



Journal of Social and Political Sciences

Cheng, M. (2022). The Ukraine Crisis: Causes, Conundrum and Consequences. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 5(2), 96-111.

ISSN 2615-3718

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1991.05.02.350

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

The *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied, and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

The Asian Institute of Research *Social and Political Sciences* is a peer-reviewed International Journal. The journal covers scholarly articles in the fields of Social and Political Sciences, which include, but are not limited to, Anthropology, Government Studies, Political Sciences, Sociology, International Relations, Public Administration, History, Philosophy, Arts, Education, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies. As the journal is Open Access, it ensures high visibility and the increase of citations for all research articles published. The *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* aims to facilitate scholarly work on recent theoretical and practical aspects of Social and Political Sciences.



ASIAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
Connecting Scholars Worldwide



The Ukraine Crisis: Causes, Conundrum and Consequences

Manqing Cheng¹

¹ Politics and International Affairs, School of Social Sciences, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Correspondence: Manqing Cheng, School of Social Sciences, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, E-mail: mche584@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Abstract

Located at the geopolitical centre of Eurasia, Ukraine has been an important arena for great power game for nearly three decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The West, principally the United States and Europe, and the Russian Federation have therefore been heavily involved in Ukraine's internal and external development. Their ideological, economic, and geopolitical interests clashed in a fierce battle that led to multiple political regime changes in Ukraine, and ultimately plunged Europe into an intractable security situation. This paper takes the rivalry between the US, Europe and Russia in Ukraine as a starting point to examine the dilemma facing European security in the context of the great power game, the root causes behind the Ukraine crisis, its far-reaching consequences for geopolitics and global patterns and the implications for regional peace in other parts of the world.

Keywords: European Union, Geopolitics, Global Governance, International Patterns, NATO, Regional Security, Russia, Sanctions, Ukraine, United States, World Economy

1. Introduction

As the conflict is on the surface between the Russian Federation (hereinafter Russia) and Ukraine, it is in essence the outcome of a tug-of-war between two camps in Europe. The current Ukraine crisis represents the culmination of the deterioration of bilateral relations between Russia and Ukraine since 2014. Specifically, there are three components at the root of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The First is Ukraine's membership in NATO. The second concerns the disputed territorial status of Crimea and the independence of eastern Ukraine. The third lies in the security interests of Russia. The United States (hereinafter U.S.) and NATO may bear unshirkable responsibility for the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, which occurs as a result of the prolonging encroachment of the U.S. on Russia's security space. With the exception of a brief honeymoon period after the end of the Cold War, Russian-American relations have evolved against the backdrop of constant confrontation throughout the past three decades. Following the Ukrainian revolution in 2014, the relations between Russia and the U.S. were spiraling into a hostile state, marked by political vilification, diplomatic expulsion, economic sanctions, and military confrontation.

2. The Roots of Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

In the early period following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the region was left in a political and economic

chaos. Though all post-Soviet states have achieved independence, they remain closely associated with Russia due to the long-lasting influence of the Soviet planned economy. A major concern of the U.S. at that time was that, if the former Soviet Republics were not drawn in, the Russian Federation might unite them again to form a "new Soviet Union". The former adviser on Russia to the Clinton administration, Strobe Talbott (2003), held that along with containing Russian efforts to assert its influence in former Soviet sphere, the U.S. must also endeavour to preserve the independent status of the post-Soviet states in order to prevent the re-emergence of Eurasian powers that dominate global affairs. Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997, p.51), the former Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs in 1977-81, also wrote that "In the short run, the United States should consolidate and perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia... preventing the emergence of a hostile coalition that could challenge America's primacy."

Since the Clinton administration, the U.S. has been concentrating on forging closer ties with post-Soviet states and has engaged in campaigns to limit the influence and control of Russia over these countries. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Russia did not expand westward nor did it pose any immediate threat to EU security prior to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Even so, NATO has not halted its eastward expansion. By adopting a unilateral security policy exempting Russia, the U.S. increased NATO membership from 16 to 30, gradually expanded its sphere of influence beyond Western, Southern, and Central Europe to include Eastern and South-eastern Europe, and extended from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea region, thereby completely encircling Russia. Upon rapidly absorbing countries in Central and Eastern Europe, NATO enlarged its gaze to the post-Soviet space. Many of the post-Soviet states are now part of NATO's "partnership for peace". The West has drawn on their historical grievances and territorial disputes with Russia to encourage their NATO enrolment, with Ukraine and Georgia among the strongest proponents. In the wake of the 2014 Crimea crisis, Ukraine clearly sought membership in NATO. In 2020, NATO accepted Ukraine as the sixth Enhanced Opportunity Partner.

America's strategy towards Russia is primarily based on three factors: the economy, public opinion, and geography. In the economic field, the country constructed new gas pipelines for post-Soviet states to ease their transition off of Russian energy; the former Soviet Union received substantial political and financial support from the country to bring the pro-American forces to power. On the geopolitical level, the U.S. has deployed weapons and equipment closer and closer to Russia's borders, increasing the acute sense of insecurity within Russia. It is the aim of US strategy to disrupt, and perhaps even weaken, the checks and balances among countries in the region in order to place the U.S. in an advantageous position as an offshore balancer. In enlarging NATO eastward, the U.S. stimulated and intensified the reaction of Russia, which in turn enhanced Europe's opposition against and hostility towards Russia and gradually gave rise to the current Russia-Europe tensions.

Unlike the US, where militaries and power space rule in squeezing Russia's geographical space, the EU focuses more on economic, cultural, and political pressure on Russia. For example, they encourage post-Soviet states to adopt EU technical and regulatory standards as a counterweight to the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union; and encourage these states to participate in the European integration process and thwart Russia's attempts to integrate the former Soviet space economically and politically. Through accession prospects, economic assistance, and visa facilitation among other measures, the EU promotes democratic transitions and colour revolutions in former Soviet Republics to pry them away from Russia. It was not the strategic objective of the EU to deter Russia, but rather it was ideological, which was considered by some Russians as anti-Russia policy. As a result, the EU, Germany, Poland, and other countries actively intervened in the 2004 Ukrainian election and launched the Orange Revolution, which prevented the pro-Russian Yanukovich from gaining power and supported the pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko. This provided a strong stimulus to the Kremlin. Upon the expansion of the EU to the east, not only have the Baltic states, Poland, and other countries become part of the union, but also their fears and animosities toward Russia have been accommodated. A sense of insecurity prevails in these countries due to their history and geography. However, starting from an adversarial mindset, they have only been concerned with their own security, disregarding Russia's, thereby reinforcing the insecurity of both sides. Consequently, the EU is prevented from engaging in a constructive dialogue with Russia. French president Emmanuel Macron has repeatedly called for a change in EU policy and a thaw in relations with Russia, but to no avail. As recently as June 2021, France and Germany proposed holding an EU-Russia summit to promote pragmatic cooperation and

