

Post-Ukraine-Crisis World Order: Alternative Futures in the International Political Economy

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Abstract

This paper addressed the problem of the Ukraine crisis according to which the aftermath of the conflict ushers in alternative futures based on the alliances of economic and political forces in the world. It raised the query related to the repercussion of the Ukraine crisis to the nascent world order. This case study employed the qualitative research design that resorted to document analysis emanating from mainstream, alternative, and social media news reportage, reflecting divergent perspectives. It presented alternative futures before us, which converts the challenges into prospects toward inclusive development in the world at the end of the Ukraine crisis. The study focused on possible post-Ukraine crisis scenarios: one, the unipolar hegemon maintains its grip on the global economy; two, post-Cold War global harmony; three, China and Russia emerge as new centers of global economic power; and four, the non-aligned countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America assert a non-aligned multipolar world in which they will benefit from

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slices of the global pie. Each incipient system in the international political economy shall have different front-runners and losers.

Keywords: Alternative Futures, BRICS, Geopolitics, International Political Economy, Ukraine

Introduction

Problem Statement

The conflict in Ukraine has led to an international economic crisis and an international political crisis, in short, to a crisis in the international political economy. Employing international political economy as the theory, the political conflict in the Ukraine armed hostilities has led to a global economic crisis (IMF Blog, 2022); economic sanctions, energy shocks (Jenkins, 2023), trade disruptions, interruptions in global supply chain (AP News, 2023), inflation, higher prices of commodities, and high debt levels (World Bank, 2022). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) stresses that armed hostilities in Ukraine have resulted in a major blow to the global economy, which negatively affects economic growth and leads to inflation and increased prices of consumer commodities (IMF Blog, 2022). The toll is great in Ukraine and unprecedented sanctions on Russia cripples financial transactions and trade, leading to a deep recession (IMF Blog, 2022). The thinktank Rand Corporation emphasizes that the conflict in Ukraine fighting in Ukraine leads to slowed economic growth and a slowed recovery from the pandemic (Jenkins, 2023). The Economic Intelligence Unite (EIU) of *The Economist* reports that the Ukraine conflict hurts the global economy, especially NATO countries: increase in global commodity prices leading to inflation and decrease in economic growth and closer political relations between China and Russia (Howey, 2022). Both the Council on Foreign Relations (Masters, 2023) and BBC (BBC News, 2014) argue that the Ukraine crisis has intensified the political crisis and conflict between NATO and its allies on the one hand and Russia and its allies on the other hand. Sanctions on Russia result to higher energy

prices, depletion of gas reserves in the winter months, and inflation in Europe and the West (Pettinger, 2022). As a result of the Ukraine crisis, the world is facing deepening economic crisis. Major powers are taking sides in these armed hostilities. Emerging powers are likewise raising their voices of discontent with the status quo. Countries of the Global South are starting to air out their grievances. In short, we are in for loads of disgruntlements in the world order as we know it.

This paper reviewed the literature regarding the origin and development of the concept and theory of international political economy from antiquity to the present. As western politicians use economic sanctions in the current international political economy to enforce their economic and political agenda, the literature of the theory of international political economy does not provide a relief for the Global South. NATO economic sanctions against Russia in the Ukraine crisis is a case in point. Thus, BRICS fills the gap in the current international political economy, as they seek to develop, expand, and consolidate an alternative international political economy. The countervailing political force of BRICS in the global economy has yet to be seen (Cynthia et al., 2017; Nuruzzaman, 2020).

The current international economic and political crisis, especially acute during the Ukraine conflict, contests the previous theories of international political economy. None of which explain the fact that the Global South is now openly challenging and opposing the economic sanctions of the politicians in the Global North (Prange, 2023).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative paper was to examine the Ukraine crisis, to understand the causes of the demise of the past world orders, as well as to scan the emerging alternative futures as a result of the realignment of forces during the Russia-Ukraine combat.

Research Questions

This case study raised the following queries:

1. What is the Ukraine crisis?
2. What changing factors facilitate the demise of the major political economy in world systems in the modern times, leading to the emergence of a new one, the last one being the Ukraine crisis?
3. What are the evolving alternative futures in the wake of the Ukraine crisis?

Definition of Terms

Alternative Futures: Futures studies engaged in scenario building and planning that investigate the current state of complex affairs, including governmental actions, international business, and military affairs (Henderson, 1996).

BRICS+: Politics of the governments of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and other countries that are joining the effort to get out of the international political economy that is subject to economic sanctions and political offensives by creating an alternative international political system (DW, 2023; World Data, 2023).

