

## UKRAINE EFFECT: ARE WE GROPING FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER?

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## Abstract

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has upended the contemporary world order - and with it the global energy, manufacture, supply, and financial systems in deep distress. In many ways the war recaps the appalling horrors of the two world wars. The conflict between Moscow and Kiev is unfolding against the backdrop of other correspondingly significant crises and cataclysms, for instance the continuing coronavirus pandemic, worsened tensions namely in the U.S. - China relations, U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, uncertainty in the Sahel Region, the unending civil war in Yemen, increased nuclear polarization in North Korea, and lead to a new pattern of European rearmament. The cost of war is having geopolitical and economic ramifications on the rest of the world. The Russian aggression in Ukraine is manifestation of the struggle for a new world order. Russia and China are openly challenging the Pax Americana, far beyond the visible economic realm. The recent Global Security Initiative (GSI) put forward by the Chinese President, in the April 2022 at BOAO forum, the narratives associated to Shangri-La 2022 defense talks, the Global Development Initiative proposed at the UN General Assembly 2021 and the Global Think Tank Network for Democracy Studies, underlined this evidence. As asserted by Kuo, the GSI is "Blueprint for integrating China's security priorities and practices (...) Using the U.N. aegis, Beijing is promoting China as a primus inter pares dispute arbiter, architect of new regional security frameworks, and trainer of security professionals and police forces in developing countries" (Kuo, 2023). But the question how the next world order will look like remains open. The Russian war in Ukraine has fast-tracked a shift in the world order forcing a renewed balance of power. There's an extensive assessment that the "Ukraine effect" could be as sweeping in restructuring global relations as significant as the chain of events following the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1989 expect that this time the power shift might be away from Washington hegemony. Since President Vladimir Putin attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, there is proliferation of research and academic papers about the future shape of world order. Therefore, these developments beg questions: Is the idea of an "end" to history is fallacy? Are there no key difficulties within liberal policies that can fuel struggle and contradictions? Is Ukraine a wake-up call for Western Liberal order? Do liberal democracies need to pay cognizance to rapidly emerging new international order which is less weighed down by old ideological loyalties but is more realist and transactional and driven by national interests? How can we comprehend China-Russia open diplomatic alignment? This paper provides an analytical discussion on New-Cold War developments and the emerging world order in the backdrop of ongoing struggles and power rebalancing. In this regard, the manuscript addresses some of the main features of the new international power configurations system, apparent drifts, and new threats in international relations.

## Keywords

Ukraine War, New World Order, Liberal Order, Post-Cold War Era, U.S., China, India, Russia.

## Resumo

A invasão da Ucrânia pela Rússia veio perturbar a ordem mundial contemporânea e, com ela, os sistemas energéticos, de produção, de abastecimento e financeiros mundiais estão em profunda crise. Em muitos aspectos, a guerra recapitula os horrores terríveis das duas guerras mundiais. O conflito entre Moscovo e Kiev está a desenrolar-se no contexto de outras crises e cataclismos correspondentemente significativos, por exemplo, a continuação da pandemia do coronavírus, o agravamento das tensões, nomeadamente nas relações entre os EUA e a China, a retirada dos EUA do Afeganistão, a incerteza na região do Sahel, a interminável guerra civil no Iémen, o aumento da polarização nuclear na Coreia do Norte e um novo padrão de rearmamento europeu. O custo da guerra está a ter ramificações geopolíticas e económicas no resto do mundo. A agressão russa na Ucrânia é uma manifestação da luta por uma nova ordem mundial. A Rússia e a China estão a desafiar abertamente a Pax Americana, muito para além do domínio económico visível. A recente Iniciativa de Segurança Global (GSI) apresentada pelo Presidente chinês, em abril de 2022, no fórum BOAO, as narrativas



associadas às conversações de defesa de Shangri-La 2022, a Iniciativa de Desenvolvimento Global proposta na Assembleia Geral das Nações Unidas de 2021 e a Rede Mundial de Grupos de Reflexão para Estudos sobre a Democracia, sublinharam esta evidência. Como afirma Kuo, a GSI é "um plano para integrar as prioridades e práticas de segurança da China (...) Usando a égide da ONU, Pequim está a promover a China como árbitro de disputas primus inter pares, arquiteto de novos quadros de segurança regional e formador de profissionais de segurança e forças policiais nos países em desenvolvimento" (Kuo, 2023). Mas a questão de saber como será a próxima ordem mundial continua em aberto. A guerra russa na Ucrânia acelerou uma mudança na ordem mundial, obrigando a um novo equilíbrio de poder. Há uma avaliação alargada de que o "efeito Ucrânia" pode ser tão abrangente na reestruturação das relações mundiais como a cadeia de acontecimentos que se seguiu ao colapso da União Soviética em 1989, com a expectativa de que, desta vez, a mudança de poder possa estar longe da hegemonia de Washington. Desde o ataque do Presidente Vladimir Putin à Ucrânia, em 24 de fevereiro de 2022, proliferaram as investigações e os trabalhos académicos sobre a futura configuração da ordem mundial. Por conseguinte, estes desenvolvimentos levantam questões: Será que a ideia de um "fim" da história é uma falácia? Não haverá dificuldades fundamentais nas políticas liberais que possam alimentar a luta e as contradições? Será a Ucrânia um sinal de alarme para a ordem liberal ocidental? As democracias liberais devem ter em conta a rápida emergência de uma nova ordem internacional, menos condicionada pelas velhas lealdades ideológicas, mais realista e transaccional e orientada por interesses nacionais? Como podemos compreender o alinhamento diplomático aberto entre a China e a Rússia? Este artigo apresenta uma discussão analítica sobre os desenvolvimentos da Nova Guerra Fria e a ordem mundial emergente no contexto dos conflitos em curso e do reequilíbrio de poderes. A este respeito, o artigo aborda algumas das principais características do novo sistema de configuração do poder internacional, as aparentes derivas e as novas ameaças nas relações internacionais.