enhance mutual trust, but it didn't go forward owing to the vehement opposition from Poland and the Baltic states.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has made European countries realize that NATO expansion and economic sanctions cannot bring Russia to its knees since it is one of the few countries in the world that is completely self-sufficient in natural resources. Natural gas reserves in Russia are among the world's largest, making up about one quarter of the world's total proved reserves (EIA, 2016, p.15). "Russian crude and condensate output reached 10.5 million barrels per day (bpd), accounting for 14% of the world's total supply" as of 2021 (IEA, 2022a, para 2). Russia is also home to as much as 30% of the world's iron, 65% of apatite, likely 25-40% of the world's unmined gold supply, and 15.2% of coal (geohistory, 2019; Mining Technology, 2021). Russia exports the largest amount of wheat in the world, nearly 20% of worldwide supplies (Duggal & Haddad, 2022). It is clear that even if Russia is economically decoupled from the west, the country is still capable of maintaining economic and trade ties with other nations by making use of its resource advantages. The EU had already imposed tough sanctions on Russia following the Ukraine crisis in 2014, which remains in place to this day. Due to close economic ties and energy dependence on Russia, sanctions are always a double-edged sword, with varying impacts for each member state. In 2020, around 45% of gas imports and close to 40% of gas consumption, 25.5% of petroleum and 54% of solid fossil fuels were met by Russia, with Germany importing about 55% of its consumption as of 2022 (CLEW, 2022; IEA, 2022b). Germany stands to lose the most in view of its close connection with Russia.

There is no way for European nations to militarily weaken Russia, as it still has a robust defence industry. Although the conventional weapons of Russia are vastly inferior to those of NATO, it is currently the world's largest nuclear power, with over 500 land-based intercontinental missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and airborne ballistic missiles. This is why NATO is keen to avoid direct conflict with Russia, which also explains Russia's restraint, viewed by some analysts, in the conflict with Ukraine. Actions taken by the U.S. and Europe towards Russia have created a political atmosphere of solidarity within Russia. There is no doubt that, in comparison with the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and Europe, the security threats facing Russia are greater than that of economy, and survival needs are greater than development needs, which rendered Russia's deployment of troops in Ukraine a legitimate decision. If Russia's invasion of Crimea served only as a warning about the NATO expansion, the Russia-Ukraine war is a more explicit manifestation of the country's rivalry with the U.S. and Europe.

Russian interference in the internal affairs of former Soviet Union has been attributed to the fact that these countries fall into Russia's traditional sphere of influence (Solchanyk, 1998, p.21). Russians view it unacceptable to have the U.S. and Europe establish "outposts" in the heartland of Russian power. Neither czarist Russia nor contemporary Russia have ever treated Ukraine as a foreign country. Historically, Russia and Ukraine are both Slavic nations. Although Russia has a larger population and a larger area, Ukraine is considered the birthplace of the Slavic people. From a geopolitical point of view, Russia is no longer a Eurasian power once it loses Ukraine. Should Ukraine, with over 45 million residents, vast natural resources, and access to the Black Sea, fall back into Russian hands, Russia would once again possess sufficient resources to rebuild its eponymous "Soviet empire". Despite having broken Russia's illusion of regaining the territory of the former Soviet Union, the U.S overlooked the establishment of a regional security framework beneficial to both Russia and the post-Soviet states, nor did it address the possibility that Russia would use force to prevent former Soviet Republics from joining the Western alliance. In sending troops to Ukraine for a second time, Moscow sent a clear signal to the U.S. and Europe: Continuing to increase Russia's sense of insecurity will further intensify a serious security crisis in Europe.

3. European Security Dilemmas and Strategic Blind Spots Behind the Conflict

In addition to exposing Europe's strategic blind spot and security dilemma, the current crisis in Ukraine has exacerbated tensions between Europe and Russia, further entrenched the dominance of the US in European security affairs, and more importantly, severely tarnished the international image of the EU.

Regardless of how it ends, the prospects for finding a lasting solution to the conflict are dim. In the heart of Europe, geopolitical confrontations are erupting from point to point and from outside to inside, leaving it to develop into a

more polarized and confrontational continent. Rather than closing, the geopolitical fault lines between East and West Europe are extending and deepening along the Polish-Ukrainian border or along the Dnieper River. Perhaps Russia's goal is to smooth geopolitical boundaries and alter the unjust and unreasonable security order in Europe, but the approach is beyond the capability and the expectations of the majority of countries in Europe, and further fragmenting of the European geopolitical landscape seems inescapable. It may not be the Iron Curtain of the Cold War due to the fact that there are still energy agreements between Russia and Europe, and a hotline between Moscow and Paris continues to offer a glimpse of hope for a détente; but the current situation and trends seem to be moving further away from Russia's goals.

After the end of the Cold War, Europe never achieved a common security that penetrates the Eurasian continent and includes Russia. However, through economic and trade cooperation, energy supply and social exchanges, Europe and Russia have maintained a constantly tangled relationship between them. Since the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 and the Crimea Crisis of 2014, mutual understanding between the two sides has deteriorated and mutual trust has faltered repeatedly, however energy dependence has not subsided but increased, and the "ease on Russia" set of positive policies has still been able to maintain a state of cold peace. Now the slowly building hostility between the two sides has reached a critical point due to the increase of NATO presence by the Biden administration and the pursuit by Ukraine of security protection. A fragile cold peace in Europe is becoming more volatile and likely to give way to a new Cold War.

As disappointing as it is, the changes in geopolitics taking place in Europe are out of keeping with what Europe intended and are in stark contrast to the lessons of Europe to promote prosperity and peace after two world wars. In the gradual quantitative change of EU-Russia relations, Europe has not been able to prevent the small things from being stifled and has not shown a sense of humility in taking security concerns seriously of all parties. At the onset of the crisis, Europe failed to play a major role as a whole. Instead, self-centred, strategic alliance of the US led it in the opposite direction of its own interests and watched the crisis being brewed, catalysed, and detonated.

The conflict brought about a tremendous shock to the European security order established following World War II. By imposing sanctions on Russia or supplying arms to Ukraine, the EU, Switzerland, Sweden, and Finland broke with tradition. Likewise, Germany raised its defence budget to 2% of its GDP. President Biden openly discussed the possibility of Finland and Sweden joining the NATO. Contrary to the U.S and Ukraine, Europe, which has deep geopolitical and economic ties with Russia, was much more likely to advocate for a peaceful solution to the crisis by means of negotiations. The French and German leaders had conducted intensive diplomatic mediation since February in an attempt to alter the status quo dominated by the U.S. and Russia. As the conflict erupted, however, the EU's mediating role, and its pursuit of "strategic autonomy", were jeopardized. The U.S. was convinced that Europe faced a serious security threat. Even if Europe were to recognize even more the importance of "strategic autonomy", it will not be easy in the short term to break free from its reliance on the U.S. in the area of defence, and it can only remain deeply bound. In order to ensure their security interests, European countries must sacrifice their economic interests. The U.S. is very successful at mobilizing western solidarity against Moscow. The U.S. and Europe have actually demonstrated a high level of coordination and consistency in their actions relating to major issues concerning the security of the global system and the stability of the fundamental order, which has exceeded Russia's expectations. Unless Russia abandons the controversial concept of "uniting Europe to check America", a miscalculation may result and a disastrous outcome may ensue.