Geopolitics: It is the study of the way in which geography, politics, nature, and the economy affect the international economic

and political relations among countries. With politics as the key factor, geopolitics is the way in which politicians view and act in reference to geography. For this article, geopolitics refers to the politics among different geographic areas: Russia, Ukraine, NATO, the Global South in general, and China and BRICS in particular.

International Political Economy (IPE): It is the study of the relationship among the world economy, political relations, and the role played by international economic institutions that governments establish multilaterally. Politics is the center of subject of analysis, while the economy is the object of analysis. IPE is the way in which politicians view and act with respect to the international economy.

Ukraine: A country in eastern Europe situated to the western border of Russia and currently the two are engaged in armed hostilities (Britannica, 2023).

Literature Review

This section reviewed the literature on political economy with a view to identify and fill the gap in the discussions about political economy, especially in the context of the Ukraine crisis.

Concept of Political Economy. Political economy is not an idea floating abstractly in the ether. It is very simple: the relationship between politics and the economy. International political economy is also known as a political-economic framework of analysis, which examines the role of the state and the world in relation to factors of production, firms, consumers, spending (Danziger, 2016). It is an interdisciplinary field of social science, which is a “combination of politics and the economy” (Danziger, 2016, p. 199). It reveals the close affinity between the political system with the economic

system and the way in which politics affects the economy as well as the ways in which the economy affects politics. Issues include the role of wealth, power, and government in decision making and in the economy. See Figure 1 below:

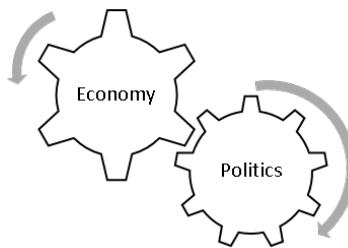


Figure 1: Political Economy as the Study of the Relationship between Politics and the Economy

International political economy is politics at the international level and is a section in international relations, which is a subfield of political science. It is the study of the politics of international economic activities (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2020). Hence, international political economy of necessity views the economy mainly from the political perspective. They include the role of governments in business, the economy, international economic system, finance, trade, international monetary system, and corporate globalization. “In all the political systems of the world, much of politics is economics and most of economics is also politics... For many good reasons, politics and economics must be held together in the analysis of basic social mechanisms and systems” (Lindblom, 1977, p. 8)

Origins of the Concept of Political Economy. Different societies had used the concept of political economy in antiquity, including China, India, and Greece. In China, Kongfuzi (Confucius) gave an exposé on *Tian Xia Wei Gong* (everything under heaven is for the common good), meaning the political leadership must ensure to take care of the well-being and the general welfare of the people (Confucius, 2000). Kautilya's *Arthashastra* was an ancient Indian treatise that discussed statecraft that involved the interplay of military strategy, economic policy, and foreign policy (Kautilya, 2016). Plato and Aristotle discussed the role of the *polis* (or the political state) in nurturing a just society in which each person plays an economic role that promotes the common good (Aristotle, 2009; Plato, 2007).

Development of Political Economy. Adam Smith and David Ricardo belong to classical political economy, which relies on self-interest, market forces, and limited government intervention in the economy. Smith favored free markets for the promotion of economic growth, while the government plays an important role only on certain matters, such as education, social services, and infrastructure (Smith, 2013). Economist Milton Friedman continued classical political economy, which became to be known as liberal political economy (Friedman & Friedman, 1990).

David Ricardo stressed the importance of comparative advantage; hence, governments must facilitate exports of locally produced goods which are of good quality which can be produced cheaply and facilitate imports of goods that are not produced locally or are costly to produce locally (Ricardo & Kolthammer, 2004). Thomas Malthus indicated that population growth increases

exponentially, whereas food production increases arithmetically only (Malthus, 2010). In principle, wars, famines, and disease are ways by which population growth could be curbed.

Karl Marx and Frederich Engels founded the scientific Marxist political economy according to which capitalism extracts surplus value from the overworked and underpaid workers (Marx et al., 1967). John Maynard Keynes championed government intervention in the economy by way of fiscal policy with a view to solve the problem of economic collapse (Keynes, 1964).