#### **Palavras chave**

Conflito armado na Ucrânia, Nova Ordem Mundial, Ordem Liberal, Era Pós-Guerra Fria, EUA, China, Índia, Rússia.

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### **Introduction**

The Russian-Ukraine conflict is one of the most unrelenting crisis of current times. It has political, geo strategic, economic and social implications globally. There is a fundamental concern that the continuing Russia-Ukraine is threatening the world order. The crisis has subsequently been argued as presenting the risk of escalating into a Cold War, which could put the normal world order to a severe imminent threat (Guchua et al., 2022). NATO has condemned Russia's war on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms, and calls it "the biggest security threat in a generation" (NATO, 2022). With this emerging concern, there is a strong relevance to examine the topic and understand it in the context of global political debate. Russia's attack of Ukraine, stunned the world. The brazen attack was the start of the largest land war in Europe since World War II and has led to enormous dislocation of the Ukrainian residents, loss of life, and the decimation of Ukrainian cities and infrastructure. It has redrawn geopolitical energy supply lines; reinforced coalitions among Western countries and expanded rifts with China; put the use of nuclear weapons on the table for the first time in decades; and taught us the significance of collective global leadership in moments of crisis.

Current drifts and recent strategic credentials point toward an additional ramping up of geopolitical rivalry, growing economic protectionism and fragmentation, and a slackening of the structures of the intercontinental order. This research paper seeks to provide a multidimensional view of the Russia-Ukraine war by evaluating its primary triggers and probing the efforts to address the war from an international perspective. In this vein, this manuscript reflects on questions such as: What is the future of international order? Is global governance undergoing an alteration, reflecting the deep shifts in power that have occurred over the past decade, especially the rise of China and the growing impact of the Global South? Furthermore, it provides an analytical discussion on New-Cold War

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developments and the emerging world order in the backdrop of ongoing struggles and power rebalancing. In this regard, the authors address some of the key structures of the new global power arrangements system, ostensible drifts, and new threats in international relations. Thus, the prime purpose of the study is to examine the diverse, but coordinated roles that various states in helping settle the Russia-Ukraine war, as an opportunity to power rebalancing.

### **Ukraine War and Divergent Responses**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been labelled as a turning point in contemporary history, a crossroads analogous to the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. in 2001, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and even the shooting of John F. Kennedy in 1963. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has proclaimed, "we are at a *Zeitenwende* - a turning point" (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 24 March 2022). Global institutions are being tried and tested once again and hard-edged chauvinism has reappeared as a force equally democracies and authoritarian states. From the European standpoint, the U.S. seems to be relinquishing its international leadership responsibility. In the meantime, Moscow is exploiting every chance to pit European partners against one another. The intensification of partisanship, rise in populism, increased use of disruptive technologies and the Covid-19 pandemic has only strengthened the multipolarity and has led to fragmented the diffusion of power, both geographically and in its resolutions.

Ukraine a nation at the intersection of Asia and Europe has become a catalyst and trigger for radical upheaval and perhaps the crucible of a new world order. On day one of Russian Invasion Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy referred to the war as "dawn of New Iron Curtain" (REUTERS/Umit Bektas, February 23, 2022), this resonated with the U.S. and West who have framed the conflict in ideological footings that an autocratic Russia is waging a brutal and unprovoked war against Ukraine, as the country desired to adopt the Western liberal model. This tactical narrative has been less effective in marshalling the like-minded democracies and is arithmetically tricky. Biden's call to make Putin "pariah on the international stage" failed to mobilize the "democratic cooperative network" (Grieco & Jourdain, 14 June 2022). The Russia-Ukraine conflict is illustration of number of new self-assured players that are playing significant role in shaping the global system. According to Colarossi, Anatoly Antonov justified his nation's "special military operation," the term the Kremlin uses to avoid calling the invasion a war, by saying it is meant to halt the West's expanding dominance worldwide (Colarossi, 18 April 2022). Anatoly Antonov further added that "We don't want the United States or other NATO countries to use this territory against the Russian Federation" (Colarossi, 18 April 2022). But the affair has begun much before. Russia sent shockwaves throughout the world by annexing Crimea on 18 March 2014.

