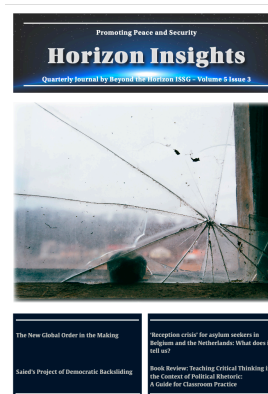




The New Global Order in the Making

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The New Global Order in the Making

Geopolitics Task Force Brief

by Onur Sultan¹, Mats Radeck², Jeremy Alan Garlick³, Olena Snigyr⁴, Charles Joseph Sullivan⁵

1. BACKGROUND

- On August 29, 2022, the Ukrainian military launched its first major counteroffensive in the Southern region around Kherson, claiming to have breached Russian defence lines and retaken territory. The counteroffensive marked the beginning of a third phase of the ongoing war. ⁶
- On September 6, 2022, the Ukrainian military launched a second major counteroffensive on Russian-occupied territory in the provinces of Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. By September 9, Ukrainian forces had reached a breakthrough and managed to recapture approximately 2.500 square kilometers, including the cities of Kharkiv, Balakliia and Izyum, in a rapid advance. ⁷
- On September 15, President Xi Jinping met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The sides praised continued practical cooperation in various fields to include trade and energy, strategic comprehensive partnership geared towards building “a more equitable and reasonable international order”, and subscription to the ideals of non-interference in each other’s internal affairs. ⁸
- During the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit on September 16, Indian PM Narendra Modi marked a shift in Indian foreign policy toward Russian invasion of Ukraine by telling Putin “Now is not the time for war.” ⁹
- On September 21, 2022, Russian President Putin announced a partial mobilization of 300.000 reservist forces to serve in the battle in Ukraine. ¹⁰ The mobilization is the first after the Second World War. In reaction to the order, protests erupted Russia-wide and border traffic out of Russia, especially to Georgia and Finland, increased.
- Lasting from September 23 to September 27, 2022, amid the counteroffensives, Russian occupiers ran referendums in the Ukrainian provinces of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia, about the declaration of independence and consequently the Russian annexation of the provinces. Russia does not control any of the provinces completely. Yet, after having installed puppet governments, the referendums are seen to anticipate justifications for further Russian attacks, claiming to defend Russia’s alleged territorial integrity. Kyiv and Western governments reject the referendums as “a sham” and did not plan to recognize the results. ¹¹
- During his address on 22 September, Putin threatened the West with use of nuclear weapons. He finished as speech saying: “This is not a bluff.”
- The war in Ukraine triggered unprecedented change in strategic thinking on security, defense and foreign policy in Europe, and especially in Germany. On 16 September, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said to the army congress: “As the most populous country with the greatest economic power and as a country in the middle of the continent, our army must become the cornerstone of conventional defence in Europe, the best equipped force in Europe.” ¹² The Chancellor had famously called forth a “Zeitenwende” that signalled reorientation of the country’s policies toward use of Bundeswehr and allocation of more funds to significantly upgrade its capabilities. ¹³

Towards a New Global Order and Position of the US

by Onur Sultan

We are far away from the unipolar moment that Charles Krauthammer described in his famous article in 1990. ¹⁴ As opposed to what he asserted, the power is distributed now across the globe. Russia has challenged the West by invading Ukraine while it joins China in investing heavily in new technologies and their application in defense. On the western side, NATO that witnesses eroding of its technological superiority that it relied upon throughout the Cold War. Until Russian invasion, the US call to the Allies to increase spending in defense and specifically research and innovation had not received enough attention. As the US Senator Mark Warner describes, 21st century will be characterized by technology driven competition and the Western Alliance does not seem to act accordingly. ¹⁵

This European apathy also creates an internal challenge for US governments. The increasing tone of the US taxpayers about why the US must pay for European defense while Europeans themselves do not want to increase their defense spending is a recurrent theme. If President Trump's critique about the relevance of NATO is discounted, overall the US has stuck to the multilateralism so far, a lesson learned in the Vietnam War. Another failure of the consequent US governments has been inability to convince European Allies to lessen dependency on Russian hydrocarbons.