After World War II, Paul Samuelson spearheaded the neoclassical political economy, which became the dominant ideology up to today (Samuelson, 1997). It is quantitative, statistical, and stresses trade liberalization, deregulation, privatization, economic efficiency, which developed to economic globalization in a rules-based world order (Byrne, 2020). This is the neoliberal political economy of corporate globalization which is known as the Washington Consensus (Marangos, 2020). Using datasets covering decades, Piketty revealed that capital growth far exceeds income growth, which leads to income inequality and the widening of the gap between the few rich and the majority poor (Piketty, 2017).

Gaps and Weaknesses in Political Economy Today. With the outbreak of the armed hostilities in Ukraine in a proxy war between Russia and NATO, many politicians in different parts of the world are now more vocal about their dissatisfaction about the current international political economy, which is for the most part, neoliberal political economy in a rules-based world order of the Washington Consensus which a hegemon leads. For this reason, the BRICS moves towards a new international political economy are

rapidly on the rise and increase, filling the gap. In the aftermath of the Ukraine conflict, alternatives to neoliberal political economy emerge.

Framework. Political economy provides the lens through which to analyze the current configuration of the world economy as well as to forecast the possible alternative futures in the post-Ukraine crisis period. Narrative theory was employed to analysis the political and economic stories that the key actors to the Ukraine crisis tell, stressing the “interpretive power of stories to disclose human meaning” (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 4).

The alternative futures analysis is an approach in the analysis of events that forecasts what the near future would look like, based on facts and figures in the current situation. The purpose of this approach is to help in the management of uncertainties as well as for assisting in decision making by laying bare the opportunities and challenges. Governments will be able to plan their strategies ahead in order avoid or reduce risks and maximize gains (Goldschmidt, 1984).

With critical lenses, this paper systematically combed through the mainstream media, alternative media, and social media regarding the Ukraine crisis (Ty, 2022, 2023a, 2023b) in order to map out the scope of the literature regarding the Ukraine crisis as well as the emerging alternative futures. News reports in the English, French, and Spanish languages were scanned for this purpose. By not only presenting the one-sided mainstream news reportage but also alternative views and citizen reportage, this paper provided a more balanced view of the conflict and the possible emerging alternative world orders. Mainstream news coverage emanates from

the “usual suspects” of the giant corporate news agencies at networks, such as ABC, BBC, CBS, CNN, Fox News, NBC, New York Times, RFI, Washington Post, and others.

Alternative news reporting originates from dissenting voices, including academics, journalists, politicians, and organizations of divergent ideological persuasions that oppose the war in Ukraine. They span the political spectrum from right to left. Anti-war proponents are neither pro-Russia nor pro-Ukraine; they are neither anti-Russia nor anti-Ukraine. However, mainstream media characterize and falsely stigmatize all anti-war and peace advocates as pro-Russian, conspiracy theorists, or disseminators of fake news. Among the anti-war champions include Richard Boyd Barrett (People Before Profit/Solidarity, Ireland), Max Blumenthal, Prof. Noam Chomsky, Stephen Cohen (Russian studies expert), Clare Daly (Member of European Parliament; from Ireland), Daniel Ellsberg, Tulsi Gabbard (former Democrat politician), George Galloway (Workers Party of Britain), Chris Hedges (On Contact), Jackson Hinkle (The Dive), Paul Jay (The Analysis), Aaron Maté, Nikolas Mirkovic, Prof. John Joseph Mearsheimer (University of Chicago), Douglas Abbott MacGregor (retired U.S. army colonel), Rand Paul (libertarian; Republican), Scott Ritter (former U.N. nuclear weapons inspector), Mick Wallace (Member of the European Parliament; from Ireland), Richard David Wolff (U.S. economist), World BEYOND War, and others.

Dissenting voices come from both mainstream media as well as alternative media, including Consortium News and People’s Dispatch, and others. Social media accounts are rich with reportage from citizen journalists and peace journalists who cover the armed

fighting on the ground. For example, students from India and different African countries leaving Ukraine as refugees aired their grievances, through social media, about racist treatment when they were fleeing for safety. Patrick Lancaster is an example of an independent citizen journalist who reports through social media what is currently taking place on the ground in Ukraine.

Framework



Figure 2: Divergent Narratives of about Actions related to the Ukraine Crisis Lead to the Emergence of Alternative Futures in the International Political Economy

Methods

Adopting the constructivist grounded theory (Glaser, 2007), this descriptive research (Creswell, 2015) discussed a case study (Yin, 2003) of the current Ukraine crisis and presented alternative futures that could emerge in its aftermath. It provided data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) of the current historical events and its impact on the changing relations among global forces. This paper examined the behavior among the different global players as they impact the changing global economic, social, and political realities. Based on reports from various sources, this investigation led to the identification of different alternative futures which is the core of the erected grounded theory.

Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is a research data collection process in qualitative research by collecting codes and analyzing data with a view to uncover an emergent theory (Glaser, 2008). By purposive theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), this paper is engaged in a process of seeking and collecting additional data based upon concepts gathered from initial data analysis for the purpose of generating an inductive theory. Through the strategy of theoretical sampling, concepts are organized, themes are systematized, and trends are unearthed, all of which are based upon specific characteristics that bind them together. At the end of this research, a grounded theory is constructed based on the relationship among the data collected.

Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Coding of Emerging Categories

The author has traveled to different parts of Ukraine to visit Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking friends and home-stayed with some of them and met their extended family members, during which the author has gained deep insights into the Ukrainian history, economy, politics, cultures, and society. This qualitative, descriptive, and analytical study is based upon collecting data available widely in the internet and social media, after which they are subjected to critical review and analysis, which provided structure and depth in the emergence of trends. Data about the Ukraine crisis, its aftermath, and world futures are gathered, analyzed, and coded from various sources. A cross-textual study of the news coverage about the Ukraine crisis was conducted in order to extract empirical data about the views of major actors regarding the armed conflict in Ukraine.

Major sources of news in the English, French, and Spanish languages from across the world were scanned to garner empirical data about the Ukraine crisis as well as the rhetoric and actions of governments of different parts of the world. Emerging from the empirical data, these sources of news coverage about the Ukraine crisis include 1) mainstream media (MSM), 2) alternative news sources, and 3) citizen and peace journalism.

Corporate and state mainstream media (MSM) provide the core of the dominant views about the Ukraine crisis. In most parts of the world, they include news networks on both sides of the Atlantic, among which are: ABC, CBS, BBC, DW, Le Monde, El País, NBC, New York Times, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, FRI, Voice of America, and Washington Post.

Alternatives news emanate from both the mainstream media when they are able to slip through, usually anti-war views that academics and politicians portray. They include Noam Chomsky, Clare Daly, George Galloway, John Mearsheimer, and Jeffrey Sachs. In addition, they also come from other news outlets and independent reporters from all over the world, such as: Consortium News, Jimmy Dore, George Galloway, Chris Hedges, Jackson Hinkle, Caleb Maupin, Mint Press News, Wyatt Reed, Scott Ritter, T-House (China), TFI Global (India), and others.

Citizen journalism and peace journalism emanate from individuals and independent journalists who are on the ground in the conflict areas in the Ukraine crisis, reporting about what they actually experience, see, hear, and witness.

Being theoretically sensitive, the author is therefore able to organize the different strains of ideas, categories, and trends that emerged, which then formed part of the grounded theory in the form of a taxonomy of perspectives and world futures which are distinct from each other.

Findings

Details of the Case Study regarding the Ukraine Crisis.

Upon the dissolution of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact closed its doors forever. At the outset, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) promised not to expand an inch. However, historical memos and other records reveal that NATO broke its promise and expanded eastward continually (George Washington University, 2023). Russia had warned NATO about such expansion but NATO did not heed the warnings but was unrelentless in its expansion. Ukraine was the red line beyond which Russia became bellicose. Beyond the pale, NATO expansion made Russia irate. Mainstream media correctly called out Russia for invading Ukraine. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the whole world was on edge. Russia waged a relentless attack on Ukraine, which took a toll on human suffering, human lives, and properties. Instead of throwing in the towel, Ukraine redoubled its saber-rattling and counter-attacks on Russia, with the weapons and monetary support from NATO in the hopes of leveling the playing field.

All parties to the Ukraine conflict wage a hybrid war. One side of the conflict or the other side of the conflict, or both sides, engage directly or indirectly in hot war, psychological warfare, local unrest instigation, cyber-attacks, fake news, weapons delivery,

irregular forces, economic war, financial war, and more (Hoffman, 2007). Zelenskyy was the loudest megaphone for Ukraine's military buildup and succeeds in shoring up NATO support, as he is a seasoned actor who plays very well with media. Ukraine wins the media war with Zelenskyy getting air time in major events around the world. However, Russia is winning the armed conflict on the ground, taking vast tracks of land in the east and south of Ukraine. By arming and funding Ukraine's war efforts, NATO is stoking the flames of war and is sending the Ukraine crisis into a tailspin of continuing armed hostilities. In the fog of war, NATO's unrestricted arms and monetary support for Ukraine sets the stage for Zelenskyy to believe he can win the war. However, Russia decimates city after city in Ukraine, taking in vast swathes of lands in Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbas as well as in Mariupol, aside from Crimea in 2014. Russia has warned NATO not to be involved in the armed hostilities directly, as this act will spell the death knell. Putin has vented his fury by announcing that he will not refuse to use the nuclear option. This serves as a cautionary tale to avoid nuclear annihilation of the world. See Figure 3 below:

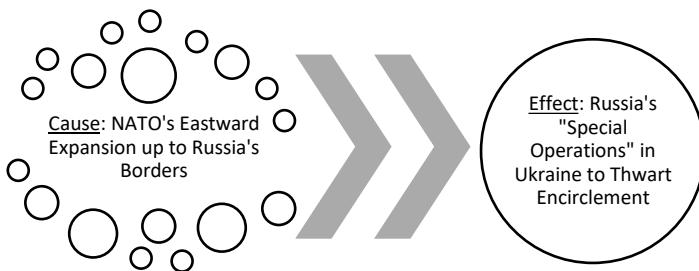


Figure 3: NATO's Eastward Expansion Provoked Russia's "Special Operations" in Ukraine

The mainstream news in the west blames Russia for the Ukraine crisis and stokes tension and war with Russia. Russian aggression was not unprovoked and the provocations are well-documented (Executive Intelligence Review, 2022b). Mainstream news from the west project the perspectives of NATO and Ukraine, including fake news. Russian news project its own perspectives, including fake news.

Independent western journalists expose fake news and propaganda of NATO and Ukraine (Global Times, 2022). While asserting that the Russian military action in Ukraine was unwarranted, alternative news in the west blames NATO expansion eastward as provoking the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Ty, 2022, 2023a, 2023b). Éric Denécé who is the Director of the French Center for Intelligence Studies asserted that the Ukraine conflict “should have been avoided” and that all parties “have their share of responsibility” (Denécé, 2022). Retired Swiss Lt. Col. Ralph Bosshard stressed that Ukraine’s unilateral declaration that the Minsk Agreements are null and void and attacking the Russian speaking Ukrainians in Lugansk and Donetsk provoked Russian reaction (Executive Intelligence Review, 2022a). Some mainstream politicians boldly call out the war efforts as “war propaganda” and refuse to take part in them (Brakey, 2023a, 2023b; Responsible Statecraft, 2023).

People trapped in Ukraine during Russia’s special military operation were both foreigners and citizens. Foreigners included among others, students, spouses, and business people. International students and other foreigners shared home-made videos in their mobile phones by uploading them into social media outlets to

disseminate information about what they are experiencing on the ground in Ukraine.

Eyewitness citizen news accounts vary by a wide margin to accounts of mainstream media about the situation on the ground. International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), for example, is worried about the increasing armament and military expenditures as a response to the armed conflict (Pressenza, 2022). A few anti-war organizations call for a stop of supporting the war in Ukraine and engage in peace journalism, among which are La Rouche Organization (La Rouche Organization, 2022), Schiller institute (The Schiller Institute, 2022), and World BEYOND War (World BEYOND War, 2022). Based on the empirical research, there are three major sources of news globally that present three alternative views about the Ukraine crisis. See Table 1 below:

Table 1: Different Perspectives of the Ukraine Crisis from Different Sources of News

Media Coverage and Three Perspectives of the Ukraine Crisis		
Perspective 3	Perspective 2	Perspective 1
Eye-Witness Reportage	Anti-War or Peace Journalism	Pro-War Mainstream Journalism
Individuals on the ground who were fleeing or who live in the conflict zones	Mostly from Alternative News Outlets and Independent Journalists	Corporate and State Mainstream News Networks

Sanctions against Russia not only did not hurt Russia but in fact has negative impact on the economies of NATO countries primarily and of the world in general. The rate of inflation is high on both sides of the Atlantic. The price of gasoline has skyrocketed globally due to the price gouging practices of petroleum companies. As many countries rely on wheat, sunflower oil, and other produce from Russia and Ukraine, the sanctions have also threatened a possible food shortage due to agricultural products and fertilizers not leaving both Russia and Ukraine.

Lest the armed hostilities in Ukraine spiral out of control, there needs to be a dialogue now for a peace settlement that guarantees the security not only of NATO but of all parties involved in the armed conflict and the whole world as well. A new security arrangement is needed. Peace based on justice is more important than victory in war.