The same unacceptable political and military occupation, together with military presence, often disguise as peacekeepers, has been repeated in Transnistria (Moldovia), Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Artsakh as part of the revitalization of the former soviet empire. Apparently, the only visible consequence of this unprovoked and illegal occupation of Crimea was the Russia expulsion of the G8. However, the occupation of Crimea has



ignited the roots of a complex confrontation that has reverberated to this day, serving as a precursor to the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine and setting in motion a prolonged standoff between Russia and the West, which “we are still dealing with the ripple effects of these events years later” (Chausovsky, 10 March 2021).

The 2022 invasion of Ukraine extended the arc that commenced in 2014. Russia’s wild attack on Ukraine is hastening the global tectonic shift. The Western alliance on the other hand have straightforward ethical and strategic reasons for supporting Ukraine war. Their position is Ukraine is the prey of Russian aggression and this is challenge to the democratic world. West has to collectively defend the rules-based global liberal order from Russian President Vladimir Putin and therefore isolate the Russian Federation: Sanctions, G8, WEF and Arctic Council, stand as clear examples or forums that excluded Russia – a clear set back in terms of advancing multilateralism. These drivers have been the salient feature of official Russian national security documents for the past three decades.

*The war against Ukraine, launched by the Kremlin in response to the West’s refusal to accept it demands to fundamentally revise the post-Cold War security arrangements, has put an end to the few remaining hopes of managing the tense relationship through such channels as the NATO–Russia Council, the Normandy format to resolve the stalemate in eastern Ukraine, and the U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue (Rumer & Sokolsky, 2022).*

Nevertheless, the moral fervour manifest in the Western retort to Russia’s war on Ukraine has been conspicuously vague. “Russia’s ally, Belarus which is a member of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the Eurasian Economic Union, is a reflection of Russia’s own institutional connectivity, has allowed Russian forces and weaponry to be stationed on its territory. Belarus has directly and openly backed the Russian Federation. China has taken a stance of “active neutrality”, with Chinese authorities blaming the U.S. and the NATO for bringing “Russia-Ukraine rifts to a critical point” and accusing Washington of using the conflict to attempt to “contain Russia and China” (Chausovsky, 21 April 2022). Another significant player in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is Turkey, who wants to be a key mediator in the conflict and wishes to capitalize the opportunity to brand its NATO allies as well as to preserve the existing ties with Russia. Even though Turkey is a member of the NATO, it also has deep financial and energy connection with Russia and has declined to participate in Western led sanctions. At the same time, Turkey has supplied Ukraine with crucial weaponries such as TB-2 drones and has assisted Kyiv diplomatically. Turkey has been committed to facilitate the implementation of different stages of the agreement to export cereals from Ukraine and from Russia (REUTERS, September 5, 2023). This fact has provided Turkey influence with Ukrainians and the Russians equally, exemplifying the ever more multifaceted web of power relations in current multipolar age.

Other central global players like India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Israel and Indonesia have continued their stance of being non-committal and acted to protect their national strategic interests. States such as India, Angola and Mozambique, decided to abstain



voting in UN resolutions intended to punish Russia thereby exhibiting strategic ambivalence. India values long and deep military and economic ties with Russia, and has taken benefit of reduced bills to buy more Russian oil which it has doubled from 2021. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 24 March 2022 - ES-11/2. Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine (A/RES/ES-11/2) was favoured by 140 countries in the 193-member assembly. Four states - Syria, Belarus, North Korea, and Eritrea - joined Russia in voting against, while 38 abstained and 10 were absent" (UN, 2 March 2022).

The OPEC countries similarly continued with their agreement with Russia rather than conform with U.S. demand to increase oil production so as to relieve inflationary pressure. Other nations like China have declined to overtly reprimand Russia. The reflexively pro-Russian régimes like Belarus and Syria, with their large financial and military dependency on Moscow provides reasonable explanation for being supportive of Russia's stance towards Ukraine. In September 2023, the North Korea's leader Kim Jung Un visited to Russia, raising the world's attention for the possibility of military support to President Vladimir Putin (Bubalo, 2023) as associating the country to the circle of Russia effective supporters. In Middle East states, particularly those flush with cash, apply their agency and discretion in defining the depth and scope of Russian impact in the region than is recognized. Some countries are taking nonaligned posture to probably effort as mediators to bring peace in the region.

