brazilian government has taken a neutral stance. We appreciate, of course, the support of the UN General Assembly and the Security Council. There are many other countries, democratic countries, that have other positions, that abstained. We would like to say that we hope this position remains unchanged. But at the same time, if you go to Kyiv and ask people what they think about Brazil, they won't know what to say. They'll say: look at our friends in Germany, in Poland, even in countries like Japan or South Korea and many others. They have supported us not only with words, which is important, but also with some actions, sending weapons, helping us to defend Ukrainian cities. What does it mean to send air defence systems, as Germany has done? It means that the missiles that fly over Ukrainian towns and villages every day won't bring devastation. That's what counts, because civilians have been the main target of Putin's war. Civilians, schools, museums, hospitals. The Ukrainians are asking me why the Brazilians aren't helping us. It's a common cause for the good of humanity. This would be something Brazil could do, because Brazil is one of the strongest economies in the world, in the top 10. It will be the eighth-largest economy and maybe even the sixth in a few decades. So it's one of the strongest economies, which can help those you consider friends. That's why I'd like to repeat this appeal to Brazilian society, to the Brazilian community, to all people of good will here. Please rethink this stance, because it will be remembered by the Ukrainians. Because this is what will go down in history. If Brazil takes the position it has, historically speaking, we can have full understanding. But it could help humanely. There's no running water because the Russians are destroying

3 This refers to the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT). The VCLT regulates the conclusion, entry into force, application, interpretation, amendment, and termination of treaties between states.

critical infrastructure. They hate our factories. They do everything they can to make life impossible in Ukraine.

Paulo Silva Pinto: Is the fact that Brazil is a founding member of the BRICS an obstacle to the country having a different position in the war?

Andrii Melnyk: I'm trying to understand the whole philosophy of the Brazilian political elite. What's the point of sticking with Russia, an aggressive state, fighting wars that break all the rules? Why is that so important? Why keep it in this alliance? I get different answers, but none of them, at least to me, seem really persuasive. I keep asking myself, what can Russia contribute? There are other countries like India and South Africa. I hope that there will also be some critical reassessment of this strategic partnership with Russia. This is something I hear almost every day at diplomatic meetings and talking to members of Congress: Brazilians are proud of this partnership. I reply: OK. The country is sovereign. Nobody will question that. But at the same time, there may be some consequences. Russia is still waging an aggressive war as we speak here and it's not going to stop. Now we have Iran, which has been invited to the BRICS. From our perspective, that country is one of the few that is actively helping Russia, and not just with the deadly drones that have been hitting Ukrainian cities. You can take my word for it. I lived in Kyiv in the middle of this war. I can distinguish the sounds of different types of drones flying over my house, which were detected by the air defence systems of Germany and other friends who helped us. But now we have proof that Iran has also been sending hundreds of ballistic missiles, which have been used by Russia to kill civilians. I want to say that we can't understand what this country can have in common with Brazil, one of the largest democratic nations and a country that is striving to be a leader not just in the Global South, but on the global stage, to be a true leader. How can we have partners like Russia or Iran fighting wars of aggression?

Paulo Silva Pinto: The strongest country in the BRICS group is neither Brazil nor Russia. It's China. What is your assessment of the Chinese position in this conflict?

Andrii Melnyk: China can play an active role, perhaps even a crucial one, in ending this war. Unfortunately, so far China has not really been involved in any process to help persuade an end to this war. What would we, the Ukrainians, our Western partners, and hopefully Brazil too, like? We want

to persuade Putin to stop this madness. Now this is only possible on the battlefield because there is no willingness for any negotiations, no talks on Moscow's part. That's why there can now only be a military solution, which is quite difficult because the price is also enormous for us. Our hope is to involve China in this process, because China has more power to influence Putin to stop the war. This is our hope: Brazilians have excellent relations with Beijing, and we have also been talking about this issue here in Brasília so that our friends here can try to persuade the Chinese to truly engage in this process. I think China could play a crucial role in persuading or, I would say, forcing the Russians to stop this war. In the end, this also contradicts China's long-term interests. China has profited from the existing international legal norms and this order to build prosperity, to build one of the world's largest successful economies, which now also reaches Latin American countries. It is an example of successful economic development for many countries around the world. The whole world is now on alert because of Houthis⁴ who are bombing ships. How can China benefit from this kind of action, from the domino effect that will come if Russia wants to destroy even more? Our hope, a rational hope, is that the Chinese can play a more constructive role in this process. That's the demand we've made of the Brazilian government, so that they can help us in our talks with Beijing.

Paulo Silva Pinto: What was the response given to the Brazilian government?

Andrii Melnyk: The negotiations are, as I understand it, ongoing, because there are many forums in which these discussions take place, not only within the BRICS community, but also on a bilateral scale. We hope that the Brazilians can also play a role here. It has been said that Brazil would like to create a group of friends of peace to start some process with this objective. Putin started this war unprovoked, which is why he can stop it at any time. So it's just a question of the power of persuasion. The Brazilians, together with their Chinese partners, could achieve this. We would like to see a genuine initiative from Brasília with some other countries to help us put an end to this barbarism.

Paulo Silva Pinto: President Lula said in April 2023 that Ukraine was as much to blame for the war as Russia. What effect did this phrase have on our assessment?

4 The Houthis (from Arabic al-Ḥuṭīyyūn) are a political–military movement and a civil war faction in Yemen.

Andrii Melnyk: There's no point in commenting on this statement. What counts for now is the meeting of the two presidents in New York last September. I was very happy as an ambassador that we were able to achieve this in just three weeks. I was here in Brasília, and we were finally able to arrange this meeting. It wasn't easy, because it was during the General Assembly. The conversation was good, although it wasn't an easy one. I think both sides were behind it, they were satisfied with the outcome and at least we had the feeling that we can move forward. It's possible to think that now there really will be a new start to our bilateral relations, because there have been no visits from Brazil for many years, but especially since the beginning of this great war that Russia has started against Ukraine. Not a single Brazilian politician or member of the government has been to Kyiv. We hope that this can change. We hope that President Lula will be able to visit Kyiv. The last time he was in our capital was almost 15 years ago. That was a different time. Only by being there, seeing with your own eyes what is happening, talking to the government, but also to people in society, can you get another sense of what can be done. Half a year has passed and not much progress has been made. Unfortunately. We hope to be able to organise a series of visits on which the two presidents have agreed. We're still waiting for the green light from Brasília for my foreign minister to come and meet with Minister Mauro Vieira and start discussing issues that are on the table regarding how to end this war, what Brazil's contribution can be and, of course, how to renew economic ties. Because of the war, our trade is now non-existent, especially our exports to Brazil, because the Black Sea has been blocked by the Russian Navy. We would like to restart our dialogue. We would like to be seen, regardless of this terrible war, as equal partners.

Paulo Silva Pinto: Could Brazil play a role as a peace broker?

Andrii Melnyk: I think that's been my message since day one of my work here in Brazil as ambassador. And hope still exists because Brazil has enormous soft power from the entire international community. Its diplomacy is one of the best in the world. There are ambassadors, capable negotiators, who may be ready and hopefully willing to take this task seriously and actually start negotiating, but what is needed in this sense is real involvement. To be an intermediary or mediator or play any other active role in stopping this war, Brazil has to be more engaged. And to do that, we need to talk, we need to travel, we need to invite the Ukrainians here and perhaps the Russians too, but that's another story. Only then can you understand both sides and look for ways forward. You have to understand, agree, everything

is still possible. There hasn't been much progress in this regard so far, but Brazil is capable of helping and we hope that it will be willing to get more involved than has been the case so far.

Paulo Silva Pinto: When will the foreign minister visit?

Andrii Melnyk: We're waiting for that invitation. The two ministers spoke on the phone a few weeks ago. I asked my minister about it, if Minister [of Foreign Affairs Mauro] Vieira had proposed a date. The answer was no. We hope that this visit can take place in the next few months because the last time we had an exchange at this level was more than 10 years ago. We have to start talking. You Brazilians should try to understand us better, because without this basic understanding, you can't dream of this special role of mediator. You have to be committed. I was in Germany as ambassador. Germany and France were two mediators in the so-called Normandy format after the annexation of Crimea between 2014 and 2022. Yes, perhaps it wasn't as successful as we imagined, because the war couldn't be avoided. That's a tragedy, but that's another story. At the same time there were almost 1,000 rounds of negotiations with the Russians, in Berlin, in Paris, in Minsk. Constant rounds of expert groups. This was valuable because now the Germans have a different understanding of the situation. This is my wish, my personal wish, for Brazil, with its global ambitions, to get more involved in order to understand better. This can happen, it can be realised, and it can help us end this war.

Brazil and Ukraine had reasonable co-operation at one point. There was even a joint venture for satellites. What happened? This was one of the most important projects that Ukraine had abroad, not just with Brazil, but with all countries, about 15 years ago. This project couldn't be realised and that's a shame because the joint venture that was created was a project agreed between the two governments. President Lula was last in Kyiv in December 2009. Alcântara, that was the name of the project, which was the cornerstone of our partnership agreed at the time. And I would also like to remind the Brazilian public that it was President Lula and Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko⁵ who signed a declaration on strategic partnership. One of the foundations of this partnership should have been this project, which unfortunately couldn't be realised. It's a shame, but for us it's no reason to stop working. So we're looking for similar possibilities in the

5 Viktor Andriyovych Yushchenko (b. 1954) was president of Ukraine from 2005 to 2010. During his term in office, he sought to bring Ukraine closer to the EU, the US, and NATO.

sphere of space again. Building aeroplanes together is also something that can be discussed because Brazil is one of the biggest nations and players in this respect. Ukraine has always been a key player with Antonov aeroplanes. It's a factory that is still developing new types of aeroplanes now.

Paulo Silva Pinto: Are you dealing with it?

Andrii Melnyk: We're trying to feel where we can match our interests, and I think that would also be a natural alliance. Not only [Brazilian aerospace corporation] Embraer, but other players in this field could see the opportunities that Ukraine can offer and what can be achieved, not only in terms of civil aviation, but also militarily. Brazil is one of the biggest producers in the world. Especially because of this war, we've gained unique experience in terms of modernising our army, modernising our air defence system, new types of weapons, such as drones, and we've seen that this is a drone war, because drones can even play a decisive role and Ukraine has unique experience in that sense. Of course, Brazil has other security problems. But I want to say that this very painful experience cannot be ignored by our Brazilian friends. We would like to reach out and propose the continuation of a defence dialogue that was started three years ago before the war. Now we're trying to revive it because it means that Brazil would need to have access to the experience, which is very sad because of this war, but Ukraine is now, unfortunately, at the forefront of many new developments.

Paulo Silva Pinto: Looking back in perspective, were there any mistakes made by the Ukrainians before the war that left the country more vulnerable to Russia?

Andrii Melnyk: It's hard to say, especially as long as this war continues. Of course, there will be all sorts of assessments of why this war happened. It couldn't have been avoided, of course. If you look back, Ukrainians are a peaceful nation. We were no better prepared for a possible war with our Russian neighbours. But what I would like to say here is that there are many stories that you can hear, that Ukrainians are just puppets of Westerners and this war is being fought not between Ukraine and Russia, which invaded it, but between the West and Russia, and we are just an amusement park and a battlefield. All these stories have no substance. Unfortunately, Russia still wants to destroy Ukraine, and I think the common task also with our Brazilian friends will be to signal that we will not allow Russia to succeed in Ukraine, because that would be a terrible message not just to Europe,

not just to our neighbours, but to the whole world. And that's what counts. Mistakes are made, of course. We're human, everyone makes mistakes. You analyse and understand those mistakes in order to admit them in the future. And that's our approach.

Paulo Silva Pinto: What is your assessment of President Lula's statement that the war in Gaza is equivalent to the Holocaust in some respects?

Andrii Melnyk: I don't intend to interfere in this very difficult discussion between Brazil and Israel because the two countries are our friends. The only thing I can say is that, for Ukrainians, the Holocaust is something that is part of our history and our DNA, because all the Jews who died, who were killed during the Holocaust, lived in Ukraine, on Ukrainian soil, so it's part of our history and that's why for us it's a sacred thing. It's the biggest crime in history against the Jewish people. That's why I'd keep quiet and wouldn't like to comment on it.

About the Author

Paulo Silva Pinto graduated from the University of São Paulo and obtained a master's degree in economic history from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He joined the news outlet *Poder360* as a journalist in February 2019. Prior to this, he worked as a reporter for the daily newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* for seven years and as a politics and economics reporter and editor at *Correio Braziliense* for thirteen years.

Part 4

Religious Solidarities

Abstract: This chapter presents articles that explore how religious solidarities—and related ideas of globality—are articulated, encompassing not only divisions and confrontations, but also connections and alliances along religious lines. Religion has long played a central role in fostering notions of belonging, community, cross-border solidarities, and cultural hierarchies. The selected articles shed light on different facets of these dynamics triggered by the war against Ukraine. Religiously inspired ideas of world order also figure prominently here.

Keywords: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, religious imaginings of globality

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Introduction

Home to Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities, Ukraine is a multi-religious society, and religious affiliation has become a key dimension of the war against the country. Religious beliefs and loyalties are being mobilised in the context of the war to invoke transnational and transregional solidarities, as well as to promote particular visions of world order. This chapter presents articles that reveal the expression of such religious solidarities and related ideas of globality, encompassing not only divisions and confrontations but also connections and alliances along religious lines. We dedicate an entire chapter to this topic because discussions about the global consequences of Russia's war on Ukraine tend to focus on politics, the economy, international law, and human rights—all of which are addressed in the other chapters. However, the reconfiguration of the world order that is taking place before our eyes is also unfolding through and along the lines of religious faith and its institutions. After all, religion has always played an important role in fostering notions of belonging and community as well as cross-border relationships and solidarities, even within predominantly secular societies.

In introducing the articles in this chapter, we will first discuss the role of religion in shaping notions of globality—whether understood as a religious group's perception of itself as possessing global significance and articulating corresponding visions of world order, or as concepts of belonging that transcend local boundaries and claim global validity. Secondly, we will outline Ukraine's multi-religious landscape to better understand why the concept of religious solidarity has become so significant on a global scale amid the ongoing war. Finally, we will analyse the articles to explore how religiously grounded ideas of globality and transregional solidarity manifest across various religious contexts.

Religious Imaginings of Globality

The evocation, consolidation, and modification of regional and transregional religious solidarities during the course of the war have taken place against the background of centuries-old conceptions of the world that have shaped cultural hierarchies and claims to dominance.

To begin with, colonisation processes initiated by European powers from the fifteenth century onwards were based on an edifice of ideas that postulated the civilisational superiority of Christianity. This religiously

based notion of superiority was used to justify and sustain domination over societies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—and, as has long been overlooked within Europe itself. As the second chapter has shown, this also affected Ukraine.

What forms of religious imaginings of globality were associated with such notions of superiority, or how did they contribute to their emergence? First of all, the binary of a developed and developing ‘West’ versus a static and undeveloped ‘rest’ can be noted. In a modified form, this dichotomy found expression in conservative notions of the ‘Christian Occident’ and in calls for European unification—ideas that were influential in Western Europe after the Second World War and remain so today.¹

Closely related, though articulated in an entirely different way, is the idea of a ‘Muslim world’, which emerged in the nineteenth century and continues to resonate within Muslim communities around the globe.² Like the Christian concept of the ‘Occident’, it draws on centuries-old ideas of commonality—known as *umma*, the community of all Muslims—and reconfigures them into a politicised notion of solidarity. While the concept referred to in the Arabic-speaking world is *ittiḥād al-islām* (unity of Islam), ‘Western’ scholarship commonly employs the initially pejorative term ‘pan-Islamism’.³

Pan-Islamism has its roots in intellectual resistance to the colonial expansion of European powers into Muslim countries, a process that intensified in the final decades of the nineteenth century. By convincing Muslim communities of Islam’s global significance and its potential to compete with the ‘Christian West’, global Muslim solidarity was invoked to give meaning and strength to this resistance. While pan-Islamism initially asserted the equality of Muslim societies with those of the West, the experience of violence and oppression under colonial rule—as well as the persistence of unequal relations after its end—reinforced its anti-Western connotations. This was especially evident after the Second World War, when pan-Islamism was used to oppose the policies of the United States and former European colonial powers, which were perceived as imperialist. It has also been invoked to criticise and reject the unconditional support for Israel by the

1 For a concise overview, see Vanessa Conze, ‘Abendland (Occident)’, *European History Online* (EGO URL: <https://www.ieg-ego.eu/conzev-2012-en>; URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-2016120202, accessed 24 November 2024).

2 See Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Harvard University Press, 2017).

3 For the historical use of terminology, see Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Clarendon Press, 1990); Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

US, Germany, and other Western European states. In this context, ideas of globality and society are developed in deliberate distancing from—if not in outright opposition to—liberal conceptions of world order. Such a distancing is inherent in another form of transregional religious solidarity discussed in this chapter: the imagined community of a (Christian) Orthodox world. This concept is significant because its political cosmology is often intertwined with nationalist ideas of space and community, as exemplified by the concept of the *‘russkii mir’* (‘Russian world’).⁴

Another dimension in the proclamation of transregional religious solidarities during the war on Ukraine involves religiously grounded practices of humanitarianism, which have emerged since the second half of the nineteenth century, driven by the belief that co-religionists in other parts of the world are under threat—whether from war and violence, or from hunger and natural disasters.⁵

Religious Diversity in Ukraine Today

To understand how such religious notions of globality become meaningful in a time of war on Ukraine, it is necessary to recall the country’s current religious diversity. Two key factors are decisive here. Firstly, even before the large-scale Russian invasion, there was a long-term trend towards identifying as religious and as a member of a religious group, regardless of the actual intensity of ritual practice. This followed decades of state-imposed secularisation policies during the Soviet era. Data collected as part of a long-term study suggests that in 2022, 74 per cent of the population in Ukraine’s free territories identified as religious.⁶ Secondly, Ukraine is often perceived from the outside through a religious prism—whether as part of the Orthodox world, in its relation to the Roman Catholic Church, as a historical periphery of the Muslim world, or as home to a Jewish diaspora.

4 Stefan Rohdewald, “‘Katechon’, “Third Rome”, and “Holy War”: “Russian” and “Serbian World(s)” as Eschatological Geopolitical Exceptionalisms”, in *Fault Lines in the Orthodox World: Theology, Geopolitics, and Diplomacy in Light of the War in Ukraine*, ed. Emil Hilton Saggau and Sebastian Rimestad (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 109–146.

5 On the connection between war and religiously motivated humanitarianism, see, among others, Jonathan Benthall and Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan, *The Charitable Crescent: Politics of Aid in the Muslim World* (I. B. Tauris, 2003); Jaclyn Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism in the Age of the Great War* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

6 *Viyina i tserkva. Tserkovno-religijna situaciia v Ukrayini 2022r* [War and the church: The church and the religious situation in Ukraine in 2022] (Razumkov Centre, 2022), 4, https://razumkov.org.ua/images/2023/02/13/2022_Religiya_SITE.pdf.

An examination of Ukraine's religious diversity using population statistics shows that the two largest religious communities are Orthodox churches: on the one hand, there is the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, whose autocephaly (that is, its canonical and administrative independence) was recognised by the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople in 2018. On the other hand, there is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) that was originally the Ukrainian branch of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.⁷ After Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church declared its independence from Moscow because of the ROC's widespread support for Putin's war policy. However, as most of its members do not decline official invitations to Russian Orthodox Church meetings, they are suspected by the Ukrainian authorities of covert collaboration with the ROC.

A third Christian community, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC),⁸ accepts papal supremacy while retaining the Byzantine rite. It has its roots in the Union of Brest, concluded in 1596 when most Ukrainian territories were part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Greek Catholic Church reached the height of its influence in the early modern period and, by the eighteenth century, had achieved near-total dominance over adherents of the Byzantine rite within Poland–Lithuania.⁹ The partitions of Poland–Lithuania at the end of the eighteenth century led to the incorporation of the Greek Catholic Church into the Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian-occupied territories in 1839, while it continued to exist in the Habsburg Monarchy. Later in the nineteenth century, the Greek Catholic Church played an important role in the emergence of a Ukrainian national movement. Its close ties to the Holy See led the Catholic Church to take a special interest in Ukrainian affairs long before the current war. At the same time, as Thomas Mark Németh's article in this chapter shows,

7 Membership figures for religious denominations vary in different statistics and studies. A recent study by the Kyiv-based Razumkov Centre records only 'Orthodoxy' as a category and states that 62% of the population in the unoccupied territories profess 'Orthodoxy'; see *Viyina i tserkva*, 25. A 2016 study by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology distinguishes between the two churches, listing 45.7% of the population in non-occupied Ukraine as belonging to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and 13.3% to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate); see Olena Bohdan, 'Religious Self-identity and Prayer in Ukraine', Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 18 July 2016, <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=638&page=1>.

8 The 2022 survey of the Razumkov Centre lists 10.2% of the population in the non-occupied territories as members of the UGCC; see *Viyina i tserkva*, 25.

9 Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform: The Kyivan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Harvard University Press, 2001).

the attitude of Pope Francis and his diplomacy towards the war has been criticised within the UGCC.

The complex history of the 'Eastern' churches in Ukraine as well as the issue of their present-day orientation continue to be the subject of fierce disputes between Ukrainian and Russian historiography. The question of solidarity among the various Orthodox churches also has international repercussions—especially in the current wartime context, as Vladimir Veljković's article illustrates.

Alongside these and smaller Christian communities (mainly Roman Catholic and Protestant), Muslims have lived in what is now the Republic of Ukraine for centuries.¹⁰ With the advent of tsarist rule in the late eighteenth century, their numbers steadily declined as a result of emigration—some of it forced—to the Ottoman Empire (and later to Turkey during Soviet times). A dramatic turning point came in 1944 with the deportation of the country's largest Muslim community, the Crimean Tatars, to other parts of the Soviet Union (mostly Uzbekistan) following accusations of collaboration with the German Wehrmacht. The Crimean Tatars were not allowed to return to their historic homeland until 1991.¹¹ Today, the Muslim population in the non-occupied areas of Ukraine is estimated at 0.2 per cent.¹² Despite its small size, the integration of the Tatar population into Ukrainian public discourse has been important for the consolidation of a political—as opposed to an ethnically defined—Ukrainian nation.

Before the Shoah, Ukraine was also one of the most important centres of Jewish life in Europe. As a result of the Nazi policy of extermination and continued emigration after the Second World War, the Jewish population in Ukraine—excluding the Russian-occupied territories—is currently estimated at just 0.1 per cent.¹³

Activating Religious Solidarities in a Time of War on Ukraine

The following articles illustrate how religiously grounded mental maps of the world influence the war and the construction of future world orders.

10 Zaur Gasimov, 'Longue Durée Connectivity: Islam in Eastern Europe from the 11th to the 21st Century', in *Globalizing Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Economics from the 18th to the 21st Century*, ed. Gilad Ben-Nun, Katja Castryck-Naumann, and Lena Dallywater (Bloomsbury, 2025).

11 Edward A. Allworth, ed., *The Tatars of the Crimea: Return to the Homeland. Studies and Documents* (Duke University Press, 1998).

12 *Viyina i tserkva*, 25.

13 *Ibid.*

Political analyst Katarzyna Chawryło (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich/Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw) examines the concept of *russkii mir* as both a vision of Russian-centred globality and a model of globalising anti-Western illiberalism. This hegemonic spatial concept was coined in the second half of the nineteenth century and had its origins in a Russocentric variant of pan-Slavism, which combined ideas of ethnic and confessional (i.e., Russian Orthodox) commonality. It was further developed after the October Revolution of 1917 by conservative emigrant communities in Western Europe. Their ideas were later enthusiastically revived by nationalist right-wing circles in Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Today, the concept of *russkii mir* informs the expansionist ideas of the right-wing mastermind of neo-imperial Russian expansionism, Aleksandr Dugin, as well as the programme of a foundation of the same name, founded in 2007, and the political propaganda of the Moscow Patriarch Kirill (Gundiaev), a close associate of Vladimir Putin. Chawryło analyses a document published on 27 March 2024 by the World Russian People's Council (Vsemirnyi Russkii Narodnyi Sobor)—a body composed, as the author explains, of 'high-ranking church hierarchs' and 'politicians, officials, public figures, and pro-regime oligarchs with nationalist leanings', chaired by Patriarch Kirill himself. This document, entitled 'Decree of the 25th World Russian People's Council: The Present and the Future of the Russian World', describes the Russian war against Ukraine as a 'holy war'. In so doing, the decree not only continues the 'sacred and messianic justification' for the war offered by representatives of the ROC, but also propagates a vision of a global order shaped by an epic battle between good and evil—with Russia portrayed as fighting 'the West immersed in Satanism'. Chawryło argues that the decree fuses the traditional concepts of 'Holy Rus' and an 'All-Russian nation' with that of the Russian world as a 'civilisational community where the ROC and the Kremlin, as its most important religious and political powers, should predominate'. By describing Russia's full-scale invasion as a messianic war, the ROC becomes part of Russia's hybrid warfare against the West—not least because, as Chawryło argues, the decree's message is also aimed at believers outside Russia.

Vladimir Veljković—a journalist who writes for the Serbian online magazine *Peščanik* (The hourglass), known for its eloquent criticism of all forms of nationalistic populism in the former Yugoslavia—discusses another international dimension of the ROC's policy. He reports on a joint letter by Patriarch Kirill and the Belgrade-based Serbian Patriarch Porfirije, in which they criticised the treatment of Pavlo (Lebid), Metropolitan of the Moscow-oriented Ukrainian Orthodox Church and former Father Superior

of the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves (Kyiv Pechersk Lavra), who, at the time, was under house arrest, having been accused of supporting Russia's war of aggression. The letter not only testifies to the close ties between the ROC and the Serbian Orthodox Church during the war; it is also notable for its list of recipients. As Veljković notes, it was sent to 'the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the offices of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the human rights organisations Amnesty International and Freedom House, the heads of the Catholic and Anglican churches, and the other Orthodox patriarchs'. The content of the letter reflects the attempt to instrumentalise international organisations and international law for one's own purposes. It states that the Metropolitan's arrest is part of a 'great hunt' by the Ukrainian government against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, allegedly violating religious freedom. However, as Veljković points out, this rhetoric stands in stark contrast to the human rights situation in Russia itself, where there are now more political prisoners 'than there were in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union'. Both the state and the Church are ruthlessly cracking down on critics of Russia's war of aggression within the ROC, who do not benefit from the religious freedom that Kirill and Porfiriye claim to defend in relation to Ukraine by appealing to international organisations.

The article by academic theologian and UGCC priest Thomas Mark Németh describes the expectations, disappointments, and criticisms of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ukraine towards Pope Francis. Being—like his predecessors—both the head of the cosmopolitan Catholic Church and the sovereign of a state with a global diplomatic presence made Pope Francis, as Németh puts it, simultaneously 'a pastor and a diplomat'. According to the author, this entails a moral dilemma, since the Vatican's proclaimed neutrality 'can make mediation possible but can also cost moral legitimacy'. This tension is also evident at the liturgical level, where representatives of the UGCC have criticised symbolic gestures of reconciliation that they considered 'untimely' in a situation of ongoing violence against the Ukrainian people. Some observers from the UGCC have attributed the Pope's reluctance to explicitly name Russia as an aggressor to the Vatican's vulnerability to Russian influence and to Pope Francis viewing the world 'from the perspective of the Global South', where different perceptions of the war prevail.

Strategies for invoking religious solidarity across borders and spatial boundaries are outlined in the next two articles, both of which address Muslim audiences. One such strategy involves providing factual information on Muslims who are suffering from the war, and it is used to generate

interest among Muslim readers in regions of the world far removed from the immediate theatre of war. Syed Ali Mujtaba, who writes for the Indian–Muslim newspaper *Siasat Daily*, offers insights into the religious practices of Muslims living in Ukraine and shows how their lives have been affected by the Russian invasion. Both in content and style, the text is reminiscent of the tradition of reporting on Muslim communities in other parts of the world that emerged during the early days of pan-Islamism—reporting that helped to construct and consolidate the image of a unified ‘Muslim world’.¹⁴

Next comes an article by the investigative journalists Micah Reddy and Anastasia Levkova (based in South Africa and Ukraine), published on the website of the Al Jazeera television network—renowned for its global reach and multilingualism, with web content available in Arabic, English, Spanish, French, Bosnian, and Chinese. The authors recount real-life stories of Crimean Tatars in the Ukrainian army, fighting to liberate Crimea from Russian occupation.

Finally, we republish a piece by the journalist Tash Mosheim, writing for *The Jewish Chronicle*, a London-based weekly newspaper. The provocative question ‘How Jewish Is Volodymyr Zelensky?’ serves as the starting point for his discussion of Zelenskyi’s public commitment to his Jewish heritage, as well as the arguments of anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists who suggest there is ‘a Jewish globalist plot to support Ukraine’. The article provides insights into the Ukrainian president’s family history: readers learn that Zelenskyi’s grandfather fought against Nazi Germany as a soldier in the Red Army, while his great-grandparents were murdered by German occupation troops. The political significance of Zelenskyi’s background and his approach to it is underscored by the article’s examination of how his Jewish identity is perceived in Israel. This piece is once more an example of how religiously grounded solidarities are fostered across borders and regions.

Taken together, these articles reveal that perceptions of global interconnectedness and world order—viewed here through the prism of religion in the context of war—are shaped by long-established discursive patterns, both in terms of content and rhetoric. Rather than indicating a need for reorientation in response to radical disruption, they suggest a reinforcement of pre-existing tendencies.

14 On Muslim communities in Eastern Europe, see, Dennis Dierks, ‘Scripting, Translating, and Narrating Reform: Making Muslim Reformism in the European Peripheries of the Muslim World at the Turn of the 20th Century’, in *Knowledge on the Move in a Transottoman Perspective: Dynamics of Intellectual Exchange from the Fifteenth to the Early Twentieth Century*, eds. Evelin Dierauff et al. (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 157–222.

About the Volume Editors

Dennis Dierks studied history, Islamic studies, Turkology, and Slavic studies in Mainz, Dijon, and Vienna and received his PhD from the University of Jena. In 2024/25, he was a research associate at the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the history of remembrance, nationalism, revolution, and reform, as well as the global circulation of ideas since the nineteenth century. His latest publications include 'Nation-building and Nationalism in the Black Sea Region (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)', in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, edited by Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Troebst (2024).

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and *Globalizing Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Economics from the 18th to the 21st Century* (2025, co-edited with Gilad Ben-Nun and Katja Castryck-Naumann).

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A Holy War: The Russian Orthodox Church Blesses the War Against the West

Katarzyna Chawryło

Editorial Note

This article first appeared in *OSW Commentary* on 12 April 2024.¹ *OSW Commentary* is published by the Warsaw-based Centre for Eastern Studies (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich). The centre was founded in 1990 to research the transformation processes in the USSR at that time. The geographical focus of current research is broadly defined to include Russia, Eastern and Central Europe, the Baltic States, Southeastern Europe, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia, but also Germany and Scandinavia, as well as Turkey, Israel, and China. Security issues—also in a European context—are a focus of the institute's research activities.

Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) have supported the war and justified Russia's aggressive policy since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine. There have been very few voices criticising the invasion among the clergy, and any such instances of criticism have been consistently suppressed due to censorship within the church and the state. Over the past few weeks, the ROC's position has become even more unequivocal and radical. On 27 March, the World Russian People's Council (Всемирный Русский Народный Собор), an organisation associated with the ROC and chaired by Patriarch Kirill, published a policy paper in which the war in Ukraine was called a 'holy war'. The document identified the 'West immersed in Satanism' as the main enemy of Russia and the Russian people and one which poses a threat not only to them but also to the entire Russian civilisation and Christian religion, from which it (the West) has turned away.

At home, the paper aims to increase the mobilisation of the Russian public and elites, which can be used by the regime to maintain support for the

¹ Katarzyna Chawryło, 'A Holy War: The Russian Orthodox Church Blesses the War Against the West', *OSW Commentary* 589 (2024), <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2024-04-12/a-holy-war-russian-orthodox-church-blesses-war-against-west>.

war. The religious motives behind the war are emphasised as a statement of Russia's strong determination to continue the invasion and subjugation of Ukraine. The content of the decree also fits in with the increasingly harsh rhetoric employed towards the West by the country's most senior officials, including Vladimir Putin. The ROC not only accepts and justifies the conflict *post factum* but has also adopted a proactive stance, providing the authorities with a sacred and messianic justification for the war. The church thus supports the aggressive and expansionist state ideology based on the ideas promoted by the church itself: Holy Rus,² the Russian world and the All-Russian nation.³ The aim of this rhetoric is also to exert psychological pressure on Western elites. Nor can it be ruled out that this is also part of preparations for more aggressive moves against the West.

War Against the West as a 'Holy War'

Since the outset of the invasion of Ukraine, hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church have sanctioned and justified the war. After over two years, the church's support for the invasion has moved to another level. On 27 March, the World Russian People's Council (hereinafter: the Council) published a policy paper entitled 'Decree of the 25th World Russian People's Council: The Present and the Future of the Russian World'. In this document, the conflict with Ukraine was depicted as a 'holy war', where Russia is on the side of 'good' and the West embodies 'evil'. It is noteworthy that it was not Kyiv but explicitly the West that was identified as the main adversary, which was alleged to have renounced Christianity and embraced Satanism.

According to the document, Russia and its people are defending the 'sole spiritual space of Holy Rus', and are thus fulfilling God's mandate. The document stipulates that, once the 'operation' is over, the entire territory

2 The term 'Holy Rus' (*Sviataia Rus'*) has been used rarely, and with different meanings, since the sixteenth century in the context of Muscovy and later Russia. As a concept it was elaborated and popularised to a greater degree in the nineteenth century on the basis that Russia has been chosen by the sacredness of the Orthodox Christian faith, which is embodied by the Russian Orthodox Church and realised through the political actions of Russia's rulers.

3 The concept of the All-Russian nation (*obshcherusskii narod*, literally: common Russian nation/people)—adapting older, pre-modern ideas of unity and difference—was an essential concept of rule in the Tsarist Empire of the nineteenth century, which postulated that Ukrainians and Belarusians did not constitute independent nations but were, as 'Little Russians' and 'White Russians', part of an All-Russian nation. In contemporary Russian nationalism, these ideas form the basis for the denial of the Ukrainian right to self-determination.

of Ukraine should fall within Moscow's exclusive sphere of influence, and there should be no room for any 'Russophobic political regime' there. The wording of the document concerning the conquest of these territories suggests that, even though the signatories of the decree, just like the Kremlin, accept that a Ukrainian state may exist in some form, they believe that it should be a puppet regime, governed by Moscow-friendly elites who are totally subservient to Russia.

The Council brings together not only high-ranking church hierarchs but also politicians, officials, public figures, and pro-regime oligarchs with nationalist leanings. It is chaired by the head of the ROC, Patriarch Kirill, and its extensive presidium includes figures such as the governor of Saint Petersburg, Alexander Beglov, the presiding judge of the Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vladimir Kolokoltsev. While the organisation predominantly comprises Russian activists, it utilises its official status of an international organisation for propaganda purposes and asserts the right to speak on behalf of all communities where Russian Orthodoxy is present. Traditionally, the church perceives this space as the 'Russian world', a civilisational community where the ROC and the Kremlin, as its most important religious and political powers, should predominate (1). At the core of this space lies the territory of historical Holy Rus, which the ROC believes to be the cradle of Russian Orthodoxy and an area that, historically, should fall under Moscow's jurisdiction, both ecclesiastical and political. The church claims that at present, these territories are divided by enemies and are striving for reunification.

The Religious Foundations of the Expansionist State Ideology

The views expressed in the decree reflect the stance of the entire Russian Orthodox Church. Both the ROC and the Council are controlled by Patriarch Kirill, who governs the church in an authoritarian manner in excess of the powers that are typically vested in the patriarch. The vision of war as a clash of good versus evil had been present in fragmented form in church hierarchs' statements. However, this is the first time it has been comprehensively articulated in an official document. In the past, Kirill proclaimed during one of his sermons, for example, that death on the battlefield in Ukraine washes away all sins and that Russia opposes the Antichrist and global evil. Similar claims have been made by experts close to the church. Moreover, after the invasion commenced, the patriarch ordered that the 'Prayer for Holy Rus' for victory in the war should be mandatory in all church services.

In this prayer the war is presented as a fight for the survival of the so-called All-Russian nation.

This vision aligns with the narrative and goals of the 'special military operation' promoted by the Kremlin, where the invasion is portrayed as a defensive, just, and existential war which is taking place in Ukraine against the much stronger perennial enemy: the West. However, the content of the decree goes beyond the previous framework of the church's cooperation with the government, which involved accepting and justifying the invasion. The document provides a comprehensive ideological, moral, and religious justification for continuing the war, which is now presented as a strictly religious and messianic fight. The church thus creates the foundations for an aggressive and expansionist state ideology from which the Kremlin can draw, based on the ideas the church has promoted for a long time: Holy Rus, the Russian world, and the united All-Russian nation.

The Goals of the Church's Claims

In domestic politics, the decree and the church's position expressed therein are intended to increase the engagement of the Russian public and elites in the war, which the regime will be able to directly exploit in its military campaign in Ukraine. Considering the strong institutional ties between the ROC and the Kremlin, it may be assumed that this stance was somehow coordinated with the central government. The 'holy war' slogans may be used to mentally prepare Russians for increased mobilisation or to justify other unpopular war-related decisions.

Furthermore, the content of the document fits in with the increasingly harsh rhetoric adopted by the country's most important figures, including Putin, towards the West, especially the US. This rhetoric has recently been seen, for example, in politicians' statements concerning the terrorist attack staged near Moscow on 22 March (2), which the Kremlin blamed on Western intelligence services. The purpose of this message is primarily to put psychological pressure on the West and compel it to stop helping Kyiv. The war is framed in religious terms in order to underscore Russia's determination to win and its unwavering commitment to the goals of the so-called 'special operation'. It cannot be ruled out that the rhetoric is being escalated in order to prepare the public for more aggressive moves against the West, which is consistently portrayed as the primary source of 'evil' and is dehumanised in the Russian political and propaganda discourse. Similar

social engineering mechanisms were employed ahead of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The involvement of the ROC in promoting the invasion confirms that the Russian Orthodox Church is not only an integral part of the Russian political establishment but also a significant instrument in Russia's hybrid (including propaganda) war against the West. Its role is to influence communities of believers both within and outside Russia, by leveraging its status and, more importantly, the communication channels typical of a religious organisation.

The ROC's Engagement in the War

The Russian Orthodox Church's support for the war extends beyond mere rhetoric. Its individual priests and entire structures participate in promoting the military campaign, fundraising and sending humanitarian aid to combatants or aiding veterans. Some priests publicly bless military equipment and soldiers heading to the front lines. The Synodal Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces uses its Telegram account to run a pro-war propaganda campaign, reporting on the situation on the front lines and the activities of priests there. Church media outlets do a lot to publicise these efforts in order to demonstrate that the war is a righteous cause supported by the ROC and its followers.

However, sometimes propaganda materials do prove controversial among the Russian public, especially within its more liberal segments. One example of this was the appearance by the priest Mikhail Vasilyev on the Orthodox channel television Spas, where he urged Russian women to have more children, as they would then not regret sending their sons to the front lines. Shortly after this Vasilyev himself was killed in Ukraine in November 2022, where, as stated on the official website of the Patriarchate, he had gone 'on a pastoral mission'.

Meanwhile, complete censorship has been implemented within the church, and those representatives of the clergy who are critical of the war or fail to comply with the patriarch's orders are severely punished. At least several priests have been disciplinarily defrocked (banned from ministry and deprived of income) for refusing to recite the 'Prayer for Holy Rus' during religious service or for modifying it, thus disobeying Kirill's orders. Two prominent cases include the defrocking of highly respected priests: Alexei Uminsky (parish priest of the Holy Trinity Church at Khokhly in Moscow) and Ioann Koval (who allegedly replaced the word 'victory' with 'peace'

in the prayer);⁴ both priests subsequently came under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In turn, Andrey Kordochkin⁵ left the Moscow Patriarchate—specifically its Spanish–Portuguese diocese—on his own initiative to protest against the invasion and the ROC's support for it. After resigning, he initiated the Peace unto to All (Мир всем) project to assist priests persecuted by the church for their anti-war stance.⁶

Examples of the Russian Orthodox Church's Subordination to the Kremlin

The Russian Orthodox Church's policy in Russia has clearly favoured the Kremlin over the past years. Besides justifying the war, it consistently promoted the regime's policies both at home and abroad. Patriarch Kirill has lent his support to the Kremlin by participating in governmental ceremonies, such as during the celebrations of the annexation of the territories separated from Ukraine. In July 2022, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (Священный синод Русской православной церкви)⁷ decided to remove Crimea from the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and directly subordinate it to the Russian Church (3), a move initially avoided directly after the annexation to prevent the alienation of believers in Ukraine. In 2024, a bishop who is believed to be Putin's confessor and who is known for his pro-Kremlin views as well as for

4 Ioann Koval was previously a priest in a parish in the Lyublino district of Moscow. For further information, see 'Moscow Ecclesiastical Court Defrocks Priest Who Replaced "Victory" with "Peace" in Prayer', *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, May 14, 2023, <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/05/14/moscow-ecclesiastical-court-defrocks-priest-who-replaced-victory-with-peace-in-prayer-en-news>.

5 Andrei Kordokhkin served as a priest in the Russian Orthodox parish of St. Mary Magdalene in Madrid. After making critical comments about the war in Ukraine, he was suspended from duty for three months by the Russian Orthodox Church. He resigned from his parish in Madrid and relocated to Germany.

6 The project specifically references the appeal for reconciliation and a ceasefire signed on 1 March 2022 by nearly 300 Russian Orthodox clergy. The signatories are now 'subject to persecution and pressure from state authorities and church hierarchs', according to 'About Us', Peace unto All (Мир Всем), <https://www.mir-vsem.info/about>, accessed 10 June 2025 (in Russian).

7 The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (Svyashchennyi Sinod Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi) is the governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church. Subordinate to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, it consists of metropolitans from Russia and other former Soviet republics or territories of the Tsarist Empire. The Holy Synod is based at the Danilov Monastery in Moscow and at an estate in Peredelkino, a suburb of the city.

his extensive involvement in propaganda justifying Russia's historical claims to Crimea and the invasion, Tikhon (Georgy Shevkunov), was appointed Metropolitan of Simferopol and Crimea (4).

In internal politics, the church, for example, has opposed the introduction of laws criminalising domestic violence, claiming that they are inconsistent with 'traditional and Orthodox values'. Additionally, in its documents (including the aforementioned decree), the ROC has promoted increasing the birth rate and backed nationalist attitudes, for example, advocating for a more restrictive approach to migration. Church structures have also facilitated the state's repressive policies. For example, recently, they made difficulties for the holding of Alexei Navalny's funeral.⁸ Ultimately, despite numerous problems, he was buried in Moscow on 1 March, and the religious ceremony was limited to the necessary minimum.

Prominent as the church and the patriarch himself are in Russian public life, the ROC has been losing social and religious significance. Russians are not a very religious people, and their declared affiliation with Orthodoxy mainly revolves around participation in holiday rituals rather than actual faith or respect for Christian values. Various surveys have revealed that in recent years, the percentage of citizens considering themselves religious has declined despite the government's visible efforts to promote the church and 'traditional values'. In May 2023, around 60% of Russians claimed that religion did not play a significant role in their lives (5). The level of participation in church practices is also minimal—only 12% of respondents go to church at least once a month. At the same time, 72% of respondents identify as Orthodox—they view religion more as an element of national and cultural identity or even as an area of social ritualism. Meanwhile, interest in esotericism and the paranormal is growing (for example, tarot card sales are breaking records), and there is an increase in crime, divorce rates, and the widespread use of alcohol and all kinds of drugs.

Consequences of the Church's Stance

Russians are not overly religious, so the potential for the church's views to translate into societal impact and effectively increase mobilisation in this manner is certainly constrained. However, the Russian Orthodox Church's

8 Aleksei Anatolevich Navalnyi (1976–2024) was a lawyer and politician. He died in February 2024 in a Russian prison camp. It is widely believed that he was murdered at the behest of the Putin regime.

stance is used more broadly as part of the government's propaganda, which is simultaneously adopting an increasingly aggressive and absurd tone, one example of which is accusing the West of Satanism. These views may garner moderate approval within Russia itself.

In the international community, the ROC's ostentatious support for the Kremlin's aggressive policies backed by such radical arguments, may be counterproductive—contributing to further discreditation of both the church and its leader. As a result, the church's communication channels, effectively exploited by the government—such as influencing Orthodox communities outside Russia, individuals disillusioned with the West or supporters of moral conservatism—may become less effective.

In the long term, the church's war rhetoric will likely lead to a more adequate assessment of this institution in the international community. The Russian Orthodox Church maintains active contacts with the international religious organisations in the West it is so critical about—such as the World Council of Churches or the Holy See. Moscow has so far used the church's links with their structures to promote pacifist views, effectively referring to ending the war in Ukraine on Russian terms (essentially misinforming the international community about its own intentions), and to propagate anti-Western, especially anti-American, sentiments among those who already have a negative assessment of the actions and morality of Western elites. The content of the 'Decree of the 25th World Russian People's Council: The Present and the Future of the Russian World', in which the West was unequivocally named as the main enemy and branded as satanic, reveals the actual world view of the ROC representing, like the Kremlin, a zero-sum approach, which is focused on confrontation and aggressive expansion rather than cooperation for the sake of peace.

Notes

- (1) Both the Church and the Kremlin assume that the primary target of their influence is the Eastern Slavs—Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians—as well as all Russian-speaking and Orthodox communities.
- (2) For more, see M. Menkiszak, P. Żochowski, 'Islamists and the "Ukrainian Trace": The Moscow Concert Hall Terrorist Attack', *OSW*, 23 March 2024, [osw.waw.pl \[https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2024-03-23/islamists-and-ukrainian-trace-moscow-concert-hall-terrorist-attack\]](https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2024-03-23/islamists-and-ukrainian-trace-moscow-concert-hall-terrorist-attack).
- (3) In the form of the newly established Crimean Metropolis, comprising the dioceses of Simferopol, Crimea, Dzhankoi, and Feodosia.

- (4) Tikhon has presented his views, for example, in the interview for the celebrity and former opposition activist Ksenia Sobchak in her show *Осторожно: Собчак*, see Тихон Шевкунов: о России, церкви и войне, 15 May 2023, Youtube.com [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgxYomCL4d8>].
- (5) Levada Center Survey Religious Beliefs, 2 June 2023, levada.ru [<https://www.levada.ru/en/2023/06/02/religious-beliefs/>].

About the Author

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9 OSW—Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, <https://www.youtube.com/c/OSWOśrodekStudiówWschodnich>, accessed 24 April 2025.

Rotten Coalition

Trula koalicija

Vladimir Veljković

Editorial Note

This text was published on 29 July 2023 on the Serbian website *Peščanik* (The hourglass),¹⁰ which has been run by a Serbian NGO of the same name since 2007. The website primarily provides a forum for intellectuals and artists from the former Yugoslavia, but also publishes texts by public intellectuals such as Masha Gessen in Serbian translation. *Peščanik* clearly positions itself against nationalist and populist illiberalism worldwide, with a special focus on the successor states of Yugoslavia.

Last Sunday, the Cathedral of the Transfiguration in Odesa—one of the city's most important historical and cultural landmarks, which dates back to the early nineteenth century and is under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church—was severely damaged in a Russian rocket attack. Only a day earlier, the Russian and Serbian patriarchs had sent open letters to international political organisations and religious leaders calling for the release of Metropolitan Pavlo,¹¹ former vicar of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra,¹² and an end to the persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Many religious sites have already been destroyed or severely damaged since the

¹⁰ Vladimir Veljković, 'Trula koalicija [Rotten coalition]', *Peščanik*, 29 July 2023, <https://pescanik.net/trula-koalicija/>.

¹¹ Pavlo (Lebid) (b. 1961) was Metropolitan of Vyshhorod and Chornobyl from 2011 to 2023 in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), which does not recognise Ukrainian autocephaly, and abbot of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra from 1994 to 2023.

¹² Founded in the eleventh century, the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, also known as the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves, is one of the most important monasteries of Orthodox Christianity, as indicated by its honorary title of Lavra, which refers to early Christian hermit colonies. It has been the subject of fierce conflict between the Moscow-oriented Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC-MP), which controlled the monastery, on the one hand, and the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and Ukrainian state authorities, on the other, since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion. At the end of 2022, the Ukrainian government announced that it had terminated the lease with the UOC-MP, but this was ignored by the UOC-MP, as was an eviction notice issued in March 2023, which led to Metropolitan Pavlo being placed under house arrest for 60 days in April 2023.

beginning of the aggression, but the close timing between the issuance of the letters and the rocket attack on the church serves as a powerful symbolic indicator of the true extent of the Russian side's purported concern for Orthodoxy in Ukraine—and how destructive its actions have been, both literally and symbolically.

The Metropolitan has been under house arrest since April on suspicion of supporting Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine and violating the equal rights of citizens on the basis of their ethnic and national affiliation and their faith. The immediate cause for sending the letters was the court order of 15 July, by which the Metropolitan was remanded in custody with the possibility of bail. The letters were sent to, among others, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the offices of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the human rights organisations Amnesty International and Freedom House, the heads of the Catholic and Anglican churches, and the other Orthodox patriarchs.

Moscow Patriarch Kirill's letter says that an unjust court decision, dictated by the Ukrainian government, has been made against Metropolitan Pavlo, aimed at intimidating believers and making them give up defending their religious freedoms. The verdict against Metropolitan Pavlo is, for the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), 'part of a large-scale persecution initiated by the Ukrainian authorities against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church', but clergy cannot and must not be subjected to repression 'because of their religious beliefs'. Kirill has called on religious leaders and human rights organisations to monitor the persecution of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) in Ukraine and to do everything in their power to protect Metropolitan Pavlo.

Before the attack on Ukraine in 2022, Russia had twice as many political prisoners as the Soviet Union did before its collapse. Since the beginning of the attack, ROC clergy who have publicly expressed anti-war views have added to this number. The clergymen Ioann Burdin, Ioann Kurmoyarov,¹³ and Nikanor Pinchuk were arrested for expressing their views against killing and war within the church and on social networks. Russia has enacted a law criminalising anti-war statements, and the clergy of the ROC will be

¹³ Ioann Burdin was condemned as a heretic by an Orthodox church court and removed from his position as a priest after he stated in a sermon that Christians could not support the war in Ukraine. Ioann Kurmoyarov, an Orthodox priest who previously worked in St. Petersburg, was sentenced to three years in prison for allegedly spreading fake news after posting a YouTube video in March 2022 condemning Russia's attack on Ukraine; see 'Ioann Kurmoyarov Was Released', *Memorial PZK*, 1 August 2024, <https://memopzk.org/news/ioann-kurmoyarov-vyshel-na-svobodu/>.

punished for their religious beliefs. Last year, nearly 300 clergymen of the ROC signed an open letter against the military invasion of Ukraine and the suppression of freedom of conscience in Russia.