Ideally, the lasting security of Europe should be overall security that lies in a comprehensive approach, as a partially safe Europe cannot be a secure one. An effective regional security architecture cannot exclude any country within the realm. At a time when economic globalization binds the destinies of all countries together, Europe ought to focus more on developing a balanced, collaborative, and sustainable regional security architecture that can promote lasting peace in Europe and throughout Eurasian continent. NATO exists to prevent threats from hostile countries and ensure the security of some member states. After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO lost its rationality. Some European countries hope that NATO will transform into a political organization, capable of promoting economic and social integration. History shows that security created by military power is temporary, and economic cooperation and integration are long-term. While the Europeans were celebrating the victory of the

Cold War more than 30 years ago, they failed to recognize that the U.S. had its own plans for the future of European security. In Washington's view, European security can only be created within the framework of a US-governed NATO. At this year's Munich Security Conference, US Vice President Harris (2022) declared that America would defend any NATO territory as if it were its own. Western Europe has been beset by wars for more than 2,000 years, and the 75 years of relative safety following World War II have lasted longer than any other period in European history. However, most of this cannot be attributed to the Europeans themselves, but rather is dependent upon the U.S., or the balance between the U.S. and Russia. After participating in the Munich Security Conference for 19 consecutive years, Russia refused to attend this year, which not only caused a structural imbalance in the Munich Security Conference, but also symbolized that the Russia-US relationship, which has a large impact on European security, has seriously out of control in the European region. This sword of Damocles hangs over European security.

Although the Cold War has ended, its spectre has never truly left Europe. The current Russia-Ukraine war is a continuation and a culmination of a process that has been in existence for some time, an old account based on American planning. While Russia and the U.S. are owed security obligations, Europe and Ukraine are not the real protagonists in this incident. Europe is fundamentally incapable of determining its own security, which may sound frustrating, but it is an irrevocable fact of history. Assuming that the "back to the future" option is conceivable, what Europe would need is a sustained peace effort anchored by a common market, a security order capable of accommodating and balancing the concerns of both Russia and Ukraine, a safety mechanism that can be designed, constructed, and maintained independently.

4. Challenges to the Reconciliation between the U.S., Europe, and Russia

Today, the U.S. stands out as the only superpower in the world capable of waging war unilaterally, as well as creating regional conflicts. At the junction of geopolitical plates, the conflict and its evolution can be divided into two levels: the first is the greater intensity of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine until they confront each other on a tangible battlefield; the other is the showdown on the system between Russia and the Western world spearheaded by the U.S.

On March 16, President Biden signed the federal budget for the 2022 fiscal year worth up to \$1.5 trillion. In this 2,741-page bill, US defence spending has the biggest budget amounts to \$782 billion, an increase of 5.6, and \$730 billion in non-defence spending, making up less than half of the budget (Probasco, 2022; Pramuk, 2022). Intriguingly, the budget proposal that was finally put to a vote was altered, eliminating the \$15.6 billion budget for fighting the pandemic, and spending \$13.6 billion on Ukraine and other Eastern European nations (Probasco, 2022; Pramuk, 2022).

In light of current situation, throughout the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, a bloodthirsty machine was developed from American financial capital, production capital, and military-industrial complexes. Firstly, join forces with major allies to impose economic and financial sanctions on Russia in turn, thereby crippling Russia's foreign economic links, interrupting Russia's financial lifeline, and removing obstacles to low-cost legal theft of Russian assets. Secondly, cut off Russia's economic connections with Europe to resume Europe's economic dependence on the U.S. Several countries, such as Germany and France, were caught in the middle as they sought to reduce their dependence on Russian energy while taking action to cushion the blow of rising energy prices. The U.S. then announce joint action "on enhancing European energy security and reducing its dependence on Russian oil and natural gas" (Reuters, 2022a). On the surface, it seems to alleviate Europe's worries, but it took the opportunity to export liquefied natural gas to Europe at inflated prices (De Luna & Chestney, 2022; De Luna, 2022; Woodward, 2022). The shipments of US LNG to Europe have jumped to more than 10 times higher than a year ago for three consecutive months (Rinke, Abnett & Renshaw, 2022). The largest U.S. exporter, Cheniere Energy, has signed numerous long-term contracts to sell LNG in recent months, making it one of the top beneficiaries of this surge (Rashad, 2022). The third stage is to create tensions in the international financial market and to guide capital from Europe to return to the U.S. by raising interest rates. Recently, echoing the fourth round of the EU sanctions against Russia, the credit rating of the Russian government and all its companies has been completely removed, directly

cutting off the financing channels of the Russian government and enterprises in the international financial markets. Around this time, the U.S. initiated interest rate hikes on the grounds of tackling inflation and signalled that Federal Reserve's balance sheet would be drastically reduced (Cox, 2022). A rate hike by the Federal Reserve at a time when most equities markets are experiencing high uncertainty implies US confidence in the endogenous growth momentum it has achieved within its own economy, which also sends a powerful signal to other strong economies around the globe: the U.S. still dominates the global economy and monetary policy; global capital will accelerate the flow of capital into the US market, which will further prolong the cycle of US dollar hegemony while bolstering financial stability.

In instances where capital needs war to survive, this may also indicate a new period of shuffle is imminent. In this military conflict, Russia has been forced to expose its own weaknesses to the world, and its international status and deterrence will be impaired accordingly. Despite its vast arsenal of nuclear weapons, energy, food, and other bargaining chips, time is running out for Russia if it fails to obtain technical and economic support from other channels. In any case, Russia has failed economically, diplomatically and politically, no matter the outcome on the battlefield.

The first is a failure in the way in which the war was fought. As can be seen, Russia implemented the methods of Afghanistan, the Prague Spring, and even World War II in this war. However, Ukraine is fighting a decentralized, flat war in which artificial intelligence is prominently involved under high-tech conditions. Russia's traditional approach to combat can be considered backward in this conflict. The second is the failure of national power. In the structural power system consisting of four factors - security, production, finance, and knowledge - Russia trails behind in production, finance, and knowledge, except in the military sphere. Thirdly, the underlying logic of strategic culture has failed. It is still the Russian strategic culture to focus on territorial expansion and natural resource monopolies. Yet, in the 21st century, great power struggles have been reframed by technology, finances, and the ability to influence global governance structure. Clearly, Russia is at a distinct disadvantage in these areas. In the fourth place is the failure of the Russian way of thinking. Recently, there is a popular contention that Aleksandr Dugin's thinking, one of modern Russia's most influential thinkers, has been instrumental in influencing Putin and Russia's decision-making (Von Drehle, 2022; Zabala & Gallo, 2022). Dugin's ideas are a melange of the Russian Messiah, Neo-Eurasianism, Slavic superiority, Russian exceptionalism, post-Soviet imperialism, and "Living Sphere" or "Living Space" (Lebensraum) in a German "Geobiological Environment". (Dunlop, 2004; Shekhovtsov, 2014; Scott, 2018; Lewis, 2020). A concept of interdependence under globalization, a proposition of harmonious coexistence of different civilizations, and the principle of modernity in the context of industrial civilization and post-industrial civilization are absent from his philosophy. In this regard, many Russians are still trapped in the 18th and 19th centuries. Nonetheless, Russia has demonstrated its readiness to use nuclear weaponry over the course, controlling the situation to a considerable extent. This indicates that a war-like disposition to employ nuclear weapons will prove powerful as a negotiating instrument in the future international game. Apart from Russia's energy, food, and control of Eastern Ukraine and the Black Sea, the country is still somewhat capable of resisting so long as there is no regime change. It is anticipated that the game between Russia and the U.S. and Europe will be protracted.