*On the diplomatic front, Middle Eastern states that have engaged with Russia, including America's Arab security partners, have deferred on joining the Western-led condemnation of Russia's aggression and refused to join efforts to isolate Russia economically. In many cases, again, this is more of a form of local signalling, especially by the Gulf monarchies, to convey discontent with America's supposed inattentiveness to their security needs rather than a full-throated embrace of Russia (Wehrey, 19 May 2022).*

Saudi Arabia despite close military alliance with the U.S. has rejected Washington's demand to supply more oil to help ease inflation caused by price surge, ensued due to the Western sanctions on Russia, whose production fell by a million barrels a day since its attack on Ukraine. The shared outlook of some of these countries is that they consider the Ukraine war as a regional conflict where it's not in their nation interest to get openly involved. This is antithetical to U.S. and European Union position who consider this as a serious risk to global balance of power, stability and outright violation of International the law and norms underpinning the global order after World War II.

In Africa, the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau Umaro Sissoco Embaló visited Russia in July 2023, anticipating the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations. No public statements about Ukraine conflict had been released, but the visit has been seen as an expression of political solidarity. In South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa President expressed that Washington's persistent push of NATO expansion contributed to revving up a catastrophe in Europe, which ultimately led to belligerent stance by Russia. These countries are in the making of emerging multivalent global order a reality.



Nearly half of the world is following “another narrative” which is divergent from the U.S. consensus. For many of these states belonging to Global South, Washington has been hypocritical given the West past of abandoning these same moralities when suitable. For example, NATO’s unilateral involvement in Kosovo in 1999, commenced without a UN Security Council Resolution, and the 2003 Iraq war to attempt regime change started on the incorrect information that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and add to this 2011 intervention in Libya, which also went outside the terms and conditions of the S/RES/1973 passed on 17 March 2011 imposed a number of restrictions on Muammar al-Qaddafi regime, and more recently U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 year and leaving behind political anarchy and citizens in disarray has led questioning of the decision by U.S. and West. These diverse attitude challenges the Washington’s efforts to consign Russia as pariah state status misses the mark of unanimous response. The moralizing lectures have fallen on deaf ears in Global South who have on occasion countered irritably to the arm twisting from West. They have indeed, undermined the legitimacy of all United Nations System, specially the UNSC as the governing body of the international security order.

These advances highlight serious dysfunctionality in U.S. outmoded alliances with Arab autocracies and a rising global movement of multipolarity well-defined by the pre-eminence of self-interest instead of shared moral standards and guidelines. There is also some indication that the Arab community is apprehensive of Washington's aims and strategies in this region – particularly its past history of military intrusions and dual values on human-rights violations. Realistic political positions and need to safeguard the benefits they derive from their association with Moscow is playing out in open. “Russia’s new position was best labelled as sub-imperialist: a regional power that generally plays by the rules of Euro-Atlantic capitalism, yet is able to dictate its own terms of integration into the global economy. Another useful term for this strategy is “sovereign globalisation” (Matveev, 14 April 2022) Chausovsky puts it bluntly: “(...) the Russia-Ukraine conflict has revealed the complexity of the power architecture of the world. While the U.S. was once in a dominant position in the global order, it now faces more competition from the likes of Russia and China, while presumed allies like Turkey, India and even certain EU states like Hungary have carved out their own independent roles vis-à-vis the conflict” (Chausovsky, 21 April 2022).

### **Understanding Post-Cold War Reality**

Kamel asserts that "It does not seem far-fetched to claim that future generations will consider the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War as one of the meaningful moments in the shift of the balance of power from West to East" (Kamel, 2022). The Russia-Ukraine conflict, is deeply altering the world structures and spaces of influence. It is actually provoking a new divide. Indeed, Zhang Weiwei, director of the China Institute of Fudan University, termed Russia aims at radical restructuring of the world order. He assumes that besides “looking to realize the “demilitarization and de-Nazification” of Ukraine, Moscow has a reflective determination by launching military action against Ukraine: Russia desires to overthrow the post-Cold War unipolar world order led by U.S. hegemony, foster the



formation of a novel multi-polar order in which Russia will be a key player” (Ning, 15 May 2022).

NATO may appear united but the crack in the overall stand against Ukraine is visible and the 31 member-states, a U.S.-led alliance, is facing disparagement for not doing enough to support Kyiv. Furthermore, the conflict has invigorated an argument that NATO’s eastward expansion was an error that perpetuated to the current crisis. Huge internally displaced and refugee outflows and an associated humanitarian emergency is overwhelming the capacity of EU governments and relief activities to deal with. “More than 14 million people have fled their homes since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the United Nations (UN) says. Indeed, almost seven million left for neighbouring countries, while eight million people are displaced inside Ukraine itself” (BBC News, 2 June 2022).

With the collapse of erstwhile USSR and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s the world shifted away from bipolar division and this had a double influence on international relations. On 7 December 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev had declared, in the address at the United Nations, that USSR will no longer interfere in the matters of its Eastern European satellite states. Those states could follow liberal democratic systems, which Frank (1988, p. 2575) asserted as “steps in the right direction”. Until the end of the Cold War, the conservative understanding in the world was that ethnicity and nationalism were outmoded notions and mostly resolved complications. On both sides of the Cold War, the tendency appeared to show that the world was moving toward internationality rather than xenophobia or chauvinism. As an outcome of the danger of nuclear warfare, excessive importance was placed on democracy and human rights, financial interdependency, and steady acceptance of universal philosophies, it became trendy to speak of the demise of ethnic and nationalist movements. This marked the prescribed start of the end of the Cold War.