From a wider geopolitical perspective, the US singles out China as "most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge". The 2022 National Defense Strategy outlines four defense strategies two of which openly address China.¹⁶ Those are:

1. *Defending the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC*
3. *Detering aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary, prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific, then the Russia challenge in Europe*

13. The other two pertain to deterring attacks against the US and the Allies and building a resilient Joint Force. NATO also named China a challenge for the first time in its history. More precisely, the latest strategic concept that the Allies endorsed during Madrid Summit on 30th June reads:

The People's Republic of China's (PRC) stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values. The PRC employs a broad range of political, economic and military tools to increase its global footprint and project power, while remaining opaque about its strategy, intentions and military build-up. The PRC's malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its confrontational rhetoric and disinformation target Allies and harm Alliance security. The PRC seeks to control key technological and industrial sectors, critical infrastructure, and strategic materials and supply chains. It uses its economic leverage to create strategic dependencies and enhance its influence. It strives to subvert the rules-based international order, including in the space, cyber and maritime domains. The deepening strategic partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation and their mutually reinforcing attempts to undercut the rules-based international order run counter to our values and interests.

The war in Ukraine has served the US to tilt the balance of global power in the direction of the Western Alliance and create a rally around the flag effect to align the latter around its policies that awaited response for long. Through the war, the current Biden Administration has successfully gathered Europe around the table under its leadership to fine tune reaction to Russian actions. The EU has rapidly and in full congruity with the US, imposed sanctions to cripple the Russian economy to cut down its ability to support the war efforts. Although deemed as an area directly related to national security, the EU countries have sought ways / alternatives to lessen dependency on Russian gas, oil, coal and other raw materials, and European societies have become more prepared to probable non-delivery of Russian energy to European markets.

The war has laid bare dependencies, deficiencies and areas to improve to make Europe more autonomous and again a strong player in the geopolitical arena. The war, while seriously downgrading Russian capabilities, has awakened Europeans to give proper consideration to war and security-related issues that will further unlock public support for spending on the military. Besides this primary area of concern, other dependencies, trade agreements, and business models will undoubtedly be revised.

In the book he co-authored, "2034: A Novel of the Next World War," former SACEUR Admiral James Stavridis foresees a war between the US and China. The fiction book has a more instructive than entertaining tone. The expectations of a new world war among scholars and policymakers are abundant.

The war in Ukraine has played in the hands of the US in that it has downgraded Russian capabilities while creating the push for Europe to counter this challenge on its eastern flank, depending mainly on European capabilities. This, more importantly, will likely preclude a two-front confrontation for the US with both Russia and China at the same time. The already energized European defense sector is in constant move to dynamically plan for the bleak outlook for the next decade and beyond. This envisioned future will entail a push to revise relationship with both China and Russia that will certainly translate into less trade and lesser economic growth for both major powers.

Europe's Future: Does Europe Rise Again as a Hard Power?

by Mats Radeck

Europe has long struggled to agree on a common stance on its external action and defense policy. However, the Ukraine war now expedites this agenda. Sweden and Finland's applications for NATO membership exhibit a growing sense of exposure to military threats across Europe and give a new purpose to the Alliance. Meanwhile, key

players, such as the European Commission,¹⁷ as well as the German and French governments have disclosed their ambitions to further Europe's transformation into becoming a key geopolitical player, showing how a sensibility for external action has been introduced at the highest political levels.

The most notable example of this has arguably been the recent announcement of German chancellor Olaf Scholz aiming for Germany to take on substantial responsibility in this European transformation. His "Zeitenwende" agenda (literally meaning "turn of an era") has disclosed German ambitions to turn a country reluctant on foreign policy in the past into a country keen on taking on greater responsibility for a sovereign and resilient EU.¹⁸ Russia's neo-colonial appetite therefore caused a rupture in Germany's risk-averse foreign policy and led the chancellor to reinvent it. Particularly, the 100 billion Euro special budget for the Bundeswehr (the German armed forces) exemplifies the seriousness behind the new agenda.