Kirill has expressed concern about the human rights situation of UOC members, but, given that he frames Russian aggression as a fight against 'Western values'—democracy, the rule of law, civil and human rights—his concern is an obvious and shameless manipulation, and only in the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) can the sincerity of his intentions be believed.

Serbian Patriarch Porfirije is the only Orthodox patriarch to have joined Kirill's call and the Russian campaign against the Ukrainian government. Ukraine is facing not only brutal military aggression but also a frightening amount of abuse of Orthodoxy and religious sentiment by the aggressor. In his letter to the court about the case of Metropolitan Pavlo, it is stated that this is 'the consequence of the tense atmosphere in Ukraine', but also 'the consequence of the intention of the current government to take over the Kiev Pechersk Lavra [the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves]'. The Russian side's ambitions of conquest are viewed extremely favourably, while the Ukrainian authorities are accused of wanting to take over the state-owned monastery.

The letter further states that Metropolitan Pavlo is loyal to 'ecumenical Orthodoxy', but that is far from the truth. In 2015, a year after Russia annexed Crimea and began an armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, the Metropolitan declared: 'Russians are Ukrainians, or, in other words, Ukrainians are Russians. From the twelfth century to the present day, we have been one. In the past, everyone would rush together to the Lavra. But now everything has been turned on its head, and our people are increasingly forgetting where the spiritual centre of our earth and our people lies.' The Metropolitan believed that the main reason for the decline in the numbers of visitors at the monastery was the negligence of the Ukrainians—he called them, at the time, ungrateful Russians—and not the manipulation of religious and national feelings, in which he was personally involved. The Metropolitan put forward ideas that ideologically fuelled the Russian war machine, but this does not mean that he should be denied the right to a fair trial.

Alexandrian Patriarch Theodore II replied to Porfirije's letter, criticising his colleague's selective perception of what was happening in the Orthodox world. According to Theodore, the SOC had remained silent in the face of Russian meddling in Africa, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria,¹⁴ and it has failed to name those responsible for

14 The Patriarchate of Alexandria is one of the four ancient patriarchates of the Orthodox Church, alongside those of Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem. In addition to these, there

waging a war of aggression against an Orthodox people. The canonical right of the Patriarch of Alexandria was confirmed at the Ecumenical Councils,¹⁵ while the canonical right of the SOC and ROC was not. Therefore, the statement in Theodore's letter that the Russians are tearing apart the body of Jesus Christ carries weight, and in this sense the Moscow Patriarchate's meddling in Africa disregards the decision—as Porfirije would say—of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church. Until now, we thought that the SOC had deviated from some common Christian and humanistic values, but it is becoming increasingly clear that, due to its connection with the ROC, it is also moving further and further away from the common principles of the Orthodox Church.

About the Author

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are four patriarchates of more recent origin. These are the Patriarchates of Russia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople plays a *primus inter pares* role in relation to them, as well as to other Orthodox national churches, such as the UOC. The term 'Ecumenical Orthodox Church,' used in the article, emphasises this sense of unity within the Orthodox Church.

¹⁵ The seven ecumenical councils are: the First Council of Nicaea (325), the First Council of Constantinople (381), the Council of Ephesus (431), the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Second Council of Constantinople (553), the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681), and the Second Council of Nicaea (787).

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Pope Francis, and Russia's War Against Ukraine

Thomas Mark Németh

Editorial Note

This article was originally published on *Talk About* on 18 September 2023.¹ The blog is intended, according to its editors, to be a 'non-partisan platform' for 'conversations on critical issues related to religion, law, ethics and world affairs'. The International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS), which operates the blog, is part of the J. Reuben Clark Law School (JRCLS) at Brigham Young University, which is funded by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

In this article I focus on the Pope's attitude toward the Russian–Ukrainian war in the context of the Vatican's relations with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) (1). Standing in full communion with the Roman Pontiff and belonging to the Catholic Church, the UGCC is also a *sui iuris* church with a specific autonomy, having its own first hierarch and a Synod of Bishops and sharing the Byzantine Rite with the Orthodox Church.

Surveys show that Christian Orthodoxy is Ukraine's majority religion, with faith adherents comprising 60–70% of Ukraine's population. Catholicism with the UGCC as an Eastern Catholic Church (10%) and the Roman Catholic Church (2%) is the second largest denomination in Ukraine. The UGCC plays a significant role in the public discourse in Ukraine. According to various public opinion polls, UGCC head, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk,² enjoys a remarkable public confidence in Ukraine. Regarding the Pope's perception in Ukraine, another more recent survey shows a rather low level of public confidence (3%); half of the respondents either do not know the Pope's position regarding Ukraine or do not pay attention to it. Almost 34% expressed—with gradations—a negative attitude towards the Pope's position.

1 <https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2023/09/18/the-ukrainian-greek-catholic-church-the-pope-francis/>.

2 Sviatoslav Shevchuk (b. 1970) has served as the Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Galicia and the Primate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church since 2011.

While the UGCC enjoys a significant level of autonomy in its structure and religious life, the relationship to the Holy See is a more complex issue for Greek Catholics than for Roman Catholics. Although the UGCC is the largest among the Eastern Catholic churches, it has not yet achieved the rank of a Patriarchal church, a designation only the Pope can grant. The Vatican's relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church also plays an important role in shaping the Holy See's policy towards the UGCC.

The beginning of the full-scale invasion added complexity to Holy See/UGCC relations. On Good Friday 2022 at the Colosseum's Way of the Cross event under the direction of the Pope, a Ukrainian woman and a Russian woman carried the cross together at the thirteenth station, provoking negative reactions in Ukraine. The Major Archbishop called this act 'untimely', and the texts about and gestures at the event 'incoherent and even offensive'. Kyiv nuncio Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas stated that reconciliation can come only when aggression has stopped. Myroslav Marynovych, a former dissident and vice rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv, pleaded for a distinction between the one cross of Jesus and the different crosses of a victim and a perpetrator.

Despite this backlash, a year later the Vatican combined the testimonies of a Ukrainian boy and a Russian boy at the Way of the Cross event at the Colosseum. The Roman Curia gives the impression of being 'above things', but this approach results in blind spots. In light of the church abuse scandals, it is strange that there is not enough awareness of how easily expressions like 'forgiveness', as well as the appeal to the cross, can be instrumentalized.

UGCC Major Archbishop Sviatoslav's Position

In an extensive interview in June 2023, UGCC head Major Archbishop Sviatoslav addressed the lack of communication between the Holy See and Ukraine, noting, 'We all in Ukraine feel that today the Pope does not fully understand the pain of Ukraine, and Ukraine does not understand the Pope.' Regarding the Pope's planned visit to Kyiv, which might be connected to a papal visit to Moscow, Sviatoslav said he was still not clear what message the Pope wanted to bring to Ukraine. Sviatoslav acknowledged the Vatican's specific diplomatic tradition of neutrality, with dialogue as its main instrument, but added that the Vatican's distinction between diplomatic and moral neutrality had been clearly drawn only later. According to Sviatoslav, the Ukrainian state doesn't fully 'understand the opportunities offered by the

Vatican to defend our national interest', and he pleaded for a more active stance from the Vatican.

At the end of 2022, Sviatoslav commented on the Pope's statement that 'Russian people are a great people' and his positive allusion to Dostoevsky. Sviatoslav told the Pope that in the opinion of Ukrainians he had not 'read Dostoevsky properly', and noted that romantic views on Russia exist not only in the West, but also in Rome. Sviatoslav also proposed that the Pope write a letter to the Ukrainian people. The letter appeared in November 2022, and was composed in an empathetic tone, but showed restraint in naming the aggressor. In order to counteract discontent within his own church, Sviatoslav also conveyed positive aspects about the neutrality of the Holy See, noting that it contributed to the release of thousands of prisoners of war. However, he also added that 'the Vatican is indeed a very powerful target of influence from Russia' and that this fact is shaped by Pope Francis's view of the world from the perspective of the Global South.

Sviatoslav said in his recent interview 'not to be afraid that the faithful of the UGCC will leave our church because of certain misunderstandings that we have today with certain political positions'. Catholics should distinguish between the Pope speaking on international issues and his ecclesiastical role as the successor of the Apostle Peter. According to Sviatoslav, 'all healthy criticism is useful and, interestingly, the Pope allows us to do so and listens to it'. However, it is questionable how much the Pope takes into consideration such criticism. This can be seen in the controversy over Pope Francis's comments during a meeting with Catholic youth in Russia, in which the Pope referred to 'the great Russia of Peter I, Catherine II, that great, enlightened empire'. Sviatoslav responded very recently on August 27, [2023], calling the reference to Russia's past 'the worst example of imperialism and extreme Russian nationalism', and noting, 'There is a danger that these words could be taken as supporting the very nationalism and imperialism that has caused the war in Ukraine today.' It remains to be seen what the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC, which will be held in Rome from September 3 to 13, [2023], and will include a meeting with the Pope, will bring in this issue which caused quite a lot disappointment in Ukraine's society.

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav also extensively commented on the peace-making activities of the Vatican. He said that, while visiting Kyiv, Moscow, and Washington, the Pope's envoy, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, had only the competence to listen, but not to act as a political mediator. He also praised President Zelensky's visit to the Pope as 'very fruitful'. Concerning Zelensky's 10-Point Peace Plan, according to Sviatoslav, the Vatican could take on three key areas: the return of children, protection of the environment, and food security.

Academic Voices

The UGCC also contributes to the war-related dialogue with the Vatican through academic discourse. In June 2023, the Ukrainian Catholic University organized the conference ‘Church Diplomacy and the Religious Dimension of the Russian–Ukrainian War’, in which I took part. The range of questions addressed at this conference reflected internal Greek Catholic debates about theological, ethical, and political implications of the war and articulated the focal questions of the Holy See/UGCC relations. In particular, Dr. Cezary Kościelniak spoke about new traits of the *Ostpolitik*³ of the Vatican, which tries to ‘find compromises where there can be none’. Given that the Vatican’s current diplomatic efforts have yielded few results, [Ukrainian Greek-Catholic priest] Dr. Andriy Hlabse directed inquiries to the principle of being ‘*supra partes*’ [impartial] in the current war situation.

On a different occasion, [theologian] Pavlo Smytsnyuk addressed the issue of the unresolved tension between just war and nonviolence in Pope Francis’s approach to peace ethics, but also of the importance ‘not to hold Russians collectively responsible for what the government is doing’ and not to lose the perspective of reconciliation. Regarding the diplomatic steps of the Vatican in 2023, [theologian] Anatolii Babynskyi noted that ‘in Ukraine, it was understood that there is no way for negotiations, and the Vatican has only now come to understand this’. According to [church historians] Oleh Turiy and Yuriy Avvakumov, this war shows the need to rethink systems of interchurch and church–state relations. Turiy and Avvakumov argue that Ukrainians need to stop being objects and to take initiative, especially in light of inflexible structures in the Catholic Church.

A Learning Church

Recently, the UGCC made a long-discussed change in its calendar system, which means that calendar-bound feasts will be celebrated thirteen days earlier, together with the major part of the Christian world. This shows that the Church is able to learn from societal processes and to act with a certain autonomy. Ukrainian Catholics face ambivalence arising from the

3 The term was first used to describe the foreign policy of German Chancellor Willy Brandt (in office 1969–74) towards communist Eastern Europe, including the GDR. This policy aimed to bring about change through rapprochement. The term was then applied to the Vatican’s policy towards Eastern Europe under Pope Paul VI (in office 1963–1978).

different roles and functions of the Pope, who is the head both of the Catholic Church and of the Vatican state, as 'a pastor and a diplomat'. This perception seems to promote a more mature approach to the relationship between the faithful and church authority. The war against Ukraine is not only an enormous challenge for religious institutions (2), it also raises questions of how to deal with certain issues, where academic theology can play an important role. For example, Pavlo Smytsnyuk mentions the asymmetry between anti-gender issues and peace and social justice articulated in documents of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, Ukraine's largest interfaith organization. Smytsnyuk emphasizes the need for preparing ground for peacebuilding by 'dealing with collective blaming and dehumanizing language, development of reflection on just peace, reconciliation and healing, and keeping ecclesial autonomy from the state'. Since February 2022, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav has constantly addressed sensitive issues in his regular video messages. For example, on March 6, 2022, on the Sunday of Reconciliation, he elaborated on the difficulty of 'speaking of forgiveness in the midst of war', but asserted that this would be 'the secret of victory'.

Russia's war against Ukraine shows that the international activity of the Holy See is not based on political but on moral authority. For the Vatican it creates a significant challenge; while conducting its efforts to stop the war, it must weigh tactical considerations against clear testimony. Neutrality can make mediation possible but can also cost moral legitimacy. When the Vatican appeals to its own diplomatic tradition, the question arises as to its value when measures reach their limits. This is no less true for the leadership of the Catholic Church, which is currently going through a global crisis of confidence or, to put it more positively, a process of transformation.

At the UCU conference previously mentioned, [Polish diplomat] Jan Tombiński asked whether church leaders should not focus more on post-conflict reconciliation processes. One example for this is the Polish–Ukrainian commemoration of the Volhynia massacre committed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during WWII against mainly Poles.⁴ In July 2023, the UGCC head and the head of the Polish Catholic Episcopate issued the joint statement 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation', referring to this and other difficult episodes of Polish–Ukrainian relations which require mutual

4 Between 1943 and 1945, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) killed up to 100,000 Poles as well as Jews and people of other nationalities in massacres in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. The commemoration of these atrocities remains a contentious issue between Poland and Ukraine to this day.

healing of memory. In any case, there is a need for churches to take the victim's perspective more clearly into account and opt for truth, justice, and human dignity. This cannot be done without listening to the voices of Christians on the ground. Therefore, the UGCC has its own role to serve its faithful in times of war, but also to contribute to the universal church discourse through its experience in a reflective perspective and in exchange with academy and society.

Notes

- (1) See my article: T. M. Németh, 'Pope Francis and Russia's War Against Ukraine', *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai—Theologia Catholica Latina* 68, no. 1 (2023): 99–109.
- (2) See my article: T. M. Németh, 'Der Krieg gegen die Ukraine und die Kirchen: Anfragen an die Theologie', *LIMINA—Grazer Theologische Perspektiven* 6, no. 1 (2023): 234–255.

About the Author

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Ukraine Muslims Are Wary of Russian Invasion

Syed Ali Mujtaba

Editorial Note

This article was published in *Siasat Daily* on 5 March 2022.¹ The *Siasat Daily* was founded as an Urdu-language newspaper based in Hyderabad, India, in 1949. The focus of reporting is on India and the Middle East.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on Feb[ruary] 24, 2022, has brought uncertainties to about 400,000 Muslims, the majority being Crimean Tatars. According to an estimate, 100,000 Muslims are living in the capital Kyiv alone, others in cities like Kherson, etc. The other ethnic Muslim groups in Ukraine besides Crimean Tatar are Volga Tatars, Azeris, North Caucasians, and Uzbeks. After the Russian invasion, the future of the Ukrainian Muslims hangs in balance and largely depends on the ongoing diplomatic efforts by world leaders to defuse the escalating tensions.

The Union of Islamic Communities of Italy has urged Muslim communities in the country and across Europe to open the doors of their centers so they can be safe havens for those fleeing from war in Ukraine. Muslim communities throughout Italy have been organizing local initiatives to collect food and medicine to be donated to Ukraine, in cooperation with the Catholic organizations.

In this regard, there is little effort made by the Muslim countries. In fact, their reaction to the current Ukraine war is hopeless. While Turkish President Erdoğan has criticized the Russian invasion, Iran has accused the US and the West of causing the 'problem' in Ukraine. The other Muslim countries are silent about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and they have no words of support for the fleeing Ukrainian Muslims.

¹ Syed Ali Mujtaba, 'Ukraine Muslims Are Awry [sic] of Russian Invasion', *Siasat Daily*, 5 March 2022, https://www.siasat.com/ukraine-muslims-are-awry-of-russian-invasion-2285823/#google_vignette.

Annexation of Crimea Displaced 750,000 Muslims

To recall in March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea after a disputed and internationally rejected referendum. The occupying forces immediately began to crack down on the Crimean Muslims. The war displaced some 750,000 Muslims from the Crimean Peninsula and they moved to the capital, Kyiv, and Kherson, a city in southern Ukraine.

Now with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the nightmare of persecution once again looms large on the mind of the Muslims and they are wary about their future. The renewed threat of their displacement by the Russians holds their future into uncertainty and they fear to be treated in the same way as they were in 2014, the Crimea war.

The history of Ukraine Muslims is associated with the Crimean Tatars, the Turkic-speaking descendants of Turkic and non-Turkic peoples who had settled in Eastern Europe as early as the seventh century.

The Crimean Tatars are a Muslim ethnic group indigenous to the Crimean Peninsula, on the northern coast of the Black Sea. Muslim settlements are concentrated in the countries in the southern half [of the former USSR], particularly in Crimea, although there are Lipka Tatar² colonies in other regions, such as Volhynia and Podolia.

Muslims established the Crimean Khanate in southern Ukraine in the fifteenth century. The Khanate soon lost its sovereignty and fell to the Ottoman Empire, although its local rulers retained a significant degree of autonomy. The Khanate ended after growing Russian influence leading to its annexation into the Russian Empire after the Russo–Turkish wars in the late eighteenth century.

At the time when the Khanate was annexed by Russia, its capital of Bakhchysarai had at least 18 mosques along with several madrassas. Later, at the time of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Muslims constituted one-third of Crimea's population. Nearly all major cities in Crimea had a significant Muslim population.

However, the Russian Empire began persecuting the Muslims. Crimean Muslims were subjected to mass deportation in 1944 by Joseph Stalin, who accused them of collaborating with Nazi Germany. This stigma was

2 The Lipka Tatars are a predominantly Muslim ethnic group of Tatar origin who settled in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—which encompassed parts of present-day Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus—in the late fourteenth century. Today, they form a minority of a few thousand people across these countries.

propagated about the Muslims despite tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars serving in the Red Army.

In 1944 more than 200,000 Crimean Muslims were deported to Central Asia, primarily to Uzbekistan. They were forced onto the cattle trains and exiled. It is estimated that about half of them died due to the harsh journey, starvation, and subsequent diseases.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Crimean Peninsula became part of Ukraine,³ and the exiled Muslims were asked to return to their homeland. The repatriation though began in 1989, accelerated after 1991. The returnees faced challenges such as being blocked from buying or renting homes, including those that they had previously owned before the deportation.

Ukrainian Muslim Population

Estimates of the Ukrainian Muslim population vary. According to a 2011 Pew Forum study estimate, the Ukrainian Muslim population is about 393,000, but the Clerical Board of Ukraine's Muslims claim that there are two million Muslims living in Ukraine. According to another report from 2012, an estimated 500,000 Muslims live in Ukraine, among them are 300,000 Crimean Tatars.

The condition of the Muslims in Ukraine has been improving since 1991, [the date of] Ukraine's independence. During the Soviet era, Ukrainian Muslims were not allowed to practice their religion in the open but after 1991 Muslims were allowed to pray in their mosques.

There are other notable developments taking place with regard to Ukrainian Muslims since 1991. A Crimean Tatar representative body was formed, called the Mejlis, in 1991. In addition, Crimean Tatar language schools were introduced to reverse the effects of the Soviet ban on the study of the language.

Now Muslims in Ukraine have 445 communities, 433 ministers [imams], and 160 mosques, more mosques being built there slowly and steadily. There are nearly 360 registered Ukrainian Muslim communities and organizations and there are several charitable Muslim organizations.

Muslims in Ukraine lead an Islamic way of life. Weddings are conducted as per Islamic rituals, halal food is served, and Islamic education for children

3 This refers to a part of independent Ukraine. Crimea had been part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic since 1954.

and adults and other facilities are provided. Ramadan programs are organized in a big way. During the month of Ramadan, there are about 800–1,000 people daily visiting the Central Mosque in Kyiv for iftar and Tarawih prayers.

The assumption is Russia may not persecute the Muslims of Ukraine as it has done before because there is no reason for doing so. It is believed that Vladimir Putin has built a brand image for himself in the Muslim world that he is the only leader that can stand up to Western anti-Muslim biases. In the war against Ukraine, he must deploy this Russian capital in the most effective way and spare the Muslims from any harm to gain the support of Muslims from all over the world.

About the Author

Syed Ali Mujtaba is a journalist based in Chennai. He is also a blogger critical of India's current Hindu nationalist government.

The Ukrainian Muslims Fighting Against Russia

Micah Reddy and Anastasia Levkova

Editorial Note

This article appeared on 4 August 2022 on the English-language website of the Doha-based Al Jazeera television network.¹ Founded in 1996, Al Jazeera's English-language website went online in 2003. As a multilingual media network, Al Jazeera targets a global Muslim audience.

Kharkiv, Ukraine—Ali Khadzali stands among the blown-out buildings of his hometown, Kharkiv, about 50 kilometres (31 miles) from Ukraine's border with Russia.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion began in February, Khadzali has worked with a team of six volunteers to provide humanitarian assistance and evacuate people from areas hit hard by the fighting.

Khadzali, a warm, charming 30-year-old, wears a skullcap, a hoodie, and cargo pants. He is on a break between the day's duties early one afternoon in mid-May. Russian forces have been pushed back from the city, but intense shelling has reduced much of the northern suburbs to debris.

The distant rumble of artillery still reverberates through this now empty neighbourhood. Nearby, a large playground with colourful swings and seesaws is strangely intact, framed by high-rise buildings blackened and scarred by weeks of bombardment.

Khadzali was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, to a Ukrainian mother and a Syrian father. He would regularly visit Syria until war broke out there in 2011. In 2015, Russia's intervention in Syria's now 11-year-old civil war tipped the scales in favour of the Assad regime.

'Both of my homelands, Ukraine and Syria, were invaded by Russians', Khadzali says.

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/8/4/the-ukrainian-muslims-fighting-against-russia>.

Joining the War Effort

In 2015, Khadzali became a chaplain—an imam offering spiritual services within a military context. The previous year, the Maidan Revolution saw Ukrainians take to the streets to protest against the pro-Russian government of President Victor Yanukovych. His forces responded with a brutal crackdown that killed more than 100 protesters and injured thousands. Yanukovych was overthrown and soon after, Russian-backed separatists took up arms in the Donbas regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, beginning an eight-year war and precursor to Russia's invasion in February 2022.

Spurred on by his 'Islamic brothers' to take on the new role, Khadzali had wanted to find a way to help his country and felt that he could best do that by supporting the small number of Muslim troops scattered in the Donbas. 'What could be a better way than playing a part that connects with the army in a country at war?' says Khadzali.

As a chaplain, he led prayers, ensured the provision of halal foods, and offered religious instruction, psychological support, and guidance about human rights to troops. 'Simply talking with troops', he says, has been a crucial part of his duty. 'That may even be the most important thing.'

He still carries out these duties, but today his role is even higher stakes—he often spends his time helping people in dangerous frontline areas.

'We have a list of people in need of help, and we check up on them weekly', he says. 'For example, we get medicine to elderly people who need it, and groceries.... When you help one family, your telephone number gets to 10 families who need aid.'

Although Muslims make up only about 1 per cent of the predominantly Christian country of 44 million people, many have joined the war effort following Russia's invasion. Many are driven by a history of Russian injustices against Muslim communities and support for what is seen as an open and tolerant Ukraine.

The majority of Ukraine's Muslim population are Crimean Tatars, Sunni Muslims of Turkic origin. For those who fight, it is also a fight to return to their homeland, Crimea—a peninsula of steppe land jutting out into the Black Sea and buttressed by mountains in the south—annexed by Russia in 2014.

Crimean Tatars: Tortured Recent Past

Islam has a long and important history in Ukraine not only as a religion brought by itinerant traders and missionaries and sustained by pockets of

minority communities but as the basis of statecraft. As the religion of the Crimean Khanate, which lasted from the fifteenth to eighteenth century, Islam left an indelible political and cultural imprint.

Yet Crimean Tatars have a tortured recent past. During the Second World War, Stalin tolerated no threat, real or perceived, and deported entire populations deemed to have collaborated with the Nazis to other regions within the vastness of the Soviet empire.

Among those targeted were the Muslim populations of Chechnya and Ingushetia—today both Russian republics in the northern Caucasus—who were forcibly removed from their homelands in 1944.

Today, Chechen soldiers fight on both sides of the Russia–Ukraine conflict—a mini proxy war within a war, pitting the troops of Chechen strongman and Putin loyalist Ramzan Kadyrov against Chechens sympathetic to the separatist movements of their homeland.

Chechens fighting on Ukraine's side, mostly as foreign volunteers, see an opportunity for revenge after two bloody wars for independence that started in 1994,² following the breakup of the Soviet Union, and lasted until 2009 and saw Russian forces raze the Chechen capital, Grozny, to the ground. On May 18, 1944, just days after the Red Army drove Axis forces from Crimea, Crimean Tatars were collectively rounded up by the secret police and deported, accused of Nazi collaboration. Even Crimean Tatars in the Red Army and those with the status of 'Heroes of the Soviet Union' were not spared.

Families were thrown into sealed, airless cattle wagons and exiled to remote parts of the Soviet Union, mostly in Uzbekistan.

The entire population of roughly 200,000 Crimean Tatars was hauled off. Thousands died on the arduous journey, and many thousands more from malnutrition and disease on the collective farms and prison-like labour camps they were sent to.

'Soviet Collar'

The family of Isa Akaev, a commander of a volunteer unit serving in Ukraine, was among those sent from Crimea to a collective farm 100 km (62 miles) from Samarkand in Uzbekistan.

Akaev, 57, stocky, bearded and pious, is a father to 13 children and a father figure to a larger group of fighters. During a break from his duties in the

2 That is, the First Chechen War from 1994 to 1996 and the Second Chechen War from 1999 to 2009.

capital Kyiv, he recalls first learning about the deportations in the 1970s in Uzbekistan where he grew up.

He was about 10 years old, and an ardent member of the Young Pioneers—the Soviet answer to the Scout movement that groomed children for a future in the Communist Party.

He had visited his homeland of Crimea to attend a Pioneer camp, and at a cultural show-and-tell said to his teacher that he would bring something to represent his Crimean Tatar heritage, only to be told that there was no such thing.

When Akaev returned to Uzbekistan, confused, he went to his mother, who though upset told him to ignore the incident. Among many expelled families, communal exile was a long-suppressed secret. Some preferred not to unearth old traumas. Others did not want to draw attention to themselves by retelling an unsanctioned history.

But Akaev's grandmother, perhaps more defiant and weary of self-censorship in her later years, told him the full story.

She once pointed to the red Pioneer scarf he proudly wore around his neck and called it a 'Soviet collar'. He never wore it in front of her again.

'She often spoke of Crimea', says Akaev of his grandmother, 'about its beauty, its nature, and about its seaside', long beloved by the Russian elite as a setting for their luxury dachas.

While post-Maidan Ukraine has recognised the deportations as genocide, Russia has been reluctant to let Crimean Tatars remember their history as they choose. On May 18, 2014, thousands in Crimea defied a ban to attend rallies to mark the 70th anniversary of the deportations amid a heavy police presence.

Fight to Return Home

In February 2014, as Russia was preparing to annex Crimea, Akaev, who ran a business selling metal roofing, wanted to form a militia to fight the Russian occupation.

Ill-prepared, the Ukrainian army gave up the peninsula almost without any fight. Many commanders were nowhere to be found or sided with Russia, like the second in command of the Ukrainian navy.

Akaev says he tried to appeal to local Crimean leaders to support an armed resistance but says those efforts got nowhere. Before long, he realised he was being followed by what he believed were Russian agents.

He decided to flee to mainland Ukraine, setting off from the Crimean capital of Simferopol in a dramatic escape.

‘I bought a ticket from Simferopol and boarded the train in Dzhankoy, the next stop after Simferopol’, he says. ‘I went to the fitting room in a nearby store, changed my clothes, my colleague put on my clothes, and those who were watching followed him, he got into my car. I came out of the fitting room in his clothes.’

For Akaev and his family, and about 30,000 Crimean Tatars who have fled Crimea since 2014, this is a repeat exile.

‘God says to fight those who have driven you from your homes. For me, this is the motivation to fight Russia.... We have to return to Crimea, and we will return.’

Shortly after leaving Crimea, Akaev helped set up a small squad with Muslim fighters to fight alongside the Ukrainian armed forces in Donbas.

Crimea Squad

At the beginning of Russia’s invasion in 2022, Akaev released a video in which he is surrounded by masked, armed comrades. He urges Muslims not to fight for Russia in this war, warning those who do that ‘there is a lot of land in Ukraine, and there will be enough space to bury everyone’.

His detachment, called Crimea, was about 15 fighters strong at the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion, and now has about 50 mostly Muslim Crimean Tatar combatants. Akaev says they largely do reconnaissance work, scout newly liberated areas for remaining Russian soldiers and other threats, and operate checkpoints.

As Russian forces began withdrawing from around Kyiv in late March, his men were among the first to enter the village of Motyzhyn, where they came across the grisly scene of likely war crimes—a mass grave with bodies of civilians allegedly tortured and executed by Russian troops who had served in Syria. The head of the village council, who had stayed to coordinate the defence of the area, was among those killed, alongside her husband and son.

Our guys in the reconnaissance discovered this as they were walking in the woods, searching for Russians left behind, and one of the fighters noticed that a hand was sticking out of the ground’, Akaev says. As he cleared the dirt with his foot he saw the body. ‘And then they found the corpses of other people.’

Said Ismagilov, 43, lives about 40 km (25 miles) away in another place that has become synonymous with Russian atrocities—Bucha. He moved there

from war-torn Donbas in 2014, after his hometown of Donetsk was taken over by pro-Russian separatists.

The day after Russian troops pulled out of the Kyiv region, Ismagilov returned to his apartment, which had been thoroughly wrecked by occupying soldiers.

For 13 years, Ismagilov was one of the most influential Muslim leaders in Ukraine—the mufti of the Ukrainian ‘umma’ for the country’s community of Sunni Muslims. Around the time his term ended in March, Ismagilov turned in his religious robes and turban for a set of standard-issue military fatigues. In a picture taken in the first weeks of the war, the bespectacled former mufti sits smiling among comrades in camouflage, a yellow band wrapped around his right arm identifying him as a member of Ukraine’s Territorial Defence Force.

Ismagilov has been in the thick of the war in the Donbas, driving a truck transporting medics and evacuating the wounded.

‘I am of more use to my country doing this than if I were closing my eyes in quiet prayer somewhere far removed from the conflict zone’, he tells Al Jazeera by phone speaking near the city of Lysychansk before it was taken by Russia.

He has appealed to Muslims across the world to denounce Putin’s ‘unjust war of aggression’ in an online video. ‘Support Ukraine, support with funds, support with information, support militarily’, he said.

Repression Has Touched All Crimean Tatar Families

Like Akaev, Ismail Ramazanov’s fight against Russia began after it annexed Crimea.

‘I left my small homeland to protect my big homeland. I know that without a free Ukraine, there will be no free Crimea’, the 36-year-old tells Al Jazeera.

Ramazanov sits with his friend, Anna Eismont, an activist, at a café in downtown Kyiv, and speaks over traditional Crimean Tatar pastries and tea.

He recounts how as an activist and citizen journalist he drew attention to the plight of political prisoners in Crimea. He recorded arrests and harassment of activists by Russian authorities, organised flash mobs and other protests, and collected bail money for arrested dissidents. As an act of defiance, he and other activists regularly collected fines in coins and handed them over in plastic bags or buckets to frustrate officials.

But he also drew the attention of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and ended up in prison for his political activities. In January 2018, in

the early hours of the morning, Ramazanov was dragged from his family home by FSB agents, blindfolded, bundled into a white van, and taken away. He was badly beaten before his pretrial hearing the next day and imprisoned for six months while awaiting trial.

Ramazanov says FSB agents tried to frame him by placing pistol cartridges and 'extremist' literature in his house, and he faced charges of 'incitement to enmity or hatred' under laws used to target independent voices.

Russian authorities crack down on critics by branding them as 'extremists' and 'terrorists' according to human rights organisations.

According to the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, one of the oldest rights organisations operating in Ukraine, such tactics are a common response to criticism of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Since annexation, stories of abduction have become commonplace. Entire families have been harassed and intimidated to silence individuals. As of May 2022, there were 123 documented Crimean political prisoners—98 of them Crimean Tatars, according to the rights group Crimea SOS.

'There is no Crimean Tatar family that Russian repression has not touched', says Ramazanov. A modest change in the law allowed his lawyers to eventually get the case against him withdrawn a year after his arrest and he left for the mainland.

When the full-scale war broke out, Ramazanov joined a volunteer unit of the Territorial Defence Force safeguarding and patrolling the Kyiv region. 'I'm part of a much larger effort now', he says.

Sourcing Drones for the Troops

Eismont has also joined the war effort. The shy-but-determined 26-year-old has been working behind the scenes as an activist sourcing goods and raising funds.

She has been an activist ever since she joined the Maidan Revolution at 18.

Working independently and through [the] Ukraine-based aid organisation Anomaly, she has been actively procuring medical supplies, vehicles, food, drones, thermal imaging devices and other equipment for troops, which she personally sorts and checks.

'I sent first aid kits to soldiers in Chernihiv, and when I saw the photos of them with the kit, I felt like there was a part of me there with them', she says with pride.

During the Maidan Revolution, Eismont, like so many of her peers, was eager to play her part in changing the course of Ukrainian history. A close

Muslim friend she met during the revolution, who later died fighting in the war in Donbas, played an outsized role in her path since, and her conversion last year to Islam.

During the height of violence in Maidan, her friend sent her far from the square to collect something. She later realised he had wanted to keep her away from danger.

Although she spent much of her childhood in Crimea, it was only after annexation that she became immersed in Crimean Tatar culture through activism to support Crimean Tatar families.

‘I helped several families from Crimea to move and adapt to life in Kyiv’, she says.

In 2019, she stepped up her efforts to help Crimean Tatar families together with Anomaly’s team of foreign volunteers—what she calls ‘a kind of international volunteer battalion’. They taught English courses for Crimean Tatars and their families, soldiers, volunteers, and regular people, she says. Alongside this, ‘it was brick by brick, and I gradually came to understand that I wanted to convert’, she says.

It was through one such course that she met Ramazanov, who was a student, and a strong bond between the two was forged by activism and volunteer work.

Eismont and Ramazanov’s social media posts show frequent appeals for donations and a steady stream of military supplies being sent to the front, with Ramazanov often making the deliveries.

Their focus lately has been on supplying drones, which play a key reconnaissance role on a battlefield. So far, Anna has sent drones to battalions in Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhia, Izyum, and earlier, around Mariupol.

The Returnees

In Crimea, generations of Russian imperial and later Soviet rule led to the Russification of the peninsula, with Russian immigrants taking over Crimean Tatar houses left empty by the deportations. Ethnic Russians are by far the largest group, followed by Ukrainians and then Crimean Tatars, who make up a little more than 10 percent of the total.

The memories of Soviet oppression still haunt many Crimean Tatars. After Stalin’s collective punishment, oppression under Putin is just a new chapter in a history of persecution.

For younger Crimean Tatars who were born after repatriation following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the intergenerational wounds still feel

raw. Deported communities like Chechens were allowed to return earlier, but the ban on Crimean Tatars returning was not lifted until 45 years after their exile. Ismail Kurt-Umer was born in 1991 in Crimea and grew up in Bakhchysarai, the ancient Khanate capital, as Crimean Tatar families were making their historic journeys home.

For many returnees, the trip back was only the beginning of a very challenging adjustment. Foreigners in their homeland, Crimean Tatars' marginalisation combined with engrained falsehoods about historical betrayal meant families were unwelcome and struggled to find homes and jobs.

'Other Crimeans could be very hostile to us returnees, and many seemed to believe the propaganda all those years later, seeing us as traitors', says Kurt-Umer.

Kurt-Umer was born in the year of Ukraine's independence at a time when society was opening up and challenging old prejudices. Unlike so many of the older generation, he grew up hearing stories of the hardships of exile.

His grandfather was a decorated soldier in the Red Army and fought during most of the Second World War, but was given just three days to leave Crimea after he returned. The Soviet Union, perfectly content to draw fighters from among those it had condemned as traitors, sent Kurt-Umer's father to fight in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989.

In 2014 Kurt-Umer joined Ukraine's army, but as a classically trained singer in the military ensemble. 'Looking back', Kurt-Umer says, 'I think something in me wanted to be part of the armed forces because of the annexation. Everyone has a duty now, and I may not carry a gun but I contribute in a different way'.

Singing for Crimea and Ukraine

Like Eismont, Kurt-Umer is part of the generation who came of age during the Maidan Revolution and Ukraine's pivot away from Russia. For several years, he would sing at events commemorating the months-long uprising, performing the Ukrainian traditional song, 'Plyve Kacha', about a mother and her son who is departing for war, as a requiem.

Since Russia's invasion, Kurt-Umer has been touring and performing with the band and recording music videos. He sees his role as part of a national effort to build morale and instil a sense of Ukrainianness in people's hearts.

On a sunny spring morning in May, Kurt-Umer sat in a café in downtown Kyiv. The chestnut trees were in bloom, and the streets were filling up again.

In sharp contrast to his bold stage persona, Kurt-Umer is pensive, almost shy. In a video from earlier this year, Kurt-Umer sings a militaristic version of the *Salawat*³ at the head of his army band, his echoey muezzin's voice set against the heavy beat of drums.

Kurt-Umer has been introduced as a Crimean Tatar at performances and has been moved by the reception he and the ensemble have received on tours of the country—here was the army of an overwhelmingly Christian nation foregrounding its Islamic and Crimean Tatar heritage.

A Battle for Freedom

For many of Ukraine's Muslims, the country's religious tolerance and move towards more open, democratic politics also lies behind their support.

'Ukraine is a country fighting not only for its independence but for the ideas of freedom and democracy in general', Akaev says.

Crimean Tatars and others who have been at the sharp end of Russian imperialism say they know what is at stake in this war.

Ukraine is far from perfect, Ismagilov says, and there is much to be done to build trust between different faiths. 'But Muslims are well aware of what will happen if Russia occupies their territories', he says. 'It will be the same as in the Russian-occupied Crimea, where Muslims are disappeared and given long prison terms.'

For Khadzali and others, the war has shown the strength of a united society. It has brought people together, says Eismont, and brought about the solidarity that Crimean Tatars, having endured all 'the troubles together', already shared.

'Only together you can win and survive. This is what we Ukrainians lacked', she says. 'We as a nation realised this with the beginning of the full-scale war. When trouble came to every home, the war became painful for every Ukrainian—and we are united now.'

About the Authors

Micah Reddy is a South African investigative journalist. **Anastasia Levkova** is a Ukrainian writer, journalist, and cultural manager.

3 The *ṣalawāt* is a traditional Arabic blessing that is added to the name of the Prophet Muhammad, either during prayer or in writing.

How Jewish Is Volodymyr Zelensky?

Tash Mosheim

Editorial Note

This article was published on 21 September 2023 in *The Jewish Chronicle*.¹ Established in 1841, *The Jewish Chronicle* is a London-based Jewish weekly newspaper. According to its self-description, 'it is the world's oldest and most influential Jewish newspaper'.

Volodymyr Zelensky, the heroic president of Ukraine, is often held up as an example of strong Jewish leadership, a rarity, especially in a part of the world where antisemitism is historically rife. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, Zelensky has not been shy about his heritage, even referencing it in a plea to the Israeli government for financial and military support in the early stage of the invasion. He's also been used by antisemitic conspiracy theorists to suggest a Jewish globalist plot to support Ukraine. But what is his Jewish background and just how Jewish is Volodymyr Zelensky?

Background

When Volodymyr Zelensky won his election in 2019, it meant that for the first time in Ukraine's history, the country had a president and a prime minister, Volodymyr Groysman, who were both Jewish and open about their Jewish background. For a time, Ukraine was the only country outside of Israel where the heads of state and government were Jewish. Yet neither promoted nor relied on ethnicity in their politics. In fact, Tsyba, a childhood friend and now MP in Zelensky's Servant of the People party, says Zelensky rarely mentioned his Jewish background and it was not something people talked about. 'It never mattered.... There were a lot of Jewish people around yet there was no particular interest in who was who.'

¹ Tash Mosheim, 'How Jewish Is Volodymyr Zelensky?' *The Jewish Chronicle*, 21 September 2023, <https://www.thejc.com/news/world/how-jewish-is-volodymyr-zelensky-n4utji15>.

Grandparents

Days before taking office in 2019, Zelensky put flowers on the grave of his Jewish grandfather, who fought the Nazis in World War II.

[Simon] went through the whole war and remains forever in my memory one of those heroes who defended Ukraine from the Nazis. Thanks for the fact that the inhuman ideology of Nazism is forever a thing of the past. Thanks to those who fought against Nazism—and won.

He revealed on CNN that his great-grandparents were killed by the Nazis in a blaze that consumed their entire village.

However, his grandmother escaped Hitler in an evacuation of Jews to Kazakhstan. He said:

My grandmother was living in Kryvyi Rih, in a part of south Ukraine which was occupied by the fascists. They killed all the Jews who remained. She had left in an evacuation of Jews to Almaty, Kazakhstan. Many people fled to there. She studied there. She's a teacher. After World War II, she came back. That's where I was born.

Parents

Zelensky grew up in the Russian-speaking city of Kryvyi Rih, in the eastern part of Ukraine. Like most Soviet Jews, his parents were highly educated but limited in where their careers could go. His father was a professor of mathematics and his mother studied engineering. Zelensky said he grew up in an 'ordinary Soviet Jewish family', which was to say, not very religious, since 'religion didn't exist in the Soviet state as such'. In January 2020, during the commemoration in Israel of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Zelensky told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a story about a family of four brothers.

'Three of them, their parents and their families became victims of the Holocaust. All of them were shot by German occupiers who invaded Ukraine', he said. 'The fourth brother survived.... Two years after the war, he had a son, and in 31 years, he had a grandson. In 40 more years, that grandson became president, and he is standing before you today, Mr. Prime Minister.'

His Childhood

As a child, Zelensky had little connection to Kryvyi Rih's Jewish community. Instead, his Jewish ties have mostly been to the community of Dnipro, the largest city in the region. Shmuel Kaminetsky, the chief rabbi of Dnipro, met Zelensky in 2010 after inviting the comedian to perform at a Purim celebration. Since then, they have met on various occasions, including at the new president's meeting with the Jewish community in 2019. Yana Dobroserdova, an entrepreneur with Jewish roots, says she didn't even know that Zelensky was Jewish. 'We are so intermixed; everyone has either a brother or friend with a Jewish background.'

Running for President

Zelensky did not hide his background during his presidential election campaign, but he did not play it up either. 'The fact that I am a Jew is about the 20th question among my characteristics,' he said.

Vyacheslav Lykhachev, head of the National Minority Rights Monitoring Group, believes that Zelensky, if anything, benefited politically from being Jewish—he was seen as a 'smart Jewish boy'. But his Jewishness was not the most important factor. 'What matters in Ukraine is the region you are from,' Lykhachev explains.

Rabbi Kaminezki, the chief rabbi for the eastern Ukrainian region where Zelensky grew up, remembers feeling appalled that his own community believed Zelensky should not run as they thought 'we will have pogroms here again in two years if things go wrong'.

However, historian Mr. [Ihor] Shchupak thought Zelensky's background played 'zero role' in the election campaign—aside from a few posts on social media, which included a comment on Facebook by an adviser to Ukrainian President Poroshenko that 'the president of Ukraine must be Ukrainian and Christian'.

'Everybody in Ukraine knows that Zelensky is a Jew,' Mr. Shchupak said. 'He is a typical product of a secular intellectual Jewish family. How can this happen in a country that Russia says is run by fascists?'

How Important is Zelensky's Jewishness to Him?

Zelensky's 'Jewishness is important for him,' said Nathan Sharansky, who spent years in a Soviet Gulag accused of treason for seeking permission to

move to Israel. 'He is not a Jew who is making secret of his Jewishness and he is not a Jew who is looking for some other identity', Sharansky told AFP.² Lisa Maurice, a senior lecturer in the Classical Studies Department at Bar Ilan University near Tel Aviv, told AFP she saw signs of Jewish influence in Zelensky's public posture, including his social media posts.

'All our heroes, even the military heroes, fight not because they want to fight, not because they are aggressive, but because it is the right thing to do. That is a really strong tradition in Judaism', she said.

About the Author

Tash Mosheim has reported on a wide range of topics, from politics to show business, for *The Jewish Chronicle*. She now works for the *Daily Mail*, a conservative tabloid in the United Kingdom.

2 The Paris-based news agency Agence France-Presse.

Part 5

Economy and Trading Routes

Abstract: This chapter brings together a selection of articles dealing with the global economic consequences of the war on Ukraine, offering insights into how globality is viewed through the lens of worldwide economic interdependence. Particular attention is paid to the roles of Ukraine and Russia as major exporters—Ukraine as a key producer of grain, and Russia as a major supplier of fossil fuels and fertilisers. The texts in this chapter shed light on the complex nature of global interdependence, explore possible economic motives behind the war, and question the effectiveness of international sanctions in an interconnected global economy.

Keywords: globalisation, food security, agriculture, energy supply

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Introduction

Questions about the worldwide economic consequences of the war on Ukraine were raised early on, given the key role of Ukraine and Russia in the globalised world economy. For example, in April 2022, an article of the government-owned Beninese daily *La Nation* referred to a ‘world war’ with ‘local repercussions’. As in many other articles published in sub-Saharan Africa, the problem of food supply is described as a lived experience. At the same time, the article situates this experience within a broader global context. The unnamed author notes that Russia must prepare for negative economic consequences, including a shrinking GDP, as a result of declining exports. Furthermore, the war is portrayed as a shock to Europe due to its dependence on Russian exports of grain, oil, gas, and metals such as nickel, palladium, and copper. With regard to African societies, the consequences are severe, the article argues, as the continent faces an impending food crisis and fears dramatic increases in fertiliser prices.¹

The issue of food supplies in Africa and the impact of the war on the global economy would remain a focus of international reporting in the coming years, although local reporting would highlight different aspects. The pro-government press in Turkey, for instance, reported extensively on the role of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government in bringing about the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which enabled the export of agricultural products from Ukrainian Black Sea ports between July 2022 and July 2023. This coverage often reproduced government statements portraying Turkey as a ‘reliable centre for resolving crises’, whose diplomatic successes were said to be ‘beneficial for the whole world’.² Such reporting supported the Ankara government’s efforts to present itself as a regional power and an important mediator in the war against Ukraine, whose diplomacy helped maintain global trade corridors.

This chapter reflects these kinds of discourses by presenting articles that shed light on how globality is understood through the prism of global economic interdependencies. As the examples above show, considerable attention has been paid to Ukraine’s and Russia’s roles as exporters—Ukraine as a major producer of grain, and Russia as a significant supplier of fossil

1 ‘Invasion russe en Ukraine: guerre mondiale, repercussions locales [Russian invasion of Ukraine: Global war, local repercussions]’, *La Nation*, 27 April 2022.

2 Hasan Aydın, ‘Dünyanın beklediği gemi yola çıktı [The ship the world has been waiting for has set sail]’, *Milliyet*, 2 August 2022.

fuels and fertilisers. Consequently, the disruption of trade chains caused by the war has been a key focus of debate, with the threat to food supplies seen as a particularly pressing issue. An article by Michael Brüntrup, an agricultural economist at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability in Bonn, highlights the complexity of global interdependence and cautions against viewing the war in Ukraine as the sole cause of food insecurity in African societies. Further texts broaden the perspective by exploring potential economic motives behind the war, or by emphasising the positive consequences that a rebalancing of global trade induced by the conflict could have for African countries. A text by Denis Morokhin, published in the Russian exile newspaper *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, questions the effectiveness of international sanctions regimes in a globalised world economy, given their successful evasion by the Russian state and certain global economic players. Finally, Feng Shaolei, a Russia expert from East China Normal University, discusses the impact of the war in Ukraine on global economic integration.

Ukraine's Key Role in the World Economy

Global economic interdependencies have been at the centre of research on globalisation processes since the pioneering works of sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s and historian Christopher Bayly in the early 2000s.³ As a key transit point and producer of several key commodities, Ukraine played an important role in the processes of economic globalisation early on. From the early modern period onwards, grain was exported via the Vistula and the Baltic Sea, becoming the most important trade for the Polish–Lithuanian economy within the development of the European ‘global economy’ (Wallerstein). With the colonial integration of the northern Black Sea coast into the Russian Empire, Odesa emerged as a crucial hub for the global grain trade. Since the second half of the twentieth century, natural gas and oil pipelines have connected the Russian Federation to Central Europe through Ukraine. Pipelines and commodity supplies in general have always been politically relevant and have often been weaponised in critical situations. Both world wars have been analysed as wars over supplies, ranging from oil

3 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (University of California Press, 2011; reprint of the 1974 ed.); Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World: Global Connections and Comparisons, 1780–1914* (Blackwell, 2004).

in Iraq and the Russian/Soviet Caucasus to Ukrainian grain. Since Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, Ukrainian oil rigs and natural gas fields in the northern Black Sea or Crimean shelf have been claimed by Russia. At least one pipeline project involving this territory and Ukrainian participation was cancelled.⁴ Nevertheless, the German government continued to support the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline through the Baltic Sea, despite the European Union adopting a 'European Energy Security Strategy' in May 2014 aimed at reducing dependency on Russia. Furthermore, Russia's war against Ukraine since 2014—and especially since 2022—has affected global commodity flows and the discourse surrounding them. Russia's attacks on Ukrainian Black Sea ports have endangered grain exports, which are crucial for many parts of Africa. Although representatives of African states attended the 'Russia–Africa Summit' in 2023, they criticised this Russian policy. By exporting grain from occupied Ukrainian territories, Russia endangered the nutrition of Ukraine's population while simultaneously claiming to secure global food supplies. It could be argued that Russia actively reproduced a military colonial situation ('food colonialism'), while professing to support the 'Global South' and economic and political decolonisation.

The Articles

Agriculture and Food Supply

Detailed insights into the complexities of food supply in a globalised economy are provided in Michael Brüntrup's article, which was published in *Welternährung/Global Food Journal*, the monthly magazine of the German NGO Welthungerhilfe (World Hunger Relief). Brüntrup warns against focusing solely on Russia's blockade of Black Sea ports when analysing the global food crisis, arguing that fertiliser shortages existed even before the war. Agricultural prices had already risen dramatically in the run-up to Russia's full-scale invasion, disproportionately affecting people in poorer countries who spend most of their household income on food and lack the financial resources to deal with price increases. Brüntrup shows how the COVID-19 pandemic and related global economic cycles, coupled with crop failures due to global warming, led to this price rise. After Russia's

4 Stefan Rohdewald, 'Oil, Natural Gas, and More: Infrastructures of Energy Around and Across the Black and Caspian Seas Since the Late Nineteenth Century,' in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, ed. Ninja Bumann, Kerstin Jobst, Stefan Troebst, and Stefan Rohdewald (De Gruyter, 2024), 559–75.

invasion and the disruption of Ukrainian grain trade routes, the suspension of agricultural exports by countries such as India and Indonesia, and the suspension of fertiliser exports by Russia, further exacerbated the situation. He emphasises that Russia's war against Ukraine is only one factor driving the global food crisis, which would persist even if the conflict were to end. Focusing on the issue of global fertiliser distribution, he argues for a long-term, environmentally sustainable strategy to meet growing food demand and reduce vulnerability to crises caused by reliance on world market prices. This, he asserts, cannot be achieved without financial support for local agricultural producers.