USSR military and ideological retreat from Eastern Europe and the Third World countries brought about democratization of in many nations which were hitherto ruled by Marxist totalitarianisms, and led to noteworthy advancement in resolution of numerous Third World skirmishes that had developed during protracted Cold War since 1940’s. The decrease in East West tension, led to in a substantial waning in inter-state conflicts, many of which ensued due to the ideological power bloc rivalry. Glasnost has liquidated a regime founded on misapprehension and falsehoods. Practically nobody in the Eastern bloc now trusts USSR-led socialism can contest with the Western liberal ideas and capitalism in terms of financial performance and liberties. Marxism dominance and promises of classless and stateless society as a means of understanding and directing society stood discredited.

Conversely, it has been imprudent to assume that the world really moved to neo liberal order and that there was Washington consensus. Fukuyama (1989) argued that with the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the last political substitute to liberalism has been rejected. Fascism was discredited after the World War II, the Communism had collapsed and in China, political and economic reforms seemed to be moving in the course of a more integrated global economy. The world looked as the Hegelian imagination - progressive history as the process of conflict between ideas has reached its ultimate goal by establishing liberal institutions - representative government, free markets, and



consumerist culture globally. There was “Common Marketization and New World Order” and the world has achieved homeostasis. “It seemed as if there would be a global convergence around a set of universal values — freedom, equality, personal dignity, pluralism, human rights. Fukuyama predicted greater geopolitical stability in the world” (Brooks, 8 April, 2022). Fukuyama (1989), summarised it “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such (...) That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” The “endist” proposition guaranteed that U.S. faces no grave threats to its hegemony and that it will continue to be the foremost authority in a global neo liberal order. Currently, it is said that Fukuyama was perhaps hasty to assume the future, all too certain that he could envisage the progression of political progress in advance. Perhaps Fukuyama ignored any discrepancies to the set pattern of dominant Western liberalism. However, as the Berlin wall collapsed and the Cold War ended, Hirst (1989) published *Endism* where he attacked Fukuyama prognosis with deeper and nuanced foresight.

The breakdown of the “Soviet Empire” has been followed by the rise and return of many grave struggles and wars in several parts of the world. Some of these new battles are happening within the former Soviet Union, for example the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the hostility in Chechnya. However, some wars also emerged or deepened in numerous states outside of it and several Third World armed conflicts, in which the superpowers were not intensely involved during the Cold War have continued after it. Moreover, in 1989, Fukuyama ignored that China was still an unyielding state in spite of extensive market reforms and the expectations that Russia would come under liberal democracy fold after the Cold War persist as authoritarian regime (Fukuyama, 2016).

Ethnopolitical conflicts aside, there have been other threats to international order that are, indeed, beyond the full control of major powers, even the U.S., the victor of the Cold War. The most notable ones include religious militancy, terrorism, North-South conflict, and severe competition over scarce resources. The post-Cold War period also saw the revival of North-South economic antagonism. “The very notion of an “end” to history is pernicious (...) Democracy is deeply compromised. The record of liberalism after 1945 needs serious critical attention. Western Europe, the U.S. and Japan all offer ample evidence of the failings of liberal political institutions” (Hirst, 2019). Liberal capitalist economy is not the predictable concomitant and bulwark of liberal democracy. Unfettered financial system can equally pose substantial danger to political democracy, when it allows exceptionally unequal influence of advantaged economic and corporate actors. Growing economic globalization in the post-Cold War era does not appear to be breaking the historical stratifications between the North and South.

*The phenomenon of the economic dependence of the developing countries on the multinational companies from the industrialized countries is named today neokolonialismus, what refers to the economic exploitation of these countries, which resembles the conditions in the colonial age in various regards. With global problems like the climate change, a further dimension of injustice is*



*added: Whereas the problems are caused over proportionality in the North, the consequences of the desertification or extreme weather conditions occur over proportionally in the South. This extends to the threat to the existence of numerous small island states, which will no longer exist if the sea level continues to rise any further (Seligson; Passe-Smith, 2003).*

The unregulated free market does not guarantee economic equality as it aggravates unrestrained concentration of economic activity in the hands of few (Hirst, 2019). The consequence has been growing wealth dissimilarity and class antipathy. The rise of right-wing populist espousal of ultra-nationalism has been undermining for the European Union led to Brexit as well. The rise of religious fundamentalism in recent years within the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions has been widely noted. One is inclined to say that the revival of religion in some way attests to a broad unhappiness with the impersonality and spiritual vacuity of liberal consumerist societies. The other major "contradiction" potentially unresolvable by liberalism is the one posed by nationalism and other forms of racial and ethnic consciousness. But it is not clear that nationalism represents an irreconcilable contradiction in the heart of liberalism. In the first place, nationalism is not one single phenomenon but several, ranging from mild cultural nostalgia to the highly organized and elaborately articulated doctrine of National Socialism. Only systematic nationalisms of the latter sort can qualify as a formal ideology on the level of liberalism or communism (Fukuyama, 2014).