The greatest obstacle to Russian rapprochement with the U.S. and Europe lies in that both sides are extremely hard-line on the issue of post-Soviet statehood: the former believes it has military superiority while the latter believes it possesses economic and political clout. Even if the two sides were to come to terms, it should be noted that the interests of the former Soviet Republics cannot be reliably assured. In the case of reconciliation at the expense of the former Soviet Union, such an outcome is tantamount to appeasement. In its capacity as a major stakeholder in the war, Ukraine should play a primary role in facilitating reconciliation between Russia, the U.S., and Europe. Nevertheless, Ukraine has adopted an opportunistic approach to the question of integration with the West or cooperation with Russia, seeking both economic benefits from Western countries and political benefits from Russia. To avoid becoming a proxy in the great power game, Ukraine would do well to maintain a friendly, equidistant relationship with Russia, the U.S., and Europe. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (2014) considers that internationally pursuing "a posture comparable to that of Finland...cooperat[ing] with the West in most fields but carefully avoid[ing] institutional hostility toward Russia" would still be a viable solution even to

the current crisis, and Ukraine could strive to bridge the East and the West. A non-aligned Ukraine would be beneficial to all parties.

Regardless of the outcome of the Russo-Ukrainian War, matters on the battlefield must be addressed through negotiations. Military restraint on the part of Russia in Ukraine is intended to limit the scope of the conflict and open the way for negotiations. Negotiations at the moment are conducted primarily through Russia's strategy of "promoting talks through forces". If it were not for the continual advancement of the Russian army, Ukraine would not necessarily offer to negotiate with Russia. Ukraine, on the other hand, is delaying negotiations in order to gain more support from the U.S. and Europe. If the U.S. and Europe continue to encircle and intercede with Russia, call upon more countries to join a coalition of sanctions against Russia - some post-Soviet states may be forced to act as "vanguards" against Russia - or provide substantial military assistance to Ukraine, Russia would be most likely to retaliate with more "tit-for-tat" measures. Not only will this intensify confrontations and contradictions within Europe, yielding a zero-sum game, but it may also stimulate the formation of new political alliances in other regions, thus creating a more complex multipolar cold war pattern. If the war between Russia and Ukraine continues for a prolonged period of time, NATO countries bordering Russia could view Russia's military presence in Ukraine as a potential security threat, and "NATO will depend on U.S. support as will the anxious and imperilled countries of Europe's east... Eastern member states, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania, will likely have substantial numbers of NATO troops permanently stationed on their soil. A request from Finland and Sweden to...join NATO would be impossible to reject" (Fix & Kimmage, 2022).

A more realistic course of action is to move away from threats and extortions towards reciprocal favours. If this step is to be accomplished, it will require practical concessions from all parties. As an example, the U.S. and Europe reduced sanctions against Russia or reduced military aid to Ukraine; in response, Russia reduced countersanctions against the U.S. and Europe, or reduced military operations against Ukraine; and at the same time, Ukraine actively pursued neutrality. For Europe to restore security and peace, it should fully leverage its strength as the most influential political and economic force in the region, unite with neighbours and the international community for peace talk, encourage the creation of trust rather than aggravate hostilities, and push for an early cease-fire. Considering that Europe and Russia are inseparable neighbours, European countries would need to manage risks such as expanding sanctions against Russia and increasing military assistance to Ukraine in a rational and prudent manner, as well as establishing a regional security structure on an equal footing with Russia. More importantly, resolving the Russian-Ukrainian conflict could constitute a significant step towards enabling Europe to achieve its long-sought strategic autonomy and a notion of subjectivity necessary for redefining the regional security. Europe is in a more powerful and sensible position than any other actor in the world to exert pressure on the U.S. and urge them to assume its responsibilities not to escalate conflict, not to avoid its dissonances with Russia and not to endanger European security.

The outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War has once again exposed the failure of the international order with the United Nations at its core. Although Russia participates in the existing system, it is not a beneficiary, and, thus, it is free to wage war without much consideration of its impact on the system whatsoever. This in mind, the actors involved in conflict should devise a more robust regional security architecture, establish an effective regional crisis management mechanism, and negotiate more stringent terms on arms control. Otherwise, the world might witness a coexistence of a "cold war" and a "hot war".

In the long run, no matter how the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is resolved, Russia-Ukraine relations will never be the same again, and Europe's geopolitical structure and security pattern will undergo profound changes. It was of greater concern to the U.S. to maintain its dominant position in the international and regional order, and other countries were subordinate to its strategic interests. The present conflict represents another manifestation of Russia's long-standing dissatisfaction with the US-led world order and the European landscape. In the wake of the current Ukraine crisis, the European security order will be challenged, Russian-European relations will continue to deteriorate, prospects for Russia-Europe cooperation in energy will be slim, and the landscape of global energy will undergo a fundamental transformation.

5. The Reconfiguration of Europe and the World by the Crisis

Among the major beneficiaries of the conflict with Ukraine would be NATO, which could be given a clearer mandate to defend Europe. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO could leverage the conflict as a pretext and justification for a substantial increase in its forward presence along Russia's periphery. In the current political climate, the membership of Finland and Sweden in NATO has become an urgent policy option rather than merely an after-dinner topic. In expanding to the north, NATO would complete its C-shaped encirclement of Russia, which was obstructed by Ukraine in its eastward expansion. Direct and intense confrontation between the two parties would also become more common.

5.1 *The Conflict and the Eurasian Transformation*

What is more noteworthy, however, is that the EU's construction of "strategic autonomy" is being pushed in an anti-Russian and militarized direction. Over the past few years, the difficulties in accurately identifying security threats and the lack of clarity regarding strategic objectives have been the recurring problems for the EU to be quick to speak and slow to act when designing and implementing strategic autonomy. Despite not being originally conceived with Russia as its only imaginary foe, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has provided the EU with an opportunity to unify its internal positions and to focus on potential security threats, creating a great need to build hard power and set up a geopolitical entity within the EU. A policy shift in Germany may be one of the biggest drivers of the EU's strategic autonomy to target Russia. Following its economic heft in the debt crisis in 2009 and its diplomatic heft in Crimea in 2014, Germany's security breakthrough in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is symbolic of the history-making process of "normalizing" the state since the end of World War II. Even though Germany will remain determined to meet its security ambitions through the "EU way" and will still do its best to avoid the outside world from drawing too many connections between reality and history, its economic and industrial strength will inherently contribute to the development of the Russia-EU relationship, which is currently in the throes of geopolitical confrontation. After the Cold War ended, a new issue arose for the European security architecture: how to guarantee Russia's security needs? The "Common European home" and a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals" are somewhat of a utopian fantasy. Russia was not only unable to integrate into the original European security system but has also been gradually expelled from that system. For Russia, European security is divided; American and NATO security is based upon Russian insecurity, and Russia's security concerns are not being adequately addressed. In this sense, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is an outburst of the general security tension that has developed between Russia, the U.S., and NATO, but has reached a certain intensity, signalling a return to the Cold War in Eurasian geopolitics.