International Political Economy of the World Systems in the Modern Times. This article examined the megatrends in international political economy of necessity from Westphalian Peace to BRICS's Eastphalian Peace in order to have a bird's-eye view of historically and socially contextualized changing trends. Westphalian Peace is the impetus for the movement towards Eastphalian Peace. We have gone through a series of world systems in the modern times: 1) Westphalian Peace, 2) the League of Nations, 3) the United Nations, and 4) humanitarian intervention. See Figure 4 below:

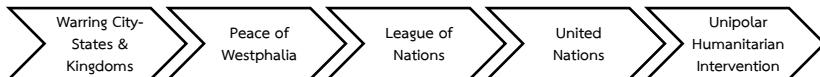


Figure 4: Changing World Economic and Political Systems in the Modern Times

In the period of antiquity and in the Medieval times, there were separate city-states as well as separate warring kingdoms and empires (Johnson & Steams, 2022). They were characterized by both hierarchy and anarchy (Larkins, 2009). Thereafter, the Peace of Westphalia was an arrangement which ended wars as well as recognized territories of states as well as state sovereignty over these boundaries, which became the global norm (Treaty, 1648).

When World War I erupted, wars in Europe led to the territorial divisions. The League of Nations was created with a view, among others, to prevent further wars, recognize the right to self-determination and collective security; however, it failed primarily because the United States was not a member (Henig, 2019).

As a result, World War II was waged in Europe and Asia, with the participation of the United States. When the Axis powers were defeated, the Allied powers initiated to call to create the United Nations, the purpose of which included self-determination, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, non-interference in the domestic affairs of states, national sovereignty, and international cooperation (United Nations, 1945).

During the Cold War, proxy wars between the United States and the former Soviet Union were waged in the different parts of the world (Gaddis, 2006). The end of the Cold War saw the collapse of the former U.S.S.R. and many republics became independent

countries. The only superpower remaining was the United States which imposes hegemonic stability in the now unipolar world (Worth, 2015). The unipolar world configuration in the post-Cold War period is the time during which humanitarian interventions were rampant: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere.

Then came the Ukraine crisis in early 2022. While NATO criticizes Russia for the unprovoked military invasion, Russia insists that NATO's eastward expansion was the impetus for its "special military operations," as its security is threatened. The whole world watches the debate between NATO and Russia. While NATO demands allegiance from all countries in the world, many countries in the Global South are rethinking their options, keeping in mind their experiences with colonialism and neocolonialism. We live in a totally different world today. Global realignments and reconfigurations are taking place, as a result of the Ukraine crisis.

With unipolar humanitarian interventions all over the world, the general principles of public international law recognized in the Peace of Westphalia, the League of Nations, and the United Nations have eroded. The United Nations Organization does not anymore maintain the general principles of international law as such but approves anti-Westphalian humanitarian interventions which violate non-intervention in the domestic affairs of states, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty.

Alternative Futures. The world is now walking on eggshells, attempting to wiggling out of the Ukraine quagmire. We are now witnessing the alignment and re-alignment of forces among global actors in response to the Ukraine crisis. Four possible alternative futures are emerging. As ideal models, they are not mutually

exclusive and can coexist with varying degrees of importance at different points in time and on specific issues, all of which have implications to inclusive growth in the global economy. The four possible world futures are the following: 1) the continuance of the rule-based unipolar hegemonic stability order, 2) a return to the early post-Cold War harmony; 3) a China-Russia led world order, and 4) the re-emergence and re-strengthening of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). See Figure 5 below:



Figure 5: Four Alternative Futures in the Aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis

Unipolar Hegemonic International Political Economic World System. The first alternative future points to the maintenance, strengthening, and consolidation of the rule-based unipolar hegemonic stability. These rules are mostly western in origin but internationalized or globalized, including rules of the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Bank, World Trade Organization, and others. The rhetoric of democracy, human rights, and individual freedom are elemental. In an anarchic world order, power-hungry countries vie to crown themselves as the global hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001). The world has been under the

helms of a global hegemon since the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991 to the present. This model will remain predominant, if a single hegemon will continue to hold sway not only trans-Atlantic but also globally. The lone superpower will be able to remain as the sole authoritative economic, political, diplomatic, and military power in the world as a result of confluence of superiority in technology, ideology, and access to resources (McCormick, 1990). A hegemon could also enforce its will to survive as the lone global leader through the imposition of international rules in a rules-based world order (Keohane, 1994). In this world order, we will see the continuation of the important roles that the United Nations (UN), corporation globalization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) will play. Economic rules in this system include liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. Economic, social, and political life as we know it will continue as it is.