The simple existence of a rising China "with Chinese characteristics", created an alternative pole of ideological attraction, and as such constituted a threat to liberalism. As depicted by Table 1, China's contribution to global GDP is estimate to soon reach 1/5 of the total sum, surpassing the U.S.. China now is global economic power that echoes its own benefits and methods, rather than merely following the lead of prevailing organizations. China definitely will be strategic winner, if Ukraine becomes a protracted trial of strength between Russia and the West.

Table 1 – China's GDP and Share Global GDP							
Year	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2022	2028
GDP	360,86B	1,21T	6,09T	11,06T	14,69T	17,96T	>21T
Share Global GDP	4%	7,24%	13,62%	15,97%	18,14%	18,84%	19,72%

Source: World Bank and Statistica (2023)

Even if "America will continue to be the world's leading military power. But China's growing anti-access/area denial (ACAD) capabilities cuts U.S. edge at least in the East Asian region" (Acharya, 2019). China is challenging the U.S. visions on regionalism and globalism by its very strategically laid out projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative (GDI). These are directly tied to enhancing China's own interests and priorities. The Belt and Road Initiative is trying to getaway of the U.S monopoly and the immediate aim of the several ports, corridors and railway lines is to



avert the interruption of Chinese supply routes. If China gets ahead in tying Europe closer through extensive Belt and Road Initiative, this will be big leap for China and Russia towards their aim of neutralising U.S. domination in Eurasia. In the same line of reasoning, the GDI, builds on the B&RI, and consolidates the international development cooperation agenda and seeks to place China as the key development partner for the Global South.

The Trump Administration and its "make America great again", left a legacy of demise in the global leadership, pushing the European leadership to be uncertain about the long-lasting transatlantic relationship. China has smartly explored this weak link, advancing new levels of cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels, namely at Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), at BRICS+, at Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), at Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), at ASEAN +, in Africa, in South America, and in the Middle East. Russia and China now share a mutual rival in the United States, that has global competences and existence that they perceive as challenging their national and security interests in their sphere of influence. In particular, with Putin's invasion of Ukraine, he is aiming to finish the work on important mission of demolition underhandedly reinforced by numerous world leaders, especially Chinese President Xi Jinping. Together, these leaders want to disrupt what they perceive as U.S. hegemony over the global structure and challenge the belief that the world is bound by a shared set of morals embodied in transnational laws and maintained by organizations such as the United Nations. China and Russia made explicit observations about a "new world order", suggesting that the Ukraine fight and the sanctioning of Russia is going to have farther-reaching significances than hitherto assumed. Xi Jinping's line of thinking was reflected when China's foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told that "China-Russia cooperation has no limits, and that our striving for peace has no limits, our upholding of security has no limits, our opposition towards hegemony has no limits". Moscow and Beijing will continue efforts to "advance global multipolarity and the democratization of international relations" (Ellis, 30 March, 2022).

The new post-cold war world order they are trying to establish is dominated by opposing alternative models of global governance and each political unit seeking to influence its own geopolitical space. Putin basically plans that a larger Russia encompassing part of Ukraine will be one completion of his 2020 declaration that "Russia is not just a country. It's really a separate civilization" (Moscow Times, 2020). "This struggle should be viewed in civilizational, not just geopolitical terms (...)" declared Charles Kupchan, a former senior U.S. official and now scholar at Georgetown University. "It is at once and the same time sui generis, particular to Putin and Russia, but also is part of a broader increase in ethnonationalism and its role in global politics, as well as the backlash to globalization" (Hirsh, Foreign Policy, 10 April 2022). With his attack on Ukraine, which President Putin believes is an inextricable part of Russia, he is resonating what President Xi has also sought to do when he called for the reconstruction of Chinese philosophy and civilization "the utmost vision for the Chinese nation in contemporary history" (Hirsh, 10 April 2022). Zhang (2012) asserted that "China is today the only nation in the world which has combined the world's lengthiest continuous civilization with a huge modern state".



China resents the degree to which the West imposed its presumably collective principles on the global system in the post-war period, which has favoured U.S. hegemony. Simultaneously, the U.S. reads China's pledge to forging a multipolar order based on diverse ideals and determined by different standards more beneficial to non-Western countries as China aims to be a foremost global authority in the process. These two viewpoints on the imminent global order drives larger disagreement and generates the atmospherics of a "new Cold War," even if the U.S. and China state they want to evade it. Global pressure and antagonism from Western powers draws these two nations closer "Trade between China and Russia exceeded \$107.7 billion in 2020 and experts estimate this may be more than \$130 billion considering the rising price of bulk commodities this year" (Xin & Wenwen, 24 May 2021). Both countries believe that U.S. defence plans, for instance missile defences positioned in Europe and the Asia-Pacific as a risk to their safety and an effort by the U.S. to deny them the capacity to put off or strike back against it in the incident of war. Russia's close partnership with China has removed the prospect of a military conflict between two of them to the margins, while the worsening bond with the U.S. has raised the awareness of danger from its treaty ally Japan. According to Arbatov (2021) there are tangible consequences of China's nuclear build-up; if China continues with stated strategies to enlarge its nuclear arsenal to level of the U.S. and Russia, this will lead to a three-way arms race and the tactical nuclear equilibrium that presently exists will be "radically destabilized" as an outcome.