In addition to having profound impacts on the European security structure and Eurasian geopolitics, the Russia-Ukraine conflict will also reshape the global geopolitical pattern in some way. Relations between Russia and the U.S. will change more fundamentally than in any other time since the end of the Cold War. In the event that Russia, the U.S., and the West come to blows, there will be severe repercussions for the original political ecology of peace and for the development of global politics. This will result in new eras in global politics and economic development. A pronounced trend of geopolitical division and confrontation in Europe has accelerated the transition of international relations from a globalized era with geoeconomic cooperation as the central theme to a post-globalized era with geopolitical competition. Developed economies have employed a broad range of tools against Russia other than direct military means, including financial attack, energy diversion and export control, which are extending and deepening the geopolitical confrontation while systemically destroying the geoeconomic foundation. The end result of this occurrence will interact with supply chain security issues that have been created by the pandemic, making regionalization and collectivization of the global economy increasingly plausible.

A long period of time will probably elapse before the EU is able to play a vital role in international affairs as an independent pole; instead, it will have to rely on the U.S. for major strategic decisions. Russia-Ukraine conflicts will lead to a Europe in greater need of assistance and support, as well as the increasing dislocation between the U.S. and Europe over the Indo-Pacific issue. In the eyes of U.S., its positioning towards Europe remains a tool of great power competition, and its strategic alliance with Europe should serve the Indo-Pacific strategy, which is

dominated by competition with China. A marked increase in sense of insecurity and defence awareness has taken hold throughout Europe as a result of the current conflict. By empowering Europe through the framework of NATO, the U.S. hopes its allies can shoulder more defence responsibilities and share its pressure in Europe, so that allow the country to steadily shift its strategic focus to the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific may not be the centre of attention for Europe. A clear example of this occurs in the economic and trade sphere, where Europe's energy dependence on Russia cannot be eliminated within a short period of time, and there will be hardships associated with the energy transition. The serious economic backlash of Europe's sanctions against Russia will continue to manifest themselves, and the continent itself will be adversely affected. Food shortages generated by the crisis is likely to put inflationary pressure on the eurozone, and the millions of refugees from Ukraine will put the solidarity and social cohesion of Europe to the test once more. As a result, Europe will become increasingly focused on domestic affairs for some time to come and be less able to match America's ambitious efforts in the Indo-Pacific.

In the long run, the U.S. will be severely hindered in its quest to balance its "two-ocean strategy" over time. During the conflict, Europe's dependence on the U.S. will likely be heightened in the short term, yet a loose alliance between the U.S. and Europe and a so-called "thematic alliance" will remain in place in the long term. Europe has become increasingly aware of the fragility of mutual dependence and unwilling to rely permanently on the U.S. for security protection. Though the pace of pursuing strategic independence has been disrupted, the direction is becoming clearer and more determined. The "strategic awakening" occurring in Germany and other countries relating to defence matters does not aim to ensure the security of the U.S., but to give Europe a sense of autonomy in terms of security and so to gradually move away from the hegemony of the U.S. in strategic affairs. This outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine will further accentuate the differences between the U.S. and Europe on the matter of China, which is likely to become a fundamental division between the two on the future orientation of the Indo-Pacific strategy, and seriously impair the implementation of US "two-ocean strategy". The Ukraine crisis has led Europe to recognize Russia as the most pressing threat, whereas for the US, China remains the greatest obstacle.

The great power game may be evolving in its underlying logic. Over the last few decades, countries have moved from a state of hard confrontation to soft confrontation. They are no longer squabbling over military positions and political influence, but competing for the right to speak on finance, media, cyberspace and ideology.

5.1 The Conflict and the Changes in Geopolitics

The Ukrainian conflict arose ostensibly due to NATO's five rounds of eastward expansion following the Cold War, which severely curtailed Russia's strategic buffer space, causing Russia to lash out. Nevertheless, the fundamental structural contradiction at the heart of this war is the clash between the liberal imperial order erected by the U.S. and the traditional imperial order of Russia which resorted to nationalism, civilizationism, and territorial logic. What has changed about geopolitics as a result of the Ukraine crisis? First, it overturns a fundamental component of geopolitics, the idea of geographical space. Russian-Ukrainian hostilities uniquely exemplify the nature of modern hybrid warfare, that is, the application of small-scale mobile warfare, information warfare, cyber warfare, economic warfare, and technological warfare at the same time. Thus, the essence of the Russia-Ukraine conflict reaches beyond the Eurasian plateau itself, for there has been a delocalization and regionalization of conflict, where the latter is the nature of geopolitics, namely, the power relations between states in geographical space. Geographical space is blurred, and geopolitics is becoming global. A conflict in one part of the world could reverberate across the globe. The power relationship between Russia and Ukraine has evolved from a merely bilateral relationship to a global one. Those countries planning for the future will have to consider the consequences of friction at the border in terms of global impact.

Second, it changed the states as the main actors in geopolitics. There has been a significant amount of damage caused by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, including the loss of weapons, refugee problems, environmental damage, food crises, and the stimulation of international terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism. Non-state actors have played a variety of roles. On March 26, the White House (2022) announced that

in response to Russia's military action against Ukraine, the U.S., the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and Canada decided to exempt some Russian banks from the SWIFT payment network. As a neutral international organization, the SWIFT covers more than 200 countries and regions around the world but now becomes a conduit for conflict. Multinational corporations, for example, have also withdrawn from the Russian Arctic gas project due to the US sanctions on Russian energy. Most states will be required to assess even the smallest trade frictions from the responses of various actors in international relations. A reflection of a state's financial strength, financial sanctions are not only a common external tool used to safeguard national strategic security but are also an effective instrument in performing great power plays. Financial sanctions will continue to be in place for as long as geopolitical conflicts persist.

Third, it revolutionized the essence of geopolitics - military conflict. The U.S. has once again asserted the dominance of liberal ideologies in the world, especially in the "post-truth age" when public opinion is at its most volatile. From the perspective of cognitive warfare, all countries in the world have actively or passively participated in the conflict, transmitting all kinds of true and false signals, deceptive and valid information deliberately released by both sides to compete for international discourse hegemony, moral commanding position and public opinion support at home and abroad. "social media companies had to 'pick a side'; and cast a blind eye to propaganda and disinformation coming from the anti-Russian side" (Pappin, 2022). Ukrainian President Zelensky stands out in virtual space. He released regular material through various social media, expressing his determination to stay in Kyiv, winning the favour of Ukrainians and the Western world. Using video calls, he addressed the European Parliament as well as the British, Canadian, American, German, Israeli, and other international parliamentary bodies. Ukraine "is winning the war" in managing ideas to control public mental and leader images. The military battle has evolved into the cognitive battle, and only the cognitive battle can fundamentally shape the concept of geopolitics and national security and mobilize the people of all countries. Russia-Ukraine conflict has provided inspiration and reference for other countries on how to improve their international communication and construct discourse power.