The issue of local agency is addressed by Kako Nubukpo, a Togolese economist and the Commissioner for Agriculture, Water Resources, and the Environment for the West African Economic and Monetary Union (Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine UEMOA). In an interview conducted by Viviane Forson for the Paris-based magazine *Le Point*, Nubukpo paints a nuanced picture of the economic situation on the African continent. He begins by describing the various shock waves that have impacted African societies economically since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Pointing to the problems faced by African central banks in responding effectively to the commodity price explosion by raising interest rates, he also discusses the problematic role of the World Bank. For a long time, the World Bank discouraged African governments from pursuing food sovereignty, only adjusting its stance after the 2008 financial crisis. Nubukpo takes a different view: Africa should produce what it consumes. Achieving this will require targeted rural development, increased agricultural production, and the implementation of protectionist measures. But if Africa organises itself well and makes skilful use of local knowledge, he argues, it can be 'the agricultural powerhouse of tomorrow' despite the current crisis.⁵

International Companies and Trade

The consequences of economic sanctions against Russia are analysed in the following two texts. In their article, Liu Guizhou, Huang Haokai, and Hu Hongmin, working in the Chinese oil industry, discuss of the causes of the war in Ukraine from an energy supply perspective and emphasise impacts on global energy flows. The authors focus on the US becoming oil and gas

5 For recent research on food scarcity, see Jörg Gertel, ed., *Globale Getreidemärkte. Technoliberalismus und gefährdete Existenzsicherung in Nordafrika* [Global grain markets: Technoliberalism and the threat to livelihoods in North Africa] (transcript, 2023).

independent in 2022 because of the so-called 'shale revolution'. In their opinion, this has not only given the US new room for manoeuvre in foreign policy, but has also led to a search for new markets to absorb the surpluses of liquefied natural gas (LNG) generated by the shale revolution. Another development has come into play: NATO's eastward expansion, driven by the US, has escalated tensions with Russia and, they argue, provoked the war in Ukraine. The war forced European countries to look for alternative energy sources, opening up new sales opportunities for US LNG. According to the authors, this development, together with the US policy of protective tariffs, has led to a serious setback for globalisation, as the free flow of energy lies at its core. Instead, two 'hemispheres' of energy supply have now emerged: one dominated by the US and one by Russia. The authors argue that China is trying to counter this development with a cleverly diversified energy supply policy that does not rely on a single source, including importing LNG from the US. At the same time, they portray China as a defender of globalisation and free trade around the world, in sharp contrast to American protectionism.

Denis Morokhin, an exiled Russian journalist, analyses in his investigative piece, published in *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, how international companies operating in Russia are responding to the war. Attitudes and strategies vary greatly. Of the 110 international companies examined, the largest group consists of enterprises that have decided to 'wait silently'. This approach has been adopted by companies such as Metro, TotalEnergies, and 'several leading pharmaceutical companies'. Meanwhile, others—such as BP; food manufacturers Mars and Nestlé; Austrian Raiffeisen Bank; Italian banks UniCredit and Intesa; and beverage manufacturers PepsiCo, Bacardi, and Campari—have been 'promising to leave but not leaving'. The reasons for this are highly diverse. The article argues that many companies have 'found themselves essentially held hostage by the Kremlin', while others continue to weigh up the consequences of exiting the Russian market versus remaining and risking being labelled 'international sponsors of war'. Some larger companies in the tobacco industry have concluded that for them, maintaining a presence in the substantial Russian market offers more benefits than drawbacks.

The Future of Globalisation

The final article adopts a broad historical and thematic approach, contextualising the war within a long-term process of global transformation. Feng Shaolei, one of today's leading experts on Russia in China, starts his reflections from the perspective of the international order. Here, Feng distinguishes between different cycles of world order since the establishment

of the Westphalian system. He sees the emergence of a 'pluralistic and multipolar' system, able to avoid 'total war by maintaining balance', as the common feature of these cycles. He identifies the post-9/11 US policy of military-led regime change and attempts to export democracy—evidenced in support for various colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space—as a turning point in this trajectory. What he describes as a policy of 'permanent revolution' has, in his view, contributed to global destabilisation and helped consolidate American hegemony within a unipolar world order. This, he argues, is also the reason for the ideological interpretation of the war in Ukraine by the US and its allies as a 'confrontation between democracy and authoritarianism'. In contrast, Feng highlights China's official guidelines in support of multipolarity and the concept of a 'community of common destiny for mankind', which 'clearly declare that the present era is no longer one in which one ideology or civilisation replaces another', thereby stabilising the international order.

Feng's interpretation of the world order shapes his view of the global economic impact of the war in Ukraine. He also views the war as a catalyst for ongoing developments, describing the accelerated shift towards plural globalisations as a key consequence. Russia's success in enforcing the settlement of energy transactions in roubles represents a further departure from the dollar as the international reserve currency. Furthermore, he notes a retreat from the previously widespread decarbonisation efforts in many countries. Finally, Feng brings together his thoughts on a multipolar world order and plural globalisation in the concept of the Asian Mediterranean. He sees this as laying the foundation for future regional cooperation in East Asia, as well as for Chinese–Russian collaboration. In this context, Russia is seen as a potential supplier of energy, food, environmental and agricultural products, clean water, and other bulk materials to the Asian region. The anticipated permanent opening of the Northeast Passage to shipping traffic, due to the melting of the pack ice, also plays an important role in his vision.

In all of the texts, the war against Ukraine is portrayed not as the trigger of an exceptional or isolated crisis, but rather as part of a longer continuum of crises and partly also of broader transformation processes. Where the war is addressed as a crisis, we can see attempts to demonstrate agency—for example, through export substitution, or by highlighting the development potential of local agriculture for African societies. It is noteworthy that there is discussion about whether the changes triggered by the war could provide an opportunity to overcome what is perceived as unipolarity and Western economic hegemony. The idea is that the war could speed up the decentralisation of the global economy by making globalisation processes

more diverse. According to authors such as Feng, this would facilitate the restoration of multipolarity, which is regarded as essential for a stable world order.

About the Volume Editors

Dennis Dierks studied history, Islamic studies, Turkology, and Slavic studies in Mainz, Dijon, and Vienna and received his PhD from the University of Jena. In 2024/25, he was a research associate at the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the history of remembrance, nationalism, revolution, and reform, as well as the global circulation of ideas since the nineteenth century. His latest publications include 'Nation-building and Nationalism in the Black Sea Region (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)', in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, edited by Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Troebst (2024).

Katja Castryck-Naumann is a senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and has headed the research training group 'Global Armenia/ns: Entangled Histories of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus' since 2025. After completing her training as a historian at the Universities of Leipzig, Edinburgh, and Vienna and earning a doctorate from Leipzig University, she worked in the 'East-Central Europe Transnational' project group (2008–2016) and in the 'Entanglements and Globalisation' department (2017–2025) at GWZO. She also served as spokesperson of the steering committee of the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA, 2020–2025). Her research focuses on the history of international organisations and transnational actors, transregional entanglements of East-Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the history of area studies and global history writing.

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Stefan Rohdewald has held the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University since 2020. From 2013 to 2020, he was Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Giessen. After completing his studies, assistantship, and doctorate in Zurich (PhD, 2004), he worked as a research assistant at the University of Passau from 2003 to 2012. His research focuses on the entangled histories of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, urban history, memory, and transconfessionality. From 2017 to 2024, he served as the chairperson of the DFG Priority Programme *Transottomanica: Eastern European–Ottoman–Persian Mobility Dynamics*.

Global Food Crisis: A Fertiliser Strategy Must Be Part of the Answer

Globale Ernährungskrise: Eine Düngestrategie muss Teil der Antwort sein

Michael Brüntrup

Editorial Note

This article was first published in June 2022 in *Welternährung/Global Food Journal*,¹ the online journal of the German NGO Welthungerhilfe (World Hunger Relief), founded in 1962. According to its mission statement, the journal aims to provide 'a forum for scientists, practitioners, and experts on current development policy issues with a focus on combating hunger and poverty'.

Fertiliser prices had already exploded worldwide in 2021. Then the war in Ukraine drove them up even further. The causes are complex—as are the solutions. What can be done?

After 2007/08 and 2011/12, the world is heading towards a new global food crisis, possibly the worst since the Second World War. The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO's)² food price index reached a new high in March [2022] and has remained there ever since. Consumers are faced with three alternatives: they can cut back on other spending, liquidate their savings, or sell valuables to maintain their food consumption; replace expensive meat, fruit, and vegetables with cheaper, often healthier, calorie-heavy products; or they must cut back on their calorie consumption. As poor

¹ <https://www.welthungerhilfe.de/welternaehrung/rubriken/agrar-ernaehrungspolitik/ukrainekrieg-als-treiber-der-globalen-duengemittelkrise>.

² The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), based in Rome, was established in 1945. As a specialised United Nations agency, its mission is to improve the global production and distribution of agricultural products, especially food, to ensure food security worldwide.

households spend a much larger proportion of their income on food and have little savings, they are the hardest hit.

This is all the worse for the vast majority of households in developing countries. In 2021, 193 million people were already acutely food insecure, 40 million more than in the previous year. In 2022, this figure is expected to rise by at least 13 million more. In a broader sense, over 800 million people are undernourished, almost one in ten of the world's inhabitants. The organisations that buy and distribute food aid, above all the World Food Programme (WFP),³ can now provide less food for the same amount of money. In some cases, daily rations have to be reduced to quantities that are below the bare subsistence level. This particularly affects people in crisis areas such as Somalia, Yemen, and Afghanistan—displaced people and refugees.

When analysing the causes of this global crisis, Western media focus on Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports and sea routes. Ukraine, with its fertile black soil and relatively low population density, is one of the largest agricultural exporters in the world, particularly for wheat and barley (12–14 per cent of global exports) and sunflower oil (approximately 35 per cent). Countries such as Egypt, Bangladesh, and Eritrea are heavily dependent on these products and, before the war, sourced up to 80 per cent of their wheat imports from this geographically favourable country. The WFP has also greatly expanded its source of supply. The West is urging Russia to open up Ukraine's sea trade routes and is trying to develop alternative trade routes through the EU in order to end the shortage.

As If That Would End the Food Crisis!

Unfortunately, this simple 'narrative' is only partially accurate when it comes to the global food situation. A good understanding of the causes is important in order to draw the right conclusions and take action. It is therefore worth taking a look back: global agricultural prices had already risen continuously since May 2020 and in February 2022 were already almost as high as after the outbreak of war. The coronavirus crisis had disrupted many supply chains at various points, for example, by closing borders and restricting workers' freedom of movement. The surprisingly rapid and strong recovery of the global economy following the pandemic had an even greater impact

3 The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) was established in 1961 and is based in Rome. Its mission is to combat global hunger.

on overall demand, causing energy prices to skyrocket. These in turn have a major impact on food prices—firstly, through the production costs for inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, and fuel for tractors and machinery; secondly, for the transport, processing, storage, and trade of food.

With the boycott of Belarus in 2021, an important fertiliser exporter was also hit directly at an early stage. Fertiliser prices were already 200–400 per cent higher at the end of 2021 than in previous years. Failures in various regions of the world, partly due to climate change, led to agricultural yield losses of over \$12 billion in the USA alone, the third highest figure ever. The war in Ukraine is building on this crisis situation. Around 22 million tons (22,352,000 tonnes) of wheat alone, a third of the old harvest, is still stuck in storage. If it is not moved, part of the new harvest cannot be brought in. If the situation worsens, many Ukrainians themselves could become food insecure. But the crisis is spreading.

The search for a replacement for imports from Ukraine initially put pressure on the directly affected global product markets, and then also on the international and local markets for substitute products such as millet, rice, and palm oil. In the course of the crisis, 19 other agricultural nations have so far imposed export restrictions—for around 15 per cent of the food calories traded worldwide. Since the beginning of 2022, 268 policy measures have been counted in 75 countries. In particular, the (temporary) export bans on refined palm oil products from Indonesia and wheat from India sent out strong price signals. Russia also suspended agricultural exports.

Border Closures Send Price Signals

Governments want to protect their consumers from global price rises spilling over into domestic markets, but in doing so they are harming importing countries and their own farmers, who cannot benefit from the higher prices and often even make losses under the politically reduced prices.

The situation on the fertiliser markets is of particular concern. The West's boycott of Russian products, banks, and oligarchs initially excluded energy supplies and foodstuffs, which are perceived as sensitive, but not fertilisers. This led not to the much hoped-for easing of the situation in this market but, on the contrary, to new price peaks and real shortages. Following international protests, particularly from Latin American countries, some exceptions to the sanctions were made for fertilisers.

Russia, for its part, stopped its own fertiliser exports after a partial ban back in February [2022], nominally to protect its own supply but it can be

assumed that the aim is actually to damage the reputation of the West and stir up unrest and migration pressure in the vicinity of Western countries. At the very least, Russia can use the supplies as political leverage in the geopolitical tug-of-war. China, another major global player, and other countries have also slowed down or banned their fertiliser exports.

While the countries of Latin America with their very large markets are partially able to cope with the difficult situation, even the largest African agricultural nations such as Cameroon or Ghana are hardly in a position to do so and are expecting drastic declines in fertiliser imports—especially (as is the case in Ghana) where the state organises and finances fertiliser imports.

Uncertain Calculation

Where fertiliser is available, farmers are faced with the question of whether it is worth investing in extremely expensive fertilisers despite the high agricultural prices. It depends on product and fertiliser quantities and prices, on alternatives, and on the reaction of production to fertilisation, as well as on related quantity and price changes—for example, for pesticides or labour input. As operating resources have to be pre-financed but product prices are rarely fixed in advance, the current uncertainty and possible political interventions such as export bans result in a high level of uncertainty for producers. This has a negative impact on their willingness to invest.

In addition, small farmers—particularly in developing countries—not only have poor returns but also little liquidity: expensive fertilisers are simply unaffordable without sufficient equity or access to credit, even if they do promise to be highly profitable. It is therefore difficult to predict how much agricultural production will decline overall. Farmers with low fertiliser use—i.e., organic farmers and micro-farmers with few inputs, who mainly produce for their own use—are likely to be relatively less affected. However, the latter also have the greatest liquidity problems.

The ‘Perfect Wave’

One thing is clear: the current crisis has several causes; the war is only one of them. Even an end to the war would not mean the end of the crisis. Some of the causes are already partly priced into international price trends—but it is unclear to what extent, and also how long, the pressure will last. Additional

risks are looming large: the future segmentation of markets (e.g., into ‘friends’ and ‘foes’ in geopolitical blocs) and further export restrictions could ensure longer-term price effects and fluctuations, and thus constant uncertainty. Small countries and customers find it much more difficult than large ones to establish new supply chains. Even in some large countries, shortages are already becoming apparent again. Add to this the fact that most countries are heavily indebted after the coronavirus crisis and have less money to spend on new crisis management at home and on development aid, and you get the frightening picture of a ‘perfect wave’ building up for the global food situation.

The appropriate response to this complex crisis must also be multifaceted. In the short term, some initiatives have already been launched by national governments, donor countries, development banks, and the International Monetary Fund: the WFP is receiving more funds for emergency aid, social security systems are being expanded, governments are receiving short-term loans for food and fertiliser imports and their distribution to target groups or for broad-based price subsidies. This aid will certainly need to be expanded. The export of Ukrainian stocks could also be made possible.

Reducing Susceptibility to Crises

In addition, the urgent question arises as to how the crisis can be overcome in the medium term and whether or how such crises can be structurally reduced or even avoided. In other words, how can vulnerability to food crises be reduced and resilience increased? In the following, the focus is particularly on the role of fertilisers as the core of global agricultural production—with the proviso that this should be only one element of a larger agenda.

First of all, the current crisis makes it clear that the social implications of high agricultural prices weigh heavily—even if they may be an important factor for more sustainable agriculture with higher environmental and animal welfare standards, as is often demanded in Germany and most recently prominently by Agriculture Minister Cem Özdemir.⁴ In richer countries, this can be offset by taxes and income transfers, but on a global scale this is only feasible to a very limited extent. Maintaining affordable and stable prices, at least for basic foodstuffs, is therefore a basic prerequisite for socially sustainable global nutrition.

4 Cem Özdemir (b. 1965), member of the Green Party, German Federal Minister of Agriculture from 2021 to 2025.

The paths to higher supply are initially simple:

- Less ‘refinement’ of plant-based agricultural products into animal-based agricultural products and biofuels, and thus loss of calories
- Reducing losses in the agricultural value chain—from production to storage, processing, and trade to waste at the consumer level
- Increase in production

The sum of the individual efforts must ensure high-quality food availability for a world population of at least two billion additional people by 2050, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. If the supply is to be secure, production must be less susceptible to crises and buffers must be created to absorb unavoidable fluctuations.

At the same time, agricultural production must become more sustainable, as agriculture is a, if not the, most important driver of global sustainability threats—in particular, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, nitrogen and phosphate overload in water, and general water consumption and pollution. Some of these risks arise not only in ‘industrial’ high-performance agriculture with high capital and external input costs but also in extensive small-scale farming, where more nutrients are removed from the soil than are added (soil mining). This leads to declining soil fertility and productivity and—where still possible—to the expansion of land into forests, floodplains, and savannahs.

In the tropics, almost all agricultural scientists are convinced that a sustainable increase in agricultural production can only be achieved with the addition of external fertilisers. Completely dispensing with external nutrients (except nitrogen) is not sustainable for many deeply weathered tropical soils with very low nutrient reserves—except in traditional shifting cultivation. If long fallow periods for soil recovery are no longer possible due to increasing production requirements, nutrients must be supplied.

This connection is already clearly stated for Africa in the IAASTD report⁵—one of the reference works of modern agroecology: ‘Fertiliser use in the region is only 9 kg/ha, compared to 73 kg/ha in Latin America, 100 kg/ha in South Asia and 135 kg/ha in East and Southeast Asia. Such low fertiliser use, combined with shorter fallow periods and insignificant use of organic fertilisers, poses a serious threat to the sustainability of agriculture. African

5 The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) was initiated by the World Bank with the aim of describing ways to feed the growing world population sustainably.

soils are continuously deprived of nutrients by not using fertilisers.' External application of nutrients, especially in higher doses, is usually only effective in combination with responsive (improved) varieties, proper application of the right amounts at the right time, and good soil management.

Balancing production, productivity, and sustainability under conditions of global inequality will be one of the greatest challenges facing humanity in the coming decades.

What Does this Mean for Sustainable Fertiliser Use?

It is first important to take a closer look at the various nutrients and the role of organic matter. The most important plant nutrient, and by far the most widely used, is nitrogen. It can also be fed into farms locally via legumes—a group of plants that can bind nitrogen from the air in conjunction with species-specific soil bacteria. Well-known species include soybeans, peanuts, beans and peas, clover and alfalfa, as well as many tropical tree species in particular. However, the selection of plants for [quickly growing] catch crops, ground cover, mixed cultivation, crop rotations, or agroforestry is a fine art, as their introduction requires careful integration into the existing farm and household systems. Labour management is often crucial to, for example, cut back hedges at the right time or incorporate catch and cover crops or mulch into the soil. (Partial) mechanisation is usually necessary to convert large quantities of organic matter.

Legumes are often only sufficiently interesting for producers if they also have additional benefits as food and/or market crops, instead of 'only' regenerating soil fertility and supplying other plants with nitrogen. Many of these crops are susceptible to disease and pests due to their high protein content. A very small-scale, participatory adaptation to the respective systems for the various types of organic nitrogen fertilisation is therefore required.

Other plant nutrients, in particular the macronutrients potassium and phosphorus, cannot be obtained in the same way as nitrogen. They must come from the soil or be introduced through fertilisation. This also applies to micronutrients such as sulphur, boron, or iron, which are often added locally—especially in sub-Saharan Africa—in order to achieve a site- and crop-specific mix. Agroecological measures that increase organic matter content and soil life can increase the mobilisation of nutrients from soil minerals.

Extensive livestock farming and its integration into agricultural operations can also 'collect' nutrients from the environment and accumulate

them on arable land. However, these possibilities are usually limited in the tropics and lead to the degradation of natural pastures and their soils in the long term—at least if the animals become more numerous, arable land becomes larger in extent, and pastures correspondingly smaller.

This is the situation in most poor developing countries with a growing population and too few alternatives to generate income outside of agriculture. For these reasons, rapid and large-scale changes in agriculture are hardly possible. Organic matter is limited, as is the amount of nutrients in the landscape. The hasty switch to purely organic fertilisation in Sri Lanka, which had catastrophic consequences for the supply situation, serves as a warning that an agricultural transformation takes a long time. In addition, as the sale of agricultural products to supply the cities increases, the nutrients they contain leave the local circulation systems.

How Else Can the Fertiliser Crisis Be Tackled?

Fertiliser subsidies, credit lines for states and producers, as well as lower transaction costs—including import duties for fertilisers—can be used to dampen the effects of high prices in the short term, particularly in poorer countries and for smaller farmers. These are already being introduced by various countries and donors. Uncertainty about future agricultural price developments can be offset by minimum price guarantees; a rejection of export restrictions, or their very cautious use; the cautious promotion of imports; and, in the longer term, income insurance. All of this requires a great capacity for political coherence and control, which is rare in poorer developing countries and must also be promoted.

However, none of these measures can eliminate either short-term scarcity or medium-term distortions. A global redistribution of fertiliser intensity would be a partial solution. Use would have to be reduced in the Global North and increased in the Global South—particularly in Africa. The positive overall result would stem from the fact that in the countries of the Global North (and in some emerging countries such as China) fertilisers are applied at levels close to the economic optimum (additional expenditure due to fertiliser = additional yield due to production), often also at the optimum yield (highest yield to be achieved), and sometimes even above it (declining yields again). With moderate reductions, these yields therefore do not fall very much. In the poorer countries of the Global South, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, it is usually the other way around—fertilisers are applied

at a very low level, and the marginal increase in yield is very high with even a moderate increase in fertilisation.

An additional benefit of such a global redistribution would be a reduction in environmental damage in the North, and in soil mining and pressure on fallow land and remaining forests in the South. Such an attempt at optimisation could be initiated by the G20 group of finance ministers and central bank governors, and steered with the instruments mentioned. Unfortunately, such global control—if politically desired at all—is neither easy nor quick to implement.

Increasing Availability

The possibility of greater availability depends very much on the nutrient in question. Nitrogen fertiliser can be produced from nitrogen in the air practically anywhere; it mainly requires (cheap) energy. So far, this has often been provided by natural gas, which is already expensive and will become even more so with the loss of access to Russian natural gas. Also, due to the high transport costs of gas, it tends to be converted into nitrogen fertiliser in the country of origin. Promising countries with respect to this development include the USA, Nigeria, or Kuwait—and, of course, still Russia.

In principle, plant-available nitrogen can also be produced using electrical and therefore potentially renewable energy. This used to be done on a large scale, for example in Norway with hydro energy, but was discontinued for cost reasons. In the event of major price changes (such as a surplus of cheap renewable electricity and high natural gas prices), these processes could be used again at market prices—albeit with a longer time frame and high capital expenditure. Support through climate financing, as with green hydrogen, would be extremely useful.

Potassium deposits are concentrated in only a few places on earth—most prominently in Belarus and Russia, but also in Canada and Germany. However, it is difficult to expand production quickly and massively. The third macronutrient, phosphorus, is the most problematic. Although it is abundant in the earth's crust, there are only a few places where it can be mined—including Morocco and Western Sahara, China, and the USA. Just a few years ago, phosphorus was considered to be the first element that might run out. Recovery and higher technological yields have resulted in new sources. However, it remains a precarious substance. There are deposits of low-quality crude phosphate in other countries, including in

Africa. However, their development and processing are only worthwhile if prices remain high.

Lifting economic sanctions on fertilisers from Russia and Belarus would be a short-term and effective step towards increasing the global availability of these nutrients. Although this limits the effectiveness of the sanctions, in view of the major collateral damage to food security it seems not only ethically justified but also necessary. In the medium term, the two countries would also find alternative sales and financing channels in the rest of the world, as long as the West does not stop this (which it should not do; see above). In the name of the stability and resilience of the entire agricultural sector, the expansion and diversification of raw material sources would be highly desirable.

Politicised Markets

However, if investments are based on the current maximum prices, there is a risk that the capacity expansions will overshoot the mark and trigger a long-term drop in prices, bankruptcies, and price and supply fluctuations. Private investments will tend to be based on long-term supply and demand projections, although the political development of the global market is currently difficult to calculate. Politically motivated expansion in individual countries in the interests of security of supply is to be expected. However, this is dangerous without global coordination due to the threat of surpluses for the world market. These politicised markets may be suitable for global control and agreements along the lines of Keynesian commodity agreements. Here, too, initiatives by the G20, or rather by 'clubs' of the leading producing and selling countries, would be necessary.

Stockpiling fertilisers, nationally or even globally, is likely to be difficult due to the high costs involved; if it is deemed necessary at all, then it should be directed more to the infertile soils of the tropics than to the fertile soils of temperate latitudes. A better information situation regarding fertiliser reserves, as recently agreed by the G7 agriculture ministers (i.e., those of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US) as part of the global Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS),⁶ may be a first step in this direction.

6 According to its mission statement, the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) is 'an inter-agency platform to enhance food market transparency and policy response for food security'. Founded in 2011, its purpose is to address food price volatility and improve global food security. It is hosted by the FAO in Rome.

Improving the efficiency of fertiliser use is also important. This increase in efficiency is a core element of agroecology. There are a number of approaches: better choice of varieties, correct timing of application according to growth phase, timing of application in the growth cycle of plants, coordination of fertiliser with plant species, incorporation of nutrients into the soil, crop rotation and use of the longer-term fertilisation effect, and optimised speed of nutrient release. The combination of organic and mineral fertilisation in particular increases the utilisation rate; reduces losses through leaching, fixation in the soil, or outgassing; and improves nutrient recycling. The difficulties of adapting and spreading such complex systems locally have already been described with regard to legumes.

The recycling of nutrients that are lost through sale from local cycles of agricultural operations is another, possibly the largest, unused opportunity for the circular economy in agriculture. This requires putting the recovery of nutrients from human excrement into production. In industrialised countries, this is prevented by a variety of regulations—in developing countries, it tends to involve the underdeveloped wastewater disposal system. It could be helpful to counter concerns by applying such biological fertilisers only to energy or other non-food crops.

Autonomy Is Not the Solution

Some demands from the agroecology camp, or the food sovereignty camp that often merges with it, for extensive autonomy in food supply overlook the fact that the increasingly frequent local and regional food crises caused by extreme weather, especially droughts, cannot be offset by local production alone. Even money for social security is not enough; food imports from functioning transnational food markets and foreign exchange earnings, i.e., exports, are needed to finance such a measure. Agricultural trade is one of the most important components of food resilience.

This does not contradict the assessment that many countries, particularly in Africa, still have enormous potential for more agricultural production, both for exports and for substituting imports. In order to exploit this potential, more systematic promotion of food systems is needed above all. Import restrictions are only suitable to a limited extent, if only because they would drive up internal prices and are politically difficult to enforce on urban consumers. What is needed instead is investment in research and advice, market promotion, and financing along the value chains.

The acute food price crisis and, above all, the medium-term fertiliser price crisis call for massive intervention at many levels. The high costs should not deter us from tackling them head-on. It is not only the food security of the poorest people that is at risk but also the stability of food systems and social peace in many countries—as well as ecological resources in poorer countries, where overexploitation is often a matter of survival. Such intervention is therefore worthwhile.

Many of the aforementioned agroecological approaches make sense under almost all circumstances, provided they are economically viable. The current constellation of high prices for agricultural products and inputs is certainly conducive to this. This does not mean dispensing with the use of fertilisers, which is geared towards the removal of nutrients and soil fertility. However, the most urgent priority is to stabilise prices, which are largely triggered by political decisions and uncertainties. Otherwise, many future investments, from the smallest farmer to global agreements, are questionable and at risk.

About the Author

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Africa Can Become the Agricultural Powerhouse of Tomorrow

L'Afrique peut devenir la puissance agricole de demain

Viviane Forson

Editorial Note

This article was published on 20 October 2022 in *Le Point*.¹ *Le Point* (The point) is a weekly political and conservative news magazine published in Paris. It is one of the three major French news magazines.

Against a backdrop of considerable uncertainty in Africa and around the world, the Togolese economist Kako Nubukpo, who is also Commissioner for Agriculture, Water Resources, and the Environment at the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which brings together eight West African countries, offers an uncompromising assessment of most of the economic strategies pursued in Africa over the past 40 years. This long-term work has led the monetary expert to regularly step outside his role as a technocrat, even if it means sometimes upsetting the African political establishment. On this October morning, when we met him in Paris, Kako appeared calm. It should be noted that many of the intellectual's reflections, whether on the CFA² franc or the role of international financial institutions, which provoked heated debate and some controversy, have struck a particular chord in Africa, with events, tours, and debates being held. He is back with *Une solution pour l'Afrique: du néoprotectionnisme aux biens communs* (A Solution for Africa: From neoprotectionism to common goods), published by Odile Jacob—a hard-hitting essay in which he debunks many preconceived ideas about the development of the African continent

¹ https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/kako-nubukpo-le-systeme-neoliberal-a-echoue-20-10-2022-2494635_3826.php.

² The CFA franc is the name of two common currencies in West Africa (franc de la Communauté financière africaine, i.e., the African Financial Community franc) and Central Africa (franc de la Coopération financière en Afrique, the Financial Cooperation in Africa franc). It is used in 14 African countries, all former French colonies. Its exchange rate is pegged to the Euro.

and puts forward several avenues for reflection on common goods, ecological protectionism, and security. He spoke to *Le Point Afrique*.

Le Point Afrique: From 10 to 16 October, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund held their annual meetings against the backdrop of the global economic crisis, but Africa seems to be even more vulnerable to shocks.

Kako Nubukpo: Currently, the world is paying for three successive shocks: the first is linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption of global supply chains. This is a supply shock, characterised by rising prices. Then we had a second shock, this time on the demand side, a direct consequence of the rapid post-pandemic recovery. The Russian war in Ukraine is the third shock, and again it is a supply shock, due to soaring commodity prices, including energy. To address this, the Bretton Woods institutions are, as they have done for more than 40 years, steering African countries towards the same solutions: monetary policy adjustment, fiscal consolidation, and interest rate hikes by central banks. Nothing new under the sun. Except that Africa cannot develop by following these dogmas.

Le Point Afrique: To curb price growth, central banks have no choice but to raise interest rates. Don't you think urgent action is needed?

Kako Nubukpo: It is important to understand that the first and third shocks are difficult for a central bank to grasp because inflation is not monetary in origin. In general, when a central bank raises interest rates, it hopes to curb inflation. But in the current context, this is very complicated for African central banks because even when rates are raised, inflation does not slow down. In reality, we are paying for our dependence on the rest of the world and our peg to the euro in the CFA franc zone. I have always said, and this is borne out every time there is an external shock, that pegging the CFA franc to the euro makes no sense because we are subject to all the fluctuations of the euro, even though the economic situations of our two zones are very different. In this context, African countries have no choice but to adapt. When the dollar is very high, our imports cost us more, and when it is very low, we are encouraged to import much more. And we suffer from all of this.

Le Point Afrique: However, since the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the countries in the CFA franc zone seem to have weathered the external shocks better than other countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, whose currencies are collapsing....

Kako Nubukpo: Pro-CFA supporters applaud this, because they believe that it is thanks to the peg to the euro that we are managing to keep inflation rates down. I believe, however, that it is because of the CFA franc that, for 60 years, we have not built the factories that would have enabled us to be a little more self-sufficient in relation to the rest of the world. If Africa never finances its own economy, it will be vulnerable to all kinds of shocks.

Le Point Afrique: How do you explain that, with all their resources, international financial institutions have failed to better support Africa's development and that today the continent is increasingly indebted, with huge financing needs?

Kako Nubukpo: Promises have not been kept, and this is not a recent phenomenon. More recently, there were the famous special drawing rights, or SDRs. In the spring of 2020, there was talk of the continent receiving 5 per cent of all SDRs, which is not much given that we represent 17% of the global population. It is now the end of 2022 and we have still not received anything. These institutions also bear some responsibility for the succession of food crises we are experiencing, with high food price volatility every time there is an external shock. This is because, at the beginning of structural adjustment in 1980, the World Bank asked African countries to end their food self-sufficiency policies and move towards what it called food security. The message was that countries did not need to produce what they consumed because if they exported enough raw materials, they would have the foreign currency to import food. It was not until 2008, during the severe global food crisis, that the World Bank admitted its mistake. It changed its tune and now advocates agricultural and food sovereignty. So there is a problem of sincerity between what is said and what is done. The promises made to Africa by international institutions must be kept. People are vigilant and expect their leaders to be accountable. That is what has changed today.

Le Point Afrique: Are there any initiatives that you think are moving in the right direction, not only to respond to the current food crisis but also to restore African agriculture to its place in global agriculture?

Kako Nubukpo: As Commissioner for Agriculture, I am very attentive to the various proposals that are being made, such as the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM) initiative launched by [French] President Emmanuel Macron last February in Brussels, which is based on three pillars: trade, solidarity, and production. The production component in particular

aims to promote plant proteins such as legumes, cowpeas, and acacia. I firmly believe that Africa should produce what it consumes. On these issues, my position is clearly on the left, in line with the Egyptian economist Samir Amin, who advocated disconnection. However, this does not mean that we should live in autarky. That said, it is imperative for Africa to build itself up and be able to feed its children. Isn't this food crisis also, and above all, a structural crisis? What concrete solution do you propose that could create a virtuous circle in food production? The food crisis is at the forefront of all current debates with the war in Ukraine, but the problem is not the war, it is first and foremost protection, because it makes no sense for Africa to import chicken from Normandy or milk from the Netherlands when we have agricultural sectors to develop. The African farming community has always been neglected. We have focused all our efforts on urban areas and, instead of promoting local production, we have preferred to promote food imports, which are cheaper and prevent food riots in the cities. Yet 70% of the African population lives off agriculture. Cities are suffocating and rural areas are exploding. We need to come up with solutions for Africa. We have a generational duty to find, or at least initiate, paths to shared prosperity and ecological sustainability so that our continent can be liveable. When it comes to food production, there are three things that absolutely must be done: the first is to increase productivity. It is a fact that agricultural productivity is stagnant in Africa. Take cotton, for example. In half a century, the African continent has not exceeded 1 ton (1.02 tonnes) per hectare, which was already the yield we had at the time of independence. Some countries have even fallen below that, to 800 kilos per hectare, while our Chinese and Brazilian competitors are at 3 tons (3.05 tonnes) per hectare. The issue of productivity is crucial. It goes hand in hand with more research into the right varieties, training for producers, work on compliance with technical guidelines, sowing dates, spreading dates, and water management—none of which we have developed. When it comes to irrigation, we are still dependent on the vagaries of the weather. Today, the ratio between northern and southern countries in terms of agricultural productivity is 1 to 400. In other words, when a rice farmer in Arkansas in the United States and one in Casamance in Senegal both work for an hour, the American produces 400 times more. When they arrive at the same market, the Senegalese farmer disappears because he cannot compete with certain prices, which is why African agriculture must be protected. In addition to these impressive productivity gaps, we must take into account the heavy subsidies that northern countries allocate to their producers. American farmers receive 820 times more subsidy, averaging \$47,000 per year compared with \$46 for Tanzanian producers. We also need

to develop agricultural services, i.e., promote institutional arrangements such as access to credit, insurance, and post-harvest storage. Agriculture receives no funding whatsoever in our countries. Our development banks have closed one after the other due to poor governance, leaving us with an orphaned sector that nevertheless accounts for 70% of the population. Then there is the question of integrating our agriculture into global agriculture. I am against free trade because it is like letting the wolf into the sheepfold. Take the EU–ACP agreements, for example (i.e., those between the European Union and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries). They are part of what I call predatory external relations because the productivity gaps between our two agricultural sectors are so great that there is no justification for creating a free trade area between Europe and Africa. And this violates the principles of the original Lomé agreements. Proof of this is that, 20 years later, we still haven't managed to sign the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that followed the Cotonou agreements.³ Similarly, I am against the African Continental Free Trade Area if it pits productive farming, such as that in the Maghreb, against subsidised farming, as practised in Burundi, the Gambia, etc. The risks of intra-African predatory practices also exist.

Le Point Afrique: Yet there are many pan-African initiatives to address the issue of agricultural production. Why do you think they are not working?

Kako Nubukpo: Major institutions have launched noteworthy initiatives, but they need to be developed locally. The situation in Kenya is not the same as in Togo. Major initiatives provide guidance, which should be welcomed, but implementation must be local. Hence the importance of working to strengthen producers' capacities. A lot of work needs to be done with umbrella organisations so that they can get a larger share of the value created. After that, of course, we need to know what we want to do in terms of agricultural policy. Do we, like the European Union, want to stabilise prices or, like the Americans, stabilise producers' incomes with a decoupling system that allows prices to fluctuate according to supply and demand while providing income to producers? Tariff dismantling has already done us so much harm; we have been flooded with Chinese textiles, French chicken, Dutch milk powder, etc. There must be consistency between the objectives

3 The Lomé Convention, also known as the Lomé Agreement, is a trade and development aid agreement that was signed in 1975 in Lomé, the capital of Togo, by the European Economic Community (EEC) and 77 developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP states). It was superseded by the Cotonou Agreement in 2021.

of agricultural policy and those of trade policy, and therefore between the imperative to increase production and the need to preserve our ecosystems.

Le Point Afrique: How can we both increase productivity and protect the environment?

Kako Nubukpo: Sub-Saharan Africa has 650 million hectares of arable land and a country like the DRC has 80 million hectares, not including forests. This is important to emphasise. Unlike the Maghreb, which is already reaching its limits, we can massively increase agricultural production in Africa while preserving ecosystems. This is good news, and prospective studies by the National Institute for Agronomic Research (Institut national de recherche agronomique, INRA) confirm it. If Africa organises itself well, it can be the agricultural powerhouse of tomorrow. We still need to make better use of our raw materials and take a better approach to our comparative advantages. This is particularly important at a time when energy prices are rising rapidly. Potash, which cost \$200 a ton (\$203 a tonne) a year ago, is now worth \$840 a ton (\$853 a tonne). This means that our farmers have a rational duty to return to our natural inputs.

Le Point Afrique: How can this be done in practice? Take the cocoa sector, for example.

Kako Nubukpo: For cocoa, our countries have chosen to expand the area under cultivation in areas where there was a trade-off between forest and agriculture, rather than intensifying production. We must move away from the easy option of endless expansion of land area in order to preserve our ecosystems. This is a necessity, because when you destroy forests, it has a knock-on effect on productivity. On the contrary, agroecology makes it possible to intensify production, but using methods that are ecologically viable. However, we must not engage in agroecological agriculture to please others or to be in line with internationally recognised discourse, but because it is the only way for African family farms to survive. Africa possesses all the ancestral knowledge; we must, as in India and China, value it, share it, disseminate it, direct our researchers towards this endogenous knowledge, and understand how to scale it up.

Le Point Afrique: What alternatives do you propose? What types of new development initiatives and forms of collective action are emerging in response to these failures?

Kako Nubukpo: One solution that seems obvious to me for Africa is neo-protectionism.

Le Point Afrique: What are the fundamental problems posed by the neoliberal model that the concept of neoprotectionism could solve in terms of development theory and practice?

Kako Nubukpo: The African continent can still boast a very strong ecological tradition. In African cosmogonies, there is no separation between human beings and other living beings—even inanimate ones. From this perspective, three factors justify, in my opinion, protectionism for ecological purposes. The first is that Africa provides enormous ecosystem services to the rest of the world, for example through the Congo Basin forest: the planet's second green lung. I observe that Africa is increasingly being preyed upon for its natural resources—with fierce competition, particularly from emerging countries. It is a mad race that is accelerating the rate of degradation of our natural ecosystems. This call for neoprotectionism is almost a cry for help. The second factor is the failure of the neoliberal system. The main factor in the adjustment of the neoliberal system is the mobility of capital and labour. When a person cannot make a good living where they are, they have a duty to go and live elsewhere, where they can find work. However, while capital is mobile, labour is not very mobile due to all the restrictions on migration. Between 1845, when the Great Famine began in Ireland, and 1930, Europe exported 60 million people to the rest of the world. It was alone in the world and was able to manage the transition phases from the agricultural revolution to the industrial revolution and then from the industrial revolution to the service revolution. Now we live in a closed world, and the surplus population in Africa has no way out. We must therefore create more jobs for Africans in their own countries. Given all these factors, we have an obligation to change the model, because what enabled the neoliberal model to work is no longer acceptable. Neoprotectionism allows us to preserve not only our natural resources but also the 'global commons'.

Le Point Afrique: Your new essay discusses the 'commons' that must be protected. What are they?

Kako Nubukpo: Commons are assets whose unregulated management can lead to their depletion. Two factors characterise a common good: ease of extraction and low exclusion from use. Some are tangible, such as forests, lakes, and rivers; others are intangible, such as Wikipedia, OpenStreetMap,

and open-source software. When you think about it, it is global commons that need to be preserved, such as forests that are at risk of destruction. Commons are attempts to transcend the state on the one hand and the market on the other. They are a third way between the state and the market.

Le Point Afrique: How has this concept of commons helped to put the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world into perspective?

Kako Nubukpo: We are doing humanity a service, and humanity is not returning the favour! Because with our ecological way of life, we can continue to preserve the entire planet—hence the importance of keeping our commons alive. Living together allows us to pool our efforts and services and achieve a more equitable redistribution of the fruits of growth and social inclusion. I believe that protectionism must be linked to the preservation of the commons as a philosophy for action. Now, three dimensions of action must be taken into account: the resources to be preserved, the stakeholders, and the modes of regulation. American researcher Garrett Hardin showed in ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ [1968] that when goods are not regulated, they disappear due to predation. Years later, researcher Elinor Ostrom, winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize [in Economic Sciences], revisited all this research to demonstrate that, on the contrary, human beings, through communities, have always had the intelligence to organise themselves to preserve goods whose predation would lead to depletion. It is no coincidence that it was in 1983—at a conference in Minneapolis, USA—that all research on the commons was relaunched. This was clearly a response to the adjustment programmes of the IMF and the World Bank, which were already causing a great deal of damage in Latin America and Africa. From the outset, the commons have been an act of resistance to rampant neoliberalism.

Le Point Afrique: How are African communities involved in this issue of preserving the commons?

Kako Nubukpo: Self-organised communities are the ones that have traditionally managed the commons. For example, in Africa, land belongs to family communities. This approach, in terms of a bundle of rights, makes it possible to distinguish between the specific rules governing land distribution and those governing land use. Some people have the right to allocate land; others only have the right to use it; and some, particularly pastoralists, only have the right to pass through the land within transhumance corridors. These solutions have not been exploited because the World Bank and the

IMF very early on pushed for individualisation, particularly through land titles, whereas our customary rights are community rights. There is a gap between this individualistic approach to land and the communities' vision.

Le Point Afrique: This gap is also found in the management of protected areas, which are considered crucial. Under what conditions can communities continue this preservation work?

Kako Nubukpo: Protected areas could be managed by local communities and not necessarily by the state, because we have observed two contradictory movements. On the one hand, states tend to exclude these communities from management and then engage in predatory practices, sometimes even privatisation. On the other hand, we have green colonialism, which can be seen in the way protected areas in Africa are viewed as reserves where African people have no rights. These places would then be reserved for foreign tourists, where they would be allowed to hunt, as is the case in Tanzania, Kenya, Pendjari [National Park] in Benin, etc. Between these two ultimately maximalist interpretations of the role of protected areas, there are the commons, which help communities organise themselves around goods—honey, shea butter, and oysters in the Sine Saloum region of Senegal, for example, where we see a real trade run by women that works very well. The challenge is to preserve the mangroves and rainforests that are under attack due to climate change, which is driving people in the Sahel to move down to these areas. At the same time, the rise of the Atlantic Ocean towards the land means that other populations tend to move up. West Africa is caught in a vice, which justifies the urgent need to create a more endogenous model that is neither state-run, because there are many state failures, nor market-driven, because the market is not always the best way to allocate resources.

Le Point Afrique: Africa seems to be losing its endogenous knowledge—particularly in the Sahel, where certain communities are now fighting over these common goods.

Kako Nubukpo: The Sahel is experiencing the combined effects of five crises. There is the security crisis; the climate crisis, which is causing population displacement; the health crisis, with the [COVID-19] pandemic; the political crisis, with a succession of coups; and, finally, the consequences of the Russian–Ukrainian crisis. These successive shocks are completely destabilising West Africa and perhaps even the entire continent. There is

an urgent need to rebuild the social contract around local governance and a capacity to better understand what I call the triptych of state, territory, and society—because, after all, the failures that West Africa is experiencing today are due to the inability of states to embrace their entire territory. I see the revolts, both among peasants and especially among urban youth, as a step backwards. It is as if the debates we should have had in 1960 are now taking place half a century later, but in a very violent manner. We have a population that doubles every 25 years. Forty per cent is under the age of 15. There is unprecedented demand for education, training, and healthcare, and yet we have states that have failed to develop due to predatory regimes. Jihadism has arrived as an accelerator.

Le Point Afrique: What makes you think that Africa now has a window of opportunity to achieve its dreams of emancipation through the economy?

Kako Nubukpo: We are currently witnessing a paradigm shift, because Africa is in the third phase of its development process. We had the first phase, the period of independence until the early 1980s, which was a time of voluntarism. Unfortunately, it led to white elephants, poor governance, and excessive debt. This was followed by the second phase, that of management. These were the years of structural adjustment programmes, during which international institutions completely downplayed structural projects in favour of short-term macroeconomic stability. There were many blind spots in this development model, particularly in health, education, agriculture, and industry. Thirty years later, we realised that Africa was still unable to kick-start its emergence process. Today, we are in the third phase, which is one of pragmatism, where we are trying to reconcile the contributions of the state, the market, and the commons in order to turn them into levers for the transformation of African societies. Now, why do we have an incredible window of opportunity to achieve this development model? Because events in the rest of the world have proven the Bretton Woods institutions and neoliberalism in general wrong. In the face of major global crises, such as the 2008 financial crisis and the 2020 pandemic, the state has been at the centre of everything whatever the cost, which is in fact the opposite of the dogma of structural adjustment. We have been prevented from using the levers of development that are currency and the budget for more than 30 years, yet the West is doing just that to save its populations from recurring crises. We are at a turning point, because the IMF and the World Bank cannot forbid us from doing anything other than what the West is doing. At the same time, we must prepare for the future, which means identifying

Africa's common assets, agreeing on how to manage them, and deciding how we want to integrate into globalisation.

About the Author

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‘Two Hemispheres’ and ‘Two Energy Circles’: Reshaping the Global Energy Landscape in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis

‘Liang ge banqiu hua’ he ‘liang ge nengyuan quan’: Wukelan weiji Beijing xia quanqiu nengyuan geju de chongsu ‘两个半球化’和‘两个能源圈’:乌克兰危机背景下全球能源格局的重塑

Liu Guizhou 刘贵洲, Huang Haokai 黄浩凯, and Hu Hongmin 胡红民

Editorial Note

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An unexpected consequence of the Russia–Ukraine conflict is that the global energy landscape is undergoing profound changes. Europe, following the United States in imposing economic sanctions on Russia, is accelerating its efforts to reduce dependence on Russian energy at any cost, even attempting to stifle the Russian economy through measures such as purchase restrictions and price caps; Russia, acting in self-preservation, has dumped oil at discounted prices, pivoted eastward to seek new energy markets, and even re-deployed its ‘energy weapon’. It has reduced or halted gas supplies to certain European nations and countered Western sanctions with its ‘rouble

¹ Liu Guizhou, Huang Haokai, and Hu Hongmin, “‘Liang ge banqiu hua’ he ‘liang ge nengyuan quan’: Wukelan weiji Beijing xia quanqiu neng-yuan geju de chongsu [“Two hemispheres” and “Two energy circles”: Reshaping the global energy landscape in the context of the Ukraine crisis]”, *Eluosi Dong’ou Zhongya yanjiu* 俄罗斯东欧中亚研究 [Russian, Eastern European, and Central Asian studies], no. 1 (2023): 72–89.

settlement decree'. Against this backdrop, a new global energy landscape has begun to take shape, with energy flows evolving towards 'two hemispheres' and 'two energy spheres'.

I. The Shale Revolution Exacerbates Russia–Europe Tensions and Shakes the Global Energy Landscape

Following prolonged preparation and technological breakthroughs in energy science, the sector witnessed a major technological revolution from the early twenty-first century onwards. Driven by shale oil and gas extraction technologies such as horizontal drilling, hydraulic fracturing, and acidisation, the United States spearheaded a shale revolution. Over the past fifteen years, shale technology has continued to advance, and the shale revolution has deepened, becoming a profound driving force behind the Russia–Ukraine conflict and significantly disrupting the global energy landscape.

Firstly, the shale revolution has enabled the United States to achieve complete energy independence. Since 2007, revolutionary breakthroughs in US shale development have led to explosive growth in shale oil and gas production, a rapid decline in net imports of oil and gas, and natural gas achieving net exports in 2017. By 2021, net exports reached 102.8 billion cubic metres (1). Oil is projected to achieve net exports by 2022. Having overcome its reliance on foreign natural gas in 2017, the United States attained 'energy independence' in terms of oil and gas equivalent in 2019, and is poised to achieve dual 'independence' in both oil and gas by 2022. This not only fulfils the long-cherished goal of energy independence pursued by generations of Americans, but also exerts profound influence on the global energy landscape and even geopolitics.

Second, US energy independence is a deep-seated driving force behind the Russia–Ukraine conflict. This assessment is based on two key factors: First, no longer constrained by energy dependencies, the United States can now engage more freely in geopolitical matters. This includes its actions in the Middle East, its strategic competition with Russia, its stance on European energy, and its positioning in Central Asia and the Caspian region. The US now possesses new considerations, fresh approaches, enhanced confidence, and the capacity for decisive action. This injects an unstoppable force into the evolution of the global energy landscape. Second, the explosive growth of US liquefied natural gas (LNG) has enabled the US to exert influence across Europe, indirectly triggering the Russia–Ukraine conflict.