*By way of example Lora Saalman cites several Chinese experts' speculations on strategic stability between the U.S. and China. They note that its key difference from the U.S.-Russia strategic relations lies in the fact that it is not based on approximate nuclear missile parity. In this context they argue that China should build sufficient "comprehensive power", including economic, political and military might, to be on par with the other two nations and thus prevent them from dominating in any strategic talks (Arbatov, Alexei; Dvorkin, Vladimir; Oznobishchev, Sergey, 2012, p. 29).*

Russia's continuing the war in Ukraine and intensifying strains with the West means Moscow has no substitute to the "no limits" policies with China, which leaves it no room to jeopardize even the slightest worsening of relationship with Beijing. Moreover, the multilateral global scheme, namely in the UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO, is disintegrating and some even believe is not truly representative of current global powers and influence and are getting replaced by institutions such as the G20, which brings together countries from both the North and the South, on a more equitable footing than the UN Security Council or the IMF. Micklethwait and Wooldridge (24 March 2022) wrote, "geopolitics is definitively moving against globalization - toward a world dominated by two or three great trading blocs." This broader context, and especially the invasion of Ukraine, "is burying most of the basic assumptions that have underlain business thinking about the world for the past 40 years." We are entering a more composite patchwork of bilateral, regional and plurilateral structures and coalitions. "The country composition of the G20 reveals that it consists of a set of 10 highly aligned Western countries composed of the G7 plus Australia, South Korea, and the European Union and a set of six non-Western



countries that make up the BRICS group composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and Mexico” (Bradford, 4 May 2022). Even parallel institutes such as BRICS+, ASEAN, QUAD others are evolving partnerships between regional governments.

The 2023 BRICS summit advanced the 2017 China proposal to start the BRICS expansion process. The BRICS + (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates), are not only a “new global economic paradigm in the making” (Gouvea & Guiterres, 2023), but also, they represent an antagonist alignment vis-à-vis the U.S. centred leadership. Particularly interesting is the case of Brazil. In April 2023, when president Lula from Brazil travelled to China, the agenda was driven by economics, and among the dozens of accords expected to be finalized during the visit is one regarding the joint Brazilian-Chinese construction of CBERS-6 satellites, a model that “has improved technology that allows for efficient monitoring of biomes such as the Amazon Rainforest even on cloudy days” (Arias, 2023). President Lula also attended the former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff’s inauguration in Shanghai as head of BRICS’s New Development Bank, and carefully implied the need to diversify the international currencies to conduct international payments. In relation the Ukraine War, the narrative of the Brazilian President clearly shows intentional vagueness and ambiguity as he claimed U.S. was “stimulating the fighting” (when he was in China on 10 April 2023), as he suggested Ukraine should cede Crimea (in early April) and as he condemned the “violation of Ukraine’s territorial integrity” (after the visit of Serguei Lavrov to Brazil on 17 April 2023) (Associated Press, 2023). It appears that Brazil, as a regional power, is seeking a share within the process of building a new global order.

In addition, the OECD has predicted “that by 2060, the GDP of the developing world, including China and India, would surpass that of advanced OECD and non-OECD countries: 57.7 percent to 42.3 percent” (OECD, 2012). In 2020 Joe Biden wrote that the United States needs to “get tough with China” (Planet Money, 2020). Beijing “is playing the long game”, he argued, “by extending its global reach, promoting its own political model, and investing in the technologies of the future. Washington understands that it is competing with Beijing to determine not only whose economy and military are more dominant but also whose principles of governance are more worthy of global leadership.” (Sher, 2022). Washington denial to come to Ukraine support with unswerving military backing is particularly disturbing. China is keenly observing the power play and positioning of west. U.S. reaffirmed backing for NATO, promoting the QUAD, investing in AUKUS, reinforcing trilateral security collaboration with Japan and South Korea and renewed arrangement with the Philippines indicates the U.S. return to multilateralism against Beijing's assertiveness to have closer allies and partners in the region.

Thus, the inquiry about whether the Russia-Ukraine battle declines or consolidates Washington’s position in the international arena remains an open one and is perhaps too early to respond. Partially, this will be contingent on the way in which the war pans out in reality. But essentially, the response will also hinge on whether the U.S., Russia, China or others competing for global supremacy and part will form the connectivity flows in tactically effective ways and that will incorporate the probable idea of the imminent of



the global order. What is apparent is that the multiplex nature of the international global order is here to stay, and the power architecture will be determined by this dynamic and composite struggle over tactical connectivity. On the top of all uncertainty, there is the result of the coming U.S. presidential election in 2024.