Harmonious Global System. The second alternative future points to the return of the brief period right after the demise of the Cold War in 1991 during which almost all the countries more or less were engaged in a friendly competition in international trade without the threat of or use of armed conflict. This nostalgia for global harmony gives room for major powers on both sides of the Atlantic, China, and Russia to engage in capitalist expansion and free trade without fear of military conflict (Billington, 2022). This alternative is unlikely to happen, as the animosity between NATO and its enemies are intensifying.

Eastphalian BRICS+ World Economic and Political System. No power is forever. Empires rise. Empires fall. With the Enlightenment, France reigned supreme during the eighteenth century. Due to the Industrial Revolution, the sun never set on the British empire. Macron asked if this is the termination of western hegemony with which we are accustomed. This third alternative future points to the rise of China and its economic partners as an alternative center of global economic, political, and military power around which the world will have to navigate. The original BRICS countries include Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (World Data, 2023). They account for not only about 40% of the global population but also about 25% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the world (Iqbal, 2022). It is a platform to establish multilateral relations among countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the purpose of which includes peace and security; economic, political, and cultural cooperation; and people-to-people exchanges. In short, it promotes a harmonious, prosperous, and a peaceful world (Wall Street Mojo, 2022). As an alternative to the western hegemonic world order, BRICS provides its members the ability to absorb the shockwaves of and pressures from the corporate globalization of the Global North (DW, 2023). New members from Asia, Africa, and Latin America are continually joining or asking to join. In this case, economic transition is happening right under our watch. Applicants include Algeria, Argentina, Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia (Pavicevic, 2022). Dialogue partners include Kazakhstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Senegal, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates (Xia Lu & Gao Lei, 2022).

This is the “Eastphalian” turn, which calls for the rejection of humanitarian intervention and for the return of the respect of principles of international law, including self-determination, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in the domestic affairs of states, and international cooperation and goodwill.

BRICS countries are working for an international economic and political order that the Global South leads, as an alternative to the present international order in which the Global North reigns supreme. Eastphalian Peace is a play with words, specifically in reference to the 1648 Westphalian Peace Treaties, which promoted the respect of internal sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. However, the Global North, especially of NATO, does not respect state sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of the countries of the Global South. Eastphalian Peace merely reminds and calls for the respect of the Westphalian Peace, which the west does not practice vis-à-vis the Global South. Thus, Eastphalian Peace is not novel, but a renewed call to return to basic and general principles of international law since the 1600s.

Non-Aligned World Economic and Political System. The fourth alternative future points to the re-emergence and re-strengthening of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) composed of countries in the Global South, all of which seek not to align themselves to one or the other global center of power. Many grassroots organizations in both the Global North and in the Global South see the BRICS+ world system as not any better than the unipolar hegemonic world system. The unipolar hegemonic camp under NATO and the multipolar camp under BRICS+ are engaged in

inter-capitalist rivalry, though some countries, such as China are under Communist Party rule. Grassroots organizations see BRICS+ as not their preferred leaders in the emerging world order in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, as many BRICS+ countries are under authoritarian rule. Grassroots organizations and adherents of the non-aligned world system struggle for a green, just, and peaceful world.

Discussion

The Ukraine crisis has both 1) strengthened the unity of the west as well as 2) revealed many contradictions. On the one hand, the conflict has catalyzed all the western countries on both sides of the Atlantic and the Global North including Japan and South Korea to tow the same line with NATO on political and economic issues. On the other hand, the conflict exposed the economic and political contradictions between NATO and Russia; mainstream journalism on both sides (pro-NATO and pro-Russia) and peace journalism; the military-industrial complex and peace activists; Russia and Ukraine; NATO and the Gulf states; NATO and China; NATO and India; NATO and Africa; NATO and Latin America; as well as NATO and the Global South in general. At the end of the day, global capitalism reigns supreme.

The armed conflict in Ukraine reveals sexism and patriarchy. Adult men are required to stay and fight, while women and children leave. Moreover, there is no possibility for conscientious objection to military service.