At a deeper level, the profound impact of America's shale revolution stems from multiple factors: firstly, American LNG requires access to ideal export markets. The sustained rapid growth of shale gas production in recent years has spurred the accelerated construction of numerous LNG plants in the United States, developing substantial LNG production capacity. The vast quantities of LNG produced require export to international markets, with production growth showing increasingly robust momentum. Consequently, identifying suitable overseas markets has become a new strategic objective for the United States. According to IHS Markit² statistics and projections, since 2017, when large-scale exports commenced, US LNG exports have surged annually, reaching 69.2 million tonnes in 2021. This figure is only marginally lower than Australia's 79.4 million tonnes and Qatar's 78.9 million tonnes (2). By 2021, US LNG production capacity had surged to 91.25 million tonnes, surpassing Australia's 87.2 million tonnes and Qatar's 77 million tonnes (3), propelling the nation from modest beginnings to become the world's largest LNG producer. Four new LNG projects commenced operations in 2022, adding 33.8 million tonnes of annual capacity (4). Between 2023 and 2024, numerous projects are expected to reach final investment decisions (FID) and commence construction, potentially adding a further 160 million tonnes per year of capacity upon commissioning. Beyond 2025, numerous projects totalling 167 million tonnes per annum of capacity await FID and construction commencement. Projected US LNG capacity is anticipated to reach 120 million tonnes by 2026 and 160 million tonnes by 2028 (4), leaving Australia and Qatar far behind. A substantial volume of LNG projects will progressively start operations, with the resulting LNG continuously entering international markets. Such vast capacity and output necessitate the identification of overseas markets, alongside requiring the US government to take action through specialised strategic marketing initiatives to capture international market share.

Secondly, Europe could become the most ideal market for American LNG. Asia, particularly China, represents a rapidly growing LNG market. According to IHS Markit projections, China's LNG demand will reach 101 million tonnes by 2026 (5), which nearly matches US production capacity. However, the US perceives that, within the context of strategic competition with China, the latter will not become a primary market for American LNG. While Japan and South Korea are easier to manage, their market growth potential is extremely limited. Although LNG demand in these regions will see slight increases over the next two years, it is projected to decline sharply

2 IHS Markit is a financial data provider headquartered in Denver, Colorado.

thereafter. Emerging markets like India may absorb some incremental US LNG volumes, yet capacity remains constrained and cannot absorb America's rapidly expanding supply. Moreover, India is not a US ally; its evident closeness and supportive stance towards Russia during the Ukraine conflict are far from easily influenced by the United States. By contrast, Europe remains the optimal market for American LNG: On the one hand, exports to Europe displace Russia's gas market share—a strategic adversary of the West—thereby supporting efforts to 'impoverish Russia' and advance NATO's eastward expansion. On the other hand, the US perceives Europe as lacking self-reliance and exhibiting vacillatory tendencies. Displacing Russia's European market share proves considerably easier and more stable than tackling the 'tough nut' of China. Consequently, the United States will persistently target Europe as its premium energy market.

Thirdly, the United States' successive sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline represent the first step in its bid to seize Russia's share of the European natural gas market. The commissioning of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline in November 2011 created the conditions to minimise gas transit through Ukraine following the expiry of the Ukrainian transport contract in 2019, while meeting the growing import demand in north-western Europe. In September 2015, Russia announced the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, with partners including Gazprom and five European companies (namely BASF, E.ON, Engie, Shell, and OMV). Apart from some distance between entry and exit points, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline largely runs parallel to Nord Stream 1, bypassing Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, and the Baltic states. Spanning 1,200 kilometres with dual pipelines, it has an annual capacity of 55 billion cubic metres (6). From its inception, the pipeline faced numerous attempts at obstruction from the United States, Ukraine, Poland, and others, yet none resulted in substantive disruption. It was only in December 2019, when 95% of the pipeline's construction had been completed, that the United States announced sanctions. This indicates that American perceptions of the pipeline had escalated from mere opposition to a matter of national strategic importance. Following the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, successive US–European sanctions and Europe's efforts to reduce dependence on Russia effectively 'signed the pipeline's death warrant'. It can be said that the US employed every possible means to stifle the project, with Europe not only closely cooperating but ultimately facilitating Washington's objectives. Thus, the United States' scheme to abandon the Nord Stream 2 pipeline has largely been realised. The demise of Nord Stream 2 has both exacerbated the imbalance in oil and gas supply and demand, and made it more difficult to adjust this imbalance.

Fourthly, the sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines has further severed the energy link between Russia and Europe. On 27 September 2022, both pipelines were deliberately damaged, resulting in severe methane leaks that caused significant environmental damage locally. On the one hand, it is extremely difficult to identify the perpetrators responsible for this incident. On the other hand, repairing the pipelines is likely to prove exceptionally challenging, and indeed, whether they can be repaired at all remains an open question.

Fifthly, Europe's reduction of its dependence on Russian energy has opened up a vast, high-end market for American LNG. The United States has persistently provoked tensions between Russia and Europe, stoking the intense conflict between Russia and Ukraine through measures such as NATO's eastward expansion. It then spearheaded global calls to boycott Russian energy, while vigorously urging Europe to swiftly reduce its reliance on Russian energy supplies. Under its pressure and coercion, Europe has successively unveiled radical plans to sever ties with Russian energy supplies. Consequently, American LNG will capitalise on this momentum to fully dominate the European market. Beyond existing commercial purchase agreements signed by various LNG producers, the United States, presenting itself as a 'savior', has pledged to increase LNG exports to the EU by 10 billion cubic metres in 2022, with a further annual increase of 50 billion cubic metres by 2030. Contracts are now in place for the US to supply the EU with 53 billion cubic metres of LNG annually by 2027 (7). Thus, the US's rapidly expanding LNG production now faces no lingering concerns regarding its marketability.

II. Carbon Neutrality Momentum Stalls as Global Energy Landscape Faces Reshaping

Over the past two years, the global 'dual carbon' goals³ and the energy transition have driven global trends. Successive announcements by countries of their timelines and key indicators for carbon peaking and carbon neutrality have been met with similar pledges by energy enterprises to accelerate action. For a time, the entire world seemed caught up in the fervour of energy transition, making the 2°C and 1.5°C global temperature control targets feel within reach rather than distant aspirations. Yet the Russia–Ukraine conflict is altering perceptions and shifting the stance of many nations worldwide.

3 The dual carbon goals form a key part of the energy policy of the People's Republic of China. The goals aim to peak CO₂ emissions before 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

1. The EU Finds Itself in a Quandary over the Russia–Ukraine Conflict, Backtracking on Its Energy Transition

The Russia–Ukraine conflict, successive Western sanctions against Russia, Europe's accelerated efforts to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, and Russia's use of energy as a weapon for self-preservation and countermeasures—these unfolding dramas have left the energy transition stalled amid the contest of geopolitical forces. Multiple European nations have declared their intent to wean themselves off Russian gas. Faced with threats of supply cuts from Moscow, Europe now finds itself mired in an energy crisis. This predicament may force a reversal of its energy transition strategy, with attention turning back to coal-fired power generation—a source it had previously pledged to phase out. On 19 and 20 June 2022, Germany, Italy, Austria, and the Netherlands successively announced plans to increase coal-fired electricity production (8). The Netherlands has lifted its cap restricting coal-fired power plants to no more than 35% of output; Germany has reconnected mothballed coal-fired capacity to the grid; Austria has reactivated a previously closed coal plant in the south, reversing its status as 'Europe's second country to completely phase out coal power'; Italian coal plants have been stockpiling coal over recent months. Consequently, the EU's commitment to reducing carbon emissions faces challenges, with multiple nations unable to fulfil pledges for early coal phase-outs. Faced with the energy crisis, Italy's pledge to phase out coal entirely by 2025, the Netherlands' commitment to do so by 2030, and Germany's target of 2038 have all been significantly scaled back. A major question mark now hangs over whether the EU can fulfil its pledge to reduce carbon emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (9).

2. Three Positive Forces Continue to Lead the 'Dual Carbon' and Energy Transition

Despite the impact of the Russia–Ukraine conflict and the European energy crisis, which have led to a slight decline in enthusiasm for carbon neutrality and the energy transition, and despite the fact that the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in 2022 is receiving significantly less attention worldwide, three positive forces continue to drive this development forward unwaveringly.

Firstly, China: The Chinese government regards the 'dual carbon' goals as an unshakable and solemn commitment and the unavoidable path for building an ecological civilisation. Achieving these targets is not a temporary measure and will not be altered by shifts in the international landscape. China remains steadfastly advancing its 'dual carbon' strategy

in a step-by-step, methodical manner. By 2021, China's cumulative installed capacity for wind and photovoltaic power generation had reached 635 gigawatts, with an annual growth rate of 18.7% (10). The target of achieving 1,200 gigawatts of installed capacity by 2030 is assuredly attainable, and the commitments to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve a 25% share of new energy sources will undoubtedly be fulfilled.

Secondly, global energy corporations: Energy firms have not paused for a moment in their pursuit of new energy development, and, indeed, their pace continues to accelerate. From 2005 to the end of November 2022, global mergers and acquisitions involving new energy projects totalled 356 transactions. Since 2016 alone, this figure has reached 293, with 161 deals occurring since 2021 (11). The vast majority of these new energy projects have been spearheaded by the seven major international oil companies, with participation also from major international oil and gas service providers and other energy enterprises. Since 2021, TotalEnergies has undertaken 21 new energy M&A [mergers and acquisitions] projects, BP 18, and Shell 16 (12).

Thirdly, Europe finds itself in an energy predicament: While the return to coal significantly undermines Europe's energy transition commitments, this merely represents a reversal of the substitution of low-carbon for high-carbon traditional energy sources. The development of new energy sources and their replacement of traditional energy will only accelerate, not regress, though the timeline for achieving the ultimate goal may be delayed. Faced with a gas supply crisis, Europe's desire to develop new energy sources remains more urgent than ever, and its strides forward will be greater. Take Germany as an example: having navigated its current energy predicament, the nation plans to maintain an annual increase of 10 gigawatts (GW) in onshore wind capacity beyond 2025, reaching 115 GW by 2030; from 2026 onwards, solar capacity will increase by 22 GW annually, reaching 215 GW by 2030; by 2030 and 2035, renewable energy's share of total electricity generation will reach 80% and 100%, respectively (13).

III. The Weaponisation of Energy Drives the Global Energy Landscape Towards a 'Two-and-a-Half-Hemisphere' Evolution

Throughout history, energy has repeatedly been wielded as a weapon, its efficacy proven time and again. During the two oil crises of the 1970s, Middle Eastern oil-rich nations brandished the oil weapon to defend their interests, repelling American coercion and ultimately securing victory. Since the

twenty-first century, repeated standoffs between Russia and Ukraine, and between Russia and Europe, have vividly demonstrated the formidable power of energy as a weapon. Today, energy—alongside food, precious metals, and other strategic commodities—has once again become a weapon in the struggle among great powers.

1. Further Weaponisation of Energy

First, amid NATO's eastward expansion and the hostile stance of several European nations towards Russia, Moscow deliberately reduced gas supplies to relevant countries without breaching contractual obligations. This led to gas shortages across Europe from the latter half of 2021 onwards. Subsequently, the Russia–Ukraine conflict erupted, prompting Europe to accelerate its efforts to wean itself off Russian energy. It drastically reduced or even completely boycotted Russian oil and gas, attempting to strangle the Russian economy. Against this backdrop, Russia deployed natural gas as a weapon against multiple 'unfriendly nations' in Europe, implementing countermeasures through supply cuts and reductions. It abruptly halted gas deliveries to Poland, Bulgaria, and other countries refusing to comply with the 'rouble settlement decree'. To Germany, it reduced flows through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to 40% citing maintenance work, subsequently reduced it to 20% to Western nations seizing compressors for maintenance, and then announced a three-day halt to supplies from 31 August 2022 for maintenance purposes, immediately followed by an indefinite suspension. Concurrently, Russia stabilised the rouble exchange rate through its natural gas 'rouble settlement decree'. Moreover, amid the Russia–Ukraine conflict and the sanctions game with the US and the West, America has wielded rapidly increased LNG production as a weapon, persistently urging Europe to break free from its dependence on Russian energy.

It is evident that energy is emerging as a potent instrument shaping the course of geopolitics. Throughout the multifaceted dynamics of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, the formidable power and strategic significance of energy as a weapon have been consistently demonstrated. In the evolving global landscape, energy will continue to play a pivotal role as a strategic asset. Russia, possessing vast oil and gas reserves, can engage in measured strategic manoeuvring with the United States and Western nations, while also reshaping energy supply and demand dynamics according to its own interests. The United States, leveraging its shale gas and LNG production capacity, is actively driving the transformation of the traditional energy landscape to bolster its geopolitical ambitions.

2. Energy Weapons: A Double-Edged Sword Harming Western Economies

It must be recognised that energy weapons are a double-edged sword, often inflicting harm upon the user as well as the target. Russia's use of energy weapons against Europe will have profoundly detrimental consequences for its future supply market orientation. Similarly, the United States' and Europe's use of energy as a weapon to accelerate their reduction of dependence on Russian energy has led to soaring global oil and gas prices, triggering inflation across Western nations—an outcome equally unforeseen. Presently, Western economies are experiencing severe difficulties.

Firstly, global oil and gas prices remain persistently high. According to IHS Markit statistics, even before the Russia–Ukraine conflict, American LNG had already captured a substantial share of the European market. In January 2022, US LNG exports to Europe surged to a historic high of 7.595 billion cubic metres, accounting for nearly 60% of Europe's LNG imports (14), substantially eroding Russia's share of the European natural gas market. By contrast, Russia's LNG exports to Europe amounted to approximately 1.705 billion cubic metres, representing merely 13% of Europe's total LNG imports (15). Concurrently, Russia's pipeline gas exports to Europe experienced a substantial decline. Against this backdrop, European gas prices repeatedly reached new highs, with Dutch gas futures (TTF) surging to \$60.7 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) in December 2021, with the monthly average reaching \$36.6/MMBtu. Although the January 2022 average price declined to \$27.1/MMBtu, it remained at elevated levels. Following the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, TTF prices surged sharply for consecutive days due to the conflict itself and successive sanctions against Russia, soaring again to \$61.3/MMBtu on 2 March—a 43% increase (16). By late June, LNG prices had seen occasional minor corrections but continued fluctuating at elevated levels. Meanwhile, oil prices gradually climbed from \$80 per barrel at the end of 2021 to over \$120 per barrel, remaining persistently high and currently hovering around \$90 per barrel (17).

Secondly, elevated oil and gas prices have precipitated economic difficulties in numerous nations. Generally speaking, high energy prices constitute a boon for resource-rich countries. However, the United States, despite being an oil- and gas-abundant nation, has unexpectedly encountered high inflation and economic stagnation. It is worth examining the underlying causes in detail, which necessitates clarifying the following interplay of interests, transmission mechanisms, and chain reactions.

Firstly, it must be clarified who stands to gain from these exceptionally high oil and gas prices. Shale oil and gas producers, along with LNG producers, have reaped substantial revenues. Stripping away geopolitical

factors, the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil price and Henry Hub (HH) gas price hover around US\$70–80 per barrel and US\$3 per MMBtu, respectively, while the European TTF LNG price fluctuated between \$15 and \$20 per MMBtu. Presently, geopolitical tensions have driven WTI crude oil prices above \$120 per barrel; with HH averaging USD 7/MMBtu and peaking above USD 8/MMBtu; the European TTF LNG average surged to USD 36/MMBtu, reaching over USD 60/MMBtu at its height (18). Geopolitical tensions, coupled with the normal WTI crude oil spread and the HH shale gas spread, became a windfall for US shale oil and gas producers—excess profits entirely captured by these producers. The excess profits generated by the TTF spread and HH spread in European LNG were shared by US LNG producers and underwriters. The excess profits generated by multiplying such substantial spreads by such vast export volumes are largely captured by US shale oil and gas producers, LNG producers, and underwriters, with only a portion accrued by non-US underwriters. Naturally, foreign investors and trading underwriters participating in shale oil and gas production, LNG production and underwriting have also reaped substantial benefits alongside US enterprises.

Secondly, it must be clarified who ultimately bears the cost. Ultimately, consumers foot the bill for exorbitant oil and gas prices. High-priced oil and gas exported by the United States is paid for by consumers in Europe and Asia, while domestically consumed high-priced oil and gas is paid for by American consumers. While LNG prices soar in Asian and European markets, domestic natural gas prices in the United States are similarly driven upwards. US HH prices have risen to \$7/MMBtu, having once reached a record high of \$8/MMBtu (19); US oil prices have also lingered between \$90 and \$120 per barrel for an extended period. These elevated oil and gas prices are borne by the broad mass of American consumers.

Under these circumstances, high inflation in the United States was inevitable. Soaring oil and gas prices naturally triggered a chain reaction, causing the prices of a range of related products to rise and fuelling inflation. Over several months, the US inflation rate surged from under 4% to as high as 9.1%—the highest in 40 years—with the 2022 inflation rate projected to be no less than 8% (20). Should inflation remain unchecked, the American economy and society would suffer fatal damage. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell stated in June that the Fed is taking swift action, determined to restore price stability, firmly committed to raising interest rates to curb inflation, aiming for a 'soft landing' and striving to avoid economic recession. Against this backdrop, the US economy has recorded negative growth for two consecutive quarters, with GDP contraction rates of -1.6% and -0.9%,

respectively. This suggests the US economy may be entering a period of stagflation. The Federal Reserve is expected to continue its tightening cycle, with interest rates peaking at 5 to 6% in the first quarter of 2023. Coupled with slowing job growth, these rate hikes will likely cause the economy to stagnate in 2023. GDP contraction is anticipated in the third quarter of 2023, though a technical recession may be narrowly avoided (21).

The impact of soaring oil and gas prices, coupled with high inflation, on the Eurozone and the UK is equally concerning. Europe's economic woes persist, with severe inflation rates even exceeding those in the United States. According to IHS Markit forecasts, both the Eurozone and the UK are projected to experience annual inflation exceeding 8% throughout 2022. (22). UK GDP grew by a mere 0.3% month-on-month in August, with a recession anticipated from late 2022 into the first half of 2023. Germany's GDP is projected to expand by just 0.5% year-on-year in 2023 (23). Simultaneously, numerous European nations have witnessed waves of industrial action. Workers across multiple sectors, including British Airways, port operations, and telecommunications, have staged successive strikes in recent months. Railway workers alone have conducted three strikes within the first ten days of October 2022. On 1 October, citizens in over 50 cities took to the streets, with protests uniformly targeting high inflation. Prolonged strikes by workers at two major French refineries have reduced output by 60% (24), causing fuel shortages at petrol stations. The government has been compelled to release strategic reserves to boost supply and alleviate the crisis. On 8 October, Paris witnessed another large-scale protest demanding fundamental shifts in the French government's stance towards NATO and the EU. These demonstrations, similarly fuelled by economic hardship and soaring energy costs (25), mirrored the wave of strikes and protests sweeping Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and other nations (26). Sky-high gas prices, severe inflation, a poor economy, and difficult living conditions have left European nations suffering greatly. French President Macron even publicly complained about the United States and Norway at a press conference: 'We cannot pay you four times the price—that is not the true meaning of friendship!' (27)

3. The Free Flow of Energy Faces Powerful Interference, Evolving Towards a 'Dual-Hemisphere' Pattern

Following the United States' initiation of trade wars, technological warfare, and other forms of high-intensity, malicious competition across multiple domains against numerous nations, the years of rapid globalisation have suffered severe setbacks. Yet unexpectedly, the United States' steering

of Europe towards accelerated reduction of its dependence on Russian energy has resulted in the first visible impact of this globalisation setback manifesting precisely within the energy sector. Current global energy flows have undergone discernible shifts, evolving towards a 'two-hemisphere' configuration.

a) What Is 'Two-Hemisphere Globalisation'?

The economic globalisation that has swept across the world in recent decades has unfolded most dramatically in the energy sector. Energy flows freely across continents, resource-rich nations, and consumer states, and to every corner of the globe, according to the fundamental laws of supply and demand. Even geopolitical conflicts, cold wars, and hot wars have only exerted short-term, localised impacts on energy flows. The integrated, globally free-flowing energy framework has remained fundamentally unchanged (28). However, this trend has recently faced significant disruption from geopolitical forces. Firstly, the United States urgently requires markets for its substantial LNG exports and seeks to leverage resources for geopolitical advantage in Europe. Secondly, Europe is striving to reduce its dependence on Russian energy as swiftly as possible. Thirdly, Russia, facing early pressure and subsequent sanctions from the United States, Europe, and NATO, is employing energy as a weapon to counter the West. The intense interplay of these three geopolitical forces is leading to a major reshuffling of global oil and gas trade flows.

European imports of Russian oil have remained largely stable at approximately 200 million tonnes per annum in recent years. Plans to reduce Russian oil imports by 90% from the end of 2022 (31) imply two shifts in the Russia–Europe energy market. Firstly, Europe must secure an additional 180 million tonnes per annum of oil supply. Regions such as the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East may emerge as alternative oil sources for Europe. Further analysis based on crude oil properties indicates that the primary alternatives comparable to Russia's medium-sulfur Urals crude include the Suez Blend from the Middle East, Basra Light crude, Mars crude from North America, and Mostarda crude from West Africa. From security and economic perspectives, Europe is more likely to seek alternative oil sources from South America, North Africa, and West Africa, which offer shorter shipping distances and greater control. Secondly, Russia must find new buyers for its 180 million tonnes of oil annually. Therefore, further expanding the vast international market, primarily centred on Asia, is Russia's next objective. Following three to five years of flow adjustments, the global petroleum trade will establish a new distribution pattern. Greater volumes of oil from

the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas will flow towards Europe, while Russian oil previously destined for Europe will increasingly be directed towards Asian markets, including China, India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia, and Turkey. These nations will naturally reduce their reliance on oil originally sourced from the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas. Consequently, a new global oil supply and demand equilibrium will emerge under this trend.

In the natural gas sector, following a substantial reduction in the over 180 billion cubic metres of Russian gas flowing to Europe annually, Russia will be compelled to pivot towards Asian markets. The most probable course would involve constructing new China–Russia gas pipelines and accelerating the completion of the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) pipeline. Asian markets will consequently reduce imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by sea. Europe, meanwhile, will exhaustively seek LNG supply sources, primarily turning to the United States, Qatar, Canada, Indonesia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Mauritania, and other nations. Consequently, global oil and gas trade flows will undergo a major reshuffle, gradually evolving from globalisation towards a ‘two-hemisphere’ configuration.

b) The Path for the EU to Break Free from Its Dependence on Russian Oil and Gas Is Long and Arduous

The EU’s efforts to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, primarily constrained by several factors, cannot be achieved overnight. Firstly, despite the ambitious nature of the EU’s energy independence plan, it still requires securing new sources of oil and gas. On 8 March 2022, the EU unveiled its energy independence initiative, codenamed ‘RePowerEU’, aiming to reduce Russian natural gas imports by two-thirds by the end of 2022. It envisaged an additional 15 billion cubic metres of US LNG imports in 2022, rising to 50 billion cubic metres annually by 2030 and complete disengagement from Russian gas by 2027 (32). It must be recognised that America’s increased LNG supply falls far short of Europe’s ambitious goal to swiftly shed its reliance on Russian energy. Reducing EU imports of Russian gas by two-thirds equates to a reduction of 96.9 billion cubic metres (compared to 145.3 billion cubic metres imported from Russia in 2021). America’s pledged additional supply of 15 billion cubic metres (33), equates to merely 15.5% of the EU’s projected reduction in Russian gas imports—a drop in the ocean. The remaining 87.8% shortfall cannot be bridged solely by the EU reviving coal and nuclear power, accelerating renewable energy development, or relying on increased LNG production or exports from non-US nations. Over the next three years, annual LNG production capacity additions outside the US are expected to reach approximately 13 million tonnes (34). With these incremental supplies

largely absorbed by domestic demand growth, little will remain to meet Europe's energy needs. Consequently, Europe's energy requirements are unlikely to be satisfied.

Secondly, the infrastructure being hastily constructed in Europe is unlikely to be completed on schedule. To expand LNG receiving capacity, the EU plans to expedite the construction of 17 Floating Storage and Regasification Units (FSRUs), with Greece hosting four, Germany three, Italy two, and the Netherlands, Poland, Albania, the UK, Latvia, Slovenia, France, and Estonia each hosting one. Under this plan, the EU could increase its LNG receiving capacity by 80 billion cubic metres per annum (35). The feasibility of this ambitious project remains highly uncertain, as constructing such infrastructure within a short time frame appears challenging. While onshore LNG terminals typically require three to four years to build, FSRUs can be completed in just one to two years. Nevertheless, final investment decisions still necessitate considerable time. Thirteen FSRUs scheduled for completion by 2025 may be chartered for LNG transport, particularly those operated by carriers which can be rapidly redeployed. However, EU LNG importers must negotiate pricing and contractual details with existing FSRU operators, driving up charter rates. During the first half of 2022, seven FSRUs were chartered exclusively for European LNG transport; a further two FSRUs are currently transporting LNG but may be reconverted to floating terminals in future; four additional FSRUs are capable of being converted into LNG carriers. Two additional FSRUs will become available for LNG transport in the second half of 2022 (36).

In terms of construction capacity, global floating terminal building capabilities are severely constrained and essentially saturated. Only a handful of shipyards in a few countries, such as South Korea, China, and Malaysia, possess the requisite construction capabilities. Qatari Energy's 2020 order book of over 150 LNG carriers scheduled for delivery between 2024 and 2026 will largely absorb global shipbuilding capacity, with potential delays in some delivery schedules. Consequently, surplus capacity before 2026 is minimal. An alternative approach involves converting existing vessels. Currently, one-quarter of operational FSRUs are converted from existing ships. Shipyards in Singapore, Dubai, and China have the capability to undertake such conversions. However, the design process and procurement of long-lead-time equipment necessitate a conversion period of one to one and a half years. Converting LNG carriers to conventional FSRUs would also require six to nine months of retrofitting to interface with FSRU receiving facilities. Concurrently, demand for LNG carriers is surging rapidly. Projections indicate a requirement for 330 new LNG carriers by 2030 (37).

This not only generates substantial orders for the world's limited number of shipyards but will also be constrained by insufficient shipbuilding capacity, resulting in order backlogs.

It should also be recognised that the United States' commitment to increase LNG supplies to Europe by 15 billion cubic metres in 2022 and by a further 50 billion cubic metres per annum by 2030 is entirely achievable (39). According to Wood Mackenzie projections, substantial US LNG production capacity is set to come online in the coming years, with output reaching 119 million tonnes in 2022, 194 million tonnes in 2026, and 245 million tonnes in 2028 (40). This capacity expansion poses no impediment to increased European supplies. Analysis concludes that the EU can only achieve preliminary energy diversification once the majority of Russia's long-term sales contracts expire in 2026, enabling substantial LNG imports.

IV. The Global Energy Landscape Is Evolving Towards a 'Dual Energy Sphere'

As the global energy landscape evolves from globalisation towards a 'two-hemisphere' configuration, the United States and Russia will respectively lead their respective hemispheres towards establishing the 'Transatlantic Energy Circle' and the 'Asian Energy Circle'. In reshaping these two energy spheres, regional powers including Europe, Japan, South Korea, Central Asia, China, India, and the Middle East will each play distinct roles based on their respective interests.

1. The United States Is Spearheading Efforts with Europe to Establish a 'Transatlantic Energy Circle'

The expansion of NATO eastwards is undoubtedly a strategic move by the United States, while the instigation of the Russia–Ukraine conflict and the imposition of successive sanctions against Russia are equally American 'masterstrokes'. These 'masterstrokes' stem not only from America's geopolitical ambitions and its need to strategically squeeze Russia, but also from its practical interests in occupying the European LNG market to secure substantial profits for its rapidly increasing domestic natural gas production. The Russia–Ukraine conflict has fundamentally damaged Russo–European relations, severing the energy ties between the two. Consequently, the United States is now focusing on establishing a 'Transatlantic Energy Circle'. This energy network will be underpinned by Western European and North American energy supplies, incorporating as much energy as possible from

the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, Australia, and South America. It will form a trade flow circle with a stable core and a periphery characterised by some uncertainty. The United States will leverage its energy and political advantages to shape and steer the operation of this energy sphere. On 14 December, the leaders of Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan convened to discuss the transit of Turkmen natural gas via the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan, then through the 'Southern Gas Corridor' to reach European markets. This development reflects efforts to supplement Europe's energy sources by building upon the 'Atlantic Energy Circle'.

Europe will play a secondary role in this energy sphere, caught between a rock and a hard place. By closely following the United States in imposing successive sanctions against Russia during the Russia–Ukraine conflict, Europe has prompted Russia to gradually reduce and ultimately halt natural gas supplies. This has forced Europe to purchase American LNG at exorbitant prices. Simultaneously, insufficient gas supplies are not only hampering socio-economic development but are also leading to severe consequences such as industrial shutdowns and factory closures. German industrial production grew by a mere 1% in 2022 and 2% in 2023 (41). Simultaneously, Europe's drastic reduction in Russian oil purchases has driven global oil prices higher. Consuming such expensive petroleum severely undermines Europe's economic health. Indeed, Europe finds itself caught between a rock and a hard place. The deliberate sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines aims to permanently sever Russia's energy supply, compelling Europe to align unquestioningly with the US-led 'Transatlantic Energy Circle'. Regarding this, while a few clear-headed European politicians recognise the situation and even strive to salvage it, Europe has never achieved political independence since the Second World War. Consequently, its fate—playing a supporting role and being exploited within the future 'Transatlantic Energy Circle'—remains unalterable. Japan and South Korea, situated in East Asia, lack independence in political, military, and other spheres. Consequently, they must also submit to American dictates in the energy domain, aligning with the 'Transatlantic Energy Circle'. Beyond maintaining existing energy sources and barely sustaining minimal imports from Russia, their incremental energy requirements will increasingly be sourced from the 'Transatlantic Energy Circle'.

2. Russia Will Endeavour to Establish an 'Asian Energy Circle'

Against the backdrop of Western nations striving to sever energy ties with Russia, Moscow's westward energy push has hit a brick wall. This signifies the complete collapse of the traditional Russia–Europe energy

axis that has operated for nearly a century. Russia is now compelled to offload oil at a 30% discount to nations such as China, India, and Turkey. Russia will inevitably pivot eastward to establish a new energy framework aligned with its interests. This new land-based energy sphere, centred on the abundant resources of Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, with markets in China, India, Pakistan, and Turkey, constitutes the 'Asian Energy Sphere'. This will constitute the world's largest, most stable supply and demand energy sphere with the highest resource-market alignment. It will account for 24.6% of global oil production and 29.1% of consumption, alongside 34.5% of global natural gas output and 33.6% of consumption (42). The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation⁴ may serve as the platform for shaping this land-based energy circle. This platform will actively respond to the energy cooperation needs of all parties and proactively guide them towards the establishment of the land-based energy circle. At the end of November, during his meeting with visiting Kazakh President Tokayev, Putin proposed establishing a trilateral gas alliance involving Uzbekistan. This represents a tentative step towards building the 'Asian Energy Circle'.

Central Asia seeks a four-directional equilibrium within the 'Asian Energy Circle'. The region's primary energy exporters are Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, which mainly export natural gas, with Kazakhstan additionally exporting substantial quantities of oil. The primary natural gas exporters are Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, which transport gas eastwards to China via the Central Asia–China Gas Pipeline. In 2021, the three countries exported 31.5 billion, 5.9 billion, and 4.3 billion cubic metres of natural gas to China, respectively. Northbound exports via the Central Asia–China Gas Pipeline to Russia amounted to 10.5 billion and 4.6 billion cubic metres from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, respectively, in 2021 (43). Crude oil exports primarily involve Kazakhstan transporting oil via the Russia–Kazakhstan crude oil pipeline to Black Sea ports for international sale, or shipping across the Caspian Sea to connect with the Baku–Ceyhan pipeline. Exports in 2021 reached nearly 70 million tonnes (44). A portion of Kazakhstan's oil exports is transported to China via the China–Kazakhstan crude oil pipeline. However, Turkmenistan's southbound TAPIP pipeline project—designed to carry 30 billion cubic metres per annum through

4 The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an international organisation founded in 2001 to promote security and economic cooperation. It is based in Beijing. Current members include Belarus, the People's Republic of China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Afghanistan and Pakistan to India—remains uncompleted after years of construction. Similarly, the Central Asia–China Gas Pipeline D line remains unbuilt due to pricing disagreements.

Since the onset of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, Western sanctions on Russian crude exports have adversely affected Kazakhstan, compelling the country to sell its oil transported via Russian pipelines at discounted rates. Consequently, Kazakhstan's long-pursued plan for a trans-Caspian crude pipeline connecting westward to an existing pipeline has resurfaced. Separately, Turkmenistan has persistently pursued the construction of a trans-Caspian gas pipeline to export natural gas westward via Baku and the Southern Gas Corridor to Europe. With the instigation of Western powers, both these pipeline projects may ultimately be realised. However, the Caspian Sea states, under Russia's leadership, have previously signed a treaty stipulating that any significant action in the Caspian Sea requires the consent of all member states. This agreement may exert some constraints on pipeline construction. Evidently, all Central Asian nations are striving to open export channels in all four cardinal directions, endeavouring to achieve a four-way balance.

China shares a land border with Russia, and the oil and gas pipelines connecting supply and demand offer mutual benefits without drawbacks for both nations. This arrangement provides both parties with stable and secure transport corridors, enabling the reciprocal provision of reliable energy supplies and markets. Whilst actively responding to and cooperating in the construction of an 'Asian Energy Circle', China will also seek a global energy balance. It will broadly maintain existing diversified oil and gas import channels from the Middle East, Africa, Australia, and South America, while consciously expanding imports of American LNG. Expanding LNG trade with the United States would help counteract American 'decoupling' strategies, prevent a slide into a new cold war between China and the US, and secure affordable energy supplies. American LNG holds a certain price advantage and possesses competitive potential within the Chinese market. Currently, Chinese enterprises have signed only 13 US LNG purchase contracts, involving just seven companies, including CNPC, Sinopec, and CNOOC. Purchase volumes remain modest, with peak annual supply under long-term contracts reaching 26.63 million tonnes (equivalent to 28 billion cubic metres) (45). This represents merely 10.5% of China's projected 2021 LNG imports, with most supplies scheduled to commence several years hence. Evidently, substantial scope exists for expanding bilateral trade volumes. Presently, China's seaborne LNG imports rely heavily on Australia and Qatar, with imports from these two nations

accounting for over half of the total. In 2021, imports from Australia and Qatar amounted to 43.6 billion cubic metres and 12.3 billion cubic metres, respectively, representing 39.8% and 11.2% of China's total LNG imports (109.5 billion cubic metres). Over-reliance on Australian LNG imports complicates China's geopolitical relations with Australia, while Qatar's LNG may increasingly target Europe's struggling market, limiting its capacity to boost supplies to China. Therefore, optimising China's seaborne LNG import structure and increasing imports from the United States is timely and appropriate.

Although India does not share a land border with Russia, the two nations maintain traditionally friendly relations. India requires Russia's affordable energy resources and will inevitably cooperate with Moscow in establishing an 'Asian Energy Circle'. As a major power wielding considerable influence, India will pursue global energy equilibrium from a broader perspective, safeguarding existing oil and gas import channels while also seeking appropriate levels of energy imports from the United States.

The Middle East occupies a pivotal position at the junction of two energy spheres, enabling it to generate substantial profits in Europe's premium energy markets while simultaneously supplying oil and gas to the Asian energy sphere.

In summary, the shale revolution has enabled the United States to achieve complete energy independence, necessitating substantial LNG exports. Compounded by NATO's successive rounds of eastward expansion and the persistent strategic encroachment by the US and Europe upon Russia, this has precipitated the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and intensified the energy standoff between Russia and Europe, thereby destabilising the global energy landscape. The once globally sweeping carbon neutrality objectives have suffered setbacks amidst the Russia-Ukraine conflict and strategic clashes between Russia and both the US and Europe. Energy transition can only advance through twists and turns, reshaping the global energy landscape. Against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, energy has been further weaponised, subjecting the free flow of energy to powerful intervention. Consequently, energy is leading the evolution towards a 'two-hemisphere' model. Therefore, the global energy landscape is evolving into distinct spheres: the 'Atlantic Energy Circle' led by the United States and the 'Asian Energy Circle' spearheaded by Russia. Multiple stakeholders—including Europe, Central Asia, China, India, and the Middle East—are playing distinct roles in the reshaping of these two energy spheres.

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Blood Money

Denis Morokhin

Editorial Note

This text was published on 22 February 2024 in *Novaya Gazeta Europe*.¹ *Novaya Gazeta Europe* is a newspaper run in Latvia by Russian journalists who fled the country after Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, following in the tradition of the Putin-critical *Novaya Gazeta*.

The Russian authorities are fond of saying that foreign firms only pretend to have left Russia, and even if they do, they always come back. Novaya Gazeta Europe's latest data investigation found that the Kremlin, for once, had a point.

Of 110 major foreign companies still working in Russia, 51 never even planned to leave, while another 40 have changed their minds or been unable to sell their assets at an acceptable price. We discuss the five main strategies allowing them to remain in the country in wartime.

Shortly after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the four international tobacco giants on the Russian market—Japan Tobacco, Philip Morris, British American Tobacco, and Imperial Brands—made statements in which they committed to leaving the country and selling their business interests there. Even in 2022, analysts were extremely sceptical of these plans, and two years on, with only British American Tobacco and Imperial Brands having left, and many other major companies continuing to operate in Russia despite being labelled 'international sponsors of war' by Ukraine, it appears that scepticism was well founded.

Of 3,708 foreign companies working in Russia before the war, only 854 have left the market or ceased work.

The Five Strategies Used by Firms That Stayed

Novaya Gazeta Europe studied 110 foreign companies which either worked in Russia in 2023, or had left by the second half of the year. We took the 50

1 Denis Morokhin, 'Blood Money', *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, 22 February 2024, <https://novaya-gazeta.eu/articles/2024/02/22/blood-money-en>.

largest foreign companies on the *Forbes* list for 2023 and added companies from a list compiled last year by *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, ranking the top 100 most profitable foreign companies in Russia in 2022 (excluding those who had left the country by July 2023).

We found that all of these companies could be divided into five categories depending on their work strategy in Russia.

The largest group of 51 companies has opted to 'wait silently'. The most that these companies did upon the outbreak of war was express concern, though most said nothing at all. Some even pledged publicly that they would continue working in Russia. Companies using this strategy include Auchan, Metro, Calzedonia, Ecco, Benetton, Ehrmann, TotalEnergies, Rockwool, Mitsui, and several leading pharmaceutical companies.

While financial reports for 2023 have not yet been published, these companies netted a profit of 448 billion rubles (€6.04 billion at the time) in 2022 according to *Novaya [Gazeta] Europe's* calculations.

The second largest group, which numbered 40 companies, opted for the 'promising to leave but not leaving' option: they all pledged to sell their Russian businesses, to withdraw from the Russian market, and to ditch their development plans, but they maintained various assets in the country: such as factories, retail chains, brands, services, or deliveries.

Companies in this group include BP, JTI, PMI, PepsiCo, Mars, Nestlé, Raiffeisen, UniCredit, Intesa, ABB, Bacardi, and Campari. This group is smaller in number, but larger in terms of total profit—669.6 billion rubles (€9.03 billion). We put three companies (Leroy Merlin, Decathlon, Adidas) in a separate group, which maintained their brands in Russia in various ways—essentially, they 'left without leaving'. None revealed its profits for 2022.

Two small groups in which we included eight companies each followed the strategies 'sitting it out to the end' and 'losing everything'. The first group (total profit of 43 billion rubles [€580 million]) promised to leave the market, but did not sell their business until the second half of 2023, usually at a discount and a loss. They are Hyundai, Kia, Volvo, Ingka Group (its segment of Mega shopping centres), AB InBev, Veon.

The same number of companies waited for confiscation measures or external intervention, as they had either fallen out with the Russian authorities, or were now, as the Kremlin admits, a 'compensation fund', designed to deter the West from recovering Russian assets (Danone, Carlsberg, Fortum, and others with a total net profit of 48.8 billion rubles (€658.4 million).

Twenty US companies in total favour the first two strategies for maintaining business in Russia—the largest number from a single country.

Fourteen German companies (12 of which are ‘waiting silently’), and 11 Italian companies have also opted for this approach.

Of the 110 largest (based on the *Forbes* 2023 list and [the] *Novaya Gazeta Europe* list of the top 100 most profitable foreign companies in 2022) foreign companies working in Russia in 2023, 51 have not announced their departure. Among those following the ‘waiting silently’ strategy or ‘promising to leave but not leaving’, companies from the USA, Germany and Italy predominate.

Hostages and ‘Tricksters’

Many companies that promised to leave Russia but didn’t, as well as those who kept silent for two years, have found themselves essentially held hostage by the Kremlin, according to sources we spoke to for this article. Russia’s Central Bank is building a mechanism for exchanging blocked assets, so if there are sufficient foreign companies who want to leave but can’t, the Central Bank can propose swapping its own blocked assets abroad in exchange for business assets in Russia, one expert from a major analytics company says.

Foreign companies have also been made ‘hostages’ by the huge number of restrictions placed on them in Russia, meaning that withdrawal from the country cannot be carried out without serious losses, the source said. Most notably, declaring bankruptcy has been prohibited, and if there are signs of deliberate bankruptcy, managers face criminal charges.

Global corporations including Mitsubishi Motors, ABB, and General Electric attempted to sell their factories in Russia, but were unable to do so profitably, and were unprepared to lose everything. They have all stopped production in Russia.

But there is also a group of companies which has done the exact opposite—the ‘tricksters’—which understand all too well that they are protected by their market position in Russia, as a Kremlin expropriation of their assets would have negative consequences for the Russian economy.

Tobacco companies are a good example of this phenomenon, according to industry sources. Just two of the ‘Big Four’ cigarette makers working in Russia before the war, British American Tobacco and Imperial Brands, have sold their Russian assets, while Japan Tobacco and Philip Morris are in no hurry to leave.

If Russia were to nationalise the Russian factories of tobacco corporations, those same factories could face serious problems with deliveries of raw materials, experts note. ‘Tobacco plantations, of course, are not owned by

cigarette manufacturers. But global corporations still know how to work with plantation owners, who may make concessions to world giants and cause problems with tobacco deliveries to Russia', a tobacco industry expert told *Novaya Gazeta Europe*.

For global tobacco companies, the Russian market is at least the second largest in the world, and they cannot afford to lose it, another source in the industry said, adding that they want 'to sit it out here to the end and collect the profits'. For example, the Russian market accounted for €594 million, or over one fifth, of the €2.85 billion net profit made by Japan Tobacco globally in 2022.

Promising to Leave Doesn't Mean Leaving

Companies that announced plans to leave Russia but stayed, only partially reducing their presence, include several global food and drink manufacturers. Among them are four of the world's largest drink suppliers.

All of these companies, as well as giants such as Mars, Nestlé, and Procter & Gamble, behaved in roughly the same way. While in the first days of the war they released statements announcing the partial suspension of their Russian operations, as the war entered its third year, their businesses in Russia remained operational.

Both Coca-Cola and PepsiCo retained their factories in Russia and simply went on to produce local brands, having removed global brands from the market.

The most interesting case is Bacardi: immediately after the outbreak of the war, the largest family-owned alcohol company in the world announced that deliveries to Russia had been suspended and investments had been frozen. But in August 2023, *The Wall Street Journal* drew attention to the fact that these promises had vanished from the company website. Bacardi not only maintained deliveries, but continued to sell William Lawson's whisky in Russia.

'They are not a public company, and can get away with saying that if there is no direct ban, then it doesn't concern them. They are helped by the fact that the Bacardi headquarters is located in Bermuda, and they can always say: "We're not an American company, and we decide who to work with ourselves." Although in other situations they may associate themselves with the US, where they have a major division,' said a source in the alcohol industry. None of these four drinks giants—Bacardi, Campari, Coca-Cola, and PepsiCo—responded to our questions for this article.

Austria's Raiffeisen Bank used the same strategy. Like dozens of other companies, at the beginning of the war it published a cautiously worded statement—since deleted—announcing that it would be leaving Russia 'under strict supervision'. The bank subsequently informed the public of the various withdrawal methods it was considering, including potentially splitting up or selling the business, while constantly postponing the date it would happen.

However, as Reuters reported in late 2023, Austria doesn't want to break off ties with Moscow completely, which it doesn't consider to be in its best interests. Moreover, Vienna hopes to remain a destination for the money flowing out of Russia into Europe, Reuters said.

Keep Calm and Carry On

'There's a cynical opinion in this industry that money is everything. The Russian market may only account for a small percentage of their income, but in absolute terms it's still a lot of money', said the manager of one major production company in Russia, explaining the strategy of the 'silent' companies. 'And if you just work away quietly, you'll be left in peace', he says.

Among companies that chose the 'working and keeping quiet' strategy, the most noticeable are major retail chains such as Germany's Metro and France's Auchan and Leroy Merlin.

Auchan, Leroy Merlin, and several other European companies are in no hurry to leave, as leaving the Russian market would be far more painful for them than a possible boycott or negative public opinion in the West, says a source in the industry.

In December 2023, data from the Unified State Register of Legal Entities showed that Leroy Merlin had changed ownership: it was now owned by Scenari Holding LP from the United Arab Emirates. But the market was sceptical. One industry source who asked to remain anonymous believes that the French owners have maintained de facto control over the chain. He says that Leroy Merlin, which has 112 hypermarkets in Russia, and is at the top of the Russian *Forbes* list for foreign companies in terms of turnover, is too large an asset to be sold to a completely unknown company.

Some companies, including Decathlon and Adidas, have opted for the 'changing the banner' method. Decathlon sold its Russian business to local company APM (which previously specialised in the restaurant business), which opened stores under the name Desport. They sell the same brands as the old Decathlon did, as the Desport online catalogue can confirm.

Adidas went about its departure in a very cunning way: it subleased some of its stores to Lamoda, remaining a legal entity in Russia, and now sells its goods through an official Russian distributor.

The Energy Departure

The Kremlin made it clear to foreign companies that those that made a fuss over the war in Ukraine would lose everything. This is what happened to oil company Shell and the Carlsberg brewery. Only companies that could reach an agreement with the government could keep their assets, or leave Russia and take their money with them.

For 15 years, Shell produced and liquified gas on Sakhalin, an island in Russia's Far East, and sold liquified [natural gas (LNG)] on Asian markets, primarily to neighbouring Japan. When the war broke out, Shell, which had been friendly with the Kremlin for decades, was one of the first to announce that it was withdrawing from Russia. It did so without equivocation, releasing a rather drastic statement four days into the war on 28 February 2022.

This is perhaps why Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a decree on 30 June 2022, effectively seizing 27.5% of the LNG plant on Sakhalin from Shell. Technically, the Kremlin decree took the plant away from all its shareholders, including Gazprom (50%) and the Japanese companies Mitsui (12.5%) and Mitsubishi (10%) (exemplary exponents of the 'sit it out' strategy), and transferred ownership to the specially created Russian company Sakhalin Energy. But the Japanese companies and Gazprom, naturally, agreed to become its shareholders. Shell, however, refused the honour.

In the spring of 2023, the Russian government permitted Novatek to buy this block of shares. Novatek is the second-largest gas producer in Russia, and the Kremlin has great hopes that it will conquer the world LNG market. Its export is critically important for the state coffers as the country has come under an oil embargo since the war began.

In spring 2023, *Kommersant* reported that Novatek co-owner Leonid Mikhelson had asked Putin to permit Shell to take \$1.16 billion (€1.07 billion) out of Russia for the sale of a block of shares in the Sakhalin plant and that Putin gave his permission. The deal is still in limbo and has probably not yet been finalised, two oil and gas market sources informed *Novaya Gazeta Europe*.

When contacted for this article, Shell said that it had nothing to add to what was already written in the FAQ section of the company's website,

which says: 'We retain all our lawful rights to our share of 27.5% (minus one share) in Sakhalin Energy Investment Company.' In other words, the company which had its plant seized by Putin.

One of our oil and gas market sources believes this statement could mean that Shell considers the nationalisation unlawful and may sue the Kremlin to protect its rights to the asset.

Unlike Shell, its competitors BP and TotalEnergies did not make strong statements and did not promise to protect their shareholders' rights, and managed to preserve their Russian assets as a result. TotalEnergies [pursued a] strategy of continuing to profit from the production of LNG together with Novatek, in which it owns a 19.4% stake. Additionally, the French concern owns packages in joint Arctic gas projects with Novatek.

Next in Line to Leave

Legal experts *Novaya Gazeta Europe* spoke to disagreed on what's likely to come next, with some believing that due to public pressure, companies will continue to exit the Russian market whenever possible. Others believe that those wishing to have already left, with those remaining expected to adapt to new business conditions in Russia and will soon learn how to make a profit.

'They will try to get rid of their assets, as pressure on them is strong', says one legal expert working in Russia who wished to remain anonymous. They won't do so for financial reasons, because 'there is little economic point in selling assets, they can't take the money out of Russia anyway', but 'this is rather about social responsibility, reputation, and so on'. There are also, he believes, 'companies that hope to return, as the market is large and attractive. Bridges still exist, but they are not the old bridges, of course. Things won't go back to the way they used to be.'

But not all companies will be able to return.

'Some have already caused so much trouble that they won't return', said the legal expert, citing the example of Siemens, which in 2022 completely withdrew from its energy, machine-building, and financial business in Russia, selling its assets and stopping deliveries and services.

Yegor Noskov, managing partner at the law firm Duvernoix Legal, believes otherwise. He says that the companies that left in the spring of 2022 decided that the damage to their image from continuing to work in Russia exceeded potential profits.

'Other companies calculated that the profit from the Russian market was too important for their business and outweighed the damage to their

image, and so they remain on the market, making record profits', says Noskov, giving Raiffeisen as an example.

It is unlikely that the overall situation with foreign companies in Russia will change, Noskov believes. 'I think that the ones that have left will not return until the end of the special military operation, and perhaps not until sometime afterwards.' The ones that have remained will not sell their business, but will adapt to the situation, either using other brands or various schemes that enable them to maintain their presence in the market while avoiding the direct association of Russian assets with their parent companies abroad, says Noskov.

About the Author

Since the attack on Ukraine, **Denis Morokhin** has regularly reported in *Novaya Gazeta Europe* on Russia's economic development.

Global Transformation, the Russia–Ukraine Crisis, and Sino–Russian Relations

Quanqiu zhuanxing, E-Wu weiji yu Zhong-E guanxi 全球转型、俄乌危机与中俄关系

Feng Shaolei 冯绍雷

Editorial Note

This article was published in *Eluosi yanjiu* 俄罗斯研究 (Russian studies), a journal of East China Normal University that focuses on academic articles about Russian history, economics, and domestic and foreign policy, in February 2024. The English translation, adopted here, was provided by Interpret: China,¹ whose mission is to promote understanding of China by translating and analysing primary source material. This project has been running since 2022 and is supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Looking at the current progression of world politics from a long historical perspective often gives us a deeper understanding of the significance of current events. We are experiencing a process of global transformation (全球转型) at the turn of the twenty-first century. This is a critical turning point in a grand historical process that has lasted for at least two centuries and perhaps as long as five hundred years. The current Russia–Ukraine crisis, which has arisen from a complex environment over many years, and the related contemporary relations between major powers including China and Russia, are all set against the backdrop of this global transformation.

The Russia–Ukraine crisis, as the largest regional conflict since the end of the Cold War and which has already lasted for two years, is like a ‘catalyst’, ‘oscillator’, and ‘mirror’, reacting to the global transformation in an in-depth manner and shaping the future format of foreign strategy and major power relations including those of China and Russia in a comprehensive, systematic,

¹ <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/global-transformation-the-russia-ukraine-crisis-and-sino-russian-relations/>.

and endogenous way. In this process, the complex interactions among major powers such as China, Russia, the United States, and Europe will not only directly affect the prospects of the Russia–Ukraine crisis, but will also inevitably have a profound impact on the significance and direction of the global transformation.