### **Concluding Observations**

Recalling that the prime purpose of the study is to examine the diverse, but coordinated roles that various states in helping settle the Russia-Ukraine war, as an opportunity to power rebalancing, there is a looming reality: we are building blocks, instead of multipolarities. Geo-economics influence and Western hostility are the foundations of the new invisible walls.

Indeed, the world is very different from the post-World War II, where the U.S. arose as the world's foremost power, neither we are seeing typical characteristics of multipolar world. Amitav Acharya calls this a "multiplex world combines multiplicity and complexity (...) It's a world of multiple actors in global affairs that are nonetheless bound by complex forms of interdependence" (Acharya, 2014). We are building blocks instead of promoting globalization and multilateralism. "Geopolitics is conclusively moving against long-standing global order toward a world dominated by two or three dominant trading blocs: an Asian one with China at its core and maybe Russia as its energy supplier; an American-led bloc; and possibly a third centred on the European Union, with the Europeans largely allied to the U.S. but anxious about it also. Other powers will equivocate between these two or three great blocs, much as they did during the Cold War" (Micklethwait; Wooldridge 24 March 2022).

Kissinger (2014) argues that, "The contemporary quest for world order will require a coherent strategy to establish a concept of order within the various regions and to relate these regional orders to one another (...) New World Order is phase of histrionic transformation in the global politics. It is essentially associated to the idea of global governance predominantly in the characteristic of a cooperative effort to recognize, diagnose, and tackle international challenges that a nation or state cannot handle on its own". Fundamentally, "new-world-order" defined as definite epoch of global uncertainty where noteworthy fluctuations in geopolitics occurred due to armed war or financial disaster, lead to a restructuring of the global socio-political system. Contemporary global politics is fragmented, wavering by crosscurrents, inconsistencies, and multivalent forcefields, not singular ideas. Internal political pressures engendered by social divisions drive internal political supremacy over addressing global existential requirements. "Fierce independence, assertion of uniqueness, and willpower for autonomy characterize indigenous expression and spill over into the global public square creating greater diversity and cross-cutting tensions. These countervailing forcefields now ripple through global forums and international institutions, issues, and challenges, and define the new global order. The tensions between the West and the non-Western world are central, significant, and involve many countries" (Bradford, 4 May 2022).

The hurried retreat of U.S. from Afghanistan, the historic divisions within the European Union intensified by the Ukraine – Russia conflict, offered Russia and indirectly China the prospect to fashion the new form of the new world order. The new formulation is



dependent on the concept of a multi polar world order, hostile to the idea of western democratic liberal order, which has become weaponized due to the U.S. dollar reserve system, trade wars and systematic sanctions. The Ukraine conflict fast-tracked the formation of strategies of the new world order by announcing Russia as a key player in the multipolar conflict, which has destabilized the security structure of Europe. "I think the war in Ukraine and the desperate steps taken by The West to curtail Russia, is really a story of the formation of a new world order. This is not just about Ukraine. It is not just about Russia. These are mere actors in the bigger stage of shifting global politics. This story is geopolitics at its best. I believe we are seeing a new world order playing out in front of our eyes" (Heerden, 12 May 2022).

The Ukraine conflict is much more than just re-establishing Russia's power on its previous colony. It is more about a tactical repositioning by Russia to take up global status. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine make it apparent that Russia and China are aligning themselves to fill the strategic vacuum due the waning global role of the U.S. The global balance of power is shifting quickly as global and regional powers try to secure their place in the newest world order after decades of global U.S. dominance. As Roy states "After the conflict playing out in Ukraine, it would be a bi-polar world, with a tri-polar tendency. There would be conflicts galore and shadow boxing matches" (Roy, 24 February 2022).

To succeed in a multivalent global order is to take cognizance of growing intricacies, paradoxes, and contrariness as certainties; delink subjects from one another to avert a particular difference from disrupting other functional relationships; decentralise international negotiating avenues from one another; plan varied ways to work on subjects that are noticeably diverse; reassure varying groups of country representatives to lead on diverse issues; foster plurilateral groups by rotating their arrangement from issue to issue; embrace diversity; sidestep blocs; offer innovation; emphasis on substance; and dial back on polemics. This new era of intricacy, inconsistency, and polyvalent forcefields calls for new methods which are categorized by better candidness to multiplicity, transformation, and eclecticism and driven more by real-world specifics, functional understandings, knowledge-based policymaking, and an intense sense of global necessities to address systemic challenges and existential threats. In a multivalent world, these methods would be more operative and valuable than using international forums to try to advance morals, political predilections, and polemic alterations. In a complex world, we must avoid building blocks, but to strive to create global, multi-level and multipolar structures, in which multipolarities are perceived as forces for stability.

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