But the question is: under whose leadership: 1) a hegemonic pole, 2) status ante bellum harmonious international trade, 3) status post bellum multiple poles, or 4) non-aligned? Capitalism and capitalist trade will continue whichever power bloc emerges as the global leader/s. Inclusive growth in the global economy will have different characteristics under each alternative future. The back-to-the-post-Cold War brief period of harmonious global trade is unlikely to become a reality. We see the trend moving from the Westphalian system to the United Nations system and unipolar humanitarian intervention system. Are alternative “Eastphalian” systems (play with words) emerging? There are implications in each alternative future: who will benefit and at whose expense? See Figure 5 below:

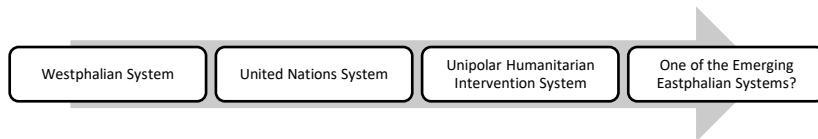


Figure 6: The Emerging Global System of Governance

Implications of the Findings

The findings reveal that there are multiple interpretations of the Ukraine crisis. NATO and western mainstream media portray Russia as the unprovoked aggressor. Jeffry Sachs, John Mearsheimer, and other sources reveal that the eastward expansion of NATO provoked the special military action of Russia. Peace scholars and activists argue that there are no innocent actors in the conflict. These contending interpretations of the same phenomenon

underscore the complexity of the conflict and the likelihood for several actors to the crisis to accept accountability.

The four possible future scenarios show four policy options for politicians worldwide to consider in order to promote their economic and political national interests. There will be shifting allegiances, international power dynamics, and the reshaping of international economic and political relations.

Summary

Ukraine Crisis. There are divergent interpretations about the causes of the Ukraine crisis. **One**, from the perspective of the mainstream western media, NATO asserts that Russia is the unprovoked aggressor that invaded Ukraine. **Two**, alternative voices from academics, politicians, military officials, and non-mainstream journalists emphasize that NATO is the aggressor that provoked Russia's military action in Ukraine by the former's hostile anti-Russia eastward expansion, right to the border of Russia, which Russia sees as an existential threat to its security. **Three**, peace scholars, journalists, and activists assert that there are no innocent actors in the Ukraine crisis.

Alternative Futures. There are several possible world orders that could emerge in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis. One, the hegemonic stability of the unipolar world will reign supreme. Two, a negotiated resolution of the Ukraine crisis among all the major parties involved in international politics will settle the armed conflict that brings out the security of the whole world that promotes mutual benefit, prosperity, and lasting peace. Three, the BRICS+ economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

will create an alternative world order using alternative currency or currencies for foreign exchange among themselves and with the rest of the world. Four, the dormant Non-Aligned Movement will re-emerge with vigor, strengthen, and consolidate, asserting a place for itself in the world economy for a just world order with fair trade, not free trade.

In each of these alternative futures, there are different paths for inclusive growth and development in the world economy. Note, however, these are ideal models. The reality will be more complex. The different world orders could coexist at the same time.

Conclusion

Our hearts and thoughts go to all the non-combatants affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine: Ukrainians, Russians, foreign students, and all foreigners who are reluctantly trapped in the combat. There will be a major reconfiguration in the post-Ukrainian crisis international political economy in the global system.

Recommendations

Whatever alternative future emerges when the Ukraine crisis ends, all actors must work for the fulfilment of their visions to advance inclusive growth. Scenario 1: In the unipolar hegemonic world order, we will witness the continuation of corporate globalization, trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization under the helms of the western world and the power of the U.S. dollar.

Scenario 2: A return to the brief period of “honeymoon” and global harmony immediately after the end of the Cold War is not a possibility. There are too many pent-up grievances as well as overt animosities among contending states. Many national political leaders in the Global South do not trust the hegemon anymore.

Scenario 3: In the BRICS-led multipolar world order, non-western economies will veer away from the power of NATO countries on both sides of the Atlantic. They will start to use currencies other than the U.S. dollar and will have alternative trade routes, such as the Road and Belt Initiatives of China, linking the world by land in Eurasia (new Silk Road) and by sea (maritime Silk Road). They will congregate together economically, politically, and militarily.

Scenario 4: In the emerging alternative world order, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will rise again like a phoenix. NAM countries will refuse to be controlled by (1) the unipolar hegemonic power of NATO and (2) BRICS+. NAM states will not be bound by any military alliance, economic union, or political allegiance. People at the grassroots level in both the Global North and in the Global South seek an independent path to inclusive development in a green, just, and peaceful world that they envision.

In any of the identified alternative futures, there will be opportunities in inclusive growth in the global economy. But the winners and losers in each configuration will be different. The emerging world system is still in the making.

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