Until now, Europe has been relying on US military force and deterrence capabilities to uphold its peace architecture. However, this presumption is now being challenged by the emergence of a more multipolar world which forces the US to put its foreign policy focus on the Pacific region to act as a counterweight to China.

The threat emanating from Russia and the changing world order have also set the priorities at the recent NATO summit in Madrid. Besides adopting a new strategic concept,¹⁹ NATO leaders have agreed to strengthen the alliance's collective deterrence and defense capabilities,²⁰ including enhancing the multinational battlegroups at the Eastern front, upgrading the force plan and expanding the number of forces at high readiness to at least 500.000, and increasing funding to strategically important partner countries. Lastly, the formal invitation of Sweden and Finland to NATO highlights the new role assigned to Europe in this endeavor.

German minister of defense Christine Lambrecht captured the new circumstances the world finds itself in thoroughly arguing that "the Indo-Pacific theater gains increasing importance for the US [...]. Hence, we are demanded to do more for Europe than before."²¹ Such statements are by no means new, yet until now they have not been undermined by credible actions which has been disclosing the question of whether these ambitions remain bold rhetoric. Especially Germany and France have been appearing to push for more European defense in the past. Backed by EU willingness and NATO readiness, these two countries now also signify Europe's potential to transform.

Germany's approach to hard power has historically been plagued with several issues. Olaf Scholz's government, however, can be seen to tackle some of these. After losing purpose at the end of the Cold War, the Bundeswehr has been the subject of a persisting discussion on its actual role in Germany and abroad.²² With the special budget now being anchored in the constitution, Scholz's government can claim success in having crossed partisan borders and rallied his government and the biggest opposition party behind his project. Yet, doubts remain whether this is enough to also overcome the deep-rooted military skepticism in society.

Second, the German military procurement sector suffers from great inefficiency problems with key departments being understaffed, something Scholz's government has announced to overhaul.²³ However, considering the great bearing of these problems, it is yet to be seen whether Scholz can deliver credibly.

Germany ranks in the top places in terms of weapons delivery, financial and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and has even broken a taboo by providing militarily useable intelligence data. France has massively boosted its defense spending which showcases how the country does not dodge future responsibility.

Yet, Eastern partners, especially Poland and the Baltic countries, expect a more active stance of their Western European counterparts and NATO in the wake of Russian aggression and Chinese influence.²⁴ Poland's long-held wish for a permanent US military presence in its country showcases the glance towards a more active security policy and an acceptance thereof.

Geopolitical ambitions and respective actions can therefore indeed be identified, but complications still plague the continent. Besides severe fragmentation on major political issues, a lack of cooperation and unclarity about the EU's role as defense actor regularly puts obstacles in the way of the industrial sector and hinders the realization of promising defense projects.²⁵ Delays in the development of the Spanish-French-German "Future Combat Air System" exemplify this problem, leading Germany to rather invest in American F-35s. In this regard, aims uttered by Scholz or Macron are somewhat scant considering that a vanquishing of fragmentations and overall unity is required to, for example, set the European budget.

However, the Ukraine war offers a chance to close ranks between intentions. The EU has shown in the past that it grows in crisis with the comprehensive covid relief package being the latest example. In the face of the Russian aggression, Europe united in an unprecedented manner to respond to Kremlin with unheard-of sanctions, agreeing to free the continent from a dependency on Russian oil and gas and making Georgia, Moldova, and even war-torn Ukraine candidates for EU membership. Backed by the bloc's economic power, industrial base, NATO's resurgence, and political will at the highest level, Europe has the potential to again rise as hard power. However, so far, the plans fail at their implementation and political fragmentation across the continent.

The impact of the Ukraine crisis on China's relations with the West

By Jeremy Alan Garlick

Despite appearances, it cannot be assumed that China supports Russia's invasion of Ukraine. From Beijing's perspective, it has been a destabilizing factor in European affairs. While from one perspective this plays into China's hands, from another – maintaining economic growth in China amidst signs of a downturn – it does not. Europe and North America are two of China's most important export markets.²⁶ China still needs the West for the time being. As economies are impacted by the European energy crisis, inflation, and a possible coming downturn, it is not in China's interests to see an even more destabilized international order.