This shows us that we are facing a moment of unprecedented challenges and constructs which intertwine the past and present, and domestic and external concerns. This is a topic that needs to be explored and explained through profound theoretical research and creative thinking.

This article attempts to explore the relationship between the following three ongoing international phenomena: first, the global transformation as a long historical process and its contemporary implications; second, the interaction between the global transformation and the Russia–Ukraine crisis starting from the turn of the century; and third, Sino–Russian cooperation in the context of transformation and crisis. It is hoped that this article's preliminary exploration can provide new ideas for understanding the global transformation.

I. The Debate on the Issue of the 'Cyclical Evolution of the International Order' and Its Implications

In all studies on global transformations, researchers focus on the future direction of the international order. The past half-century has seen systematic and pioneering research in the fields of international political economy, sociology, and history, which have also set off thought-provoking controversies. It is necessary to briefly review the relevant directions such research has taken over the years.

Generally speaking, there are at least three areas of international research that focus on the historical changes in the international order.

The first type of research is represented by the works of Dr Henry Kissinger, a world historian and international strategist who also has unparalleled experience in practical diplomacy. In his view, after the Thirty Years' War in Europe, the Westphalian system² that emerged in 1648 changed the traditional view of the order of human society from an order based solely on 'imperial unity' or 'religious unity'. 'The Westphalian concept took

2 In political science, the term 'Westphalian system' refers to a system of nationally sovereign states with internal and external sovereignty. Historically, this is simplified and attributed to the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648.

multiplicity as its starting point and drew a variety of multiple societies, each accepted as a reality, into a common search for order. By the mid-twentieth century, this international system was in place on every continent; it remains the scaffolding of international order such as it now exists' (1). Kissinger explains how Europe made 'pluralism [take] on the characteristics of a model of world order', saying: 'It is not that European monarchs were more immune to the glories of conquest than their counterparts in other civilizations or more committed to an ideal of diversity in the abstract. Rather, they lacked the strength to impose their will on each other decisively. In time, pluralism took on the characteristics of a model of world order' (2).

In the system described by Kissinger, although the subsequent evolution of the international order has not consciously achieved the 'restraint' against a backdrop of 'pluralism' of the Westphalian system, the practice of constructing the international order, such as the Vienna Treaty in 1814, the Yalta Agreement in 1945, and at the end of the Cold War, has shown that the pluralistic and multipolar structure has indeed repeatedly avoided total war by maintaining balance. For example, although the Vienna System was not so 'democratic' and was a result of 'great power coordination' among the monarchical or semi-monarchical Eurasian powers, it avoided the outbreak of a pan-European war and generally maintained what Friedrich Engels called the 'Hundred Years of Peace'. Although the Yalta system ushered in half a century of the terrible Cold War, it still maintained a demarcated and confrontational coexistence between the major powers with different social systems, such as the United States and the Soviet Union. Even after the end of the Cold War, although the United States was, for a time, the only dominant power, the trend toward multipolarity and diversity emerged at the turn of the century, and people from all over the world still maintained their expectations for peaceful development on this basis.

In short, Kissinger starts from the recognition and respect for the actual state of international 'multipolarity' and 'pluralism', and through the application of the carefully crafted 'balance of power' strategy and based on the foundational concept of 'the unity of legitimacy and power', advocates the pursuit of peaceful coexistence among various aspirations for 'different types of world order' in an international environment where 'there has never been a truly global "world order"'. It is in this sense that Niall Ferguson argues that Kissinger is not only a realist, but also an idealist. Although this statement is inconsistent with the definitions used in traditional international political theory, it makes sense (3).

The second type of research is from a group of researchers who are regarded by the international academic community as engaged in the study of

the 'modern world system' or the 'evolutionary cycle of world order'. These researchers include Fernand Braudel,³ a representative figure of the French *Annales* school, and Giovanni Arrighi,⁴ a representative scholar of Italian 'world-systems theory'. Although there are debates within this group, the author believes that this group should also include Immanuel Wallerstein,⁵ an American left-wing historical sociologist and author of the four-volume *The Modern World-System*.

The core idea of this group is that in the many changes the international order has undergone since modern times, the key moment was the rise of a capitalist system with Western hegemonic powers at its core. The result of the 'Thirty Years' War' in Europe in the seventeenth century was not only what Kissinger called 'multiplicity within Europe', but also the rise of the Dutch Republic. The result of the Napoleonic Wars after the French Revolution was not only the coexistence of the great powers of the Vienna system, but also the rise of the British Empire. The Second World War led to the creation of the UN Security Council with a coexistence of five major powers, but the United States not only achieved a more dominant world hegemony than the Soviet Union at the time, but even after the end of the Cold War and a global shift towards multipolarity and diversity, the United States remains the most powerful hegemonic country today (4). In other words, the normal state in the context of a changing world order is the coexistence of multipolarity and international centers of power.

In the preface to the first volume of the 2011 English edition of *The Modern World-System*, Wallerstein made a confession: 'I was following a bad idea—that I might better understand the trajectories of the "new nations" of the twentieth century by studying how the nations that had been "new" in the sixteenth century had come to "develop". This was a bad idea because it presumed that all states followed parallel independent paths to something called "development"' (5). Although Wallerstein later revised his original ideas, he insisted on observing this issue from the perspective of the 'world-system' rather than from the perspective of a single country. Wallerstein criticized Max Weber's sociological theory, especially the view

3 Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) was a French historian. As an influential member of the *Annales* school, he viewed history as a social science that should integrate sociological and economic perspectives, focusing on long-term historical processes.

4 Giovanni Arrighi (1937–2009) was an Italian sociologist specialising in political economy. He was a key proponent of the world-systems theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein.

5 Immanuel Wallerstein (1930–2019) was an American sociologist and social historian. His world-systems theory, developed since the 1970s, aims to explain the emergence of a capitalist world economy since the fifteenth century.

that the Protestant ethic gave rise to capitalism, saying: 'The values in question followed rather than preceded the economic transformations that were occurring. I suggested that it was only by placing the various states in their relation to each other that we could understand why it was that some became the leaders in productive efficiency and the accumulation of wealth' (6). At the same time, Wallerstein recognizes [sociologist] Stephen Mennell's assessment of 'world-system' research. Mennell points out that Wallerstein's work 'is in effect a massive attempt at an historical disproof of David Ricardo's apparently timeless "law of comparative advantage", showing how initially small inequalities in ties of interdependence between societies and economies have been magnified over time to produce massive differences today between what are euphemistically called the "North" and the "South"'. Furthermore, despite their differences, Wallerstein and Braudel both agree that there is 'no evidence of an autonomous economic development of capitalism, wholly detached from the state and politics. They show rather that the affairs of the state and of capitalism are inextricably interrelated, that they are only two sides, or aspects, of one and the same historical development' (7). It can be seen that the reason why the views of Wallerstein and the French *Annales* school have caused controversy is that they are no longer limited to the issue of the evolution and supersession of the world system. They have systematically and intrinsically questioned and challenged the most basic parts of Western political economy theory.

It is worth noting that Giovanni Arrighi inherited Braudel's views and more systematically emphasized that every transfer of hegemony is also accompanied by the following phenomena:

First, total war—such as the Thirty Years' War that accompanied the Westphalian system, the Napoleonic Wars that led to the Vienna system, and the Second World War that gave rise to the Yalta system.

Second, transition from financial expansion to decline—this is meant to contradict the traditional view that the entire capitalist system has developed over hundreds of years from industrial capitalism, through commercial capitalism, and then to financial capitalism. In fact, every hegemonic cycle from the Dutch Republic to the British Empire to US hegemony has experienced the cyclical ups and downs of the transition from industrial capitalism to commercial capitalism to financial capitalism to varying degrees.

Third, a strong territorially based state—"The traditional view is that capitalism and the market economy are more or less the same thing; state power is the antithesis of both. Braudel (author's note: should also include Wallerstein) holds that capitalism, from its emergence to its expansion, is

completely dependent on state power and constitutes the reverse side of the market economy' (8). In fact, the idea of the *Annales* school that the 'market economy does not equal capitalism' has profoundly influenced China's reform and opening up process. Giovanni Arrighi concluded that every change in the international order is the product of the 'trinity' of the three phenomena above: total war, transition of financial expansion to decline, and a strong territorially based state. There is no doubt that Arrighi's historical summary of the changes in the world order is of direct relevance to the current global transformation.

It is particularly noteworthy that in 2009, Arrighi pointed out in the [new] afterword to his 1999 book *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* that 'while the possibility of a Western-led global empire remains, today, compared with 15 years ago, a world market society centered on East Asia seems more likely to be the result of the current global economic and political transformation.... China has begun to replace the United States as the main driver of commercial and economic expansion in East Asia and beyond' (9).

The third view is represented by the German historian Jürgen Osterhammel, an authoritative historian who challenges the above-mentioned 'world system' and 'world order cycle' theories. In the preface to the Chinese edition of his three-volume masterpiece *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, published in 2010, he wrote: 'I decided to write a history composed of countless small connections because this type of historical writing is relatively rare compared to works that expound grand theories' (10). The first type of 'grand theory' historical works that Osterhammel is reluctant to associate with includes the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. In his later collection of essays, *Lectures on Global History*, he said: 'The last confrontation between world history and a sociology open to history took place in the 1970s and 1980s under the banner of "world-systems theory". The founder of the world-systems theory was Immanuel Wallerstein, an Africa expert and development theorist from the US. Wallerstein was one of the top social science scholars in the world at that time. He also gained a high reputation in the field of history through his dialogue with the great French historian Braudel. Because Wallerstein's theory is rather mechanical and tied to a specific terminology, only a few historians accept the orthodoxy defended by Wallerstein and his followers' (11). Osterhammel's attitude towards Braudel is more reserved. He once wrote that Braudel, 'in his history of capitalism and material life from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, literally brought the whole world into view, as if it was nothing but a matter of course. Braudel was careful not to get drawn into debates about

world history. His topic of interest was not the major shifts in science and technology, trade structures, or world views during this time frame, but the way societies and the networks within them functioned. It is surprising that Braudel's panoramic vision has not been imitated by many others' (12).

Although Osterhammel's language is euphemistic, his position is clear. First, he explicitly states that his important work 'abandoned regional divisions based on national, civilizational, or land space criteria'. Obviously, this is different from the view of Braudel and Wallerstein that the state, civilization, and territorial spaces must be observed and analyzed along with capitalist development in a holistic perspective. Second, Osterhammel admits that he 'stresses the importance of colonialism and imperialism' (13). Obviously, this is significantly different from the *Annales* school and Wallerstein's critical standpoint as regards colonialism. Third, from a methodological point of view, Osterhammel does not advocate over-emphasizing the predictive function of historical science. For example, Arrighi held that, after the turn of the twentieth to twenty-first century, East Asia might become the world's dominant force replacing Europe and the United States, while Osterhammel wrote more obscurely in his new book, *Lectures on Global History*, that 'There is nothing to predict: Asia's future is its past' (14). In his view, Asia's past history of 'stagnation' is bound to foreshadow the difficulty it will face in progressing in the future. In addition, although Osterhammel did not completely deny the existence of temporal and spatial unities in the development of modern world history, and even made systematic arguments for what were in his view some important and common nodes in world history, the difference between him and the *Annales* school and Wallerstein was that he did not advocate viewing the world historical process as an interconnected and globally unified process. He also did not quite believe that such a grand, complex, diverse, and even repetitive world historical process would be dominated by some kind of innate destiny of 'law' (something to which Braudel gives a heavy emphasis). On the contrary, he is more concerned with details, localities, diversity, contingency, asynchronicity, and multiple paths, rather than with macro-wholeness, uniformity of process, or the development of world history along a single line.

If we simply summarize the various different views on the 'cyclical evolution of the international order' mentioned above, and focus on their mutual complementarities and mutual corrections, then we will propose the following preliminary judgment:

First, the process of world history is not one of evolution along a single line. Instead, it is full of contingency, diversity, and twists and turns. However, in different eras, different fields, and different levels, there are indeed

historical trends and characteristics of the times that are connected in a whole, dialectically unified, and evolve in a spiral manner. The cyclical evolution of the international order is not a fabrication. It is a complex process that is not external to human initiative, a combination of subjective and objective factors, and constantly inspired by history.

Second, since modern times, the evolution of the international order has presented two basic characteristics: On the one hand, each change of the international order has moved towards multipolarity and diversity, but there remain centers of power in a global sense. This coexistence of 'multipolarity' and 'centers of power' is the key to understanding the evolution of the international order. On the other hand, almost every change in the international order is the product of the 'trinity' of 'total war', 'transition of financial expansion to decline', and 'the emergence of a dominant power'. This provides a very important reference for observing the current evolution of the international order.

Third, the evolution and supersession of the international order at the turn of the twenty-first century may herald a 'change of track'. In other words, it is not as it was in the past that only Western civilized countries can dominate the world. Rather, in an unprecedented change, power centers outside the Western civilization may become candidates to replace current power centers under certain conditions.

Fourth, we cannot ignore the need to think systematically and thoughtfully about future changes from a broader, more diverse, and multi-dimensional perspective that takes in more lines of advance and allows for recurrence, while encompassing more fields, more cases, and knowledge from more disciplines, rather than indulging in so-called 'predictions' that lack any basis and are subjective and arbitrary. When thinking about the complex issues related to the change of the international order, we should avoid 'premature advancement' when conditions are not yet mature or the cost is too high, and be highly vigilant about the 'absence' of influence of the dominant countries in key areas in the context of international chaos. The highly uncertain nature of global transformation processes necessitates this attitude.

II. The Interaction Between the Contemporary Global Transformation and the Russia–Ukraine Conflict

The Russia–Ukraine conflict is a 'mirror' that reflects the global transformation since the turn of the century. This crisis highlights the issues confronting

the global transformation at this critical moment. It is necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of the crisis, comprehensively and objectively assess the role and impact of this conflict on the current global transformation, objectively separate the true from the false in the psychological perspectives and narrative systems arising from the interaction between transformation and crisis, deeply explore the profound structural changes brought about by the global transformation process at this stage, and comprehensively collate the key phenomena in this crisis and transformation—the actual trends of the process of globalization. Only in this way can we respond to the challenges of the transformation and truly find a way out of large-scale conflicts such as the Russia–Ukraine crisis. The author believes that the Russia–Ukraine conflict has a profound impact on contemporary global transformation in at least the following four aspects.

(i) The Conflict Accelerates the Pace of Global Transformation, but also Breeds a 'Decisive Battle Mentality'

The outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine conflict has greatly accelerated the pace of the global transformation. It has not only ruthlessly revealed various contradictions, but also catalyzed a surge in 'decisive battle mentality' among countries.

Adopting a vertical linear perspective, Professor Barry Buzan of the London School of Economics and Political Science proposed that the events from Western colonialism in the nineteenth century, the United States' dominance in world affairs after World War II, and the United States' global hegemony after the Cold War, to the emergence of a 'decentralized' historical trend at the turn of the twenty-first century have marked the gradual formation of a long-term process of global transformation (15).

From a horizontal system structure perspective, in the words of Andrei Tsygankov, a Russian scholar living in the United States, global transformation refers to a systematic complex of three structural processes: changes in the international order; evolution of domestic institutions; and the foreign strategy and international relations that connect the two (16).

Judging from the motivations of the opposing parties, it goes without saying that the Russia–Ukraine conflict affects the 'global transformation' from both 'vertical' and 'horizontal' perspectives.

In terms of domestic transformation, Russia and Ukraine represent two different social transformations. The former focuses on its own territory, while the latter focuses on Europe and the United States; the former adheres to local autonomy, while the latter rushes towards the 'democratic camp'. People with different ideals cannot work for the same end. The

Russia–Ukraine conflict originated from differences in internal institutional choices, and will inevitably further strengthen the view of internal institution building as the basis for resolving external conflicts.

From a regional perspective, in 2014, I wrote an article in the *Chinese Journal of European Studies* proposing that although the integration promoted by the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union are both in line with market principles and pay attention to internal equality to varying degrees, their competition for Ukraine reflects the defects of exclusive regional construction, which not only already caused the Crimean crisis, but would also inevitably affect the formation of the future geo-economic, political, and security structure of Europe (17).

From a global perspective, Russia wants to put an end to the unipolar world, but the United States and Europe are trying hard to maintain Western dominance. As President Putin said at the Valdai Discussion Club meeting on October 5, 2023, ‘Special military operations have nothing to do with territorial occupation, or even geopolitics (Author’s note: As I understand it, ‘geopolitics’ here should refer to NATO’s eastward expansion), but rather with the reconstruction of the international order’ (18). However, for the Western world, the issue of a change in the international order is not only about interests, but also about honor. At the West Point graduation ceremony in May 2014, President Obama stated: ‘Our military has no peer,... our economy remains the most dynamic on Earth,... [and] we are the hub of alliances unrivaled in the history of nations.... So the United States is and remains the one indispensable nation. That has been true for the century passed and it will be true for the century to come’ (19). From this standpoint, it is inevitable that the United States and Europe returned to their alliance and took a strong stand against Russia. Given their opposing views, which concern the overall international order, the two sides eventually found themselves in military conflict in the area with the most fragile security of the international structure—the relationship between Russia and NATO with Ukraine as the focal point. Judging from the consequences, this conflict has revealed the structural flaws in the existing international system—the existing functions of various global and regional organizations are still unable to prevent large-scale crises like the Russia–Ukraine conflict. Therefore, it is imperative to reform, improve, and strengthen the relevant fields. Otherwise, the world will not be at peace.

At the same time, this conflict has prompted people to more comprehensively consider how to reconcile the relationship between local changes and development and the wider environment of the external world. For example, a country has the right to independently handle its internal affairs and

external development issues, but how should it coordinate with the external international environment? For example, a country has the right to choose its own external alliances. However, can the principles of independence and autonomy in a country's handling of its own affairs coexist with the objective need of maintaining an appropriate spatial isolation and buffer zone between major powers as emphasized by geopolitics? For example, how can we reconcile the two basic principles of international law: the internationally recognized principle of a country's territorial sovereignty and the respect for the right of the people within a country to self-determination? How did people mediate when conflicts and disputes arose between these principles in the Kosovo crisis and the Russia–Ukraine conflict? In short, how should the universal principles of reform, development, and independence emphasized in the early stages of the global transformation be applied in different situations after certain changes have occurred in the international environment, so as to reduce external resistance and avoid international conflicts? Obviously, the Russia–Ukraine conflict has sharply exposed the fact that these problems have long existed in the global transformation, but are still far from a resolution.

Objectively speaking, whether from the perspective of vertical linearity or horizontal system structure, whether from the perspective of grand objectives or from the perspective of the material basis and ideological and psychological conditions that are actually required to promote the global transformation, the contemporary global transformation is likely to be a protracted and relatively long historical process. However, the Russia–Ukraine conflict, a regional conflict that had been brewing for years, escalated into a large-scale military conflict in 2022, rapidly accelerating the pace of global transformation, which was originally seen as a 'long and gradual process'. During the conflict, all kinds of hidden contradictions have been ruthlessly exposed, especially the life-and-death game on the battlefield, which coupled with the already widespread radical emotions, catalyzed a more general 'decisive battle mentality'.

The motivations for this 'decisive battle mentality' come from various places: driven by patriotic enthusiasm, driven by ideology, instigated by modern media, inspired by strategic policies, and fostered by party interests. In terms of the parties to the Russia–Ukraine conflict, even after Ukraine's failed 'Spring counteroffensive' in 2023 and its shift to the 'strategic defense', there are still a considerable number of people who, regardless of the huge cost and national sacrifice, call for a complete victory over Russia on the battlefield. As for Russia, under the tremendous pressure of collective suppression from the West, senior elites have repeatedly stated that they will

not rule out the use of tactical nuclear weapons to resolve the crisis. This was the case until Putin made it clear that the current situation was not a matter of life and death that required the use of nuclear weapons. Then, this stance gradually faded away. Even so, Russia's original intention to decisively counter NATO's eastward expansion has not changed. Even if they cannot accomplish that goal in one fell swoop, they hope to greatly accelerate the process and bring an early end to US hegemony. The behavior of the Western countries is especially noteworthy. After the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine crisis, European and US decision-making elites were not completely unrestrained. However, at least due to the absence of accurate predictions and careful planning, the crisis was allowed to escalate step by step, despite the threat of huge, unexpected risks. This point has long been criticized by European and American public opinion. Of the contributing factors, first, domestic electoral political considerations have greatly overwhelmed the objective and calm assessment of the risks of war. In this respect, Europe is particularly of note. When partisan disputes in the United States forced the suspension of aid to Ukraine in early 2024, the European Union stepped forward and, at a stroke, passed a 54 billion euro aid package to Ukraine. The EU's move was not only an attempt at strategic autonomy, but, to a considerable extent, it also uses the so-called 'changing times' as an excuse to use support for Ukraine to signal its political ambition to take on regional and even global leadership, something it has long been prepared to do but had yet to take the decisive step. To this end, the EU completely ignored its deteriorating economy and public protests and took risks contrary to the calm rationality of the European decision-making elites. A 2023 opinion piece in *The Economist* had already anticipated this trend, pointing out that 'Europe, not America, is now Ukraine's largest backer' (20). Such a rare occurrence shows that the Russia–Ukraine conflict is the 'fuel' for this 'decisive battle mentality'.

(ii) The Conflict Promotes 'Re-transformation', While Ideological Narratives Distort This Process

The second important impact of the Russia–Ukraine conflict is that its emergence has profoundly affected the 're-transformation' (再转型) process of the contemporary global transformation, but exclusive ideological narratives have become widespread, causing negative interference to global public opinion, and the positive connotation of 're-transformation' has been seriously distorted.

The global transformation since the end of the Cold War has undergone a profound 're-transformation' at the turn of the century.

In the experience of my generation, 'transformation' means reform. After the end of the Cold War, the main goal of almost all planned economies was to shift from a highly centralized political and economic system in the direction of institutional reform centered on the market, democracy, and the rule of law, and learning from the West was the main method. At the same time, we also studied how the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries reflected on their traditional systems and promoted reforms. This was one of the major causes for the formation of the academic field of Russian and Eurasian studies in China more than 40 years ago.

By the turn of the century, that is, in the second half of the 1990s and the first few years of the twenty-first century, reforms were still moving forward, but the environment was changing. At that time, Russia was faced with the eastward expansion of NATO, while China confronted the Taiwan Strait crisis; the East Asian financial crisis in 1997–1998, which was caused by the simultaneous influence of the International Monetary Fund and hot money from the West, actually occurred simultaneously in Russia; and in 1999, the United States bombed Russia's ally Yugoslavia, and the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was struck by US missiles at the same time. In short, external pressure at the turn of the century pushed China and Russia to move closer to each other without any intentional choice on their part.

In 2001, I was a visiting researcher at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in the United States. David Calleo, then director of the European Department of the school and a US authority on European issues, asked me in a conversation: 'You always talk about "transformation", so does the United States itself need to "transform"?' In fact, at that time, it was not only David Calleo, but also a group of US and European scholars who called for a reform of Western society itself, including through a large number of profound and serious academic criticisms. It suddenly dawned on me that transformation is actually a global process that encompasses the West, including the United States itself.

Since the '9/11' incident, and especially after the Iraq War in 2003, self-criticism in Western society has also deepened. At the same time, however, the neo-conservative political elites in the United States have done the opposite, loudly advocating the promotion of [their] ideology, a return to traditional Western values, and using tough measures to promote democracy around the world in order to safeguard the geopolitical interests of the United States. The expansion of American hegemony under the domination of neo-conservatism is somewhat similar to Leon Trotsky's advocacy of 'permanent revolution'. In fact, although the two are polar opposites, they do have some

connections in the history of thought. Soon after the 9/11 incident, waves of ‘color revolutions’ swept across Eurasia. In 1994, a time of harmonious relations between Russia and the West made the signing of the Budapest Agreement possible, by which Ukraine transferred its strategic nuclear weapons to Moscow. However, after several rounds of ‘color revolutions’ at the beginning of the new century, the original intention of the ‘transitional countries’ to learn about market economics and democracy suffered serious setbacks. Although countries like Russia and Ukraine are both in the process of ‘reform and transformation’, they have already parted ways due to the influence of the complex international environment. There is no doubt that the ‘color revolutions’ were a major background factor for promoting the ‘re-transformation’ of the global transformation.

The author clearly remembers that between 2003 and 2004, Putin pushed for strengthening the power of the central government in the country, taking back the autonomy that had been given to local governments, and arresting Mikhail Khodorkovsky,⁶ the president of Yukos, Russia’s largest private company, which controlled a large amount of national strategic resources. Around the same time, China established the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council in 2003 to plan the development of state-owned enterprises at home and abroad. At the same time, a major economic debate on ‘the advance of the state and retreat of the private sector’ emerged. Obviously, this is a change compared with the general atmosphere of ‘learning from the West’ that prevailed in the 1980s and 1990s. China and Russia have undergone a ‘re-transformation’ that emphasizes the combination of autonomy and openness reforms. Against the backdrop of this trend, Ukraine, located at the westernmost end of the junction of Eurasia and Eastern and Western civilizations, was gradually moving closer to Europe and the United States.

In the 2020s, as the Russia–Ukraine crisis worsened, the Cold War ideology of ‘democracy versus authoritarianism’ resurfaced and became the main tool for rebuilding and expanding the US–European military alliance in the Russia–Ukraine conflict. After 2022, as the Russia–Ukraine conflict escalated into a large-scale military confrontation, public opinion dominated by European and US discourse further spread the narrative of ‘the confrontation between democracy and authoritarianism’, making it an essential narrative for countries involved in the conflict to mobilize

6 Mikhail Borisovich Khodorkovskii (b. 1963) was the head of the Russian oil company Yukos until he was arrested for political reasons in 2003. He was released in 2013, now lives in London, and openly opposes the Putin regime.

domestic forces and confront Russia, and allowing the ideological Cold War-style confrontation to seemingly return to the mainstream.

The facts show us that European countries and the US have accumulated far more experience in democratic practice over several centuries than non-Western countries, and non-Western countries still have a long way to go in learning and improving their democratic systems. However, the specific democratic practices of European and American countries cannot necessarily be copied to non-Western countries. In the words of Francis Fukuyama, the national institutions of Denmark and the United Kingdom 'are not something that any country can imitate' (21). Although the construction of democracy in non-Western countries does require certain external conditions, this does not mean that democracy can be forcibly introduced from the outside. Whether democratic or authoritarian, when the 'sacred goals' of different internal governance systems are used as geopolitical tools for external expansion, the result is bound to be bloody conflicts and brutal wars. On the one hand, in times of international turmoil and frequent crises, there is a widespread resurgence of nationalism and a re-strengthening of state and government power. Preventing this from triggering and intensifying international disputes not only requires control and regulation at the strategic and policy levels, but also further improvement in the interpretation of theory. On the other hand, the chaos within the contemporary European and US systems has seriously distorted the nature and image of 'democracy' and 'freedom', which are common values and goals of mankind. It is really absurd to continue to forcibly implement the 'export of democracy' under such circumstances.

In principle, I do not agree with the view of John Mearsheimer, an American realist theorist, that a clash of great powers inevitably leads to war. However, in his view, during the period of the United States' unipolar hegemony starting at the end of the Cold War, the internal transformation of countries under the guidance of liberal principles could still be promoted, and the development trend toward multipolarization could also be tolerated. However, once the trend of multipolarization among emerging powers strengthens, the tension between local autonomy and the 'universality' of liberalism will emerge, and the principles of liberalism will inevitably give way to the national interests and geopolitical interests of Europe and the United States themselves. To a certain extent, Mearsheimer's sharp judgment that liberalism would be defeated in an encounter with nationalism and geopolitics reveals the crux of the problem as seen from one side (22).

In short, the trend of 're-transformation' in the process of the global transformation at the turn of the century was completely distorted into a narrative of ideological confrontation in the context of the life-and-death

struggle between Russia and Ukraine. There is no doubt that this topic calls for an objective, rational, and powerful analysis. On the other hand, we should also take this opportunity to fight back by strengthening and deepening the practical and effective practice of democracy.

(iii) The Conflict Highlights 'Deep Structural Changes', but International Power Dynamics Remain Fluid and Intertwined

Another important function of the Russia–Ukraine conflict has been to reveal the 'trends of deep structural change' in the global transformation. Overall, the international power structure is still interwoven in confrontation, mutually advancing and retreating on offense and defense. However, the emergence of many new phenomena has prompted researchers to adopt new concepts or expand the meanings of old concepts to interpret them. This article attempts to use keywords such as 'semi-order' (半秩序), 'non-partisanship' (不选边), 'big triangle' (大三角), and 'shift of focus' (转焦点) to express some deep-seated structural changes that have emerged through the Russia–Ukraine conflict and have had a significant impact.

1. 'Semi-Order'

What the Russia–Ukraine crisis first revealed was the state of 'semi-order' that has prevailed in the international system since the end of the Cold War. A key difference between this 'semi-order' state and the changes to the international order brought about by world wars and revolutions is that the changes to the international order after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War took place under relatively peaceful conditions. Under conditions of war and revolution, as Joseph Stalin said, wherever the tanks go, they can establish their preferred system. However, the transformation of the international order under peaceful conditions is different.

On the one hand, existing international institutional mechanisms undergo many changes, but there are gaps and grey areas. For example, the most critical UN Security Council mechanism is still serving its function, but the function of the Security Council has been greatly weakened because the parties involved in the Russia–Ukraine conflict have different opinions. International mechanisms that once played a coordinating and managing role, such as the OSCE and the Minsk Agreement, have been marginalized one after another.

On the other hand, however, the 'semi-order' state is different from the anarchic state in which no international institutional mechanisms are in effect: the framework of international institutional mechanisms still exists; the communication channels between major powers remain open;

and there are many precedents for international crisis management to refer to. Recent information shows that all parties in the international community have high expectations that the functions of key international organizations will be restored, especially the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB). The recent accession of Zhang Wencai, vice president of the Export–Import Bank of China, to managing director and chief administrative officer of the World Bank proves that promoting the institutionalization and reform of international relations is in keeping with the wishes of most countries. At the same time, it also shows that the current ‘semi-order’ state also reveals that the operating structure of the international organizations and institutions is in a ‘semi-crisis’ state. Not only does this structure urgently require change, but there remains great potential for promoting reform.

2. ‘Non-partisanship’

Many of the emerging powers, as typified by the BRICS countries, are ancient civilizations with rich historical traditions. Almost all BRICS countries and G20 emerging countries were once powerful countries that previously dominated their parts of the world. The gathering of emerging forces in the ‘second rise’ (第二次崛起) in the context of great international changes (23) is still the key feature of today’s international power structure and contrasts with the relative decline of the West. Emerging countries are not only driving economic growth with unprecedented momentum, but also demonstrating long-term development potential. What is particularly striking is that, in the face of this series of long-lasting conflicts, from the conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008, to the Crimean crisis in 2014, to the large-scale military conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, the vast majority of emerging and developing countries have adopted a non-aligned, non-partisan, neutral diplomatic line. They are unwilling to follow their Western allies in confronting Russia, while at the same time, they clearly oppose war and advocate resolving conflicts through peaceful and political means. As *The Economist* article pointed out, if we look at the overall opinion of the international community concerning the Russia–Ukraine conflict, countries accounting for more than two-thirds of the world’s population advocate not taking sides and not imposing sanctions. This primarily refers to the BRICS countries, the SCO countries, most ASEAN countries,⁷ and other emerging economies and developing countries. In

7 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an international organisation that promotes economic, political, social, and cultural cooperation in the region. Founded in 1967,

fact, speaking of the BRICS countries, this is not the first time they have refrained from taking sides or imposing sanctions. For example, as early as 1956, India condemned the US and Britain for sending troops to the Suez Canal, but did not condemn the Soviet Union's sending troops to Hungary in October 1956. This is a phenomenon of international history worthy of attention. In short, emerging and developing countries have a long history of pursuing peaceful neutrality and non-alignment. However, compared with the past, the actions of these countries with respect to the Russia–Ukraine crisis have particularly demonstrated their great potential to mature rapidly in the political and security fields.

3. Big Triangle

Looking at the process since the turn of the century, closely related to the above changes, the trilateral and triangular relationships among major powers have also shown an objective trend of shifting from the traditional balance of power among major powers to a growing reliance on the countries of the Global South (24).

As conflicts in Eurasia intensified, European countries had hoped to exert influence through trilateral interactions between Russia, the United States, and Europe. For example, in 2008, the United States persuaded Ukraine and Georgia to join with NATO in an effort to suppress Russia. Germany and France stepped in to stop this. Later, during the ‘Five-Day War’ between Russia and Georgia [the Russo-Georgian War], France stepped in to mediate, aiming to use the trilateral interaction between the United States, Europe, and Russia to restrain the confrontation between the United States and Russia and maintain stability in Europe.

On the other hand, since the turn of the century, almost every new US government has obsessed over gaining an advantage in the triangular relationship between the United States, Russia, and China by allying with Russia to contain China (25). However, the situation changed suddenly after 2016. In 2017, the United States openly identified both China and Russia as its competitors, indicating that its original expectations for the triangular interaction between the United States, China, and Russia could not be achieved. At the same time, the escalation of the Russia–Ukraine conflict showed that Europe’s efforts to seek a balance through trilateral interaction between Europe, the United States, and Russia had also failed. Against this backdrop, the previously dynamic post–Cold War trilateral relations between

it is based in Jakarta. Its current members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Russia, the United States, and Europe and the triangular relations between the United States, China, and Russia became relatively fixed.

In contrast, the Global South has now become the focus of all parties. In other words, the South has increasingly become a pivotal third party between the opposing sides involved in major conflicts. This is a new phenomenon in international trilateral relations that emerged following the Russia–Ukraine conflict. There are two structural trends here: First, with the two parties in the Russia–Ukraine conflict in a state of confrontation, China opposes war and respects sovereignty and territorial integrity. At the same time, given the ‘complex historical context’ of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, China advocates ensuring mutual security and opposes the unilateral pursuit of absolute security. In this tripartite structure, China stands together with the vast majority of emerging and developing countries.

The Russia–Ukraine conflict has presented an objective trend of very important structural changes in the trilateral relationship. The trilateral relationship between Russia, the United States, and Europe, which once worked, has transitioned to a new trilateral relationship framework after repeated setbacks. The Western camp led by the United States supports Ukraine’s confrontation with Russia, while the ‘Global South’ including China holds a strategic position of non-partisanship and non-alignment, advocating peace and autonomy. There is a very clear three-way balance of power between the three parties. The other trilateral relationships that exist in this overall context, such as China–US–Russia, China–EU–Russia, China–US–EU, and other multiparty groupings, also directly or indirectly affect the changes to the above-mentioned key trilateral relationship framework.

4. *‘Shift of Focus’*

The ‘shift of focus’ here means that, consistent with the trend of structural changes in the above-mentioned trilateral relationship, the focus of contemporary conflicts and crises is shifting from east to west, exactly in contrast to the shift of the economic and political center of gravity to the east.

In recent years, as the Russia–Ukraine conflict has continued, the Gaza–Israel conflict has broken out, and the situation in the Taiwan Strait has become tense. These have become the three major conflict hotspots in the world. In the past, Western powers maintained a strategic balance in Europe and maintained the balance by creating and promoting wars and conflicts in Asia. Just as in the 1950s and 1960s, the Western powers maintained a balance of power in Europe, but launched the Korean War and the Vietnam War in Asia, extending their power games to Asia in order to maintain the balance in Europe. However, the situation is different

now. This time, people saw that, for example, although the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the election in Taiwan, not only did the US side clearly state that its policy of opposing 'Taiwan independence' remained unchanged, but mainland China, while expressing its principled position of firmly opposing 'Taiwan independence', responded to the DPP victory with the most restrained attitude possible. This indicates that, although the situation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait remains highly sensitive, it is not completely impossible to prevent accidental clashes or even larger-scale risks in the coming stage. An obvious contrast shown here is that, contrary to the past, Asia has temporarily maintained a state of peace, while it has proved difficult to end the Russia–Ukraine conflict in Eurasia and the Gaza–Israel conflict in the Middle East, so the wars continue. To a considerable extent, this new pattern reveals that, on the one hand, China–US relations after the San Francisco Summit may enable the two countries to avoid confrontational conflicts for a period of time. Even if China–US relations are only in a temporary period of stability, it will be beneficial to the security and development of Asia as a whole. On the other hand, reflecting public opinion and the will of the people at the current stage, even if other regions are in turmoil, Asia, as the main support for global economic growth at present and for the future, cannot afford chaos.

In short, Asia remains relatively stable, while Eurasia and the Middle East continue to be turbulent. If we compare regional patterns, this indicates a shift in the focus of conflict. From the deeper perspective of the balance of power, this is a sign of a shift in weight.

(iv) The Conflict Drives the Transition to 'Plural Globalizations', but the Threat of Decoupling and Disruption Remains

In the first article of his book *Lectures on Global History*, Jürgen Osterhammel clearly states that it is an 'unrealistic assumption' to believe that globalization has a uniform and clear definition. On this basis, when elaborating on the changes in the concept of 'globalization' since the 1990s, he pointed out that by 2016, contrary to the previous process of globalization, what was prevalent was 'trends of fragmentation and de-globalization, the retreat of democracy, and the emergence of a potent nationalism in many countries in the world'. Therefore, Osterhammel proposed that 'the word globalization should often be understood in the plural' (26). If, as in Osterhammel's view, the new understanding of globalization in 2016 marked the beginning of a new stage, then 2022, when the Russia–Ukraine conflict broke out on a large scale four or five years after the book was written, should be regarded

as a special moment worthy of attention in the process of transformation from the singular 'globalization' to a situation of 'plural' globalizations.

The phenomenon of 'plural globalizations', greatly intensified by the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, has manifested itself in several ways.

First, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the subsequent severe Western sanctions against Russia have caused large-scale disruptions to traditional production, logistics, and financial chains in Eurasia and even on a larger scale. At the same time, they have also given rise to the creation of new industrial forms, the development of new trade channels, the adoption of new payment methods, and the exploration of new directions for regional cooperation. On the one hand, the reorganization of the geo-economic structure, with the development and opening up of Far Eastern Siberia as its fulcrum and symbolized by the eastward shift of Russia's entire economy, is not limited to Russia and China, but includes vast areas of the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. The formation of such a grand new geo-economic pattern differs from the traditional globalization that transcends national sovereignty. It will place more emphasis on sovereignty and adherence to local interests. This means that the above-mentioned regions and countries must promote regional and global cooperation in a more complex and diverse environment than in the past, needing to both open up to the outside world and safeguard their sovereignty. In this process, it will be much more difficult to attempt reforms. On the other hand, as globalization faces challenges and is forced to change course, will Russia, which was the first to absorb the shock, retreat to its 'fortress' and cut off exchanges with the outside, or will it do everything possible to continue to maintain contact with the world's major markets? Judging from the situation at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2023, even under such difficult conditions as prevailed at that time, Putin was unwilling to rewind history. He publicly announced that he would never follow the old path of the former Soviet Union's closed-door policy, but instead advocated continued openness. In the 1990s, when I was conducting collaborative research at the Moscow Institute of Experts (莫莫斯科专家研究所, it is not clear what specific institution this refers to), I had the opportunity to observe the work of Elvira Nabiullina, an outstanding young expert at the time. Now governor of the Central Bank of Russia, she insists on maintaining the operation of the Russian economy through a market economy before all else, and her biggest supporter is Russian President Putin. This can be seen as a manifestation of 'plural globalizations' set against the backdrop of the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, even though it is only an expression

of the position of one major power and has not yet been truly realized on a global scale.

Second, after the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, the energy crisis that spread across Europe and the food crisis that impacted developing countries caused great panic. When the shock of the ‘Trump phenomenon’ that occurred in 2016 was fresh in everyone’s minds, this new wave of turmoil had a huge impact on world markets that were still feeling the effects of the pandemic. Since then, with the shift of the focus of Russia’s energy supply from Europe to Asia and its strengthening of cooperation with the Middle East, especially the Russian announcement that energy transactions would be settled in rubles rather than US dollars or euros, it seems that a new international trade settlement method anchored on energy commodities is being explored as a possible future pattern and development path in unexpected ways. Compared with the introduction of the euro at the turn of the century and the challenge that the Japanese yen subsequently attempted to mount against the international financial system centered on the US dollar, the changes in the international monetary structure brought about by the Russia–Ukraine conflict, although far from fully prepared and relatively limited in scale, have created imaginative expectations for future international monetary cooperation among emerging countries. After energy, it is worth observing to what extent the improvement in food trade and self-sufficiency among major developing countries since the Russia–Ukraine crisis, especially the BRICS countries, will lead to a corresponding expansion in the scale of non-US dollar currency settlements. Against the backdrop of the US dollar’s continuing dominance, the formation of a multi-currency international cooperation network can be seen as another aspect of the gradual emergence of the phenomenon of ‘plural globalizations’.

Third, as a key part of the ‘singular globalization’ process, the global emissions reduction and decarbonization process requires countries to reduce the proportion of their traditional energy use. However, as a major energy exporter, Russia must rely on the profits from its oil and gas trade to withstand the wave of sanctions. This situation will have a profound impact on Russia’s emissions reduction process. In addition, European countries also re-activated traditional energy sources including coal during the crisis. As the world’s largest exporter of LNG, the United States relies on LNG exports to support stable economic growth, and this is not a short-term demand. We can see that it is the Russia–Ukraine conflict, including the resulting comprehensive Western sanctions against Russia, that has promoted the formation of another layer of tension between the ‘singular globalization’

with its emission reduction and decarbonization and 'plural globalizations' that reverts to the continued maintenance of the traditional energy economy.

In short, the transition from 'singular globalization' to 'plural globalizations' is itself a very complicated process. What the Russia–Ukraine conflict reveals is not only the opposition between 'singular globalization' under the 'Washington Consensus' and 'plural globalizations' under the trend of multipolarization, but also the fact that 'plural globalizations' are not the opposite of 'singular globalization'. Some paths of globalization are just a restart and reconfiguration of the combination of certain regions and fields. There is a complex interaction between these two concepts. Furthermore, the problem is that the isolation and decoupling caused by hostility will inevitably continue to exist for an extended period.

Based on the changes described above, my preliminary judgment is:

First, the Russia–Ukraine conflict has become a stalemate, reflecting the fact that the global power structure underpinning it has likewise entered a stage of overall stalemate, with both sides attacking and defending but also being stuck together. Each side has its own strengths, but it is difficult to tell who is stronger.

In this stalemate, there are at least two issues that deserve attention: On the one hand, the concept of 'community of common destiny for mankind' (人类命运共同体, referring to 人类命运共同体) clearly declares that the present era is no longer an era in which one ideology replaces another or one civilization replaces another. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union also advocated 'peaceful coexistence' that year, but failed to avoid the shoe-banging incident at the United Nations General Assembly, nor the Cuban Missile Crisis. What it all comes down to is the failure to avoid a 'zero-sum contest mindset' ([相互埋葬意识]). Therefore, if we truly base ourselves on the concept of 'a community of common destiny for mankind' and actually put it into practice, although we will inevitably experience unavoidable and even very cruel confrontations and will inevitably face waves of shocks, after a long period of hard work, there will still be opportunities and possibilities for 'a bright future after a period of darkness'. On the other hand, China's correct strategic line during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression [Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937–45] has left profound historical inspiration that remains to this day. Experts and scholars of the older generation often mention that many of their contemporaries read Mao Zedong's *On Protracted War* and realized that it was impossible to take the route of a quick victory at that time, but it was even more impossible to capitulate. Therefore, they resolutely joined the War of Resistance with the unyielding determination to fight a protracted

war. Times have changed, but the principles of *On Protracted War* remain our important theoretical and strategic basis as we face unprecedented challenges and need to make major choices among a number of possible prospects.

Second, ending the conflict between Russia and Ukraine by adopting the same logic as in the Korean War is one possible prospect.

A year and a half ago, I tried to explain the war in connection with Russia's domestic institutional transformation: On the one hand, from the perspective of about two hundred years of history, every worldwide war (the European anti-Napoleonic War in 1812, World War I, and World War II) always ended with victory for Russia and the Soviet Union (the Soviet Union's emergence in World War I can also be regarded as a major success) and the country's national strength grew and its international status rose, but on the contrary, in the past two hundred years, Russia has almost always failed in wars with its neighboring countries, which have triggered major reforms in Russia. For example, the failure of the Crimean War in the 1850s led to major changes that lasted for many years, such as the Emancipation reform of 1861 that abolished serfdom; the failure of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 led to the constitutional reform in 1905; the failure of the Polish-Soviet War in 1920 indirectly led to the advent of the New Economic Policy in 1921; the Afghan War in 1979 led to Gorbachev's reforms, and so on. At that time, I was trying to make a preliminary logical deduction concerning the relationship between war and domestic transformation. However, the situation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is more complicated. In fact, no large-scale international war in the history of warfare can be used as a simple analogy. The first issue is that the Russia-Ukraine conflict is both a peripheral conflict and one that occurs in the clear context of all-out confrontation. Therefore, the outcome of this conflict may be a mixed bag of good and bad. The second issue is, although Russia has reversed its defeat on the battlefield, will the entirety of NATO, which is arrayed against it, be willing to publicly accept this fact? The fact that the EU continues to provide large-scale support to Ukraine in its confrontation and that the United States will soon release a new overall aid package for Ukraine this spring indicates that the war may continue in 2024 until the US election. The third issue is that 2024 is not only a general election year for almost all the countries involved, but a number of interested countries will also have general elections. These factors are bound to affect the development trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in various ways, and may give rise to various possibilities. Even if the conflict ends in a way similar to the Korean War, that is, if Russia and Ukraine (Russia and NATO to be more

precise) stop the war while deferring any final outcome for an extended time, will it lead to a development trend in Russian society that is different from the two situations described above? It could be that, after the conflict, the country will neither greatly increase its national strength and status, nor will it see major liberal reforms domestically triggered by its failure. Russia could instead continue in its current system for an extended time, continuing to follow the so-called 'authoritarian line'. While doing its best to maintain stability and security, it will neither return to the highly centralized state of the former Soviet Union, nor move towards Western democracy. It will not be completely closed off and will even pursue openness and cooperation under very difficult conditions, but it will certainly not return to the 'laissez-faire free economy' of the 1990s. Or perhaps, it will hover between the two possibilities mentioned above for a relatively long time. Of course, it should be noted that the possibility that the Russia-Ukraine conflict will end in the manner of the Korean War is only a hypothesis based on logical deduction, and other options cannot be ruled out under the influence of various unexpected factors, including the possibility that the conflict will rapidly expand in scale and spiral out of control.

Third, the Russia-Ukraine conflict also highlights China's wisdom and foresight in choosing a diplomatic line of non-alignment, non-partisanship, fairness, justice, and peaceful development.

After the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, one much-discussed question was whether China had no choice but to fight back by forming its own alliances in the face of the current craze for forming cliques and factions. The other side of the issue is, given the tremendous achievements of 40 years of reform and opening up, and the huge and far-reaching economic, technological, social, cultural, and other ties between China and the West that continue to this day, can we return to the era of 'biding our time and concealing our strength' at the end of the twentieth century? Judging from its behavior during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, China has neither easily moved towards an alliance for confrontation nor returned to 'biding its time and concealing its strength'. China is trying to follow a strategic path that is both independent and non-aligned, but adheres to principles and links its national aspirations with international peace, security, justice, and stability to the greatest extent possible. Compared with rushing towards an alliance of confrontation or simply advocating a return to the 1980s, the choice of the third route mentioned above will certainly be put to the test in more complex environments, and actions will be more difficult because greater delicacy and subtlety are needed. However, taking the long view, given China's current international status, the responsibilities

it should assume, and the capabilities China currently possesses, this is a more appropriate historical choice. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russo–Japanese War broke out on Chinese territory. China at that time also maintained a ‘neutral’ stance in diplomacy, but the corrupt Qing government was simply unable to keep powerful enemies out of the country and had no choice but to tolerate powerful neighbors fighting on its own land. On the eve of the end of World War II, the Kuomintang government also considered adopting a strategy of ‘neutral diplomacy’. In a diary entry in January 1945, Chiang Kai-shek wrote: ‘If I can be independent and neutral, then they (Author’s note: referring to the Soviet Union) will respect my neutrality’ (27). However, the Chiang government’s idea of a neutral diplomatic line was simply impossible to achieve given the country’s weak national strength and the successive intervention by the great powers of the time. Following the founding of New China, after summarizing the experiences and lessons of the ‘leaning to one side’ period and going through the test of the extraordinary period of the ‘Cultural Revolution’, after the Third Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee and accompanied by the advancement of reform and opening up and the continuous increase of national strength, China’s diplomacy truly embarked on a broad path of independence, fairness, justice, and non-alignment, taking peaceful development as its goal. An independent non-aligned policy is more than simple ‘neutrality’. Moreover, although this may seem like nothing more than a diplomatic route, it is in fact also a question of path selection in the complex process of global transformation. China strives to safeguard its own rights and interests and advocate peace among all nations by ensuring security, promoting development, upholding justice, and adopting peaceful and mutually beneficial methods.

III. Sino–Russian Cooperation and a Vision for the Future of the ‘Asian Mediterranean’

Sino–Russian cooperation needs to demonstrate its strong and profound penetration in key areas and core regions of the global transformation. The ‘Asian Mediterranean’ is a significant concept that can reflect the current level and forward-looking nature of Sino–Russian cooperation.

At the end of the twentieth century, French economist François Gipouloux proposed the concept of the ‘Asian Mediterranean’. He believes that the developing Western Pacific region—specifically referring to the vast area of coastal countries and regions in the Western Pacific from the Sea of

Japan to the Strait of Malacca—can, like the European Mediterranean, not only promote cooperation among countries through long-term economic prosperity and development, but also make contributions to mankind in various fields such as politics, society, and civilization building. Professor Gipouloux was also invited to give a lecture at East China Normal University at that time, and his monograph entitled *The Asian Mediterranean* had also been translated into Chinese and published in China (28).

Faced with the challenges of the cliques forming in the Asia-Pacific region (AUKUS, the Indo-Pacific Four, the Five Eyes alliance, and NATO's attempt to get involved in Asia), while not abandoning strengthening national defense to resist foreign enemies, we must also give play to our huge advantages in geo-economics, resist confrontation through the greatest possible cooperation, win the hearts of the people through win-win cooperation, and focus on building an inclusive and open region. These are the openings we can use to find new breakthroughs to get out of the current crisis. Gipouloux's concept of the 'Asian Mediterranean' has such a function: it conforms closely to the problems faced by the international transformation, connects the strategic needs of all parties, and is in line with the comprehensive interests of global and regional multilateral development. Of course, to achieve this goal, all parties will have to commit to extremely arduous and long-term efforts.