5.2 The Conflict and International Patterns

In time, the deep impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the world pattern will coalesce. As for the international community, it will not only have to deal with the short-term political, economic, and security shocks caused by this war, but will also likely be faced with the in-depth transformation of global governance, international order, and world structure. The shadow of a "new Cold War" will become a defining sign that the world is entering a period of turbulence and change. The extent of the revolution in the international balance of power, the urgency of the change in the international order, the competitiveness of the change in national development paradigms and values, and the complexity of the changes in the game of great powers will be unprecedented. Conflict between Russia and Ukraine is confined to "aggression and counter-aggression" as exaggerated by some politicians and the public at large. The identity differences pertaining to the "winners" and "losers" of the Cold War, the cognitive contradiction between Russia and Europe regarding the indivisibility of security, the rationality of NATO's existence and the external effect of the "open door policy", as well as the imperative to rebuild the European security framework have not been seriously discussed and taken into account. The theme of peace and development continues to be prevalent, nonetheless, the environment in which such goals can be attained will become increasingly complex. The outbreak of military conflicts and the increase of traditional security risks will intensify the clash of ideologies and values and will further accentuate trends of group politics and camp confrontation around the world. The all-round isolation of Russia by the U.S. and Europe, as well as the accelerated reorientation of the universal anti-war voice to the systematic anti-Russian movement, may also lead to small and medium-sized countries trapped between the searing arrows of great powers seeking to safeguard their own security through "group self-defence". Therefore, collisions between various ideas about order, value, and security will create more uncertainties around the globe.

On the political and security front, Russian-Ukrainian conflict may also alter the existing system and development trends. Following the crisis, the debate over whether the international system should return to a regime of block-partition states akin to that of Yalta or return to a mode of great power coordination comparable to that of Vienna

will intensify, and the risks and challenges caused by Cold War thinking, hegemonism and power politics will become more acute. The U.S. and NATO condemned Russia in response to Putin's order to put his nuclear forces on high alert, causing widespread concern about nuclear war and the outbreak of another world conflict (Smith, 2022). But nuclear tensions between the U.S. and Russia will also continue to exert an influence on global strategic stability.

In the area of trade and finance, because of the comprehensive and indiscriminate implementation of sanctions against Russia as well as the inability to end the conflict in the short term, the prices of bulk commodities continued to rise, and international logistics were isolated due to the mutual closure of airspace. As a result, the structural risks of the world economy will continue to escalate, and some countries' plans for economic and production capacity recovery will be forced to slow down. The demands for re-securing of international industrial chains, supply chains, innovation chains, and value chains will rise, and the incentives for cost-driven inflation and systemic financial risks will surge. Multinational corporations and various international investment and financing activities will find themselves faced with the dilemma of choosing sides, with attempts to passively decoupling and actively building walls will increase in frequency. A heavyweight blow to expel large economies from the SWIFT may prompt countries to implement a parallel system independent of the US dollar hegemony.

The world economy and finance have become intrinsically linked as a result of economic globalization. The irreversible energy dependency of Europe on Russia, the interdependence of global supply chain and industry chain make this financial game a global affair. These extreme practices of freezing foreign exchange reserves and cryptocurrencies have profoundly impacted traditional financial thinking, civilization, and order, and deviated from the principles of borderless technology, decentralization, and free trading enshrined in internet finance. They undermined the essentials of the contract. Irrespective of the outcome of the current round of financial sanctions, it indicates the dysfunction of the international order led by the U.S., which leaves the foundation of American hegemony vulnerable, resulting in potential changes to the international monetary and financial systems. To begin with, the dollar's hegemony will be challenged. Due to the excessive overdrafts in US credit and the capricious nature of monetary policy, the international credit monetary system with the dollar at its core has been seriously weakened, and dedollarization is becoming a trend. In particular, Russia's anti-sanctions measures are designed to directly counter the "petrodollar" with "gas roubles" and "gold roubles". Should other energy powers follow suit, the dollar's status will suffer greatly. Secondly, financial sanctions are losing their marginal benefits. It brings chaos and turbulence to the global economy and finance when financial sanctions are introduced and countermeasures are applied. In this sense, the actual effect of sanctions would be considerably diminished if one were to inflict damage on the enemy while enduring a lesser but comparable level of damage on one's own side. However, it should be noted that despite the conflict significantly shaking up the international economic and political landscape and to some extent affecting the hegemony of the US dollar, it has not fundamentally altered the role of the U.S. in global governance.

A long-held basic consensus in science, technology, and humanities, including "science knows no borders", "keep politics out of sports", and "speech is free", has been completely repudiated under the comprehensive sanctions against Russia. Future nations will have greater demands for independent and controllable developments of science and technology, as well as greater emphasis on the principle of sovereignty in cyberspace, which will pose more derivative challenges. A consequence of indiscriminate sanctions will also intensify ideological conflicts, culture-identity tensions and nationalistic antagonisms throughout the world, limiting the reasonable pursuit of the common values of humanity.

5.3 The Conflict and Global Governance

A change in the focus and agenda of global governance may also result from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The plight and decline of the liberal international order have become more visible in recent years. The emergence of exceptionalism and double standards has had a deep effect on the development and transformation of the international system. Global governance has become increasingly out of tune with and asymmetrical to the changing international environment. It has now become an urgent task for mankind to overcome and address the

deficits in governance, trust, peace, and development. At this point, synchronizing the process of breaking away from outdated thinking and ideas and all institutional ailments with fostering new standards and mechanisms to meet constant changes in the global governance system has become increasingly more difficult. In the midst of increasing doubts about the deteriorating credibility of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the diminishing relevance of multilateralism, the peace agenda will become a priority for all countries to participate in international affairs, and attention to global issues will be obliged to return to traditional security concerns. Specifically, increased need for energy security could change the trajectory of global decarbonization efforts; non-traditional security governance could be overshadowed by geopolitical agenda; addressing climate change, public health, strategic stability and non-proliferation, as well as global governance are hardly priorities for the U.S., Europe, and Russia to shed geopolitical constraints and achieve limited interaction. In general, a conflict between Russia and Ukraine will reshape the European regional security pattern and not only impact the equilibrium between Russia and the West but will also change the differentiation and combination of global forces, the shattering and reassembling of orders, the collision and fusion of ideologies, and the turmoil and transformation of the world caused by the spillover effects. More efforts should be made on the part of the international community to promote talks and defuse potential humanitarian crises. Countries will need to adjust their strategic positioning and take action to adapt to the new normal of post-conflict world.

In terms of Russian-Ukrainian relations, this war will result in a complete breakdown of relations between the two nations, which have had a tangled and difficult relationship historically. It is expected that Ukraine may not join NATO after the war but will instead join the EU. A post-war Ukraine would be more inclined to embrace the European path of development. In the case of international sanctions, Russia is likely to enter a state of relative isolation, becoming a "Russian island." Accordingly, the dividing line between Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy in eastern Europe will shift eastward again. Russia may suffer from a significant negative impact of sanctions in the short term; however, over time Russia will eventually adapt to the environment and resume economic activity with new normal under new external constraints, although the quality of growth cannot be guaranteed.