For the most part, Beijing has maintained silence on the issue of the war in Ukraine. This should be taken as a sign of tacit disapproval. Recently, the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, has expressed in the UN the Chinese desire that the conflict should come to an end.²⁷ China has always maintained the diplomatic position that the sovereignty of states should be respected.²⁸ For this reason, they cannot be fully supportive of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. According to US officials, China is also not supplying Russia with arms.²⁹

At the same time, China cannot simply ditch its Russian partner for strategic reasons. China needs Russian energy.³⁰ Feeling pressured by the West, Beijing also cannot risk losing the confidence of the Russian leadership. Among the major world powers, Russia is the closest China comes to having an ally.³¹ Nevertheless, there is still not necessarily enough trust between the two to label them an axis or to assume that they are working in tandem.

The Chinese media – including the Party mouthpiece China Daily – attribute the cause of the Ukraine war to US and NATO pressure on Russia.³² The Chinese are sensitive to this issue because they worry about the build-up of US forces in the Asia-Pacific.³³ Like the Russians, they are also resistant to what they see as Western interference in their internal affairs. From this point of view, they seem to stand with Russia against the West.

However, beneath the surface suspicions about long-term intentions linger. Russia has long supplied large quantities of arms to China's rival, India.³⁴ The 'partners' – Russia and China – compete for influence in Central Asia, even if they maintain the outward appearance that this is not the case.³⁵

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has created a severe rupture with the West. Since China is tarnished with the image of being Russia's partner, its relations with the West have also been damaged by the conflict. Reconstructing ties is going to be a difficult task.

On the other hand, remembering the Sino-Soviet split during the Cold War gives a hint of what might be possible.³⁶ Russia is now beyond the pale as far as the West is concerned, at least as long as Vladimir Putin is in power. It may, however, be possible to reactivate a degree of understanding – if not full-fledged cooperation – with Beijing, at least at the macro-level of broad geopolitical policy.

The West should seek to engage with China – at least behind the scenes if not in public. With Russia and Putin now appearing weakened, Moscow is now unquestionably in a subordinate position to Beijing. Xi Jinping is a powerful voice at Putin's flank. It would be wise to try to cultivate contacts with China to try to resolve the Ukraine crisis and find ways to bring Russia back to a semblance of responsible behaviour. China cannot be an ally of the West. But from a pragmatic, long-term perspective it would be sensible not to completely alienate the Chinese leviathan and turn it into a totally pro-Russian enemy.

The Main Determinant of the Outcome of this War: Does Ukrainian Will Go Anywhere

by Olena Snigyr

The war is still going on and the main result is yet to come. But we can already talk about some visible things.

Rethinking False Narratives

On the eve of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians heard about the capture of Kyiv “in three days” not only from the Russian side. Such forecasts were also given by Western diplomats, politicians and experts. Western countries were preparing for the loss of Ukraine and partisan resistance as the best possible outcome.

Such a false belief was based not only on objective comparisons of the capabilities of the two armies - Ukrainian and Russian, it was significantly constructed by Russian propaganda, which promoted a narrative about the lack of agency of Ukrainians.

“You do understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a state!” - the widely known phrase of Putin, which he said to George W. Bush in April 2008, is a Russian narrative that was planted by Russian propaganda in all possible information fields and, unfortunately, was taken into account by a large part of the Western audience. Many Western observers (and for that matter, some Ukrainians) who were even pro-Ukrainian still believed that the Ukrainian state had no real, deep foundations, that it would blow over in a strong wind, leaving the long-suffering but dogged Ukrainian nation to fend for itself alone.

The reasons for the West's strategic blindness regarding Ukraine and Russia are rooted not only in the concept of rational choice. This is also a consequence of the unfinished processes of decolonization in the Eurasian space and the dominant Russian-centric approach in the political and scientific analysis of everything related to the study of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia - in general, all regions that Russia declares as the territory of its “special interests”.