The objective basis for promoting the concept of the 'Asian Mediterranean' is this: First, after the Russia–Ukraine conflict, Russia's strategic choice to shift its economic focus to the east has provided new factors and very important opportunities for the regionalized construction (区域化构建) of the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, the long-term growth trend in Asia is an optimistic sign for the whole world. Asia will need energy, food, environmental and agricultural products, clean water, and other bulk materials in the long term, as well as a vast market environment to be developed, and Russia is one of the most convenient sources for these things. There are huge opportunities and prospects for complementary cooperation between Russia and Western Pacific countries.

Second, while China and the United States are in a tense standoff in the current world situation, there is also a vast middle ground. This includes most countries in the middle that have to strike a balance between security and economic considerations. In recent years, China's diplomatic advancement in the Asia-Pacific region has shown that, if managed properly, it may be possible to seize opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation with countries that have been drawn into the fold of the United States. The important initiative recently proposed by Foreign Minister Wang Yi to promote the negotiations on the China–Japan–ROK Free Trade Area can

be viewed as a milestone in such arrangements. This shows that, in order to curb the trend of some countries in the Asia-Pacific region joining with the United States in containing China, it is necessary to deal with the issue from the perspective of politics and regional security. At the same time, it is also completely necessary to use economic levers to find a solution. Objectively speaking, the stability of Sino-US relations also has hopes for and requires this sort of new regional construction.

Third, not only does cooperation between Russia and the Asia-Pacific region need to be strengthened, but also, with the change in climate conditions, the opening of sea lanes through the Arctic makes it possible for the Western Pacific region to conduct exchanges with Europe through the northern channel of the Eurasian continent. In the past decade, the Center for Russian Studies where I work has participated in a multinational research project called 'The Last Frontier', which involves scholars from Russia, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, and subsequently Germany. My continued participation in this research project over the years has shown me the great enthusiasm of scholars and experts from various countries for connecting the economies of Europe and the Western Pacific region through the Northern Sea Route. Although the Russia-Ukraine conflict has complicated the international situation, the shift of Russia's economy to the east, the development and opening up of the Far East and Siberia, and the gradual opening of the Northern Sea Route provide a rare strategic opportunity to promote Eurasian cooperation over the long term.

Fourth, one very important change since 2021 has been the regional cooperation framework established by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This regional bloc, led by ASEAN with active assistance from China, has many years of experience in developing cooperative relations with partners to the north. Over the years, Russia has also worked to develop in-depth relations with ASEAN countries. They have made remarkable progress in cooperation in economics, politics, science and technology, defense, and other fields. At the current low ebb of globalization, there is a need for regional construction like the 'Asian Mediterranean' as a means to reinvigorate the momentum of globalization based on regional cooperation. Especially in the context of the emergence of cooperation mechanisms in different regions, proposing the concept of the 'Asian Mediterranean' will help advance the process of the RCEP. In other words, if an effective economic cooperation zone can be established between Russia in the north and ASEAN in the south, it goes without saying that, from the perspective of China, which is located between these regions, the surrounding geopolitical environment will improve to a considerable extent. In addition, there will

be a strong foundation and more space for further promoting cooperation in a wide range of areas. Therefore, the 'Asian Mediterranean' offers an alternative long-term approach for us to re-evaluate the strategic position of cooperation with Russia based on the overall situation of the global transformation and our Eurasian strategy.

Fifth, China's domestic and foreign economic circulation will gradually evolve from our position of being dominated by European and US markets over the past four decades to striving to maintain our market share in Europe and the United States while seeking to leverage strategic fulcrums in continental Eurasia and the Western Pacific to balance and fill the gaps in the European and US markets. The original intention of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)⁸ was to find a strategic breakthrough by working westward across the Eurasian continent. Although the Belt and Road Initiative has made progress in other areas over the years, there is still room for significant improvement in creating connections between Russia and the BRI. Sino-Russian cooperation not only can develop into areas deep within Eurasia, but also play an important role in promoting the development and cooperation between Russia and countries in the Western Pacific region. The further economic development and increased security assurance of China's eastern coastal areas also require opportunities provided by 'Asian Mediterranean'-style cooperation. Whether it is the acquisition of the Tumen River estuary, the development south from the Bohai Bay to the entire Chinese coastal space, or the stability of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, the participation of Russian factors will be an inevitable trend. In terms of form, this starts with the economy, but as this situation develops, there will likely be opportunities in the security field and prospects for increased stability for the entire region.

As far as the development of China's eastern coastal areas is concerned, the Tumen River region in Northeast China already has a strong foundation for cooperation with Russia. The overall launch of the 'Asian Mediterranean' will inevitably be conducive to the improvement of port conditions in Northeast China. With the deployment of Sino-Russian industrial joint development in the eastern coastal areas, the environment for the construction of large-scale deep-water ports in China's eastern coastal areas, especially in the eastern coastal areas of Jiangsu, is also rapidly improving. As an essential part of north-south sea passage, this provides good infrastructure conditions that

8 Since 2013, projects have been planned and implemented as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, with the aim of establishing and expanding intercontinental trade and infrastructure networks between the People's Republic of China and more than a hundred other countries worldwide.

have already taken shape for future cooperation and development between Russia and the southern region of the Western Pacific. As early as 2007, Vladivostok had become a transshipment port for domestic trade goods for Heilongjiang. It is gratifying that in May 2023, the General Administration of Customs agreed to Jilin Province's request to add the Port of Vladivostok as a transshipment port for domestic trade goods. This is an important step forward in China–Russia cooperation.

However, the Russia–Ukraine conflict continues, and the original cooperative ties in the Asia-Pacific region are facing severe challenges posed by decoupling and the severance of supply chains. Moreover, bringing out the willingness to cooperate and the potential for cooperation of the various parties described above is far from easy. It requires a long and difficult development process. However, future regional construction with the medium- and long-term goal of creating an 'Asian Mediterranean' will not only bring new opportunities for Sino–Russian cooperation, but also, through the stable development of the Western Pacific zone, we can expect it to provide vitality and space for the process of global transformation for the entire Trans-Pacific region and even the entire world.

Notes

- (1) Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, translated by Hu Liping, Lin Hua, et al., Beijing: CITIC Press, 2015, p. 24.
- (2) Ibid., p. 3.
- (3) At the end of 2019, at a small symposium during Niall Ferguson's visit to Shanghai, the author asked Mr. Ferguson the following question about his biography of Kissinger: Why is Kissinger called an 'idealist' instead of a 'realist', as he is generally regarded? Dr. Ferguson gave a detailed answer to this question.
- (4) Based on a review of the views in the works of Braudel, Wallerstein, and Arrighi; for specific texts, refer to [France] Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, translated by Gu Liang and Shi Kang-qiang, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2017; [US] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, translated by Guo Fang et al., Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2013; [Italy] Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long 20th Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times*, translated by Yao Naiqiang et al., Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2022.
- (5) Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, Volume 1*, translated by Guo Fang et al. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2013, English version, volume 1, preface, p. 2.

- (6) Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, Volume 1*, translated by Guo Fang et al. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2013, English version, volume 1, preface, pp. 2–3.
- (7) Ibid., preface to volume 1, pp. 6–7.
- (8) Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times*, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2022, p. 13.
- (9) Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times*, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2022, pp. 473–474.
- (10) Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Qiang Zhaohui and Liu Feng, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2016, p. 4.
- (11) Jürgen Osterhammel, *Lectures on Global History*, translated by Chen Hao, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2021, p. 12.
- (12) Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Qiang Zhaohui and Liu Feng, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2016, p. 101.
- (13) Ibid., introduction, p. 4.
- (14) Jürgen Osterhammel, *Lectures on Global History*, translated by Chen Hao, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2021, p. 140.
- (15) Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *Global Transformation: History, Modernity, and the Making of International Relations*, translated by Cui Shunji, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2020, pp. 249–276.
- (16) Andrei P. Tsygankov, 'From Global Order to Global Transition.' *Russia in Global Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2019), <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/from-global-order-to-global-transition/>.
- (17) Feng Shaolei, 'EU and Russia: Why the EU Is Moving from Cooperation to Confrontation [欧盟与俄罗斯：为何从合作走向对抗]', *Chinese Journal of European Studies*, no. 4 (2015), pp. 43–66.
- (18) Putin delivered a speech at the Valdai Discussion Club on October 5, 2023. The author was present at this speech. See: 'Meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club', October 5, 2023. <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72444>.
- (19) 'Obama's Speech at the 2014 West Point Graduation Ceremony (Bilingual)', May 30, 2014, https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/news/2014-05/30/content_17555058.htm.
- (20) 'Europe, Not America, Is Now Ukraine's Largest Backer', *The Economist*, September 11, 2023. <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2023/09/11/europe-not-america-is-now-ukraines-largest-backer>.
- (21) Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*, translated by Mao Junjie, Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2014, p. 425.

- (22) See John Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, translated by Li Ze, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2019.
- (23) The rise of the group of emerging countries at the turn of the century is called the 'second rise,' which is based on the terminology used by Chinese scholar Xiong Jie.
- (24) When discussing this issue, researchers often use the concepts of 'trilateral relationship' and 'triangular relationship' interchangeably. In my opinion, the 'trilateral relationship' mainly refers to the relationship between Russia, the United States, and Europe, in which there is a dedicated working framework between the three parties, such as the CSCE [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe] that existed before the Cold War and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [(OSCE) that has existed since the end of the Cold War. However, there is no dedicated working framework for mediating the trilateral relationship between China, the United States, and Russia, but there are actually important and subtle interactions taking place between them. Therefore, I have chosen to continue to use the original term 'triangular relationship' here. It should be noted that the 'triangular relationship' here does not necessarily refer to a relationship among major powers that is characterized by confrontation and conflict.
- (25) James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: US Policy Toward Russia After the Cold War*, translated by Xu Hongfeng, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2017, pp. 380–384.
- (26) Jürgen Osterhammel, *Lectures on Global History*, translated by Chen Hao, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2021, pp. 9–15.
- (27) Chiang Kai-shek, *Diary of Chiang Kai-shek*, 'Central Work in 1945', January 1945; 47.48.49. General, Volume 1, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.
- (28) François Gipouloux, *The Asian Mediterranean: Port Cities and Trading Networks in China, Japan and Southeast Asia, 13th–21st Century*, translated by Gong Huayan and Long Xuefei, Beijing: New Century Press, 2014.

About the Author

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Part 6

Ecology

Abstract: The texts collected in this chapter focus on the relationship between ecology and globality, and on the question of how this relationship is affected by Russia's war on Ukraine. The articles approach this issue from three different perspectives: firstly, the global ecological consequences of the war; secondly, the war's impact on global climate policy and the transition to renewable energy; and thirdly, whether the decarbonisation of industrial production could constrain Putin's neo-imperial project and his attack on the existing world order.

Keywords: environment, climate change, energy transition, decarbonisation

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Introduction

Four days after Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, Yannick Jadot, then the presidential candidate of the French Green Party, spoke about the ecological dimensions of this war of aggression at a press conference. He contrasted his political programme with the approach of China and Russia, which, he said, combined 'predatory capitalism' and 'dictatorship' to 'install a new world order based on a form of capitalism free from environmental and social responsibility'. Jadot explained, 'While climate change may not necessarily be their primary concern, the issue of resources certainly is.' He further argued, 'There are plans to seize resources, including through war, and to install dictatorial regimes so as to avoid having to deal democratically with the inequalities'. Against this background, his ecological approach—with its focus on renewable energy—was also a project of 'sovereignty and security' and would provide a 'structural response to the Ukrainian crisis'.¹

Jadot connects the war in Ukraine to ecological issues, while framing the topic within a global perspective. His core argument is that a consistent shift towards renewable energies—which he has described elsewhere as 'the only forms of energy that bring peace, security, and independence'²—would end France's reliance on Russian fossil fuels, as well as that of any other country. Jadot's considerations are among many that address the relationship between ecology and globality, and the question of how the war on Ukraine affects it. Supporting Jadot's view, some have even argued that the war against Ukraine is being waged precisely as an attempt to stop decarbonisation and thereby preserve Russia's export power.³

The following articles approach this question from three different perspectives: firstly, the global ecological consequences of the war; secondly, the consequences of the war for global climate policy and the transition to

1 See the Agence France Presse report, picked up by various French media—for example, 'Ukraine: le projet écologique est un projet de "sécurité", plaide Jadot [Ukraine: The ecological project is a 'security' project, argues Jadot]', *Le Point*, 28 February 2022, https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/jadot-demande-la-transparence-sur-les-livraisons-d-armes-a-l-ukraine-28-02-2022-2466437_20.php.

2 Nathanaël Bentura, 'Yannick Jadot: "Les énergies renouvelables sont les seules énergies de paix" [Yannick Jadot: "Renewable Energies Are the Only Energies of Peace"]', *europel*, 28 March 2022, <https://www.europel.fr/politique/les-energies-renouvelables-sont-les-seules-energies-de-paix-de-securite-et-dindependance-4102170>.

3 Alexander Etkind, 'Oil, Climate and War: The Curse of the Petrostate', *CEU Review of Books*, May 2024, <https://ceureviewofbooks.com/longread/oil-climate-and-war-the-curse-of-the-petrostate/>.

renewable energies; and thirdly, the question of whether a decarbonisation of industrial production could stop Putin's neo-imperial project and his attack on the existing world order.

The War's Immediate Environmental Consequences

For some time, experts have been highlighting the consequences of armed conflicts for ecology, the environment, and the climate.⁴ Yet, as Angelika Claußen, a physician and anti-nuclear weapons activist, argues, the issue has gained additional prominence with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Her intervention, published in August 2022 in an online magazine of the social-democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Bonn), is part of a wider international debate which encompasses topics ranging from the destruction of nature and the environment on battlefields to the ecological footprint of the surge in arms production and supply.⁵ On the one hand, this debate focuses on regional ecological damage. A particularly striking example is the destruction of the Kakhovka Reservoir in southern Ukraine by Russian troops on 6 June 2023. This resulted in the release of 18.2 billion cubic metres of water, destroying neighbouring villages and contaminating the soil with toxins deposited at the bottom of the reservoir. On the other hand, it has been noted that the additional CO₂ emissions caused by the hostilities have a global impact.⁶ The question of how Russia can be held accountable under international law for the environmental damage caused by its acts of war is under discussion. In 2024, a group of international experts, chaired by Andrii Yermak (head of the Office of the President of Ukraine) and Margot Wallström (co-chair and former Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs), recommended seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice 'that would clarify the rights, responsibilities, and liabilities in regard to environmental crimes and other violations in contexts of conflict'.⁷

4 See, among others, the early works of Arthur H. Westing, e.g., *Warfare in a Fragile World: Military Impact on the Human Environment* (Taylor & Francis, 1980).

5 A comprehensive overview of the ecological consequences of the war is available in English, Ukrainian, and Russian on the website of the Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group: <https://uwecworkgroup.info/>.

6 Numerical documentation can be found on this website: <https://www.topleadprojects.com/environmental-project-main>.

7 High-Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of the War, *An Environmental Compact for Ukraine: A Green Future: Recommendations for Accountability and Recovery*, 9 February 2024, 10, https://www.president.gov.ua/storage/j-files-storage/01/24/69/ccodabo40b3207268e5c8fb5275b22e4_1707492952.pdf.

The Future of Global Climate Policy and Energy Transition

The debate on the global environmental consequences of the war includes questions about the future of international cooperation and the energy transition needed to tackle climate change. A central point of criticism is the shift in political priorities, to which Claußen also points: political and economic actors are using the war as a pretext to delay the necessary socio-environmental transformation towards industrial decarbonisation and renewable energies, which is a precondition for reducing CO₂ emissions and meeting the internationally agreed target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius compared with the pre-industrial era.

This concern is echoed by Habiba Ahut Daggash, a chemical engineer and Abuja-based senior fellow at the Africa Energy Program, who notes in a policy paper that ‘as the war in Ukraine goes on, the biggest challenge of the twenty-first century—the climate crisis—has slipped down the agenda’. She also highlights the economic dimensions of this problem. Focusing on Nigeria, she draws attention to the complex interrelationships between the European and African economies and their energy sectors. Because of this close interdependence, she argues, ‘it is essential to understand what Europe’s energy strategy could mean for Africa’s energy sector, particularly for the clean energy transition it has been encouraged to pursue’. According to Daggash, the energy policy of the European Union countries following Russia’s full-scale attack on Ukraine is characterised by two opposing trends, among them the desire to move away from dependence on fossil fuels, which could lead to increased efforts to transition to renewable energy in the long term. As this would require increased production of batteries to store energy, it would create new export opportunities for African countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria, which have the critical minerals needed to produce such batteries. In the short term, however, as Daggash observes, ‘energy security has leapfrogged climate change as Europe’s top priority’ so as not to jeopardise social peace. This, she argues, has led to ‘hypocrisy in climate action narratives coming from the West’. On the one hand, European Union countries are ‘search[ing] for alternative supplies to Russian energy and increase[ing] the use of dirtier fuels such as coal’. In this context, she points out that the European Commission has even reclassified the continued use of natural gas as an ‘environmentally sustainable economic activity’, a decision that was taken before Russia’s attack on Ukraine. On the other hand, as Daggash argues, the EU is sticking to the ‘ban on public financing for new fossil fuel investments abroad’ for African

countries that it supported at COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in 2021.

In mentioning COP26, Daggash points to the importance of international relations and international law for global climate protection. As with environmentalism in general (consider the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* report),⁸ important impetus in this field emerged in the 1970s—for example, with the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which led to the founding of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). UNEP is responsible for coordinating international environmental efforts and preparing international treaties. Since 1979, world climate conferences have been held under the umbrella of the United Nations, initially as expert conferences. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This laid the foundation for the first Conference of the Parties (COP1), which took place in Berlin in 1995. Since then, climate conferences have been convened as international conferences of signatory states, aiming to develop legal instruments to combat human-induced global warming. Milestones in this process include the Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997 and entering into force in 2005, through which signatories committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the Paris Agreement of 2015, which established the 1.5-degree Celsius target.⁹

Russia's war of aggression poses a challenge to global climate protection in the realms of international relations and international law. At the most basic level, this is evident in the failure to address the environmental consequences of war within international agreements aimed at protecting the climate. In her article, Claußen laments that '[e]missions from armed forces and military equipment cause considerable environmental harm around the globe. And yet, bowing to pressure from the US, military CO₂ emissions were excluded from climate treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 and the Paris Agreement of 2015.' Beyond this, Russia's deliberate violation of international law means that the country, which is the world's fourth-largest emitter of CO₂, is no longer a viable negotiating partner for international climate protection efforts. Finally, Russia's actions—and the question

8 Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth* (Universe Books, 1972).

9 Ernesto Zedillo, ed., *Global Warming: Looking Beyond Kyoto* (Brookings Institution Press, 2008); Todd Stern, *Landing the Paris Climate Agreement: How It Happened, Why It Matters, and What Comes Next* (MIT Press, 2024).

of whether or not to condemn them—have led to a diplomatic upheaval that is having a negative impact on international climate cooperation. Karoliina Hurri and Sanna Kopra, researchers at the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland, explore this issue through the lens of China's Arctic policy. However, they also point to the potential of climate policy to bridge tensions between major powers, noting that, with regard to the US and China, 'climate change seems to be one of the rare sectors of international politics where the established and rising great powers have shared interests and prospects for collaboration'.

Energy Transition and Rival Visions of World Order

The remarks of former French presidential candidate Jadot, quoted at the beginning of this introduction, point to another global dimension of ecology and, more specifically, of the energy transition. He contrasts his vision of ecological sustainability with a conception of world order rooted in the ruthless exploitation of people and natural resources, where only the law of the strongest prevails.

Jadot's words highlight the fact that it is precisely the principle of ecological sustainability that has the potential to undermine the financial basis of this violent ideology of ruthlessness, at least as far as Putin's Russia is concerned. For, if decarbonisation reduces the importance of fossil fuels as a commodity, it will deprive the Putin regime of a major source of income. This idea is reinforced by Jadot's statement that in the French presidential elections in April 2022, 'the candidates who couldn't care less about the challenges of climate change and biodiversity' were also 'the most lenient towards Putin'.¹⁰

Sergei Tarkhanov points in a similar direction.¹¹ Tarkhanov's article discusses the central importance of fossil fuel exports for financing and maintaining Putin's rule. Therefore, he argues that combating climate change can be a key element in the struggle for peace in Ukraine. The power of oil and the authoritarian regimes it supports is not eternal, Tarkhanov asserts. They are the product of a specific historical period

¹⁰ 'Ukraine: le projet écologique' (see footnote 1).

¹¹ Current information about the author could not be located. Russian environmental outlet Smola Media has been shut down, and leading journalists and media classified as 'foreign agents'; see 'Kirill Nabutov and Smola Media Designated as "Foreign Agents"', *International Press Institute*, 22 March 2024, <https://ipi.media/alerts/kirill-nabutov-and-smola-media-designated-as-foreign-agents/>.

and, along with it, will eventually become relics of the past. In his view, the world is already moving in this direction as ‘a growing number of forces—from the Chinese government, which is investing \$80 billion a year in green energy, to the Fridays for Future movement, which unites tens of thousands of young boys and girls around the world—are making a carbon-free future a reality’. And, Tarkhanov concludes, ‘That’s very bad news for Vladimir Putin.’

Ecology and Sustainability

As regards ecology and sustainability, the war raises many questions concerning solidarity, crisis, and continuity. The articles offer perspectives formulated in very different contexts: Claußen is based in Germany, Tarkhanov in Russia, Daggash in Nigeria, and Hurri and Kopra in the US and Scandinavia. While all write with a global outlook—climate being perhaps the most all-encompassing topic of all—their focus and scope vary widely, ranging from climate change (global), energy resources (oil—Ukraine/Russia), and the energy transition (the African continent) to Arctic Circle cooperation (with/without China).

The article ‘War Is a Climate Killer,’ published quite early in the course of the war, in July 2022, addresses the global climate consequences of armed conflicts, prompted by the attack on Ukraine. The author, Angelika Claußen, co-chair of the German section of IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War/Physicians in Social Responsibility), discusses the climatic effects of wars caused by CO₂ emissions from armed forces and war equipment. She argues that both the climate crisis and the invasion of Ukraine are linked to dependence on fossil fuels.

Claußen criticises the increase in arms expenditure and calls for a ceasefire instead. She argues that the greatest global challenge of the twenty-first century—tackling the climate crisis—requires a joint effort by all countries, including Russia. In addition, Russia must be supported in switching to a climate-friendly energy economy. The author names the conflict as ‘Russia’s war of aggression’ but places it also in the context of previous wars, such as those in Iraq and Syria. She adopts a moral stance towards refugee policy, which, in the eyes of some, is intended to ‘protect’ Western populations—such as those of her native Germany—from the people who are most affected by global warming and who contribute the least to it. This humanistic attitude might be rooted in her background as an engaged physician.

Habiba Ahut Daggash is a chemical engineer working at the intersection of technology and policy to develop climate change mitigation and clean energy solutions. In her policy paper, which was published in 2022 by the West African Centre for Journalism Innovation, she discusses the impact of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on the energy transition in Africa. The picture she paints is complex and ambivalent. In the short term, the loss of Russian investment in developing nuclear power, which Daggash sees as a low-carbon technology, could have negative consequences. At the same time, the need to compensate for the loss of Russian natural gas imports opens up new sales opportunities in Europe for LNG from Africa. The author also expects the war in Ukraine to accelerate the global transition to clean energy. In her view, this could speed up the transition to renewable energy on the African continent. As noted above, it could also create significant revenue streams for countries rich in raw materials needed for battery production.

The article by Karoliina Hurri and Sanna Kopra, published a year later in 2023, has a different focus. From the perspective of the Washington-based NGO the Arctic Institute, it discusses how Russia's '2022 invasion influences the implementation of China's climate policy, particularly with a focus on the Arctic'. The authors note that the contradiction between China's goal of reducing its carbon dioxide emissions and, at the same time, of its need to ensure energy security by relying on fossil fuels has increased even further following the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as China has now significantly increased its imports of low-cost oil and gas from Russia. This and China's increasing refusal to cooperate with the Arctic Council since the outbreak of the war have had negative consequences for the polar region. International cooperation, which is necessary to effectively curb climate change, would also require overcoming tensions between the US and China, the authors argue.

Sergei Tarkhanov, writing in February 2024, after two years of war, discusses the relationship between resource exploitation, the energy industry, social organisation, and democratisation from a global perspective. The author's starting point is that, unlike other dictatorships, Putin's Russia is based not on the principle of mass mobilisation but on the systematic depoliticisation of society. Power is secured via a professional apparatus of violence, the police and the army, the high costs of which are financed by equally high revenues from gas and oil imports. In contrast to labour-intensive coal mining, which historically fostered a self-confident workforce and strong trade union organisation in mining regions—thereby creating favourable conditions for successful demands for social participation—the extraction of gas and oil tends globally to support the stabilisation of

autocratic regimes.¹² The decarbonisation of the global economy, the author argues, could destabilise such regimes and thus carries both a democratic and ecological dimension.

About the Volume Editors

Dennis Dierks studied history, Islamic studies, Turkology, and Slavic studies in Mainz, Dijon, and Vienna and received his PhD from the University of Jena. In 2024/25, he was a research associate at the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the history of remembrance, nationalism, revolution, and reform, as well as the global circulation of ideas since the nineteenth century. His latest publications include 'Nation-building and Nationalism in the Black Sea Region (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)', in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, edited by Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Troebst (2024).

Katja Castryck-Naumann is a senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and has headed the research training group 'Global Armenia/ns: Entangled Histories of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus' since 2025. After completing her training as a historian at the Universities of Leipzig, Edinburgh, and Vienna and earning a doctorate from Leipzig University, she worked in the 'East-Central Europe Transnational' project group (2008–2016) and in the 'Entanglements and Globalisation' department (2017–2025) at GWZO. She also served as spokesperson of the steering committee of the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA, 2020–2025). Her research focuses on the history of international organisations and transnational actors, transregional entanglements of East-Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the history of area studies and global history writing.

Lena Dallywater is a researcher and academic coordinator in the Cluster of Excellence *Imaginamics* at the University of Jena and was the coordinator of

12 This reflects the argument put forward in Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (Verso, 2011).

the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) from 2016 to 2025. She studied communication and cultural studies at the Universities of Leipzig and The Hague and holds a PhD in global studies from Leipzig University. Her research focuses on African and African-American intellectual history, Pan-Africanism, liberation movements, and transregional solidarity networks. Most recently, she published *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s* (2023, co-edited with Chris Saunders and Helder Adegar Fonseca) and *Globalizing Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Economics from the 18th to the 21st Century* (2025, co-edited with Gilad Ben-Nun and Katja Castryck-Naumann).

Stefan Rohdewald has held the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University since 2020. From 2013 to 2020, he was Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Giessen. After completing his studies, assistantship, and doctorate in Zurich (PhD, 2004), he worked as a research assistant at the University of Passau from 2003 to 2012. His research focuses on the entangled histories of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, urban history, memory, and transconfessionality. From 2017 to 2024, he served as the chairperson of the DFG Priority Programme *Transottomanica: Eastern European–Ottoman–Persian Mobility Dynamics*.

War Is a Climate Killer

Angelika Claußen

Editorial Note

This article was published on 1 August 2022 in *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* (International politics and society).¹ The online journal *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* sees itself as a committed debate platform for questions of international and European politics, which, according to its own statement, not only wants to describe but also give impulses. The range of topics includes foreign, security, and development policy issues as well as the challenges of European integration and global environmental issues. It is published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, FES), a political foundation with close ties to the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).

War brings death and destruction—not least to the environment and climate. Russia's invasion of Ukraine offers a depressing reminder of that fact, and further increases the military sector's already enormous global CO₂ footprint. In addition, the eastern Ukrainian cities where fighting is taking place are home to fossil fuel infrastructure such as chemical factories, oil refineries, and coal mines, the bombing of which produces a cocktail of toxic substances that has devastating environmental impacts. Efforts to arm the two sides, moreover, are consuming materials and resources that could otherwise go towards tackling the climate crisis.

Based on the global CO₂ budget, humanity has less than eight years to ensure it still hits its 1.5-degree warming target. To do so, we need to urgently implement reforms in all areas, to bring about 'systemic change', as the IPCC² report from early April puts it. The military sector barely gets a mention in this almost 3,000-page document, however, with the word 'military' coming up just six times. You might thus conclude that the sector is of little relevance to the climate emergency.

The reality is rather different. Using military hardware results in huge quantities of emissions. In the war in Ukraine, 36 Russian attacks on fossil

1 Angelika Claußen, 'War Is a Climate Killer', *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 1 August 2022, <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/economy-and-ecology/war-is-a-climate-killer-6094/>.

2 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in November 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as an UN body to provide scientific assessments on climate change.

fuel infrastructure were recorded in the first five weeks alone, leading to prolonged fires that released soot particulates, methane, and CO₂ into the atmosphere, while oil infrastructure has been ablaze on the Russian side too. The oil fields that were set on fire in 1991 during the Second Gulf War contributed two per cent of global emissions for that year.

While greenhouse gas emissions are one of the most significant impacts of war, the quantity emitted depends on the duration of the conflict and on what tanks, trucks, and planes are used. Another is the contamination of ecosystems that sequester CO₂. Staff from Ukraine's environment inspectorate are currently collecting water and soil samples in the areas around shelled industrial facilities.

Military Emissions

The ramifications for the climate can be catastrophic in scale. According to a study by the organisation Oil Change International, the Iraq War was responsible for 141 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent emissions between its outbreak in 2003 and the report's publication in 2008. By way of comparison: some 21 EU member states emitted less CO₂ equivalent in 2019, with only six states topping that figure.

Post-war rebuilding also produces significant emissions. Estimates suggest that reconstruction in Syria will lead to 22 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions. The rebuilding in Ukraine, too, will consume vast amounts of resources. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that at least five billion US dollars of reconstruction funding was needed per month. Every effort should thus be made to achieve an immediate ceasefire—both for the sake of the climate and to avoid further human suffering.

Emissions from armed forces and military equipment cause considerable environmental harm around the globe. And yet, bowing to pressure from the US, military CO₂ emissions were excluded from climate treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 and the Paris Agreement of 2015. As a result, they do not form part of their binding agreements and are neither surveyed systematically nor published transparently. The consequent lack of data means we can only make vague estimates as to the military sector's impact on global heating.

According to a study by Neta Crawford, co-director of the Costs of War project at Brown University, the US defence ministry alone is a bigger contributor to the climate crisis than individual countries such as Sweden

or Portugal. This makes it the largest institutional source of greenhouse gases in the world. Globally, the military sector is estimated to generate around 6 per cent of all CO₂ emissions.

Germany's Role

With its new €100 bn fund for the military, Germany seems willing to countenance further far-reaching climate impacts. This military investment will tie up financial and intellectual resources, making it highly unlikely that the 1.5-degree target can be achieved. That countries wish to better protect themselves against potential Russian aggression is understandable. But the public debate around this issue needs to balance an uncertain increase in security against a reduction in our ability to fight climate change.

The German military was already responsible for around 4.5 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent emissions in 2019, significantly more than the 2.5 million tonnes contributed by civilian aviation within Germany. This is now set to increase. Just one of the F-35 jets ordered from Lockheed Martin emits around 28 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per tank of fuel. For comparison: the average annual emissions footprint in Germany is 11.2 tonnes per head.

The income from the sale of fossil fuels provides ongoing funding for Russia's war of aggression. From 24 February to 24 April 2022, the country's fossil fuel exports via sea routes and pipelines had an estimated value of €58 bn. The EU accounts for 70 per cent of that total, or €39 bn, while Germany is the largest single importer of Russian fossil fuels at €8.3 bn worth. Our fossil fuel dependency is thus a factor in both the climate crisis and the invasion of Ukraine.

And yet representatives of politics and business are using the war as an excuse to delay the necessary socio-ecological transformation. While corporations still stuck in the fossil fuel age—such as BP, Shell, and Saudi-Aramco—are posting record profits, the climate crisis continues apace.

The likes of Rheinmetall and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg may champion climate-neutral warfare using eco-friendly tanks and hydrogen fuel, but this is surely not the answer. Western armed forces, security experts, and arms manufacturers are well aware of the significance of climate change, as evidenced by the numerous security strategies, policy statements, and sustainability reports published on the subject in recent years. These outline ways to adapt to a changing climate while ensuring the doctrines of growth and hegemony are nonetheless defended against any and all resistance.

Ceasefire Now

Together with the EU and NATO, Germany is preparing for scenarios such as war, environmental disaster, and influxes of refugees in order to ensure its foreign policy will still be fit for purpose and its security interests protected. A cynical approach given that the worst affected—those who, as some see it, Germany needs protecting from—will be those who have contributed least to global warming. And one that seems even more absurd when you consider that the environmental destruction brought about by military investment and resource-related conflicts will help to further heat the climate.

At the same time, steps are being taken to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Nonetheless, a Greenpeace report published last year demonstrates that the majority of all EU military missions have links to the protection of oil and gas imports. This dangerous relationship between fossil fuels, military missions, and war needs to end.

More arms means more damage to the climate, not greater security. Rising defence budgets among NATO states will simply convince Russia and China to increase military investment in turn. At \$2.1 trillion, global arms spending has already reached record levels.

As the war in Ukraine goes on, the biggest challenge of the twenty-first century—the climate crisis—has slipped down the agenda. We mustn't forget, though, that efforts to tackle that crisis can only succeed if all countries—including Russia—work together. The immediate demand is for a ceasefire, followed by measures to build trust, such as international disarmament treaties. Moreover, Russia will need outside help if it is to transition to a climate-friendly energy industry. What's required is a fundamental socio-ecological transformation, with policy-making dictated by the needs of all. That may seem inconceivable at present, but what's the alternative? Unchecked global warming would be catastrophic for the planet's entire population.

About the Author

Angelika Claußen is the co-chair of the German section of IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War/Physicians in Social Responsibility).

Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine on Africa's Energy Transition

Habiba Ahut Daggash

Editorial Note

This policy paper was published by the West African Centre for Journalism Innovation in 2022.¹ The Centre for Journalism Innovation was founded as a non-governmental organisation in Nigeria in 2014 and has branches in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Gambia.

Introduction

Scientific research has shown that human activity, primarily burning fossil fuels for energy, is responsible for climate change (1). A warmer climate will increase the frequency of extreme weather events, changes to natural ecosystems, and rising oceans—all of which threaten our established physical and socio-economic systems (2). As a result, all countries committed to pursuing efforts to limit global warming to 'well below 2°C' through the 2016 Paris Agreement to avoid these catastrophic impacts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other authoritative organisations have said that delivering this target would require a rapid transformation of the global energy system away from dependence on fossil fuels to non-polluting forms of energy (1).

Many countries have enacted legislation or policies to promote clean energy transition. However, efforts have lagged behind on what is required to deliver the Paris Agreement (3). Additionally, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February has since thrown energy markets into disarray because of Russia's role as a major oil and gas producer and exporter globally (4). The resulting geopolitical tensions from the conflict are set to reshape the energy markets, which had already begun to feel the effects of the clean energy transition. However, it is unclear what this disruption would mean for the energy transition in Africa, which is facing the challenge of delivering an energy transition alongside broad-based economic development.

1 <https://thecjid.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Impact-of-Russias-Invasion-of-Ukraine-on-Energy-Transition-in-Africa.pdf>. The numbering of the endnotes follows the original.

This policy brief will discuss the impacts of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on global energy markets and explore its potential implications for the energy transition in Africa, with a particular focus on Nigeria.

What Did Energy Transition Mean for Africa Before the Conflict?

Africa constitutes 17% of the world’s population but only 2% of energy consumption (5). The inefficient use of traditional biomass (wood fuel and dung) for energy still dominates the continent, and the lack of modern energy infrastructure means widespread energy poverty exists. Before the Russia–Ukraine conflict, many experts viewed the clean energy transition as an opportunity for Africa to improve energy access alongside decarbonisation objectives because of the continent’s vast renewable energy resources, particularly solar energy. However, investment in energy infrastructure has been below the expected levels due to many countries’ challenging economic and political landscapes. The International Energy Agency (IEA) *Africa Energy Outlook 2022* estimated that the continent needs \$25 billion a year in investment to deliver universal energy access by 2030 (5). For reference, Africa received just under \$100 billion from 2016 to 2020, but 70% was dedicated to oil and gas projects for foreign offtake (6). Additionally, 90% of investment went to 10 countries, with South Africa alone accounting for 40%.

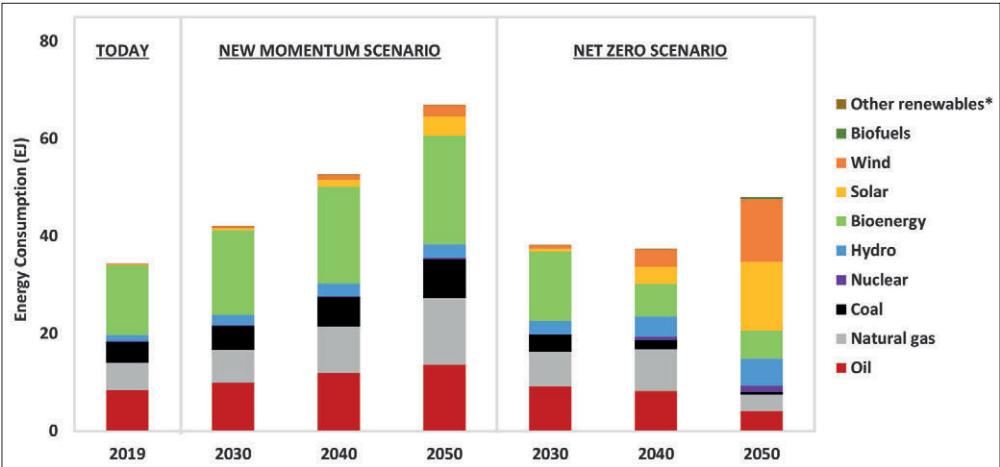


Figure 1. Projections of energy consumption in Africa from 2019 to 2050 under different climate action scenarios. ('New Momentum' represents the trajectory that the world is on currently. 'Net Zero' represents the trajectory needed to achieve carbon neutrality globally by 2050) (7).

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an environmental treaty established in 1992 to combat dangerous climate change. The treaty has a near-universal membership of 198 countries whose leaders meet annually to discuss the convention's implementation during the Conference of the Parties (COP). The UNFCCC is the parent treaty to the Paris Agreement, under which countries must submit their plans to contribute to delivering the target, called the nationally determined contributions (NDCs). At the most recent COP in Glasgow, 12 African countries, including Nigeria, made deeper decarbonisation pledges by committing to delivering net zero emissions between 2050 and 2070 (8). Achieving net zero emissions on the continent would require fossil fuel use to reduce from 53% of energy consumption today to 17% in 2050, as shown in figure 1. Similarly, reliance on traditional biomass must fall from 42% to 12% of consumption. Clean energy sources (excluding bioenergy) [shall] displace these incumbent energy sources and contribute 71% of consumption by mid-century.

Although African countries have broadly aligned with progressive climate action rhetoric on the international stage, they have reiterated that action is contingent on receiving international financial and capacity-building support. At COP26 [in Glasgow], African delegates protested the failure of high-income countries to meet their commitment to delivering \$100 billion annually in climate finance to poorer countries, many of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. The African Group of Negotiators requested that figure be revised to \$700 billion annually for the continent because investment in climate resilience is needed before they can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (9). However, other expert analyses suggest that this figure is closer to \$250 billion per year (10). Developed countries pledged to ramp up support to meet the shortfall in climate finance, but this will have to be seen in the coming years. In 2020, total domestic and international climate finance to Africa was \$30 billion, just 12% of what is needed.

COP26 also oversaw the signing of the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) between the governments of South Africa, the UK, the US, France, Germany, and the EU. The JETP is a framework to accelerate South Africa's decarbonisation efforts through clean energy investments into the electricity system and community support to repurpose livelihoods dependent on the coal industry. It is expected to avoid 1–1.5 gigatonnes of carbon emissions over the next 20 years. The signatories made an initial commitment of \$8.5 billion over three to five years through various mechanisms, including grants, concessional and non-concessional, and public and private finance (11). The partnership has been heralded as a potential template for high-income countries to support equitable energy transitions across Africa.

Since COP26, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has brought uncertainty to the global energy transition because of a renewed momentum to guarantee energy security, potentially at the cost of slower decarbonisation. Thus, assessing what this paradigm shift means for Africa and its nascent energy transition is crucial.

What Has the Impact of the Conflict on Energy Markets Been?

Russia is a leading producer and exporter of crude oil, natural gas, and coal, making it critical to international energy markets (see figure 2). Thus, any disruption to its ability to produce or export these commodities significantly impacts the availability and prices of energy globally. The EU is most affected by any supply disruptions from Russia because of its dependence on Russia for energy imports, particularly natural gas, which is critical for heating, electricity, and industry. In 2021, the region imported 155 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas from Russia, equivalent to about 40%

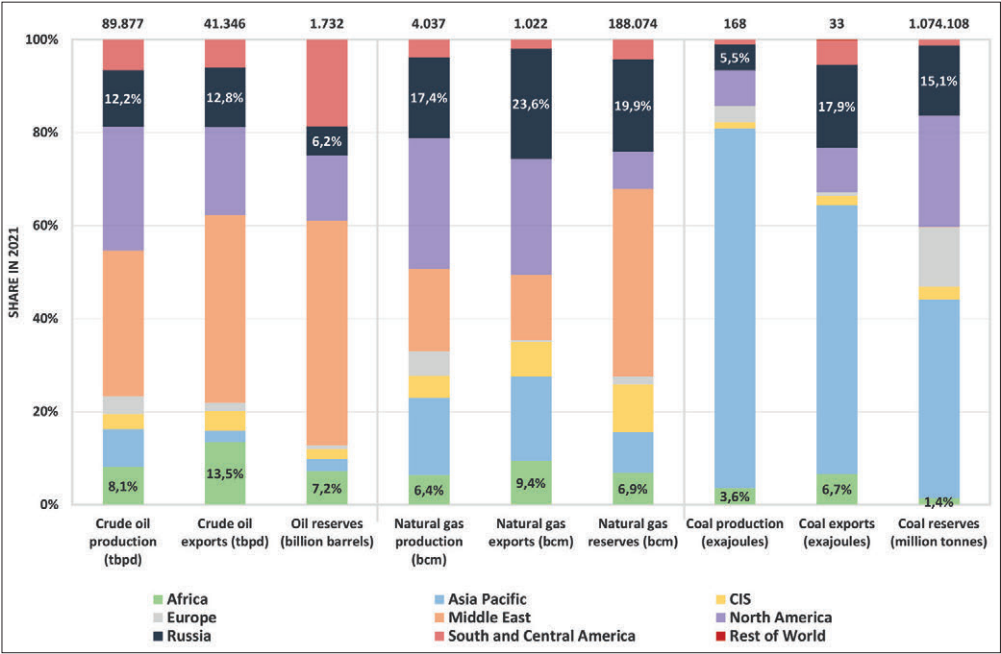


Figure 2. Russian share of production, exports, and reserves of major energy commodities in 2021. (Totals are shown at the top of each column (16). Coal reserves include anthracite, bituminous, sub-bituminous, and lignite coal. Natural gas reserves are as of the end of 2020. Key: tbpd—thousands of barrels per day; bcm—billions of cubic metres; exajoules—a unit of energy.)

of its consumption. Despite this dependence, the European Council has maintained unequivocal support for Ukraine throughout the conflict and attempted to put the Russian economy under pressure through individual and economic sanctions to restrict access to EU financial markets and services and suspend other trade and diplomatic relations (12).

In May 2022, the EU announced plans to end its reliance on fossil fuel imports from Russia by 2027. Shortly after, in June, the bloc imposed a total embargo on Russian oil imports (13). Although enforcement is not expected until 2023, European buyers have begun to seek alternative supplies by boosting oil and gas imports from West Africa and Latin America (14). Many businesses are also 'self-sanctioning' by refusing to participate in trade with Russian entities. In addition, the US announced a ban on Russian oil and gas imports in March. However, impacts are much less significant, with only 8% of oil and gas imports coming from Russia (15).

In retaliation for sanctions, Russia ordered 'unfriendly countries' to pay for their imports in roubles, which could violate EU sanctions. Bulgaria, Finland, and Poland subsequently had their gas supply from Russia stopped for failure to meet this demand (17). In early September, after months of reduced flows, [the Russian natural gas production company] Gazprom also halted gas supplied through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline under the pretext of technical faults. The Kremlin has asked for sanctions to be lifted before flows can resume. Natural gas markets are not as well-integrated as oil markets because they are mainly exported through pipelines, so supply cannot be quickly reallocated to other buyers. As for oil sales, Russia has been forced to sell its crude to India and China, often at a discount and with added shipping costs to Asian markets (18). Nonetheless, higher oil and gas prices have meant Russian energy export revenues were \$337.5 billion for the year to date, a 38% increase compared to 2021.

While the EU can resort to global liquefied natural gas (LNG) markets to compensate for the lost Russian supply, the region does not have sufficient infrastructure to import enough LNG or distribute it from coastal import facilities to farther countries in the EU. The export capacity of LNG suppliers such as the US and Qatar has nearly been reached, with new capacity requiring investment and time to be realised (see figures 3 and 4). For context, building an LNG export terminal takes three to four years (20). Furthermore, many LNG suppliers are locked into long-term contracts with other buyers, so there isn't enough spare capacity to meet EU demand. The trade infrastructure needed, liquefaction plants and LNG tankers, take between three and five years to build. Consequently, the continent has a gas shortage, with prices soaring to all-time highs.

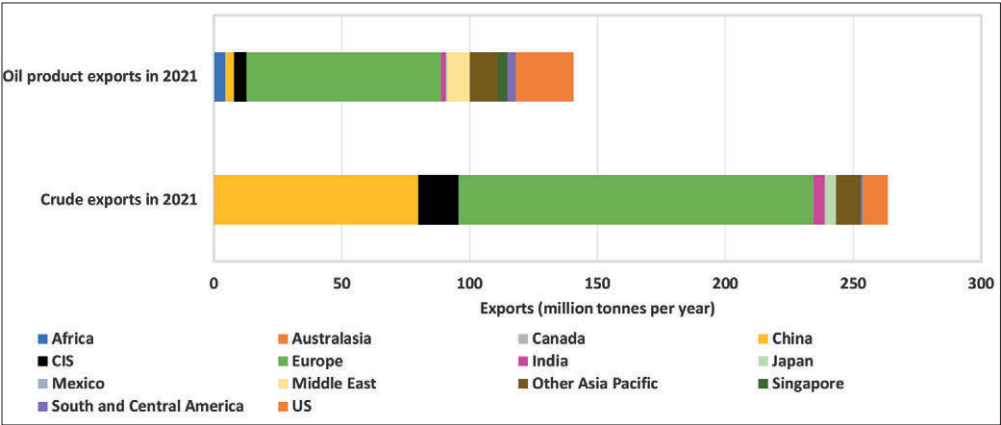


Figure 3. Destinations for Russian crude oil and refined oil product exports in 2021 (19).

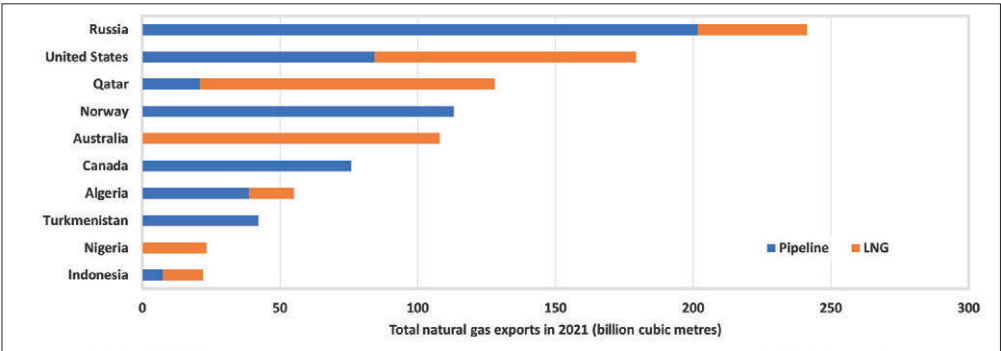


Figure 4. Major natural gas exporting countries in 2021 (19).

Impact on Africa and Nigeria

Africa’s response to the war in Europe has been divided. At the UN vote to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, 27 African states voted in favour of the resolution (21). Eritrea was the sole vote against it, while the remaining states chose to abstain or were absent. Despite no direct dependence on Russian energy, the continent’s energy sector has felt adverse effects of the war because it is a net importer of refined petroleum products. In 2021, Africa imported 2.5 million barrels equivalent of petroleum products compared to 1.2 million barrels of exports (22). Crude oil prices spiked from pandemic lows to over \$100/barrel shortly after the conflict erupted (see figure 5). Consequently, the prices of petroleum products (kerosene, petrol, and diesel) rose and fuelled inflation in many African economies. Protests about fuel

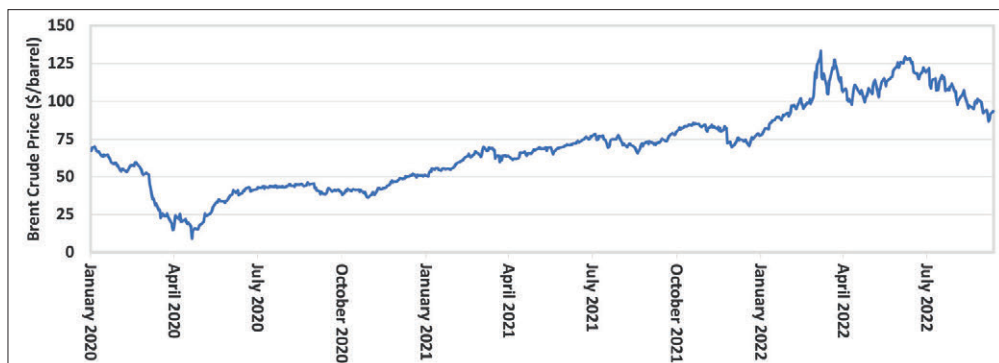


Figure 5. Brent crude oil prices since 2020.

prices across Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa were evidence of the economic hardship resulting from the war-induced energy crisis. Higher food prices have compounded this in part because of Ukraine's inability to export grains to African markets (23).

Nigeria accounts for a quarter of Africa's refined petroleum product imports because of its almost non-existent refining capacity despite being a significant oil producer (24). The expected revenue boost from higher oil prices has been offset by dwindling production because of maturing oil fields and rampant oil theft. In August 2022, OPEC's monthly oil market report stated that Nigeria's production had fallen to 980,000 barrels per day (bpd), down from a peak of 1.8 million bpd in 2019 (25). These higher crude prices have been felt disproportionately in local energy markets. Petrol remains heavily subsidised, so the energy crisis has resulted in a burgeoning subsidy bill for the state but has not been passed on to consumers. Diesel markets, however, have been deregulated since 2013, so the prices have increased in line with international trends. Diesel prices have quadrupled since the start of the year. With most residential and commercial consumers dependent on diesel generators to compensate for poor electricity supply from the grid, there has been a significant increase in Nigerians' energy bills—a report showed that electricity costs had almost tripled (26). Therefore, Nigeria has principally been adversely impacted by the energy crisis.

What Measures Are Being Taken to Minimise Disruption from the Conflict?