In two respects, this war was also a watershed in the development of post-Cold War world. The fragmentation of systems will further aggravate the issue of international security. The NATO alliance in Europe was reunited and strengthened during the war, and the US status within the transatlantic security system was further enhanced. At the same time, many countries around the world have questioned the role of the UN Security Council in maintaining international peace and security. It is likely that the reform of the UN, including the Security Council, will proceed at a fast pace in the future, which will have a major impact on the global security governance system established after World War II. Reshaping the regional and international security system will become an important global issue in the coming years. Having international institutions available can be advantageous for countries that intend to pursue their interests and achieve cooperative security between nations. At this juncture, in a turbulent environment of numerous challenges confronting international security, staying abreast of the latest developments is vital to keep institutions and mechanisms responsible for maintaining global and regional security afloat. In general, it manifests on two levels. In one dimension, global, regional, and national security arrangements should focus on specific issues, so as to match the institutions with threats, such as shifting from coordinating traditional security relations between countries to emerging non-traditional global security concerns. In a second dimension, it is equally important that the global and regional security order and institutions conform to the development course of world power structure. Improving and innovating security order, systems, rules and norms should prioritize the development of harmonious relationships between traditional developed countries and emerging developing countries in global security governance, realizing their active participation and ensuring expertise and power sharing in the process. As can be seen, reshaping the regional and international security is a multi-layered strategic agenda, which should evolve as time progresses in order to mitigate uncertainty in the global economic sphere, eliminate conservatism on the level of political and security concepts. Although the content of each field may differ, the core idea remains the same, which is evaluating actively and objectively the power, intentions, and motivation of oneself and others and maintaining self-help as the guiding principle in international security.

Globalization will further diverge at the economic level. Russia-Ukraine conflict accelerates the reorganization of global economic landscape. The multilateral system centred on the United Nations, the General Agreement on

Tariffs and Trade, World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods system established after World War II have fostered the slow but steady growth of global economy and allowed developing countries to gradually industrialise. Yet, the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict poses a serious challenge to the existing international norms, and some multilateral rules have even been weaponized to implement sanctions. Consequently, there is possibility that the post-war multilateral system will return to its bilateral status before World War II, and the rule-based multilateral governance will revert to traditional geopolitical and economic arrangements. In the recent trade war between China and the U.S., we have seen the US attempt to "de-Sinicize", however China is so thoroughly integrated into the global economic system that a complete decoupling is difficult. And now we are seeing a "de-Russification". The country was severely affected even in areas where energy plays such a significant role and where Russia was thought to have a competitive advantage. A rapid reorganization is occurring in global supply chains, especially energy supply chains. The effectiveness of energy sanctions against Russia depends on the global energy prices: if energy prices rise due to sanctions, Russia will still benefit from higher prices even if the sanctions reduce its energy exports, rendering sanctions meaningless; however, if the U.S. succeeds in driving prices downward substantially, China will be the biggest beneficiary - something that the U.S. is obviously unhappy with. These factors lead to clear limits to Western economic sanctions against Russia.

American strategic goals in the Russian-Ukrainian war - crushing Russia or bringing Russia to its knees in a prolonged conflict, are at odds with how the U.S. intends to accomplish these goals. Clearly, the U.S. is aware that without direct participation in the war, it is exceedingly difficult to defeat Russia merely by supporting Ukraine's politics, armaments, intelligence, and public opinion. For that reason, from the beginning the U.S. has focused upon coordinating its allies to sanction Russia. Such sweeping sanctions are, however, difficult to sustain over the long term. Not only do many countries around the world remain on the sidelines and are unwilling to take part, or the US most important partner, Europe, has difficulty maintaining sanctions against Russia over the long run, but, perhaps more importantly, because the cornerstone of the US economy and its position as a global leader, dollar hegemony, struggles to sustain credible long-term comprehensive sanctions against Russia. As the world's most open and largest economy, the U.S. is not immune from the inflation caused by sanctions against Russia. In the event that the US sanctions do not achieve desired outcomes and are not able to last for long, the impact on economic globalization will be limited. Fundamentally, dollar hegemony cannot be understood in isolation from economic globalization.

6. Conclusion: An Implication for the Asia Pacific

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict poses a must-answer to the world: the world needs to find a new development path. The hostilities between the two will have a far-reaching impact on the mentality and policies of Asia-Pacific countries, like a mirror. While it may sometimes be justifiable and necessary for governments to address issues of "hegemony" using "power," it may be more pressing for the overwhelming majority of countries to create a new international order of pacifism, cooperation, and development. It may be true that the trend of collectivization and the possibility of an arms race cannot be excluded in the Asia-Pacific region, but the general outlook of the countries in the region longing for peace and development remains the predominant scenario. Against the backdrop of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, all countries will appreciate and cherish the valuable and hard-earned environment for peace and development. It follows that, if the U.S. continues to promote an Indo-Pacific strategy with overtones of exclusivity and confrontation, it will find itself treading a very precarious tightrope, and will not be welcomed by other nations. Improving regional security mechanisms and advocating win-win cooperation are the right strategies for addressing common challenges and achieving prosperity for all. A number of implications may be derived from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine for regional peace in other parts of the world.

First of all, to cope today's challenges, countries in the region must fully grasp and properly employ their strategic instruments, as well as raise awareness about the importance of national financial security. A regional perspective on security should support multilateralism and emphasize mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and coordination, as well as contest hegemonism and power politics, to promote a more just and equitable international order. As countries rise peacefully, they should avoid confrontations that are purely antagonistic in nature. An immediate duty for the region is to prevent the recurrence of geopolitical conflicts in Asia, to guard against the West

interjecting themselves with camp confrontations into Asia, to defeat the impure motive of manipulating Asia as a geopolitical chessboard, to unite all forces and underline the need for early intervention in possible crises, disputes, and conflicts. The region should benefit from the provision of more international public goods by big powers. It is true that Asian powers such as China, Japan, and India are in a state of intense competition, but this competition is largely healthy and beneficial on the whole. The countries within the domain should always be open. Globalization is inimical to a value-based grouping. A number of late-developing countries, including China, must first safeguard their right to development, which ought to include the freedom to pursue a development path different from that of western liberal modernization. On this basis, the future world will likely be one of cooperation, coexistence, competition, and exchange between different types of modern nations.

Secondly, more attention should be given to the country's political security. Russian concerns about NATO's eastward expansion are primarily political in nature. To Russia, the consequences for its domestic politics of neighbouring countries becoming members of NATO are unaffordable. It is imperative that one respects the core interests of the other when managing state-to-state relations. In its capacity as a big power, Russia certainly cannot allow other nations to threaten its core interests. Russian interests in the current conflict revolve primarily around political security, but a certain degree of military security is also concerned. Russia's military action against Ukraine is primarily motivated by the threat posed to its core interests by NATO's planned expansion eastward. Countries from other parts of the world may also need to take each other's core interests into account if they are to handle their external relationships effectively, and to avoid encroaching upon each other's core interests as much as possible. In the Asia-Pacific, it is crucial to understand the relationship and manage the differences between big powers and smaller ones. Large countries need to acknowledge that smaller countries often resort to or invite external powers to seek protection. This is understandable in some respects, however, while large nations tolerate small nations, it is equally important for smaller ones to be aware of that the big neighbours have their own security considerations. The threat of a small state disregarding the security of a bigger state and acting as a proxy for a foreign power outside the region creates unrest in the surroundings and the small state itself could also be at risk of losing its own security.

A third revelation is that the use of force to resolve conflicts between countries, particularly when it entails changing the borders of nations by force, will neither resolve the problem nor achieve the goal, and will result in disaster for both the country and all humanity. This indicates that countries from other regions of the world should practice peaceful negotiation when interacting with each other, and refrain from resorting to force. Countries in the Asia-Pacific should avoid picking side. Picking a side will only intensify contradictions and conflicts between big powers, causing instability in the region. As national governments, they are responsible for determining their own judgment and act based on the merits of the specific case and national interests, rather than taking ideological position. Meanwhile, regional actors are obliged to carefully manage their relationships with the U.S. America has been in Asia for centuries and has never left. Countries in the region should play their roles in steering the military contests that the U.S. desires to see and is confident to win toward economic competition, since economic competition tends to be a win-win scenario, whereas military contest is typically a zero-sum game. In dealing effectively with the vast number of developing countries in the future, the construction of a new international system needs to prevent from falling into the trap of simple mercantilist thinking and pure economic logic, but instead promote a new discourse system, value concept, and order vision. Only in this way will the concerns of other countries about a particular country of increasing strength and size be allayed.