Rethinking Russo-centrism in the study of not only Ukraine, but also the entire geographic Eurasian space, including the territory of the Russian Federation, is a great and exciting challenge for scientific and political discussion, and it will be a direct consequence of the Ukrainian will to fight in this war.

New architecture of European security

Russia's aggression and Ukrainian resistance are changing the current security picture and shaping future security relations in Europe and influencing the world order.

The motivation of the Ukrainians in the battle against the Russian army, which by all indicators outnumbered them, is determined by their desire to survive. This motivation not only broke Russia's plans at the beginning of a full-scale invasion, but became a sufficient argument for Ukraine's allies to provide military aid for the offensive actions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. NATO's defense capabilities were de facto extended to Ukraine. Ukraine's accession to the Alliance is a much more realistic prospect today than before the start of Russia's open military aggression.

Russian military aggression has already nullified all the comprehensive security mechanisms of pan-European cooperation, undermined the authority of the UN, and threatens to finally gut the nuclear non-proliferation system and international justice of its meaning. However, it will be possible to construct new safe formats and reform old ones only after the end of the war. And the final possible result is directly influenced by Ukraine's ability to win this war.

Russia's Revised Objective, Strategy, Tactics, and Assumptions in Ukraine

by Charles Joseph Sullivan

Russia's original objectives in initiating a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in late February of 2022 have failed. Following Russia's botched attempt to overthrow the Ukrainian government led by President Volodymyr Zelensky and install a pro-Russian government in its stead, the Kremlin has revised Russia's objectives and formulated a new strategy. Moscow's new objective is to seize a portion of the Donbass region and hold it indefinitely. Granted, the optics of the Kremlin trying to forcibly acquire an inchoate portion of southern and eastern Ukraine

encompassing parts of Luhansk Oblast, Donetsk Oblast, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and Kherson Oblast by force are very unpleasant, and Russia's incorporation of these territories serves as the primary source of consternation within the international system of states today. That said, Russian President Vladimir Putin and the siloviki in the Kremlin need to demonstrate to the Russian public that the Russian military has pacified at least a portion of Ukraine, which they claim belongs to Russia. To realize this revised objective, Russia is adhering to a strategy that is grounded in a set of calculated assumptions. Whether the Kremlin ultimately succeeds in realizing its revised objective depends upon Russia's ability to effectively employ a series of tactics in furtherance of its strategy, and the accuracy of its assumptions.

In attempting to realize its presumed aforementioned objective, the Kremlin appears to be adhering to a strategy which seeks to divide the West and incapacitate the Ukrainian government. In adhering to this strategy, Russia has organized referendums within, as well as annexed parts of Luhansk Oblast, Donetsk Oblast, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, and Kherson Oblast.³⁷ In addition, by restricting gas to Europe (or "self-sanctioning by imposing different costs" on various European Union states),³⁸ working in tandem with other governments to restrict global oil output, conducting countervalue operations across Ukraine, and threatening to deploy tactical nuclear weapons (if the situation arises in which the Kremlin deems it is necessary to use such weapons), Putin and the siloviki hope to blunt Ukraine's recent military momentum.³⁹

Russia's new strategy is grounded in a set of assumptions. First, Russia's leaders are assuming that the West (i.e., at least several European countries) will eventually break ranks with the United States over Ukraine and call for a ceasefire and/or the holding of peace talks, namely because of Europe's current dependency upon Russia for natural gas, concerns related to grain prices, and the possibility that the confrontation could turn nuclear. Second, the Kremlin assumes that Ukrainians' resolve will weaken as Russia conducts sweeping countervalue operations and/or decides to deploy a tactical nuclear weapon. Finally, Putin and the siloviki are assuming that domestic civil society groups will not coalesce into a unified and coherent movement that can challenge their hold on political power. In the event that the Kremlin is mistaken about any or several of these stated assumptions, then it is highly probable that the aforementioned strategy will end in failure, and Russia will not succeed in realizing its revised objective.

Endnotes

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5 Dr. Charles J. Sullivan is an Assistant Professor of Security Studies at the United Arab Emirates National Defense College in Abu Dhabi. The opinions expressed within this article are the author's and do not represent those of the UAE National Defense College.

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