The European response to the energy crisis brought on by the war on their doorstep is detailed in REPowerEU, their new strategy to eliminate

dependence on Russian fossil fuels (27). The plan will channel €210 billion of additional investment to achieve three objectives:

1. Diversification of energy supplies
2. Energy demand reduction through widespread energy efficiency measures
3. The accelerated rollout of renewable energy

This plan is already in motion as several projects to increase the EU's LNG import infrastructure in the coming years are being agreed upon. Twenty-five of these will be floating storage and regasification units (FSRUs), which are quicker to build than permanent onshore import facilities (28). In the interim, the EU has increased LNG imports from the US, Norway, Algeria, and Azerbaijan to make up for Russian imports (see figure 6). The bloc is also courting gas-rich countries in Africa to forge partnerships that guarantee long-term supply. For example, in September, the EU sent additional military support to Mozambique, the world's third-largest proven gas reserves owner, because of an ongoing conflict that threatens LNG projects in the country. The German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, also visited Senegal to discuss potential developments at their gas field opening in 2023 (29).

Other gas-exporting countries are also looking to take advantage of the commercial opportunity resulting from the EU's gas shortage. Recently, Nigeria and Morocco signed an MOU [memorandum of understanding] for a 5,600 km gas pipeline project that will traverse 13 African countries to transport Nigerian gas to Morocco, where it will connect to the existing Maghreb pipeline, which supplies gas from Algeria (via Morocco) to Spain (30). On the demand side, the EU has mandated a 15% reduction in gas demand this winter, with exceptions made for some countries' unique circumstances. Finally, the bloc has increased its target share of renewable energy to 45% by 2030. Part of this will include deploying 600 GW of solar power and rapid scaling of hydrogen production and imports to 20 million tonnes annually.

Given its geopolitical influence and ability to mobilise large amounts of capital, the trajectory of the EU energy sector is likely to have effects beyond its borders, especially in Africa. The EU is Africa's biggest trading partner and source of foreign direct investment (FDI) (32). Thus, it is essential to understand what Europe's energy strategy could mean for Africa's energy sector, particularly for the clean energy transition it has been encouraged to pursue.

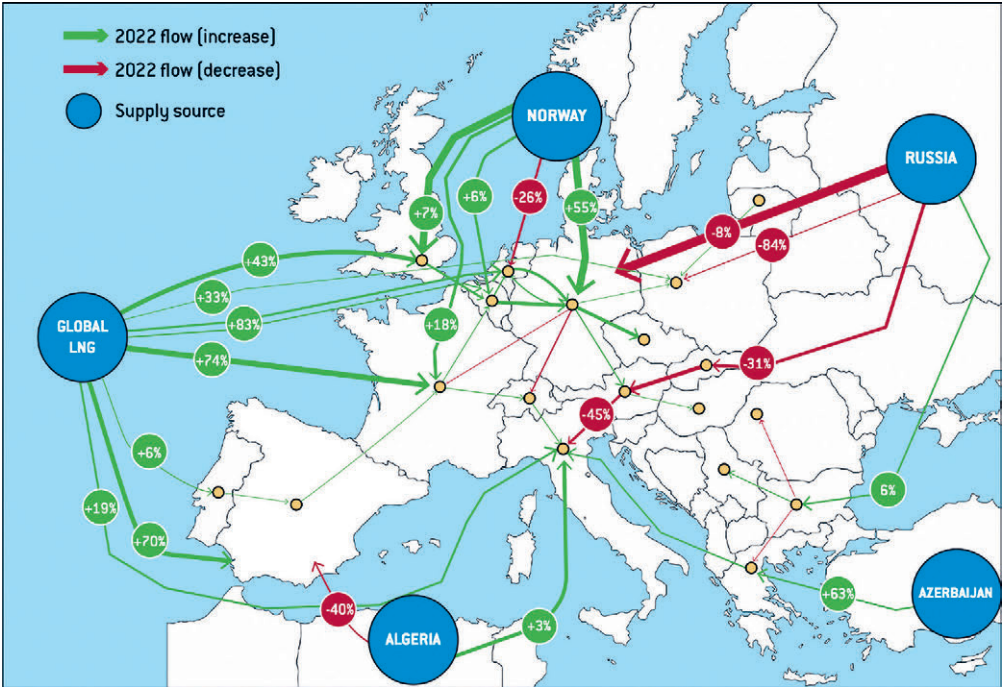


Figure 6. Largest flows of natural gas around the European market and selected smaller flows. (Arrowheads indicate direction, while arrow width indicates size of 2022 flow. Shown are the first half of 2022 vs. the first half of 2021) (31).

What Do These Measures Mean for Africa’s Energy Transition?

The EU’s boycott of Russian energy has ramped up fossil fuel use in the region. Coal imports are up 7% compared to last year, and power plants that had been closed are having their lifetimes extended (33). The new energy strategy has prompted concerns about the clean energy transition that was supposed to see a steep decline in fossil fuel use, particularly coal, the most polluting fuel. However, given the potential social unrest that could result from energy shortages and price hikes, energy security has leapfrogged climate change as Europe’s top priority, at least in the short term. Commentary on what this new paradigm means for the clean energy transition has primarily forecast two futures. First is a scenario where the EU’s need to secure alternative oil and gas supplies encourages upstream activity in the industry and prolongs the global energy system’s reliance on fossil fuels, thus slowing decarbonisation. Second is a scenario where fossil fuel imports are seen as detrimental to energy security, so a more aggressive push for renewables is made.

Although these visions are portrayed as divergent, they are not mutually exclusive as they could occur on different timelines. Instead, they confirm experts' assertions that the clean energy transition will be turbulent and non-linear, with apparent periods of regression as energy supply chains and the geopolitics attached to them are reshaped for a low-carbon future (34). EU leaders have given credence to this narrative as they emphasise that the temporary increase in fossil fuel use will not be at the expense of climate action (35). One of the ways it hopes to guarantee this is by building fossil fuel infrastructure that can be repurposed to serve decarbonisation efforts. For example, Germany is building LNG terminals that can also be used to import ammonia and hydrogen; both are vital green fuels to decarbonise Europe's industry and heating sectors (36). Additionally, the REPowerEU plan previously discussed includes ambitious targets for solar energy, wind energy, heat pumps, and bioenergy deployment across the region, all backed by a massive investment package.

Therefore, rather than considering the implications for Africa's energy transition in two distinct scenarios, we should assess Africa's potential role in a future that melds both: a near-term ramp-up of fossil fuel use and a later acceleration of clean energy transformation globally. This conflict is an opportune moment for Africa as its diverse geography and vast natural resources present many opportunities to contribute to a more energy-secure world within and outside its borders.

Opportunities: Increased Support for Oil and Gas Exploration in Africa

The most obvious opportunity for African countries in the aftermath of the Russia–Ukraine war is to ramp up natural gas exports to meet the higher demand from the EU as they shun Russian energy. The continent already accounts for 15% of the EU's gas imports, primarily from LNG from Algeria and Nigeria. Before the end of 2022, the EU plans to reduce gas imports from Russia by two-thirds. In theory, there should be scope to expand African gas exports to Europe by fully utilising existing export capacity, which would add 65 bcm to exports. However, this is challenging because the largest spare capacity exists in Algeria, where domestic demand growth has outstripped that of production (37). So net exports have fallen as a result. Nigeria is also already locked into long-term supply contracts to other markets, so redirecting exports to the EU isn't feasible. Additionally, maturing gas fields, a lack of investment in new supply and poor maintenance in the

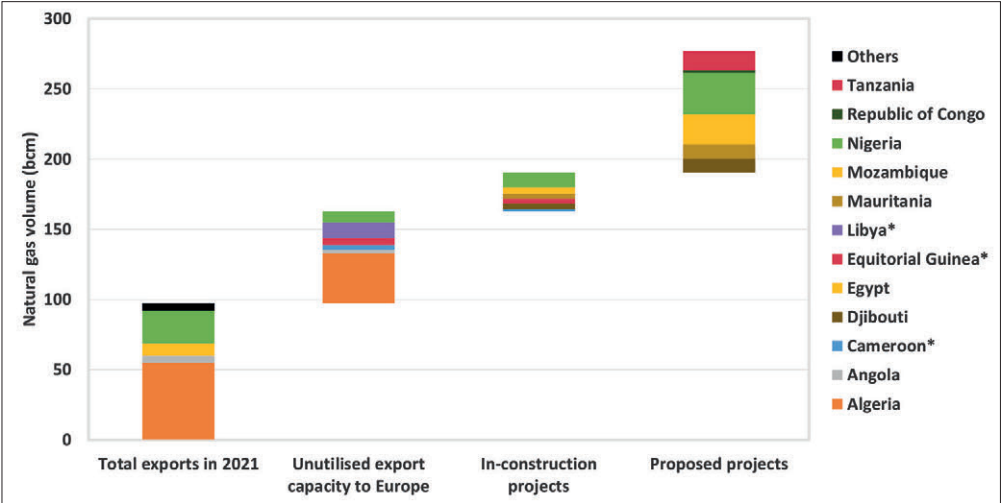


Figure 7. Current, in-construction, and planned natural gas export projects in Africa. (*Included in others in 2021 exports category.)

major producers, Algeria and Nigeria, make this challenging to realise currently (38).

In the longer term, however, there are many opportunities for expanded exports from the continent. A flurry of deals has already been signed, indicating this potential. For example, Eni recently signed an agreement with Algeria to gradually increase exports through the TransMed pipeline by 9 bcm in 2023–2024, and another with Egypt to boost LNG exports by 3 bcm next year (33). Furthermore, Nigeria LNG’s Train 7 expansion, which cost an estimated \$10 billion, is set to add about 10 bcm of export capacity by 2026. In addition, a \$50 billion investment by ExxonMobil and Anadarko is planned in Mozambique after a massive gas find that made it the holder of the world’s third-largest reserves (39).

There has been a revival of African pipeline projects connecting to the European gas network, such as the Trans-Saharan pipeline between Nigeria and Algeria (via Niger) and the Nigeria–Morocco pipeline, which will cost an estimated \$25 billion (40). With many prospective projects, Africa is primed to attract investment to expand its natural gas production and export potential and replace at least some Russian exports to the EU (see figure 7 and table 1). Africa, however, cannot replace these imports anytime soon for the reasons mentioned above. Additionally, it would need to address the challenges of attracting investment and creating an enabling environment for these projects to be executed successfully and in time to take advantage of the demand from the EU.

Table 1. List of major upcoming natural gas export projects in Africa

Projects	Scale (mtpa)	Location	Cost (\$ bn)	Due
Coral South FLNG	3.4	Mozambique	7	H2 2022
Rovuma Area 1 LNG Trains 1&2	43	Mozambique	20	2026/27
Rovuma Area 4 LNG Trains 1&2	15.2	Mozambique		2029
NLNG Train 7	8	Nigeria	10	2026
Greater Tortue Ahmeyim FLNG Phase 1	2.5	Senegal–Mauritania	4.6	Q3 2023
Marine XII Fast LNG	1.4	Congo	2	Q2 2023
Trans-Saharan Pipeline	20	Nigeria–Niger–Morocco	~13–20	TBC
Nigeria–Morocco Pipeline	TBC	13 countries	~20	>20 yrs

Key: Mtpa—millions of tonnes per annum

The opportunity for Africa's oil exploration is less clear than for natural gas because oil trade patterns have been easier to redirect, so there are fewer concerns about a shortage. Additionally, China's continued lockdowns have limited its economic recovery since the pandemic and limited global oil demand growth, so there is less competition in the market.

Opportunities: Increased Demand for Critical Minerals for Clean Energy Technologies

Technologies vital to the clean energy transition, such as solar photovoltaics (PV), wind turbines, and electric vehicles (EVs), require significantly more mineral inputs than their fossil fuel-based alternatives. Batteries used with solar PV or in EVs need cobalt, graphite, lithium, manganese, and nickel. Wind turbines rely on cobalt, copper, manganese, and nickel, among other minerals. An International Energy Agency (IEA) report showed that a typical EV uses six times the mineral inputs of a conventional car. An onshore wind plant requires nine times more mineral resources than a gas-fired plant (41). So, as the EU and others accelerate rapid decarbonisation, there will be a surge in demand for these minerals. In an IEA scenario where the Paris Agreement's targets are achieved, demand is expected to rise by 40% for copper, 60–70% for nickel, and almost 90% for lithium by 2040 (32).

Russia holds the world's fourth-largest supply of rare earth elements and is a significant producer of copper, nickel, and platinum (44). Africa already

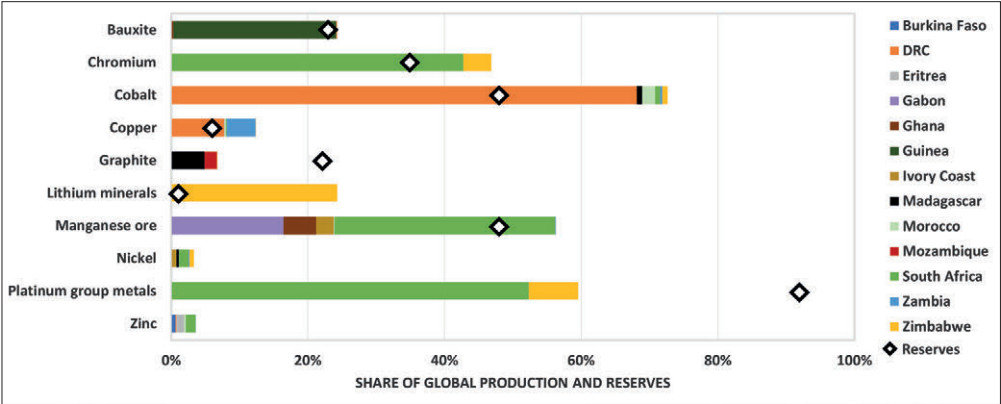


Figure 8. Africa’s share of global production and reserves of selected critical minerals for the clean energy transition. (Note that countries with less than 0.5% of global production have been excluded for clarity (42, 43). Also, only proven reserves for countries are shown; preliminary findings show Africa could hold more of the world’s reserves, including up to half of bauxite and chromium reserves.)

contributes significantly to global mineral production and possesses vast reserves (see figure 8). The US and others are already exploring investments in African mining to diversify energy supply chains away from Russia. The clean energy transition thus presents an opportunity to increase mineral production on the continent and establish new industries. In addition, Africa can leverage its resource base to move away from extractive development models by pursuing value-addition activities (refining and active material production) in-country and localising the supply chain for some of these critical minerals and technologies.

Southern and Central Africa stand to gain the most from such an approach, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Zimbabwe contributing high shares of cobalt, lithium, and platinum production and holding vast reserves. As a result, these countries can position themselves as important to the success of clean energy transformation and solicit investment on those grounds. Furthermore, mining activity often requires improvements in infrastructure beyond the resource extraction itself, including transport and power supply. Thus, the sector can be an avenue for investment in other public services that could benefit the wider society. However, in 2021, Africa received less than a tenth of global mining investment (45). This would need to be ramped up significantly to realise the opportunity.

Opportunities: Redefine the Narrative for a 'Just Transition' That Gives Africa Agency in Decision-making

At COP26, the EU supported a ban on public financing for new fossil fuel investments abroad, signalling its commitment to accelerate international climate action. However, the current energy crisis has forced the bloc to search for alternative supplies to Russian energy and increase the use of dirtier fuels such as coal. Additionally, the European Commission reclassified natural gas use as an 'environmentally sustainable economic activity', presumably because of its necessity for energy availability and affordability. The region's leaders have also revived oil diplomacy, with many visiting African countries offering partnerships and support for gas development. The US has supported the EU in these efforts with increased LNG exports to the region. John Kerry, the US climate envoy, called gas a transition fuel that will continue to be needed, walking back past comments he has previously made against gas development (46). These decisions have highlighted inconsistency in the EU and US's rhetoric and policy regarding fossil fuel use and revealed their willingness to deprioritise climate change to guarantee societal welfare, albeit temporarily.

This trade-off between immediate climate action and tackling urgent social or developmental challenges through increased fossil fuel use also exists in many African countries. Yet, the EU maintained their stance despite deep frustrations voiced by African leaders, including the presidents of Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda. Moreover, tight fiscal conditions leave Africa unable to finance its infrastructural development and determine its energy transition pathways. Instead, it is often beholden to policies enacted by rich countries, as this energy crisis has revealed. African leaders should capitalise on this moment to expose the hypocrisy in climate action narratives coming from the West and advocate against restrictive policies on financing fossil fuel projects that may be necessary on the continent. A fairer approach to the 'just transition' is needed, considering Africa's developmental context and negligible contribution to climate change.

Challenges: Stranded Fossil Fuel Assets and Lack of Investment in Infrastructure for Domestic Consumption

Oil and gas markets have historically been cyclical and vulnerable to commodity boom-and-bust cycles. The effects of the pandemic and now supply shocks from the Russia–Ukraine conflict have only served to increase price

volatility. The conflict is constantly evolving, so there is no certainty about how geopolitical tensions will reshape energy trade relations. Oil prices are already retreating from their peak earlier in the year, and gas prices are expected to follow suit after the winter. Furthermore, as the EU and other advanced economies accelerate their clean energy transitions and new renewable energy projects come online, there could be significantly lower demand for oil and gas in the future. These trends suggest that the high-price environment needed to recoup the large investments in African oil and gas exploration is unlikely to be sustained in the long term. Rushing to approve these projects thus poses the risk of stranded assets—that is, assets that will be unusable or become liabilities before their economic lifetime—or lock-in to carbon emissions that will affect their future economic competitiveness. African countries need to assess the viability of their proposed projects in the low-price and low-demand environments that could materialise and not fall prey to what may be hype following the war in Europe.

Challenges: Managing the Environmental and Social Impacts of the Extractives Industry

Fossil fuel production activities in Africa have historically led to environmental degradation, human rights abuses (such as the use of child labour), insurgency, and social unrest. Investors are increasingly concerned about environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) and are sceptical about investing in countries that cannot uphold standards. Many African countries are underperforming on ESG issues because of poor regulatory environments and complex socio-political dynamics. Furthermore, climate-conscious investors are looking to fund oil and gas projects with low emissions footprints. In this regard, Middle Eastern producers such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar emit less for their oil and gas than African producers because of the methane leakage and flaring that occurs in the latter. A failure to limit the risks and emissions associated with upstream projects will hinder investment and lead to the continent failing to capitalise on its resources. For example, it has been reported that \$160 billion of investment in Nigeria's oil and gas sector is at risk from a failure to meet ESG standards (47).

Challenges: A Slowdown of Energy Investment in Africa

Russia is an active investor and operator of several oil and gas assets across Africa through Gazprom, Lukoil, Rosneft, and Tatneft. The sanctions placed on the Russian state and key commercial entities could affect their ability to execute projects. For example, it is estimated that 173,000 barrels of daily oil production from projects co-financed by Lukoil in Ghana, Congo, and Equatorial Guinea, are threatened by sanctions (48). Rosatom, Russia's state corporation for atomic energy, has also engaged African governments (Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania, amongst others) to mine uranium or build nuclear power plants. It is currently building a plant in Egypt and an atomic energy research centre in Namibia (49). In 2021, it signed an agreement with Nigeria to develop nuclear power projects on a build–operate–transfer basis. Russian investment is often backed by cheap financing and long-term agreements for fuel supply and nuclear waste disposal (50). Clean energy technologies require more upfront capital investment, which is offset over time by lower operating costs. Thus, financing costs must be kept low to ensure projects are affordable (51). High energy prices are fuelling inflation globally, leading to interest rate hikes. The cost of capital for African projects, which was already higher than in developed countries, has been exacerbated by recent inflationary pressures (52). Therefore, financing is a more prohibitive barrier to investment now, which makes losing access to cheap financing from Russia more detrimental.

In contrast, Western governments have shown less appetite for funding large infrastructure projects in Africa in recent years. For nuclear power specifically, they have concerns surrounding non-civil uses (53). Thus, the possibility of losing Russia as a financier leaves the continent further handicapped in being able to develop nuclear power, which is a low-carbon technology that could advance decarbonisation efforts. It could also delay many planned oil and gas exploration activities that could bring much-needed revenues to their host states.

Challenges: Security

The states well-positioned to take advantage of the gas rush are also plagued by myriad security challenges. Active armed conflicts include widespread banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria, insurgency in Mozambique and the Sahel (where proposed pipeline routes cross), and ethnic conflict in Cameroon. Natural resource exploration has previously sparked or exacerbated such situations, with insurgents threatening commercial activity and

forcing companies to leave in some cases—for example, Nigeria's Niger Delta militancy campaign in the 2000s. An investment drive will only be successful if the security situation in these countries is improved.

Challenges: Creating an Enabling Environment for New Industry

Attracting investment in the extractives sector—whether oil and gas exploration or mining minerals—requires a combination of robust governance, transparent regulatory frameworks, adequate incentives, and infrastructure support, all of which necessitate strengthening the capacity of local authorities to design, monitor, and regulate resource development regimes (54). Furthermore, to ensure maximum local job creation and value addition, there needs to be a skilled local workforce to participate in these emerging industries. Unfortunately, this is lacking in many African countries because of underdeveloped education sectors, thus posing a challenge to localising workforces.

Recommendations for Nigeria

The clear opportunity for Nigeria from the Russia–Ukraine conflict is to increase energy exports, particularly natural gas, to the EU and establish stronger trade relations. The bloc is already the leading destination (55) for Nigerian LNG. In 2021, 12.63 bcm (54%) of the 23.3 bcm exported by Nigeria LNG (NLNG), a joint venture that is 49% owned by the federal government, went to Europe (56). However, redirecting exports from other countries like Turkey to the EU is not feasible because of long-term contractual supply agreements. So, more exports would have to come from increased utilisation of existing infrastructure or new export capacity. Increasing utilisation is currently hindered by technical issues that prevented the rapid return of certain reservoirs shut due to the country's OPEC production restrictions (52). However, NLNG is already expanding its export potential from 31 to 41 bcm by 2026 through its Train 7 project and exploring the feasibility of building five more trains.

Nigeria does not possess the mineral wealth of its southern African counterparts. Recent data shows that the country only significantly contributed about 0.2% to the global supply of two critical minerals, lithium and zinc. Experts have suggested that greater mineral deposits exist in the region, but without further prospecting, it is impossible to ascertain their volumes and commercial viability. The Minister for Mines and Steel Development,

Olamilekan Adegbite, recently announced that the government had rejected a bid by the electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla to mine lithium in Nigeria because they refused to site a battery-making factory in the country (57). Tesla's interest indicates that, although Nigeria's current production levels are modest, there is a commercial opportunity to scale the industry.

As described above, there are several paths forward to take advantage of the opportunities created by the energy crisis in Europe. However, for each to be realised, several challenges must be overcome. The recommendations below describe how Nigeria may look to overcome these challenges and create economic prosperity from the opportunities.

For Government

Build a coherent national energy strategy. A clean energy transition is undoubtedly underway globally. However, the rate and scale of decarbonisation will depend not only on technology, economics, and policy but also on geopolitical relations, as the Russia–Ukraine conflict has revealed. Nigeria must assess its potential roles in the different energy futures that may emerge in the short and long terms. Unfortunately, the country lacks a coherent energy strategy that charts its energy transition pathway. Plans such as the 2017 National Gas Policy and the 2022 Energy Transition Plan are often too high-level and not backed by credible investment plans. They also fail to account for external factors that may impact the feasibility of implementing them, for example, what a ban on fossil fuel finance or stringent carbon pricing regulation may mean for Nigeria's ability to build that type of energy infrastructure. A coherent energy plan should assess what the changes in technology availability and costs, supply chains, and international policy environment will mean for Nigeria's optimal energy transition—that is, a transition that will boost energy access alongside other development indices such as job creation and environmental quality.

Invest in geological surveys. West Africa remains one of the least-explored regions for mineral resources due to inadequate geological mapping, despite expert analysis that suggests the region holds considerable mineral wealth (58). The centrality of critical minerals such as lithium, which Nigeria possesses, to the energy transition, presents an avenue to realise natural resource wealth beyond the declining oil and gas sector. The government should intensify geological mapping efforts and build the capacity of its geological survey agency, perhaps through knowledge-sharing and collaboration with

more established agencies. Attracting investment will be challenging, as Africa's share of exploration spending has consistently declined since 2014, in contrast with growing exploration activities in other regions. However, state involvement will signal commitment and attract other investors.

Strengthen domestic infrastructure for gas use. Perhaps the greatest risk to oil and gas investment is that of stranded assets. Fossil fuel infrastructure that will serve export markets will be vulnerable to the climate policy pursued in those countries. The energy transition will reduce demand and increase price volatility in energy commodities. Furthermore, any reversal of geopolitical tensions could lead to prices falling. Consequently, the demand and high prices needed to justify investment in some natural gas projects may not be sustained in the long term. For context, NLNG's Train 7 project, which reached the final investment decision (FID) stage in 2019, will not begin operation until 2026. It would have taken over a decade to develop and build the project. Therefore, to insulate itself against potentially lower demand from export markets, Nigeria should strengthen its domestic gas distribution and consumption infrastructure. The government has kick-started initiatives to increase compressed natural gas (CNG) for transport, increase gas-to-power, and explore establishing a hydrogen economy (which can be made from natural gas). However, the policies or incentives needed to achieve these have been unsuccessful or insufficient. Many of the barriers are broader regulatory issues that have hindered the improvement of power supply, 75% of which comes from natural gas power plants. Thus, resolving the problems in the sector will be critical to enabling domestic gas use.

As oil and gas are internationally traded commodities, it is unlikely that local consumption will insulate Nigeria from their price volatility without price caps or other forms of intervention, even if local refining capacity is increased. For example, the US is the world's largest oil producer, yet it experienced record petrol prices at the pump because crude oil prices were high. Only a reduced reliance on fossil fuels will limit vulnerability to volatility. Renewable energy has had some success in Nigeria, mainly through rural mini-grids and small-scale solar appliances, because of an improved regulatory environment and generous donor support from multilateral institutions. However, further strengthening the enabling environment for renewable energy adoption is needed to add to existing achievements in the sector.

Create an enabling environment. Robust regulatory and governance frameworks, better ease of doing business, improved power and transport

infrastructure, and an adequately skilled workforce are needed to create a thriving extractives sector—and indeed, any sector that requires large investments and infrastructure support. Nigeria's failure to achieve any of these is well-documented elsewhere and will not be repeated here. However, a serious push to take advantage of the opportunities in the natural gas and critical minerals sector will require more efforts to remove the barriers to attracting investment, not just lip service from leaders. Elsewhere on the continent, countries are working to create a more conducive business environment for mining investments. For example, in 2022, DRC and Zambia set up a common governance structure—the DRC–Zambia Battery Council—to facilitate the development of a local battery value chain. Nigeria can look to its southern African neighbours that have established mining industries for support with technical assistance, capacity-building, and governance standards to develop its ambitions.

It is also easier to establish extractive industries dependent on foreign investment and labour because of the local financing and skills shortages. However, failing to have an industrial policy that prioritises local value addition and job creation could leave the industry vulnerable to external factors. The divestments occurring in Nigeria's oil and gas sector today and disrupting production activities exemplify this vulnerability.

For the Private Sector

The private sector's primary role is to mobilise capital for enterprise and create jobs. African governments often face dire fiscal conditions, so they cannot finance large infrastructure projects alone. In addition, private investment is needed to scale many new industries emerging from the clean energy transition. In Nigeria, local banks have been hesitant to lend to new ventures, preferring established commercial players such as large oil and gas companies. They need to have an appetite to explore these new opportunities in the mining sector and develop new financing solutions to deliver infrastructure development in partnership with the state. Finally, the private sector should outline the incentives and policies they need to thrive in these industries to serve as a roadmap for government strategy.

For the Media

Avoid prescriptive narratives. The clean energy transition will occur at varying rates and scales in different countries. As the EU's situation indicates, the transition is unlikely to be linear, even within countries or regions. Unfortunately, much media commentary often uses individual energy or climate policy decisions as the basis of their analysis of the progress being made globally. An example is the recent coverage of the EU's search for gas to replace Russian imports, but little mention of the accelerated scale-up of renewable energy capacity before 2030. Such reporting leads to misunderstanding and, sometimes, stokes unwarranted negative sentiment against the clean energy transition in developing countries. Instead, media outlets must consider new events within the context of past decisions and trends to understand their implications accurately.

Furthermore, the world is experiencing rapid technological, social, and political changes. Populations are becoming more climate-conscious, entrenched political systems are being challenged, and the digital age continues to disrupt existing norms and industries. Consequently, it is near impossible to make accurate predictions on a short timescale. Therefore, the media should avoid forecasts that are overly prescriptive or dependent on the status quo enduring.

Separate reporting from advocacy. Many Africans rightfully feel marginalised in climate and energy transition discourse because their challenges often go unaddressed. This comes through in much African reporting on these issues. Authors sometimes blur the line between reporting events and advocating for particular perspectives in trying to voice the concerns of Africans. While this is sometimes necessary, it can quickly introduce bias or overly emotional arguments in the accounts offered. This makes it hard for a reader that doesn't hold the same perspective to be convinced. The media should strive to be more objective in reporting on African energy transitions. Furthermore, there needs to be a better balance in advocating for international support for Africa's energy transition and critiquing inaction by African governments on the topic.

Build knowledge of the underlying science. Energy systems are complex, and in understanding how they will transform, there needs to be some knowledge of how the technologies that constitute them work, the supply chains and industries that they are dependent on, and how they interact when connected to deliver energy services. This knowledge is sometimes

missing in media reporting and leads to poor analyses of countries' energy policies. An example of this is the news articles encouraging Nigeria to build out large-scale solar plants to improve power supply immediately without recognising how poor transmission infrastructure hinders that. The media must educate itself in the basic science of energy technologies, networks, and trade to improve the quality of reportage and analysis.

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Russia's Full-scale Invasion of Ukraine: Impacts on China's Climate Responsibility in the Arctic

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Editorial Note

This text was published on 21 November 2023 on the website of the Arctic Institute.¹ The Arctic Institute is an NGO based in Washington, DC. It describes itself as 'the region's preeminent think-and-do-tank', focusing on 'promoting diverse voices, knowledge, and new ideas on Arctic policy'.

The AR6 [Sixth Assessment Report] synthesis report published in March 2023 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underlines yet again the hurry we are in regarding climate change mitigation: the window for halting the warming of the globe to 1.5°C is closing rapidly (1). The Arctic, a highly vulnerable region to climate change (2), is impacted not only by the actions of the major emitters but also by the geopolitical tensions accelerated by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. China plays a crucial role in both of these contexts due to its roles as the greatest emitter of greenhouse gases and the key player in international relations. The 2022 invasion challenges international collaboration, without which climate catastrophe cannot be tackled. In contrast to the seven Arctic states besides Russia (A7), China has not condemned Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It has sought to balance (3) Russia and the West, which has certainly harmed its image in the eyes of the latter. Due to these challenges, it is crucial to discuss to which extent the 2022 invasion influences the implementation of China's climate policy, particularly with a focus on the Arctic.

China's Climate Policy and the Arctic Region

China's role in global climate governance is contradictory (4). Due to its status as the world's largest carbon emitter (5), China is often framed as

¹ <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/russia-full-scale-invasion-ukraine-impacts-china-climate-responsibility-arctic/>.

climate irresponsible (6) or even a climate villain (7). Yet, there have been multiple positive developments in China's climate politics during the post-Paris era. Having ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016, China has followed the agreement's commitments by enhancing its nationally determined contribution (8) in 2021 by promising to peak its emissions before 2030. The state also submitted a long-term strategy (LTS) (9) to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) with a carbon neutrality goal for 2060 and nationally prepared a 1+N Policy Framework (10) to ensure the fulfillment of these 2030 and 2060 goals. In response to Nancy Pelosi's Taiwan visit in the summer of 2022,² China suspended Sino-American climate collaboration (11). At COP27 in Egypt in November 2022, however, the two countries seemed to be rebuilding a collaborative dialogue about climate (12).

China's increased motivation for climate action has not manifested in the Arctic context, where it has become an increasingly active stakeholder over the past decade (13). China's first-ever Arctic strategy (14) published in January 2018 did not introduce additional measures regarding the implementation of its climate responsibility, nor has China participated in international collaboration in the reduction of black carbon (15). In fact, China seems to be particularly interested in new economic opportunities in the Arctic, especially opening shipping routes and Arctic energy resources in the Russian Arctic. Undoubtedly, halting climate change requires China to enhance the ambition of its climate targets and implementation (16).

Influence of the Ukraine War on Implementing China's Climate Goals

China has framed the combination of its 2030 and 2060 mitigation goals as the effort to achieve 'the world's "sharpest drop" (17) of carbon emissions, using the "shortest time" to go from the carbon peak to carbon neutrality'. Achieving green and low-carbon transition in a relatively brief time requires, according to China's LTS, tackling more severe challenges than developed countries are facing. These challenges are visible in China's energy transition (18). With multiple indicators, China is a forerunner in renewable energy, but the continued dependency and investments in fossil fuels have caused

2 In August, Nancy Pelosi, who was speaker of the US House of Representatives at the time, travelled to Taiwan with a delegation of five Democratic Party House members. This visit was perceived as provocative by the political leadership of the People's Republic of China, which does not recognise Taiwan's independence.

speculation about the credibility of its 2030 and 2060 targets (19). China's justifications for the continued dependencies and investments include the necessity of energy security (20), the development of clean, low-carbon utilization of fossil energy, and the effort to advance carbon dioxide capture, utilization, and storage.

The contradiction between the aim to achieve the fastest drop from carbon peak to neutrality and the interest in fossil fuels has accelerated since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. China has not participated in the Western sanctions against Russia (21). Instead, the energy collaboration between the nations has intensified, and Russian exports of oil and gas to China have broken several records. In November 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that 'China is ready to work with Russia to forge a closer partnership in energy cooperation' (22). Nevertheless, in the Xi–Putin meeting in March 2023, the failure to finalize the agreement on the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline indicates that there might be a limit to the energy collaboration and China's support for Russia (23).

Influence of the Ukraine War on China's Arctic Collaboration

In the Arctic, the influence of the 2022 invasion on collaboration is clear (24). The beginning of the war in 2014³ did not yet break [the] Arctic collaboration. However, the 2022 invasion has escalated the geopolitical tensions in the Arctic: as a response to Russia's attack on Ukraine, the seven other Arctic states have refused to participate in official collaboration under the auspices of the Arctic Council (25). Consequently, many Arctic scientific projects and other collaborations have been on hold (26), and especially research on Arctic climate change has become challenging, if not impossible (27).

While Chinese scholars can continue their research collaboration with Russian colleagues, the pause of the Arctic Council during Russia's chairmanship also prevented Chinese diplomats and scientists from participating in regional collaboration (28). If the activities of the Arctic Council working groups fail to be resumed (29), there are no regional platforms where China and other non-Arctic states could contribute to regional governance and implement their political agendas in the Arctic. Without Russia's participation, however, the development of new forms of collaboration will be difficult

3 For a long time, media in Western Europe and North America overlooked that Russia's war against Ukraine began with the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of parts of eastern Ukraine in 2014. Even now, this fact is barely acknowledged.

in reducing black carbon, for instance. These challenges of collaboration, particularly in the case of prolonged war, ignore the urgency of climate change and the scarcity of the remaining carbon budget (30).

Importance of Global Climate Dialogue Between the A7 and China

Although China has refused to join the Western sanctions against Russia and the security landscape in the Arctic has changed dramatically due to militarization and NATO enlargement (31), it is important to maintain good diplomatic connections between China and the A7. For the time being, climate change is the most urgent security risk in the Arctic (32), and mitigation of adverse impacts of the climate crisis is not possible without China's participation.

After almost three years of strict coronavirus restrictions, it is again possible to meet in person and continue the dialogue at various Arctic conferences and other gatherings. Political, scientific, economic, and social collaboration is paramount to increasing trust and launching new climate change mitigation and adaptation collaborations between China and the A7. Therefore, the organization of the 8th China–Nordic Arctic Cooperation Symposium in Guangzhou, China, in December 2023 is a positive sign (33).

In light of intensifying tensions between China and the US (34), climate change seems to be one of the rare sectors of international politics where the established and rising great powers have shared interests and prospects for collaboration. The sector's importance was underlined by Xie Zhenhua, China's Special Envoy for Climate Change, in a press conference at COP26 on 10 November 2021: according to him, 'in the area of climate change, there is more agreement between China and the US than divergence making it an area with huge potential for our cooperation'.

For the sake of the resilient future of the Arctic region and the entire planet, Sino–American great power leadership on climate change should be fostered as soon as possible (35). Such dialogue is also important in maintaining international peace and security (36).

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Bullet from the Oil Needle

Pulia iz neftianoi igly

Sergei Tarkhanov

Editorial Note

The text was published on 26 February 2024 on the website of the *Smola* (Resin) project.¹ On 22 March 2024, Russia's Ministry of Justice designated the environmental outlet *Smola Media* as a foreign agent.² The article is no longer available on *Smola's* successor website. It is difficult to obtain clear and up-to-date information about the author.

Fighting climate change could be a key element in the struggle for peace in Ukraine.

Two years have passed since the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine. They have claimed thousands of lives and led to censorship in Russia, mass arrests, and the death of the country's most prominent opposition politician. The number of political prisoners in Russia, according to independent media reports, now exceeds the number of political prisoners jailed under Khrushchev³ and Brezhnev.⁴ And it is moving towards Stalin.⁵ However, a simple quantitative calculation in this case is misleading, and does not allow us to see important qualitative differences.

The authoritarianisms of the twentieth century were mobilisational in nature, and their driving force was ideology. They could not exist without active grassroots support. Soviet writer Sergei Dovlatov's famous phrase

1 Sergei Tarkhanov, 'Pulia iz neftianoi igly [Bullet from the oil needle]', *Smola*, 26 February 2024, <https://smola.media/pulya-iz-neftyanoj-igly/>.

2 'Kirill Nabutov and Smola Media Designated as "Foreign Agents"', *International Press Institute*, 22 March 2024, <https://ipi.media/alerts/kirill-nabutov-and-smola-media-designated-as-foreign-agents/>.

3 Nikita Sergeievich Khrushchev (1894–1971), First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) from 1953 to 1964 and thus political leader of the Soviet Union.

4 After Khrushchev, Leonid Ilich Brezhnev (1906–1982) was General Secretary of the CPSU from 1960 to 1982, making him the most powerful politician in the Soviet Union.

5 This refers to the period of Joseph (Iosif) Vissarionovich Stalin's (1878–1953) rule over the Soviet Union, which lasted from 1924 until his death in 1953.

about the four million denunciations⁶ is largely mythological, but it well reflects the nature of Stalinism. This regime not only suppressed resistance but also required the population to actively support it by hunting down spies, performing labour and combat feats, and even learning to 'speak Bolshevik'. The same was true of the far-right regimes with their Jewish pogroms and Blackshirt⁷ detachments, which demonstrated the people's willingness to support their regimes with direct violence.

In the case of Putin's system, the mechanisms of political legitimacy are fundamentally different. Its basis is depoliticisation—a social contract under which the population refuses to participate in politics in exchange for economic growth and stability. The state severely punishes opposition activity, but does not require the population to express its loyalty in any action.

The outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine has triggered the opposite process: the Russian state and its narratives are being rapidly politicised. Ideology is penetrating deeply into education, officials and propagandists are forming images of internal and external enemies, public criticism of what is happening in the neighbouring country is now fraught with social ostracism, and the sphere of private life is no longer reliably protected from 'traditional values'. Despite this, the inertia of depoliticisation remains strong. A good example is the denunciations that led to hundreds of administrative and criminal prosecutions by the police between 2022 and 2023. A close analysis reveals that they cannot be seen as a manifestation of popular support for the state: the vast majority of denunciations are written by law-enforcement officials themselves or by official structures like the Safe Internet League. The same applies to combat operations. Replenishment at the front is achieved not so much at the expense of ideological fighters for the 'Russian world' as at the expense of generous payments that are promised to all those who sign a contract with the army. These material incentives are especially

6 The quote is from Sergei Donatovich Dovlatov's (1941–1990) novel *The Zone: A Prison Camp Guard's Story*. Dovlatov emigrated from the USSR to the US in 1978. The novel was first published in Russian under the title *Zona: Zapiski nadziratel'ia* (Ermitazh, 1982), followed by an English translation (Knopf, 1985). A significant portion of the novel consists of fictional correspondence, and the above quote is taken from one such letter. It refers to the denunciations that took place during Stalin's rule, when millions of Soviet citizens were imprisoned in camps under inhumane and often deadly conditions or executed outright. The full quote reads: 'We endlessly rail against Comrade Stalin—and, of course, with reason. All the same, I would like to ask—who wrote four million at the time of the Stalinist terror? (This number appeared in closed Party documents.)'

7 This refers to the paramilitary militias of the Italian Fascists during the interwar period and the Second World War. They were distinguished by the black shirts they wore as part of their uniforms.

well combined with threats of being handed down an actual sentence for evading mobilisation or desertion.

Thus, the system of governance built by Vladimir Putin is still capable of reproducing itself without mass support from the population.

Where does the system get this superpower? It is ensured by access to natural rent—super profits from the sale of energy resources on the world market.

Natural rent allows power to be maintained by relying on the apparatus of violence—an army of well-heeled and armed professionals. According to the UN, in 2019, Russia had an average of 404.4 police officers for every 100,000 people (it is one of the ‘advanced’ countries by this indicator). Since then, their number has only increased due to mobilisation and the growth of the Interior Ministry’s staff.

The political economy of the current elites is particularly strong due to the global power of hydrocarbons: the oil needle⁸ has two ends, and not only is Russia on it but so are the states that buy oil from it. That is why sanctions have failed to stop the inflow of natural rents, so necessary for the Russian authorities to continue fighting and holding on to power. In March 2022, only the United States gave up Russian hydrocarbons; European countries, which accounted for up to 45 per cent of Russian exports, were unable to do so as quickly. Combined with the rouble devaluation, this led to record oil and gas budget revenues of ₧1.2 trillion (Russian roubles) in March and ₧1.8 trillion in April. At the end of 2022, the G7, the European Union, and Australia introduced a price ceiling on Russian oil of US\$60 per barrel. This measure was designed, on the one hand, to ensure sanctions pressure on Russia and, on the other hand, to maintain balance in the global energy market. However—thanks to high demand in China, Turkey, and India—Russian companies managed to circumvent the price restrictions quite successfully, and oil and gas revenues accounted for more than a third of the Russian budget in 2023, or ₧8.8 trillion, which is 800 billion more than the baseline figures set by the Ministry of Finance.

The sustainability of Putin’s system is linked to the fact that the resources that dominate the global energy balance have a major impact on political and economic structures. As Professor Timothy Mitchell of Columbia

8 In Russian political and media discourse, the metaphor of the ‘oil needle’ is used to describe economic dependence on oil exports, drawing a parallel with heroin addiction; see Roland Götz, ‘Postsowjetischer Ressourcenfluch? Rohstoffreichtum und Autoritarismus [Post-Soviet resource curse? Raw material wealth and authoritarianism]’, *Osteuropa* 61, no. 7 (2011): 7.

University (US) writes, coal and oil gave rise to very different forms of social organisation. Coal became the basis for the social-democratic regimes of the twentieth century. Bulky and hard, this resource required considerable labour in extraction and transportation. This led to the fact that in Europe and the United States, industry developed primarily around large coal basins. Huge masses of proletarians were concentrated in a limited area. The Donbas, the Ruhr, Silesia, northern England, and Pennsylvania became strongholds of trade unions and left-wing parties. As a result, organised workers gained enormous political power: by going on strike, they could shut down the economy of an entire country at once.

Oil extraction, in turn, is much less labour-intensive. The oil itself makes its way to the surface, without requiring workers to go underground and risk their lives. This, as Daniel Yergin aptly puts it, is the very idea of oil 'extraction': the political economy of the resource was centred on the struggle for control of the fields rather than on the process of extraction itself.

Moreover, the liquid state of oil allowed for the early development of efficient technologies for its transportation over long distances. The Druzhba oil pipeline from the Volga region to Western Europe, the construction of which began in the 1960s, stretched almost 9,000 kilometres. Modern supertankers can deliver oil even further, connecting fields and consumers on different continents. Oil has made it possible to locate production anywhere, paving the way for globalisation and the relocation of industry to developing countries with cheap labour. In the rich countries of the Global North, the political result of the shift to oil was neoliberalism. Labour lost its ability to impose its conditions on capital, and economic inequality rose sharply as a result. The rulers of the big oil-producing countries (Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Venezuela, and others), in turn, received a constant flow of rents that kept even the most repressive regimes stable.

In the history of the USSR, the 'big' oil of the Romashkinskoye and then the Samotlor fields played a paradoxical role. On the one hand, it provided an inflow of foreign currency, which made it possible to support the stagnating economy for a certain period of time. On the other hand, the fall in oil prices in the mid-1980s opened a huge hole in the budget, with nothing to close it.

The history of global energy transitions offers a sober but hopeful glimpse of the future.

Oil power and the authoritarian regimes it spawns do not last forever. They are the product of a certain historical period, and with it they will fade into the past.

For a long time, the end of the oil era was associated with the depletion of oil reserves. We now realise all too well that the catastrophic effects of climate change will come sooner. So far, climate summits are often used as a platform for oil deals, with world leaders flying in on private jets. But a growing number of forces—from the Chinese government, which is investing \$80 billion a year in green energy, to the Fridays for Future movement, which unites tens of thousands of young boys and girls around the world—are making a carbon-free future a reality. And that's very bad news for Vladimir Putin.

Epilogue I

Ukraine and Gaza—Relations and Comparison

Abstract: The Israeli government and army's military response to the terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023 is discussed in several articles in the source collection. Recurring themes include the recognition of human suffering, the plight of victims, and widespread destruction, as well as the varied reactions of the international community. The first section of the two-part epilogue presents three articles that document and interpret the connections between the conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, and the West Bank—connections whose significance extends beyond these regions and poses challenges to the current international order.

Keywords: entangled conflicts, Arab-Israeli conflict, terrorism, Hamas

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Introduction

Several articles in the previous chapters refer to the Israeli government and army's military retaliation to the terror attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023. What became a war is repeatedly used as a point of reference and comparison in relation to international responses to the war in Ukraine—and vice versa. Recurring themes include the recognition of human suffering, the victims, and the destruction, as well as the varying reactions of the international community.

The articles by Fatma Mabrouk and Rasna Warah (chapter 1) exemplify the type of criticism that emerges in divergent assessments—specifically, the perception of double standards in the application of international humanitarian law by the International Court of Justice in The Hague, or in the hierarchisation of victims.¹ As Warah notes, while there is 'deep sympathy and support for Ukrainians who are being bombed and made homeless by Russia,... Palestinians being killed and being denied food and water are seen as deserving of their fate'. Ranabir Samaddar, in his interview with Biao Xiang (chapter 2), raises the question of why no sanctions have been imposed on Israel. The criticisms put forward in these and other texts articulate the concern that, in Europe and the US, the perception of the war in Ukraine overshadows that of Gaza, that international law is unevenly applied, and that human suffering is viewed through a racialised hierarchy. Eric Gujer (chapter 3), by contrast, expresses a radically different view. He addresses allegations made by the Israeli government in January 2024 that some UNRWA employees were involved in Hamas's terrorist activities, portraying the organisation as a Hamas proxy.²

Another aspect, less tangible in the articles of this reader but of central importance to the global perception of the war in Ukraine and its impact on the international order, should not be overlooked: Hamas's attack and

1 The study by Mohamed Abdelwahab Khafagi presented in the article refers to the situation up to March 2022. For further statements by the ICJ concerning Israel's military action in Gaza, see the introduction to chapter 1.

2 Gujer's article appeared a few days before the release of the report of the Independent Review Group, appointed by the UN Secretary-General and UNRWA's Commissioner-General, which assessed the agency's neutrality and its responses to allegations of serious breaches. The report concluded that the review revealed that UNRWA 'has established a significant number of mechanisms and procedures to ensure compliance with the humanitarian principles, with emphasis on the principle of neutrality, and that it possesses a more developed approach to neutrality than other similar UN or NGO entities'. See: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf.

Israel's extremely disproportionate response to it were quickly seen as timely and welcome by Putin's Russia, as they shifted the focus of global media headlines. While Russia's long-standing support for Hamas's military wing and its strategic cooperation with Iran before and after 2023 have never been a secret, it was Ukrainian intelligence—in particular—that tried to establish a direct link between Russia's Wagner Group and Hamas, claiming the information originated from the 'Belarusian underground'. As victims of Russia's war of aggression, observers in Ukraine are particularly aware of the various entanglements between the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, and of Russia's involvement in them.³

The following three articles expand on the ideas outlined above, offering interpretations of the connections between events in Ukraine, Gaza, and the West Bank, and their wider implications for the international order.

In her article, *Haaretz* journalist Lisa Rozovsky presents the life of Elena Hamida, who was born and raised in Poltava, eastern Ukraine, and moved to Gaza in 2005, where she lives with her Palestinian husband and their three children. Her story reveals the entanglements of the two wars and features a victim's plea for shared humanity, regardless of which side of the contested borders one lives on.

Przemysław Urbańczyk, a Warsaw-based historian and political commentator, compares both wars and highlights the fact that both share the aim of the enemy's total destruction—with catastrophic consequences for civilians. And yet, international responses differ. While the brutality of the Russian attack is widely acknowledged and condemned, Urbańczyk argues that the same level of scrutiny is lacking in the case of Israel's conduct of war.

Finally, Arina Kravchenko offers a jarring and provocative contribution about neo-colonial fantasies, orientalist frameworks, and autocratic alliances. Here again, perceived double standards and processes of 'othering' come to a head—an intensification that (as carried out by the US president himself) reappears in the second epilogue.

3 Jonathan M. Winer, 'Essential Questions About the Russia-Hamas Link: The Evidence and Its Implications', *Middle East Institute*, 28 November 2023, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/essential-questions-about-russia-hamas-link-evidence-and-its-implications>; Albrecht Fuess, Heidi Hein-Kircher, and Stefan Rohdewald, 'Mobility Dynamics Between Eastern Europe and the Near East: Exploring a Cross-Regional Shared History', in *Mobility Dynamics Between Eastern Europe and the Near East: Exploring a Cross-Regional Shared History*, ed. Albrecht Fuess, Heidi Hein-Kircher, Julia Obertreis, and Stefan Rohdewald (Stuttgart, 2024), 9–26, here 10.

About the Volume Editors

Dennis Dierks studied history, Islamic studies, Turkology, and Slavic studies in Mainz, Dijon, and Vienna and received his PhD from the University of Jena. In 2024/25, he was a research associate at the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the history of remembrance, nationalism, revolution, and reform, as well as the global circulation of ideas since the nineteenth century. His latest publications include 'Nation-building and Nationalism in the Black Sea Region (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)', in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, edited by Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Troebst (2024).

Katja Castryck-Naumann is a senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and has headed the research training group 'Global Armenia/ns: Entangled Histories of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus' since 2025. After completing her training as a historian at the Universities of Leipzig, Edinburgh, and Vienna and earning a doctorate from Leipzig University, she worked in the 'East-Central Europe Transnational' project group (2008–2016) and in the 'Entanglements and Globalisation' department (2017–2025) at GWZO. She also served as spokesperson of the steering committee of the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA, 2020–2025). Her research focuses on the history of international organisations and transnational actors, transregional entanglements of East-Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the history of area studies and global history writing.