References

- Brzezinski, Z. (1997). A geostrategy for Eurasia. *Foreign Affairs*, 76(5), 50–64.
- Clean Energy Wire (CLEW). (2022). *Germany and the EU remain heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels*. <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/germanys-dependence-imported-fossil-fuels>
- Cox, J. (March 16, 2022). Federal Reserve approves first interest rate hike in more than three years, sees six more ahead. *CNBC*. <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/16/federal-reserve-meeting.html>
- De Luna, M. (April 2, 2022). U.S. liquefied natural gas exports rise 16%, to new record. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-liquefied-natural-gas-exports-rise-16-new-record-2022-04-01/>

- De Luna, M. & Chestney, N. (January 7, 2022). Gas gap in Europe drives U.S. LNG exports to record high. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/gas-gap-europe-drives-us-lng-exports-record-high-2022-01-06/>
- Duggal, H. & Haddad, M. (2022). Infographic: Russia, Ukraine and the global wheat supply. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/17/infographic-russia-ukraine-and-the-global-wheat-supply-interactive>
- Dunlop, J. B. (2004). Aleksandr Dugin's foundations of geopolitics. *Demokratizatsiya*, 12, 41.
- Fix, L. & Kimmage, M. (February 18, 2022). What if Russia wins? A Kremlin-controlled Ukraine would transform Europe. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-02-18/what-if-russia-wins>
- Galpin, C. (2015). Has Germany "fallen out of love" with Europe? The Eurozone crisis and the "normalization" of Germany's European identity. *German Politics and Society*, 33(1-2), 25+
- geohistory. (2019). *A guide to Russia's resources*. <https://geohistory.today/resource-extraction-export-russia/>
- Harris, K. (2022). Remarks by Vice President Harris at the Munich Security Conference. *The White House*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/19/remarks-by-vice-president-harris-at-the-munich-security-conference/>
- International Energy Agency (IEA). (2022a). *Energy fact sheet: Why does Russian oil and gas matter?* <https://www.iea.org/articles/energy-fact-sheet-why-does-russian-oil-and-gas-matter>
- International Energy Agency (IEA). (2022b). *How Europe can cut natural gas imports from Russia significantly within a year*. <https://www.iea.org/news/how-europe-can-cut-natural-gas-imports-from-russia-significantly-within-a-year>
- Kissinger, H.A. (March 5, 2014). Henry Kissinger: To settle the Ukraine crisis, start at the end. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/henry-kissinger-to-settle-the-ukraine-crisis-start-at-the-end/2014/03/05/46dad868-a496-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9_story.html
- Lewis, C. (2020). Contemporary Russian Messianism under Putin and Russian Foreign Policy in Ukraine and Syria. *Slavonic and East European Review* 98(3), 531-559.
- Mining Technology. (November 14, 2021). *Countries with the biggest coal reserves*. <https://www.mining-technology.com/analysis/feature-the-worlds-biggest-coal-reserves-by-country/>
- NATO. Fact Sheet of July 2016. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-enlargement-eng.pdf
- Pappin, G. (2022). You are entering the American sector. *The Postliberal Order*. <https://postliberalorder.substack.com/p/you-are-entering-the-american-sector?s=r>
- Pramuk, J. (March 15, 2022). Biden signs government funding bill that includes \$13.6 billion in Ukraine aid. *CNBC*. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/15/biden-signs-government-funding-bill-with-ukraine-aid.html>
- Probasco, J. (March 15, 2022). Consolidated appropriations Act of 2022: What's in it, what's not. *Investopedia*. <https://www.investopedia.com/congress-passes-massive-usd1-5-trillion-omnibus-spending-package-5221870>
- Rashad, M. (March 9, 2022). U.S. LNG exporters emerge as big winners of Europe natgas crisis. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-lng-exporters-emerge-big-winners-europe-natgas-crisis-2022-03-09/>
- Reuters. (March 23, 2022a). *Biden will announce joint action on reducing European reliance on Russia oil and gas -White House*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-will-announce-joint-action-reducing-european-reliance-russia-oil-gas-white-2022-03-22/>
- Rinke, A., Abnett, K. & Renshaw, J. (March 25, 2022). EU clinches U.S. LNG deal, brushes off Russian rouble demand. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/eu-leaders-plan-energy-security-boost-brush-off-russian-rouble-demand-2022-03-24/>
- Rutland, P. (2016). Geopolitics and the Roots of Putin's Foreign Policy, *Russian History*, 43(3-4), 425-436.
- Scott, G. (2018). The foundations of Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitics: Montage fascism and eurasianism as blowback. *University of Denver. Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1516.
- Shekhovtsov, A. (2014). *Putin's brain? Eurozine*. <https://www.eurozine.com/putins-brain/>
- Smith, P. (February 28, 2022). Putin puts nuclear deterrent forces on 'high alert' amid spiraling tensions over Ukraine. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/putin-orders-nuclear-deterrent-forces-high-alert-tensions-build-ukrain-rcna17853>
- Solchanyk, R. (1998). Ukraine, Russia, and the CIS. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 20, 19-43.
- Talbott, S. (2003). *The Russia hand: A memoir of presidential diplomacy*. New York: Random House. p. 78.
- The U.S. Energy Information Administration. (2016). *Country Analysis Brief: Russia*. 1-30.
- The White House. (February 26, 2022). *Joint statement on further restrictive economic measures*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/02/26/joint-statement-on-further-restrictive-economic-measures/>

- Von Drehle, D. (March 22, 2022). Opinion: The man known as ‘Putin’s brain’ envisions the splitting of Europe — and the fall of China. *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/22/alexander-dugin-author-putin-deady-playbook/>
- Woodward, C. (March 28, 2022). U.S. energy producers cheer Biden’s LNG to Europe plan. *InsideSources*.
<https://insidesources.com/u-s-energy-producers-cheer-bidens-lng-to-europe-plan/>
- Zabala, S. & Gallo, C. (March 30, 2022). Putin’s philosophers: Who inspired him to invade Ukraine? *Al Jazeera*.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/3/30/putins-philosophers>

Notes

Note 1. Normalization of Germany’s European identity pertains primarily to international responses to the perception of changes in Germany’s postwar commitment to Europe, particularly the expression of Germany’s national interests and national identity in a more elaborate manner.

Note 2. Common European home is a Soviet thinking espoused and much used in the diplomacy of former Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev towards Western Europe.

Note 3. Charles De Gaulle, France’s President from 1958 to 1969, viewed Europe as a product of history and geography transcending artificial and ephemeral divisions and stated in 1959 that “it is Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals ... which will decide the fate of the world”.

Note 4. NATO’s Open Door Policy refers to that the door to NATO membership remains open to other European countries who are ready and willing to undertake the commitments and obligations of membership and whose