Lena Dallywater is a researcher and academic coordinator in the Cluster of Excellence *Imaginamics* at the University of Jena and was the coordinator of the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) from 2016 to 2025. She studied communication and cultural studies at the Universities of Leipzig and The Hague and holds a PhD in global studies from Leipzig University. Her research focuses on African and African-American intellectual history, Pan-Africanism, liberation movements, and transregional solidarity networks. Most recently, she published *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s* (2023, co-edited with Chris Saunders and Helder Adegar Fonseca)

and *Globalizing Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Economics from the 18th to the 21st Century* (2025, co-edited with Gilad Ben-Nun and Katja Castryck-Naumann).

Stefan Rohdewald has held the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University since 2020. From 2013 to 2020, he was Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Giessen. After completing his studies, assistantship, and doctorate in Zurich (PhD, 2004), he worked as a research assistant at the University of Passau from 2003 to 2012. His research focuses on the entangled histories of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, urban history, memory, and transconfessionality. From 2017 to 2024, he served as the chairperson of the DFG Priority Programme *Transottomanica: Eastern European–Ottoman–Persian Mobility Dynamics*.

She Left Ukraine for Gaza: Now She Has to Choose Between Two Wars

Lisa Rozovsky

Editorial Note

The article was published in *Haaretz* (The land [of Israel]) on 25 October 2023.¹ The bilingual English and Hebrew daily paper *Haaretz* is Israel's leading liberal media outlet and is characterised by its distance from the Netanyahu government and its support for an Israeli–Palestinian two-state solution.

Elena Hamida, 42, was born and raised in Poltava, a city in eastern Ukraine. In 2005, she moved to the Gaza Strip, where she lives with her Palestinian husband and their three children. They met when he was a medical student in Ukraine.

She was interviewed by *Haaretz* in 2017, when she described the travails of moving to the Strip, and recently, as Israel and Gaza traded airstrikes, she contacted the newspaper from Kamal Adwan Hospital in the city of Beit Lahia, where her husband works.

For her, the medical centre is a kind of oasis where she can charge her phone and communicate with the world—from the enclave she says she loves.

'[On Sunday] there was shelling like never before. I think they also fired something new. Maybe artillery, I don't know. It was very scary,' she told *Haaretz* by phone.

'They started shelling at about 9 in the evening and I didn't shut an eye all night. I sat next to my daughter and held her head. I thought that if everything collapsed, maybe at least she'd survive.'

The scene she describes took place at a friend's home in the city, where the family has been sheltering since 13 October, including Elena and her husband, Hazem, in between his 24-hour hospital shifts. Also there are their sons—Nael, 16, and Ahsan, 22—and their daughter, Diana, 18, whose husband found refuge with his parents in a refugee camp in the centre of the Strip and who calls when he can.

¹ <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/2023-10-25/ty-article-magazine/premium/she-left-ukraine-to-live-in-gaza-now-she-has-to-choose-between-two-wars/0000018b-6299-d230-a1bf-6bb968170000>.

On 7 October, when it all began, the family was at home. 'Suddenly we heard that something was happening—something flew, rustling in the air. At first we didn't know where it came from—from us or from them. It was an ordinary day; everybody was getting ready for work and school,' Hamida recalls.

'I have friends in Israel; we send regards and say, "It's scary for you, it's scary for us. They bomb here, they shell here; let's remain human beings and stay in touch."

'Then the missiles started falling, like seeds. At first we sat in the house; we thought it would be like always—they'd hurl [bombs] for two or three days—but this time it didn't stop. Relatives from homes nearby came to live with us, like one big family. There's farmland next to their homes. They shelled it and also destroyed the homes of some of [her relatives].'

Leave Immediately

Hamida says their neighbourhood is considered the most dangerous in Beit Lahia, which lies at the northern end of the Gaza Strip. This is presumably because the area is near the border fence and uninhabited land.

On 13 October, 'they called at 4 in the morning and told us to leave the house immediately', she says. 'They called the whole neighbourhood. We fled in slippers. There was no light in the city and you couldn't see a thing.'

They went to the home of another family from Ukraine and have been there ever since. 'There's one other family here from Ukraine, and we're all together,' Hamida says. 'I haven't gone back to the house; I don't even know if it's still standing.'

Hamida says the Beit Lahia neighbourhood where they are now is more densely populated but less dangerous. 'There isn't a bit of land here where you could put a launcher,' she says.

Asked why her family didn't follow Israel's directive to evacuate from northern Gaza to the south, she replies: 'We got stuck in the north. Everybody who could have gone to Rafah or Khan Yunis left. Nobody took us there because it's very dangerous on the roads; people and cars are being bombed. We decided not to take a chance. We stayed together as three families, 16 people. If they bomb here, we'll all die together.'

She says the Israeli military dropped leaflets from helicopters that said 'Flee to Khan Yunis', and that in the south leaflets were scattered with the opposite message: 'Flee to the north because we will bomb here.'

Maybe the latter was psychological warfare by Hamas, '[s]o we'll run like rats in a box, from here to there and there to here?' Hamida asks rhetorically. 'Our friends who fled to Khan Yunis are sitting on cardboard outdoors, near the Rafah crossing.'

But conditions are rough in the north as well. 'There are no lights anywhere except in the schools and hospitals,' she says. 'There's gas left in the cylinders, and this is how we're cooking for now. We eat what remained here in the house and what we took with us when we fled.'

And water? Faucets have been irrelevant since the war began. The house where the family is staying has a well they draw from using a neighbour's diesel-powered electric pump, but the water isn't drinkable and is only used for showers, laundry, and the dishes. The hospital where Hazem works is an additional source.

'There's a large container there that you fill with filtered water that you can drink,' Hamida says.

On Sunday, she and her daughter went back to the daughter's home for clothing. 'Her neighbourhood is completely destroyed; we walked on the ruins,' Hamida says. 'It looks like one big wound. The house has no doors and no windows, and dogs are running around everywhere. We were afraid they'd attack us out of hunger. We grabbed clothes and fled.'

Hamida, who still holds Ukrainian citizenship, says that for the time being she has no option to leave the Strip, and that the Ukrainian Consulate in the West Bank city of Ramallah confirmed this. In any case, she's not at all sure she wants to trade Gaza for Ukraine, where her sister and mother live. 'I don't want to go from war to war,' she says.

'I don't know what will happen. People outside think that Gaza is miserable and are surprised when I show pictures of our beautiful Gaza. I love this land. I think I'll miss it if I leave. I'm calm here. There's no evil in the people here.'

Beit Lahia overlooks the Erez checkpoint and Moshav Netiv Ha'asara.² From the roof of Hamida's house, which she left, 'you can see the homes of the Jews', she says.

When asked if she watched Hamas's videos of the massacre in the Gaza border communities, she replies that she has seen the images from both sides. 'This is a war that's not good from any side,' she says.

'I'm not a politician and I don't defend anybody. In the end, we're the ones who suffer. And I think, for what? I have friends in Israel; we send regards

2 A *moshav* is a type of Israeli agricultural settlement, characterised by cooperative living. Moshav Netiv Ha'asara is located in Israel's southern district.

and say, “It’s scary for you, it’s scary for us. They bomb here, they shell here; let’s remain human beings and stay in touch.” I simply want to live normally.’

About the Author

After working in the NGO sector, **Lisa Rozovsky** has been a journalist for *Haaretz* since 2018. The newspaper reports on domestic political issues, but also on the war against Ukraine and, in this context, repeatedly on links between the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

Gaza Strip, Ukraine: Two Wars, Two Policies

Strefa Gazy, Ukraina: dwie wojny, dwie polityki

Przemysław Urbańczyk

Editorial Note

This article was published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the leading liberal daily newspaper in Poland, on 25 April 2024.¹

It has been a very long time since there have been two major wars in Europe's sphere of interest, potentially upsetting the geopolitical balance on a supra-regional scale. Both involve not only the two sides directly clashing on the battlefield but also many other participants operating on a global scale. Ukraine and the Gaza Strip have the world's attention, but reactions to the outbreak and conduct of these military operations are different—as the contexts of the two bloody conflicts are, of course, also different. What is similar, however, are some of their political aspects, prospective effects, and material consequences.

The unprovoked Russian invasion in Ukraine is mainly a manifestation of the madness of a man obsessed with neo-imperialism. The Israeli attack on Gaza was an understandable reaction to the vicious Hamas terrorist attack of 7 October.

Vladimir Putin cannot withdraw from Ukraine because he would lose face, which would arguably jeopardise his leadership. Benjamin Netanyahu cannot stop operations in Gaza because he would also lose face and certainly his position, which would threaten him with personal legal consequences (for various transgressions) and political consequences (for disregarding a deadly threat).

Both wars are framed by propaganda, using appropriate euphemisms. The aggression against Ukraine is pathetically referred to as a 'special military operation'. The attack on Gaza is still just a 'fight against terrorists'.

1 <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,30920095,strefa-gazy-ukraina-dwie-wojny-dwie-polityki.html>.

In both cases, the official aim is the complete elimination of the opponent, i.e., the 'fascist Kiev regime' and ' Hamas terrorists'. Despite the use of temporarily effective scorched-earth tactics, long-term success is doubtful in both cases. For armed aggression sooner or later results in a resurgence of the conflict once the enemy regroupes and the younger generation, radicalised by their passive participation in the horrors of the current war, reaches adulthood.

I have liberal, intellectual friends in Israel. Despite their initial rage and desire for revenge for the criminal attack by Hamas, from the beginning they have expressed their conviction that this conflict cannot be finally resolved by force, because immediate military success will not ensure lasting peace in the form of some form of coexistence between two peoples who have been in a death grip for generations. As early as December 2023, they predicted that the world would begin to turn away from Israel. They also expressed the hope that Netanyahu would sooner or later be held accountable for his actions—at least, politically.

Although the war in Ukraine has been going on for more than two years and the one in Gaza for just over six months, their devastating effects on the population are very similar, having already reached more than 30,000 victims in both cases. This shows the appalling 'efficiency' of the Israeli army, which is, of course, a function of the much smaller size of the area covered by the fighting in comparison to eastern Ukraine and the great density of the resident population.

Worldwide reactions to the two wars are as different as the reasons for the outbreak of fighting. It is impossible to find mainstream justifications for Russia's treacherous aggression and, at the same time, there is no doubt in the same arena about the legitimacy of the harsh Israeli response to the treacherous Hamas attack. This moral obviousness loses its clarity in the ways in which the tragic consequences of both wars are assessed.

While every Russian crime in Ukraine is met with the unanimous condemnation of the civilised world, Israeli brutality and even crimes (albeit at an incomparably smaller scale) are treated ambiguously. This is related to the different arguments used by the attacking parties. While Russia focuses on a primitive policy of force, reinforced by the threat of the possible use of nuclear weapons, Israel pursues a sophisticated policy of moral blackmail.

This is the skilful playing out of the tragic experience of the past, which has been etched into the world's historical memory by the hecatomb of the Jewish people's unwitting victims. Caused by atavistic anti-Semitism, the Holocaust of more than 80 years ago has become a political battering ram used against any criticism of today's actions. Every conflict between Israel

and its neighbours is interpreted in terms of a critical struggle for survival, and any doubt is countered with accusations of anti-Semitism—an infamous example of which was recently given by the Israeli ambassador in Warsaw.²

The weakness of this strategy of moral deterrence is already recognised even by Israel's hitherto uncritical American allies. Historical arguments do not apply effectively here, because they do not make the innocent victims somehow 'guilty', and the tactic of razing Gaza to the ground and forcing its depopulation does not become more justifiable as a result.

Although Netanyahu had a much better reason than Putin for starting the war, the blood of thousands of innocent victims stains his hands just as much—and no amount of propaganda will erase these stains.

About the Author

Przemysław Urbańczyk, affiliated with Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University) in Warsaw and the Polish Academy of Sciences, is one of Poland's best-known medievalists. He regularly comments on current affairs in the *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

² The author refers here to a statement of the Israeli ambassador to Poland, commenting on a demonstration in support of Palestine that took place in Warsaw in October 2023.

Trump Gaza Number One: A Few Words About One Politician's Megalomaniacal Dream

Tramp-Gaza-Namber-Van: Kilka sliv pro mehalomaniakalny son odnoho polityka

Arina Kravchenko

Editorial Note

This article first appeared in *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden*, on 25 March 2025.¹

Some were concerned about US President Donald Trump's return. Others were preoccupied with grim visions of a world ruled by artificial intelligence (AI). Whether there were any topics for discussion at the intersection of these two fears remains an open question.

Be that as it may, on 25 February 2025, social media was abuzz with discussions about a new video posted by the freshly minted (second-term) US president. It shows barefoot Palestinian children, dressed in rags instead of clothes, passing through a portal that leads from ruined houses to luxurious skyscrapers, bright lights, palm trees, and tables groaning under the weight of delicacies—into a world where money rains from the sky while Trump himself sips a cocktail in a deckchair. All this is accompanied by a song generated by artificial intelligence, which sounds something like this: 'Donald is coming to set you free / Bringing light for all to see / No more tunnels, no more fear / Trump Gaza is finally here. / Trump Gaza shines brightly / A golden future, a whole new light / Feasting and dancing, the deal is done / Trump Gaza is number one.' Such is the utopia.

Soon afterward, English writer Zadie Smith, known in Ukraine for her novel *White Teeth*, responded to the video. In a column for *The New York*

¹ <https://tyzhden.ua/tramp-gaza-namber-van/>.

Review of Books,² Smith called the video a perfect example of the fruits of the American imagination, where ‘there has always been a subcategory of people who were not only born to suffer in this world, but have also become accustomed to this suffering’—people who ‘come from shithole countries, as the president defined them during his first term’. The author also clarifies where exactly these ‘shithole countries’ are located on the mental maps of Americans: ‘Throughout history, this region has been called by various names’, Smith notes, ‘the Third World, the South, Arabia (and this concept may expand: perhaps soon it will also include all of Eastern Europe, which [possibility] Ukrainian President Zelensky is currently discovering for himself)’. Suddenly (finally!), the first (and perhaps last?) chance for a happy, ‘civilised’ life has arrived—thanks, of course, to the powerful hand of Donald Trump.

In her column, Smith continues to reflect on the now classic imperial view of the ‘other’, referring to the equally classic reading *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon, emphasising that ‘in the colonial imagination, the “oppressed” are a separate species, a special type of desensitised people ... elements of the scenography against which the drama of power in the West unfolds’. Ultimately, the writer concludes: ‘For the White House, there is no universal concept of a human being. There are Americans and Others.’ Others, one might add, whom America generously allows access to its own resources, but never, under any president, allows close enough. This is also a major theme in itself—one could start exploring it with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*,³ which has been translated into Ukrainian in recent years.

Conceptualising this precedent for neocolonial fantasies (Fanon’s book was published in 1961), Smith does not attempt to comprehend the issue of ‘Eastern Europe’, which she mentions in passing—adding the word ‘perhaps’ in the passage quoted above. In this respect, she is in good company: Edward Said, and most subsequent researchers of the complex relations between empires and their former colonies, did not dare to fully address the territory at their time of writing. Complex language, the vagueness of critical literature, a certain monopoly on critical impulses, and a cultural mythology charged with capital and the credit of Western trust—as well as a historically established self-positioning as a fighter against American capitalism and

2 Zadie Smith, ‘Trump Gaza Number One’, *The New York Review*, 2 March 2025, <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2025/03/02/trump-gaza-number-one/>. All subsequent Zadie Smith quotes in the article are taken from this essay.

3 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

imperialism—all this hinders attempts to notice the neocolonial essence of contemporary Russia, as well as how well it currently gets along with the United States of America, whose president has so vividly demonstrated his ‘democratic’ dreams.

The thing is, Trump seems to find it much easier to get along and find common ground with Vladimir Putin, who could easily be sipping a cocktail in a deckchair in that infamous video, than with Volodymyr Zelenskyi, the leader of a country where people are used to living with the sound of explosions (i.e., they have become desensitised enough to fit Fanon’s definition, as cited by Smith) and where, if you believe Russian propaganda (and representatives of the US government are inclined to believe it at the moment), a Russian–American war is actually unfolding (there you have the metaphor of ‘scenography’).

Today’s constant talk of a truce could serve as good references for AI to create the next video, in which Ukrainian children happily run through a tunnel to meet something like the ‘Moscow Towers’—‘more than ready to forgive, forget and have fun on the avenue built on the bones of their parents’, to quote Smith.

And that’s it—the end, the home stretch, the light at the end of the tunnel generated by artificial intelligence—happily forward, and only forward, without forgetting to thank Trump, of course. Except that this picture has no hint of reality—it is just the sick, unnaturally bright, megalomaniacal dream of one politician. Or several. No, definitely several.

About the Author

Arina Kravchenko is a Ukrainian journalist, editor, and book critic. Her research interests include literary history, postcolonial studies, communications, experimental prose, gender and area studies, foreign language learning strategies, and translation methodology.

Epilogue II

US Presidential Elections 2025—Global Consequences

Abstract: The second part of the epilogue addresses another event widely perceived as a turning point in world politics: Donald Trump's re-election as president of the United States in November 2024, along with the measures and legislative changes he has introduced since then. While this event is treated as a temporal endpoint of the source collection, the epilogue presents texts that reflect on the global consequences of Donald Trump's return to office. The texts offer insights into how developments surrounding the war of aggression against Ukraine, the armed conflict in Gaza and the West Bank, and Trump's second presidential term intersect—or are interpreted in relation to one another. The epilogue highlights three such points of convergence: migration, neo-colonialism, and financial capitalism.

Keywords: Trump, US National Security Strategy, global illiberalism, neo-colonialism

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Introduction

As we were compiling the material for this source collection, another event occurred that was widely perceived as a turning point—or caesura—in world politics: Donald Trump’s re-election in November 2024, together with the measures and legislative changes he has introduced since then. While this event marks the temporal endpoint of our coverage, this final section presents reflections on the global consequences of Donald Trump’s return to office.

His administration’s anti-rights agenda has been described as ‘turbocharging harmful trends already present’.¹ This has had a major impact on the various aspects of globality addressed in this collection: international law, international organisations and cooperation, economics and ecology, as well as the interpretation of power relations and transregional concepts of solidarity. Trump’s government has targeted both US and international institutions and initiatives. According to Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, his ‘all-out assault on the very concepts of multilateralism, asylum, racial and gender justice, global health and life-saving climate action is exacerbating the significant damage those principles and institutions have already sustained’. Jayati Ghosh, a New Delhi-based economist, argues that it is predominantly the so-called ‘Global South’ that is bearing the brunt of Trump’s ongoing trade war, which continues even as we write this epilogue. Tariffs have disrupted supply chains and roiled global markets.² Particularly relevant is the role of American diplomatic engagement—and military and economic support, especially in the case of Netanyahu’s government—in the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. For some, this involvement is ‘very bad news’, with long-term consequences that remain unforeseeable. In this context, Trump’s steps to disengage the US from direct support for Ukraine have been seen as helpful for Russia and complicating the role of the EU.³ These concerns are confirmed by the new National Security Strategy, published on 4 December 2025, which states that the US

1 Amnesty International, ‘The State of the World’s Human Rights: Amnesty International’s Annual Report 2024/25’, April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/global-human-rights-crisis-trump-effect-accelerates-destructive-trends/>.

2 Jayati Ghosh, ‘The Global South Will Pay for Trump’s Trade War’, *Project Syndicate*, 16 April 2025, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/developing-countries-bearing-brunt-of-trump-tariff-pain-by-jayati-ghosh-2025-04>.

3 Charles Grant, ‘Donald Trump’s Return to Office: Ten Consequences’, *Centre for European Reform*, 28 March 2025, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/donald-trumps-return-office-ten-consequences>.

intends to ‘reestablish strategic stability with Russia’ and ‘mitigate the risk of conflict between Russia and European states’,⁴ while aiming at ‘ending the perception, and preventing the reality, of NATO as a perpetually expanding alliance’.⁵ This, together with the urge to foster ‘resistance’ against the ‘activities of the European Union and other transnational bodies that undermine political liberty and sovereignty’, and to replace the European Union with ‘a group of aligned sovereign nations’,⁶ accurately reflects current Russian demands regarding Ukraine and European security and politics—prompting the *Kyiv Independent* to comment that ‘Trump’s new security doctrine gives Putin exactly what he wants’.⁷

The two texts that follow offer insight into how developments surrounding the war of aggression against Ukraine, the armed conflict in Gaza and the West Bank, and Trump’s second presidency converge—or are interpreted in relation to one another. We would especially like to highlight three such points of conjunction: migration, neo-colonialism, and financial capitalism.

Migration, flight, and diaspora—recurring themes throughout this volume—are a clear example of the confluence and amplification of various effects. This concerns not only the US economy and immigration. Institutions such as the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), a network that is part of the Danish Refugee Council, have expressed concern about how global migration might be affected by the geopolitical upheaval following Donald Trump’s return to office. ‘The threat to stop all military support to Kiev and the separate negotiations of the Trump Administration with both parties are likely to have a profound impact on the war in Ukraine and its mixed migration consequences,’ argues Bram Frouws. It remains unpredictable ‘what [such a return scenario] would mean for the labour market in Europe, with millions of Ukrainians currently filling jobs in labour markets that, generally across Europe, face severe labour market shortages’.⁸

Note: Charles Grant is Director of the Centre for European Reform, a UK-based neo-liberal think tank.

4 President of the United States, *National Security Strategy*, November 2025, 25, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf>.

5 Ibid., 27.

6 Ibid., 25, 27.

7 Martin Fornusek and Tim Zadorozhnyy, ‘Trump’s New Security Doctrine Gives Putin Exactly What He Wants’, *Kyiv Independent*, 9 December 2025, <https://kyivindependent.com/trumps-new-security-doctrine-gives-putin-exactly-what-he-wants/>.

8 Bram Frouws, ‘Migration in Times of Political Turmoil’, *Mixed Migration Center*, 10 April 2025, <https://mixedmigration.org/migration-in-times-of-geopolitical-turmoil/>. Note: The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) was founded in February 2018. It was established by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

Ali Harb, writing for Al Jazeera, describes how difficult it is to discern what Donald Trump actually aims to achieve with his erratic actions—beyond ‘bullying’ and blackmailing others in pursuit of (American) self-interest. For Harb, it appears that Trump and his administration are not merely trying to work around the global order as previous US governments had done, but believe that ‘it needs to go’. Quoting Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute think tank, Harb uses the term ‘politics of grievance’ to characterise Trump’s approach to foreign policy. The real-world implications of such grievance and nostalgia are already apparent for the US economy. Trump’s overhaul of parts of the US immigration system—including the processing and deportation of foreign nationals from the US—is adding to the economic damage. Economists anticipate that the crackdown on immigration will shrink the labour force, leading to slower growth and higher inflation in 2025.⁹

Neo-colonial fantasies and orientalist narratives form another key point of intersection. Matthew Duss, executive vice president of the Center for International Policy (Washington, DC) describes Trump as ‘just an old-school imperialist’, who ‘wants to expand American territory. He wants to extract wealth from other parts of the world.’ Since Trump first entered the political scene, orientalist language has remained central to his presidential campaigns, and his neo-colonial ambitions are infamous.¹⁰ Netanyahu’s recent characterisation of the war as ultimately one between ‘Western civilization’ and ‘barbarism’ speaks for itself.¹¹ At the same time, an opinion article published on the same day by the *Kyiv Post* and a US think tank argued that ‘Russia is spearheading a disinformation campaign to portray the US and Israel as a neocolonial villain—all while waging its own revanchist colonial war against Ukraine.’¹² The Trump administration’s rather explicit

9 For this assessment see, e.g., ‘Trump’s Tariffs Will Likely Hurt US Economy: Immigration Crackdown Makes It Worse’, *Bloomberg*, 21 April 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-04-21/trump-s-immigration-plan-expected-to-slow-job-growth-boost-inflation>.

10 Alexandra Tantros, ‘Orientalist and Imperialist Policy: Trump’s Rhetoric and Approach to the Middle East’, *Organization for World Peace*, 19 February 2025, <https://theowp.org/reports/orientalist-and-imperialist-policy-trumps-rhetoric-and-approach-to-the-middle-east/>. Note: The Organization for World Peace is an NGO based in the USA, which grounds its activities on voluntary work.

11 ‘Netanyahu at IHRA Conference: Israel Fights Civilization’s War Against Barbarism’, *Israel National News*, 28 May 2025, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/409078>. Note: *Israel National News* (also: *Arutz Sheva*) is an Israeli news portal based in Beit El. It operates the English-language Internet station Arutz Sheva Israel National Radio, which has a religious-Zionist orientation.

12 Ivana Stradner and Kirsten Terrill, ‘Opinion: From Gaza to Global South: How Russia Weaponizes Neocolonial Narratives’, *Kyiv Post*, 22 June 2024, <https://www.kyivpost.com/>

neo-imperial rhetoric regarding Greenland and Panama is not helping Ukraine undermine Russia's attempts to manipulate the media in the so-called 'Global South' for its own ends, as it reinforces traditional perceptions of the US as an imperialist power. This allows Russia to present itself as an anti-imperialist counterweight, despite clear evidence of its aggressive imperialism.

In its comprehensive summary of its 2024/25 annual report, *The State of the World's Human Rights*, Amnesty International finds that the impact of Trump's second presidency 'has compounded the damage done by other world leaders throughout 2024, eating away at decades of painstaking work to build up and advance universal human rights for all and accelerating humanity's plunge into a brutal new era characterised by intermingling authoritarian practices and corporate greed'. Here, the report's authors highlight the driving motive behind the alliance between financial capitalism and global illiberalism: the pursuit of greed and profit maximisation.¹³ This same motive also appears to lie at the heart of the 'America First' doctrine set out in the National Security Strategy of the second Trump administration.

About the Volume Editors

Dennis Dierks studied history, Islamic studies, Turkology, and Slavic studies in Mainz, Dijon, and Vienna and received his PhD from the University of Jena. In 2024/25, he was a research associate at the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe—Global Area' (EEGA) and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the history of remembrance, nationalism, revolution, and reform, as well as the global circulation of ideas since the nineteenth century. His latest publications include 'Nation-building and Nationalism in the Black Sea Region (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)', in *Handbook on the History and Culture of the Black Sea Region*, edited by Ninja Bumann, Kerstin S. Jobst, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Troebst (2024).

opinion/34614. Note: The Foundation for Defense of Democracies is a US think tank that has been in existence since 2001 and is headquartered in Washington, DC. Mark Dubowitz, the chairman of the foundation, was a foreign policy advisor to US President Donald Trump.

¹³ This aspect has also been discussed eloquently by David Smith, 'Trump's Foreign Policy Is Not so Unusual for the US—He Just Drops the Facade of Moral Leadership', *The Guardian*, 26 May 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/26/trump-foreign-policy-moral-leadership>.

Katja Castryck-Naumann is a senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and has headed the research training group ‘Global Armenia/ns: Entangled Histories of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus’ since 2025. After completing her training as a historian at the Universities of Leipzig, Edinburgh, and Vienna and earning a doctorate from Leipzig University, she worked in the ‘East-Central Europe Transnational’ project group (2008–2016) and in the ‘Entanglements and Globalisation’ department (2017–2025) at GWZO. She also served as spokesperson of the steering committee of the Leibniz ScienceCampus ‘Eastern Europe—Global Area’ (EEGA, 2020–2025). Her research focuses on the history of international organisations and transnational actors, transregional entanglements of East-Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the history of area studies and global history writing.

Lena Dallywater is a researcher and academic coordinator in the Cluster of Excellence *Imaginamics* at the University of Jena and was the coordinator of the Leibniz ScienceCampus ‘Eastern Europe—Global Area’ (EEGA) from 2016 to 2025. She studied communication and cultural studies at the Universities of Leipzig and The Hague and holds a PhD in global studies from Leipzig University. Her research focuses on African and African-American intellectual history, Pan-Africanism, liberation movements, and transregional solidarity networks. Most recently, she published *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s* (2023, co-edited with Chris Saunders and Helder Adegas Fonseca) and *Globalizing Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Economics from the 18th to the 21st Century* (2025, co-edited with Gilad Ben-Nun and Katja Castryck-Naumann).

Stefan Rohdewald has held the Chair of Eastern and Southeastern European History at Leipzig University since 2020. From 2013 to 2020, he was Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Giessen. After completing his studies, assistantship, and doctorate in Zurich (PhD, 2004), he worked as a research assistant at the University of Passau from 2003 to 2012. His research focuses on the entangled histories of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, urban history, memory, and transconfessionality. From 2017 to 2024, he served as the chairperson of the DFG Priority Programme *Transottomanica: Eastern European–Ottoman–Persian Mobility Dynamics*.

‘Tearing Down’: What Drives Trump’s Foreign Policy?

Ali Harb

Editorial Note

The article was published on the Al Jazeera website in the Analysis section on 29 April 2025.¹

Motivated by grievances against allies and foes, the US president is ‘tearing down’ the modern global order, analysts say.

Washington, DC—Donald Trump’s world view can be difficult to pin down.

During the first 100 days of his second term, the United States president started a global trade war, targeting allies and foes alike. He also issued decrees to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement on climate and the World Health Organization, amongst other international forums.

Trump continued to double down on a series of unconventional foreign policy proposals: taking over the Panama Canal, annexing Greenland, making Canada the 51st US state, and ‘owning’ Gaza.

And despite promising to be a ‘peace’ president, Trump has said he intends to take the US annual Pentagon budget to a record \$1 trillion.

He has distanced himself from neo-conservative foreign policy and does not position himself as a promoter of human rights or democracy abroad. His ‘America First’ stance and scepticism of NATO align with realist principles, but his impulsiveness and highly personalised diplomacy diverge from traditional realism.

At the same time, he has not called for a full military or diplomatic retreat from global affairs, setting him apart from isolationists.

So what exactly drives Trump’s foreign policy?

Experts say it is primarily fuelled by a dissatisfaction with the current global system, which he sees as unfairly disadvantaging the US with its rules and restrictions. Instead, Trump appears to want Washington to leverage its enormous military and economic power to set the rules to assert global dominance while reducing US contributions and commitments to others.

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/29/tearing-down-what-drives-trumps-foreign-policy>.

'The Trump doctrine is "smash and grab", take what you want from others and let your allies do the same,' said Josh Ruebner, a lecturer at Georgetown University's Program on Justice and Peace [based in Washington, DC].

'Just Tearing Down'

Mathew Burrows, programme lead of the Strategic Foresight Hub at the Stimson Center think tank,² said Trump wants US primacy without paying the costs that come with that.

'He's withdrawing the US from the rest of the world, particularly economically,' Burrows, a veteran of the US Department of State and CIA, told Al Jazeera.

'But at the same time, he somehow believes that the US ... will be able to tell other countries to stop fighting, to do whatever the US wants,' he said. 'Hegemony just doesn't work that way.'

Trump appears to believe that threatening and imposing tariffs—and occasionally violence—is a way of employing US leverage to get world leaders to acquiesce to his demands.

But critics say the US president discounts the power of nationalism in other countries, which prompts them to eventually fight back. Such was the case for Canada.

After Trump imposed tariffs and called for Canada to become the 51st state, this led to a wave of nationalist pride in the northern neighbour and an abrupt shift from the Conservative Party to the Liberal Party.

From Canada to China, foreign governments have accused Trump of 'bullying' and blackmail.

Some of Trump's Democratic rivals have rushed to accuse him of abandoning the US global role, but at the same time, the US president has been projecting American strength to pressure other countries.

While not entirely isolationist, his approach marks a significant turn from that of his predecessor.

The late Secretary of State Madeleine Albright³ famously said in 1998: 'We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future.'

² The Stimson Center is a non-profit think tank founded in 1989 and based in Washington, DC. According to its mission statement, its research programme focuses on trade and technology, security and strategy, climate and natural resources, human security and governance, and 'pivotal places'.

³ Madeleine Albright (1937–2022) was a member of the Democratic Party and served as US Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton from 1997 to 2001.

That purported power and wisdom, as Albright envisioned, put the US in a position to implement *Pax Americana*—the concept of a peaceful global order led by Washington.

Trump does see the US as proverbially taller than other nations, but perhaps not in the way Albright meant.

‘America does not need other countries as much as other countries need us,’ White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told reporters earlier this month.

Her statement, however, was to stress that other nations must negotiate with the US to avoid Trump’s tariffs.

In this context, Trump is seeking revenues and jobs—not an international system governed by liberal values in the way that Washington defines them.

However, Burrows said the chief aim of Trump’s foreign policy is to dismantle the existing global order.

‘A big part of his world view is really his negative feelings towards the current order, where others appear to be rising,’ Burrows said. ‘And so, a lot of this is just tearing down.’

The Global Order

Much of the system that manages relations between different countries was put in place after World War II, with the US leading the way.

The United Nations and its agencies, the articles of international law, various treaties on the environment, nuclear proliferation and trade, and formal alliances have governed global affairs for decades.

Critics of Washington point out that the US violated and opted out of the system where it saw fit.

For example, the US never joined the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court in 1998.⁴ It invaded Iraq in 2003 without United Nations Security Council authorisation in an apparent breach of the UN Charter. And it has been providing unconditional support to Israel despite the US ally’s well-documented abuses against Palestinians.

‘The United States has done a lot to stand up sort of multilateral institutions—the UN and others—that are based around these ideas,’ said Matthew Duss, the executive vice president at the Center for International Policy.⁵

4 For this and the following arguments, see the introduction to chapter 1.

5 The Center for International Policy (CIP) is a non-profit think tank based in Washington, DC, and New York City. It was founded in 1975 and describes itself as a ‘woman-led, progressive,

'But the United States has always found ways to violate these norms and laws when it serves our purposes,' he added, pointing to former US President Joe Biden's support for Israel's war on Gaza and President George W Bush's policies after the 9/11 attacks, which included extraordinary rendition, torture, invasion and prolonged occupation.

But for Trump and his administration, there are indications that the global order is not just to be worked around; it needs to go.

'The post-war global order is not just obsolete, it is now a weapon being used against us,' Trump's Secretary of State Marco Rubio told senators during his confirmation hearing in January.

Politics of Grievance

Trump recently told *Time* magazine that the US has been 'ripped off' by 'almost every country in the world'.

His rhetoric on foreign policy appears to echo his statements about promising to look after 'America's forgotten men and women' who have been mistreated by the 'elites' domestically.

While the modern world order has empowered US companies and left the country with immense wealth and military and diplomatic might, Americans do have major issues to complain about.

Globalisation saw the outsourcing of US jobs to countries with less expensive labour. Past interventionist policies—particularly the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—are largely seen as strategic blunders that produced a generation of veterans with physical and mental injuries.

Geoffrey Kabaservice, vice president of political studies at the Niskanen Center, a centre-right think tank in Washington, DC, noted that wages have stagnated for many Americans for decades.

'The fact is that the benefits of globalisation were very maldistributed, and some people up at the top made enormous plutocratic sums of money, and very little of that flowed down to the mass of the working class,' Kabaservice told Al Jazeera.

For people who saw their factories closed and felt like they were living in 'left-behind areas', electing Trump was 'retribution' against the system, Kabaservice said, adding that Trump's 'America First' approach has pitted the US against the rest of the world.

independent nonprofit center for research, education, and advocacy working to advance a more peaceful, just, and sustainable US approach to foreign policy'.

‘America is turning its back on the world,’ Kabaservice said. ‘Trump believes that America can be self-sufficient in all things, but already the falsity of this doctrine is proving true.’

Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute, a think tank that promotes diplomacy, said Trump’s foreign policy, including his approach to allies, comes from ‘the politics of grievance’.

‘He does believe that the United States—because of its role as world policeman, which he’s not necessarily in love with—has been shouldering a lot of the security burden of the world without getting proper compensation,’ Parsi told Al Jazeera.

The US president has been calling on NATO allies to increase their defence spending, while suggesting that Washington should be paid more for stationing troops in allied countries like Germany and South Korea.

Nostalgia

So how does Trump view the world?

‘He’s an aggressive unilateralist, and in many ways, he’s just an old-school imperialist,’ Duss said of Trump. ‘He wants to expand American territory. He wants to extract wealth from other parts of the world.... This is a kind of foreign policy approach from an earlier era.’

He noted that Trump’s foreign policy is to act aggressively and unilaterally to achieve what he sees as US interests.

Kabaservice said Trump wants the US to return to an age when it was a manufacturing powerhouse and not too involved in the affairs of the world.

‘He likes the idea that maybe the United States is a great power, sort of in a nineteenth-century model, and it lets the other great powers have their own sphere of influence,’ he said.

Kabaservice added that Trump wants the US to have ‘its own sphere of influence’ and to be ‘expanding in the way that optimistic forward-moving powers are’.

This notion of an America with its own ‘sphere of influence’ appeared to be supported by Rubio when he spoke earlier this year of the inevitability of [a] ‘multipolar world, multi-great powers in different parts of the planet’.

Parsi said that Trump is seeking hemispheric hegemony above all, despite his aversion for regime change—hence his emphasis on acquiring Greenland and the Panama Canal.

'You're shifting not from the politics of domination towards restraint; you're shifting from the politics of global domination to a more limited form of domination,' Parsi told Al Jazeera.

'Focus only on your own hemisphere.'

The US may have already experienced what happens when these views of nostalgia and grievance see real-world implications. Trump's erratic trade policy rocked the US stock market and sparked threats of counter-levies from Canada to the European Union to China.

Eventually, Trump postponed many of his tariffs, keeping a baseline of 10 per cent levies and additional importing fees on Chinese goods. Asked why he suspended the measures, the US president acknowledged that it was due to how the tariffs were received. 'People were jumping a little bit out of line. They were getting yippy', he said.

Ultimately, Trump's unilateralism and unpredictability have 'broken the world's trust in significant ways' that will outlast his presidency, Kabaservice told Al Jazeera.

'In the broad span of history, Trump will be seen as the person who committed terrible unforced errors that led to the end of the American century and the beginning of the Chinese century,' he said.

During his inauguration speech earlier this year, the US president said his legacy 'will be that of a peacemaker and unifier'.

'His actual legacy will be that he has torn down the global system that the US created', said Burrows, of the Stimson Center.

About the Author

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Amnesty International Warns of Global Human Rights Crisis as ‘Trump Effect’ Accelerates Destructive Trends

Amnesty International

Editorial Note

The article was published on the Amnesty International website on 29 April 2025 as news about and a summary of Amnesty International’s 2024/25 annual report, *The State of the World’s Human Rights*.¹ The report documents human rights concerns across 150 countries during 2024.

Amnesty International warns of global human rights crisis as ‘Trump effect’ accelerates destructive trends.

The Trump administration’s anti-rights campaign is turbocharging harmful trends already present, gutting international human rights protections and endangering billions across the planet, Amnesty International warned today upon launching its annual report, *The State of the World’s Human Rights* (1).

This ‘Trump effect’ has compounded the damage done by other world leaders throughout 2024, eating away at decades of painstaking work to build up and advance universal human rights for all and accelerating humanity’s plunge into a brutal new era characterised by intermingling authoritarian practices and corporate greed, Amnesty International said in its assessment of the situation in 150 countries.

‘Year after year, we have warned of the dangers of human rights backsliding. But events of the past 12 months—not least Israel’s livestreamed but unheeded genocide of Palestinians in Gaza—have laid bare just how hellish the world can be for so many when the most powerful states jettison international law and disregard multilateral institutions. At this historical juncture, when authoritarian laws and practices are multiplying the world over in the interests of very few, governments and civil society must work

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/global-human-rights-crisis-trump-effect-accelerates-destructive-trends/>.

with urgency to lead humanity back to safer ground,' said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

The State of the World's Human Rights documents vicious, widespread clampdowns on dissent, catastrophic escalations of armed conflict, inadequate efforts to address climate collapse, and a growing backlash globally against the rights of migrants, refugees, women, girls, and LGBTI people. Each of these faces further deterioration in a turbulent 2025 unless a global about-turn is achieved.

'One hundred days into his second term, President Trump has shown only utter contempt for universal human rights. His government has swiftly and deliberately targeted vital US and international institutions and initiatives that were designed to make ours a safer and fairer world. His all-out assault on the very concepts of multilateralism, asylum, racial and gender justice, global health, and life-saving climate action is exacerbating the significant damage those principles and institutions have already sustained and is further emboldening other anti-rights leaders and movements to join his onslaught,' Agnès Callamard added.

'But let us be clear: this sickness runs much deeper than the actions of President Trump. For years now, we've witnessed a creeping spread of authoritarian practices among states the world over, fostered by aspiring and elected leaders willingly acting as engines of destruction. As they drag us into a new age of turmoil and cruelty, all who believe in freedom and equality must steel ourselves to counter increasingly extreme attacks on international law and universal human rights.'

The proliferation of authoritarian laws, policies, and practices targeting freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly that Amnesty International documented in 2024 was central to the global backlash against human rights. Governments across the world sought to evade accountability, entrench their power, and instil fear by banning media outlets, by disbanding or suspending NGOs and political parties, by imprisoning critics on baseless charges of 'terrorism' or 'extremism', and by criminalising human rights defenders, climate activists, Gaza solidarity protesters, and other dissenters.

Security forces in several countries used mass arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and often excessive—sometimes lethal—force to suppress civil disobedience. Bangladeshi authorities issued 'shoot-on-sight' orders against student protests, resulting in almost 1,000 deaths, while security forces in Mozambique unleashed the worst crackdown on protests in years following disputed elections, leaving at least 277 people dead.

Türkiye² imposed blanket bans on protests and continues to use unlawful and indiscriminate force against peaceful demonstrators, but people power prevailed in South Korea when President Yoon Suk Yeol suspended certain human rights and declared martial law, only to be removed from office and see those measures overturned after massive public protests.

Armed Conflicts Highlight Repeated Failures

As conflicts multiplied or escalated, state forces and armed groups acted brazenly, committing war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law that devastated the lives of millions.

Amnesty International documented Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza in a landmark report and its system of apartheid and unlawful occupation in the West Bank turned increasingly violent. Meanwhile, Russia killed more Ukrainian civilians in 2024 than it did the year before, continuing to target civilian infrastructure and subjecting detainees to torture and enforced disappearance.

Sudan's Rapid Support Forces inflicted widespread sexual violence on women and girls, in what amounts to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, while the number of people internally displaced by Sudan's two-year civil war rose to 11 million—more than anywhere else on earth. Yet that conflict elicited near-total global indifference—aside from cynical actors exploiting opportunities to breach the Darfur arms embargo.

The Rohingya continued to face racist attacks in Myanmar, causing many to flee their homes in Rakhine state. The Trump administration's massive foreign aid cuts have since aggravated the situation, causing the closure of hospitals in refugee camps in neighbouring Thailand, exposing fleeing human rights defenders to risk of deportation and imperilling programmes helping people survive the conflict.

The initial suspension of US foreign aid also impacted health services and support for children forcibly separated from their families at detention camps in Syria, and the abrupt cuts have shut down lifesaving programmes in Yemen, including malnutrition treatment for children, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, safe shelters for survivors of gender-based violence, and healthcare for children suffering from cholera and other illnesses.

2 Following a name change requested at the UN in 2022, Turkey is now officially known as the Republic of Türkiye. The change was initiated by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AK Party to prevent confusion with the English word 'turkey' (the bird), which they consider derogatory to the dignity of the Turkish nation.

‘Amnesty International has long warned of double standards undermining the rules-based order. The impact of that to-date unfettered backsliding plumbed new depths in 2024, from Gaza to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Having paved the way for this mess by failing to universally uphold the rule of law, the international community must now shoulder the responsibility,’ said Agnès Callamard.

‘The cost of these failures is gargantuan, namely the loss of vital protections built to safeguard humanity after the horrors of the Holocaust and World War Two. Despite its many imperfections, [the] obliteration of the multilateral system is no answer. It must be strengthened and reimagined. Yet, having seen it sustain further damage in 2024, today the Trump administration appears intent on taking a chainsaw to the remnants of multilateral cooperation in order to reshape our world through a transactional doctrine steeped in greed, callous self-interest and dominance of the few.’

Governments Are Abandoning Future Generations

The State of the World's Human Rights presents stark evidence that the world is condemning future generations to an ever-harsher existence thanks to collective failures to tackle the climate crisis, reverse ever-deepening inequalities, and restrain corporate power.

COP29 was a catastrophe, with a record number of fossil fuel lobbyists inhibiting progress on a fair phase-out, while the wealthiest countries bullied lower-income nations into accepting derisory climate financing agreements. President Trump's reckless decision to abandon the Paris Agreement and his ‘drill, baby drill’ refrain have only compounded these failings and could encourage others to follow suit.

‘2024 was the hottest year on record and the first to exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The floods that devastated South Asia and Europe, the droughts that ravaged Southern Africa, the fires that razed swathes of Amazon rainforest and the hurricanes that wreaked havoc in the USA laid bare the immense human cost of global heating, even at its current levels. With a 3°C rise projected this century, richer nations know they're not immune from increasingly extreme unnatural disasters—as the recent California wildfires drove home—but will they act?’ said Agnès Callamard.

In 2024, extreme poverty and inequality within and between states continued to deepen due to widespread inflation, poor corporate regulation, pervasive tax abuse, and rising national debts. Yet many governments and political movements used racist and xenophobic rhetoric to scapegoat

migrants and refugees for crime and economic stagnation. Meanwhile, the number and wealth of billionaires grew, even as the World Bank warned of 'a lost decade' in global poverty reduction.

The future looks far bleaker for many women, girls, and LGBTI people, amid intensifying attacks on gender equality and identity. The Taliban imposed even-more-draconian restrictions on women's public existence in Afghanistan, while Iranian authorities intensified their brutal crackdown on women and girls who defy compulsory veiling. Groups of women searching for missing loved ones in Mexico and Colombia faced all manner of threats and attacks.

Malawi, Mali, and Uganda took steps to criminalize or uphold bans on same-sex relations between consenting adults, while Georgia and Bulgaria followed Russia's lead in clamping down on supposed 'LGBTI propaganda'. The Trump administration is bolstering the global backlash against gender justice by dismantling efforts to tackle discrimination, relentlessly attacking transgender rights, and ending funding for health, education, and other programmes that supported women and girls all over the world.

Governments are further harming present and future generations by failing to adequately regulate new technologies, abusing surveillance tools, and entrenching discrimination and inequalities through increased use of artificial intelligence.

Tech firms have long facilitated discriminatory and authoritarian practices, but President Trump has exacerbated this trend, encouraging social media companies to roll back protections—including Meta's removal of third-party fact-checking—and double down on a business model that enables the spread of hateful and violent content. The alignment between the Trump administration and tech billionaires also risks opening the door to an era of rampant corruption, disinformation, impunity, and corporate capture of state power.

'From seating tech billionaires in prime position at his inauguration to granting the world's richest man unprecedented access to the US government apparatus, it appears that President Trump will let his self-serving and corporate allies run amok, without the slightest regard for human rights or even the rule of law,' said Agnès Callamard.

Vital Efforts to Uphold International Justice

Despite mounting opposition from powerful states—compounded this year by the Trump administration's shameless sanctions against the ICC

prosecutor—international justice and multilateral bodies have continued to push for accountability at the highest levels, with governments from the Global South leading several significant initiatives.

The ICC issued arrest warrants against senior state officials and leaders of armed groups in Israel, Gaza, Libya, Myanmar, and Russia. The UN took an important step towards negotiating a much-needed treaty on crimes against humanity and the Philippines followed suit by arresting former President Rodrigo Duterte last month under an ICC warrant for the crime against humanity of murder.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued three sets of provisional measure orders in the case South Africa brought against Israel under the Genocide Convention and issued an advisory opinion declaring that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is unlawful. The UN General Assembly also passed a resolution calling on Israel to end its occupation, and in January 2025 eight states from the Global South formed the Hague Group, a collective committed to preventing arms transfers to Israel and holding it accountable for violations of international law.

'We applaud the efforts of nations like South Africa and international justice bodies to push back against powerful states hell-bent on undermining international law. In so challenging impunity, those nations and bodies set examples for the whole world to follow. The mounting attacks we've witnessed on the ICC in recent months suggest this is emerging as a major battlefield of 2025. All governments must do everything in their power to support international justice, hold perpetrators accountable, and protect the ICC and its staff from sanctions,' said Agnès Callamard.

'Despite daunting challenges, the destruction of human rights is far from inevitable. History abounds with examples of brave people overcoming authoritarian practices. In 2024 the people of several nations rejected anti-rights leaders at the ballot box while millions around the world raised their voices against injustice. So it's clear: no matter who stands in our way, we must—and we will—continue to resist the reckless regimes of power and profit that seek to strip people of their human rights. Our vast, unshakeable movement will be forever united in our common belief in the inherent dignity and human rights of everyone on this planet.'

Notes

- (1) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/polio/8515/2025/en/>.

About the Author

The article on **Amnesty International's** website and the Amnesty International Report do not specify any individual authors. The preface of the report was written by Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general, who is also frequently cited in the summary.

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List of Abbreviations

AIPWA	All India Progressive Women's Association
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Turkish), English: Justice and Development Party
ANC	African National Congress
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUKUS	Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (for the current member states, see p. 28)
CAF	Corporação Andina de Fomento (Portuguese), English: Latin American Development Bank
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (German), English: Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CELAC	Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (Spanish), English: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Communauté financière africaine (French), English: African Financial Community
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNBC	Consumer News and Business Channel
COP	Conference of the parties
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPI(ML)L/CPIML	Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation
CS	Credit Suisse
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DC	District of Columbia
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DW	Deutsche Welle
EPA	Economic partnership agreement
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance
EU	European Union

EUFOR	European Union Force Bosnia and Herzegovina
EV	Electric vehicle
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FID	Final investment decision
FINMA	Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (German), English: Freedom Party of Austria
FSB	Federalnaia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Russian); English: Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
FSRU	Floating storage and regasification units
G7	Group of Seven
G20	Group of 20
GDP	Gross domestic product
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICSID	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (1994–2015)
IDA	International Development Association
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPPNW	International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War/Physicians in Social Responsibility
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
IT	Information technology
JETP	Just Energy Transition Partnership
KFOR	Kosovo Force
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex
LNG	Liquefied natural gas
LTS	Long-term strategy

MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
MK	uMkhonto weSizwe (Zulu), English: Spear of the Nation
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
NEOS	Das Neue Österreich und Liberales Forum (German), English: The New Austria and Liberal Forum
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OAS	Organization of American States
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei (German), English: Austrian People's Party
P5	The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurmanji), English: Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PV	Photovoltaics
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RDIF	Russian Direct Investment Fund
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
ROK	Republic of Korea
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (Hindi), English: National Volunteer Corps
RT	Russia Today
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDRs	Special drawing rights
SOC	Serbian Orthodox Church
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German), English: Social Democratic Party of Germany

SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (German), English: Social Democratic Party of Austria
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UCU	Ukrainian Catholic University
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UGCC	Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and North- ern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US/USA	United States of America
USD	United States dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VTB	Vneshtorgbank (Russian), English: Interna- tional Trade Bank
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization
WHR	Window for Host Communities and Refugees
WMD	Weapon of mass destruction

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