



War in Ukraine

US, Russia, China and the Return of the
Multipolar World

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Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is nearing its one-year milestone, Ukrainian cities lay in ruin, and more than 14 million of the country's people have been displaced.¹

The destruction of Ukraine grows daily. Washington and its coalition of the willing struggle to help Ukraine defend itself. Punitive measures meted out to Russia

¹ "UN: Russian Invasion Has Uprooted 14 Million Ukrainians," *Associated Press*, <https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2022-11-02/un-russian-invasion-has-uprooted-14-million-ukrainians>.

include economic sanctions,² trade embargoes³ and the confiscation of the assets of Russian leaders.⁴ Billions of dollars from Western-bloc countries now support the Ukrainian resistance.

For some, this conflict is the result of a never-ending power struggle; the U.S. should have contained Russia when it was most vulnerable – after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Others see the struggle in Ukraine as threatening the very structure of post-Cold War stability – the future of global order hinging on the outcome.⁵

Certain is this: A new cold war has the potential to be far worse than the first.⁶

Field experts and military leaders have warned for decades that if the West continues to threaten Russia's vital interests in the region, political and even military confrontation would result.^{7,8}

Certain is this: A new cold war has the potential to be far worse than the first.

² “United States: U.S. Treasury Announces Unprecedented & Expansive Sanctions against Russia, Imposing Swift and Severe Economic Costs,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0608>.

³ “Commercial Service Status, Russia Sanctions and Export Controls,” International Trade Administration, <https://www.trade.gov/russia>.

⁴ Jonathan Ponciano, “Seized Russian Oligarchs’ Assets Could Be Used for Ukraine Aid under Senate Bill,” *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanponciano/2022/03/15/seized-russian-oligarchs-assets-could-be-used-for-ukraine-aid-under-senate-bill/?sh=2cb5e95b2b9c>.

⁵ Tanisha M. Fazal, “The Return of Conquest? Why the Future of Global Order Hinges on Ukraine,” *Foreign Affairs* (New York, N.Y.) 101, no. 3 (2022).

⁶ Mary Elise Sarotte, “I’m a Cold War Historian. We’re in a Frightening New Era,” *The New York Times* (Online) (2022).

⁷ Anatol Lieven, “Russia Has Been Warning About Ukraine for Decades. The West Should Have Listened,” *Time*, Jan. 25, 2022. Accessible from <https://time.com/6141806/russia-ukraine-threats/> 2022.

⁸ Stan Resor, “Opposition to Nato Expansion,” The Arms Control Association, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997-06/arms-control-today/opposition-nato-expansion>.

The West has chosen to ignore the warnings, breaking security assurances while engaging in activities that have threatened Russia.⁹

The war in Ukraine has been long foretold, and today has produced worldwide consequences.¹⁰ The costs of energy, wheat, corn and sunflower oil – important Ukrainian exports – have hit record prices globally. Absent a decisive military victory, a diplomatic political settlement is the only viable option to end the conflict in Ukraine.^{11, 12, 13}

The focus on the carnage in Ukraine overlooks the strengthening alliance between Russia and China.

The focus on the carnage in Ukraine overlooks the strengthening alliance between Russia and China. Says American historian and educator Alfred McCoy, “At the core of recent conflicts at both ends of Eurasia is an entente between China and Russia that the world hasn’t seen since the Sino-Soviet alliance at the start of the Cold War.”¹⁴

The war in Ukraine reveals a tectonic shift taking place in Eurasia – the Ground

⁹ “Nato Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard,” National Security Archive, The George Washington University, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>.

¹⁰ Amir Handjani, “Ukraine War Is Causing a Commodities ‘Super Cycle’ and Likely Global Food Crisis,” *Responsible Statecraft*, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/03/16/ukraine-war-could-cause-a-global-food-crisis/>.

¹¹ Barry R. Posen, “Ukraine’s Implausible Theories of Victory: The Fantasy of Russian Defeat and the Case for Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-07-08/ukraines-implausible-theories-victory> (2022).

¹² Lieven, “How the War in Ukraine Can Be Ended,” *Current Affairs*, <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2022/05/how-the-war-in-ukraine-can-be-ended>.

¹³ Lieven, Sarang Shidore, and Marcus Stanley, “Avoiding the Dangers of a Protracted Conflict in Ukraine,” *Quincy Brief No. 23* (New York: Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Accessible from <https://quincyinst.org/report/avoiding-the-dangers-of-a-protracted-conflict-in-ukraine/>, 2022).

¹⁴ Alfred McCoy, “The Geopolitics of the Ukraine War: Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping in the Struggle over Eurasia,” *TomDispatch*, <https://tomdispatch.com/the-geopolitics-of-the-ukraine-war/>.

Zero of socio-political world affairs is shifting from the West to the East.^{15, 16} The gravitational center of the world economy is shifting from the Atlantic to east of the Urals. The bloody conflict threatens the resulting global order as Russia and China grow closer in their alignment.

The rise of China poses a lethal threat to U.S. primacy in the post-World War II global architecture of governance.

The world's largest economy by purchasing power measures, China has emerged as the greatest trading nation, one set to challenge the U.S. position in the world politically, economically and militarily.¹⁷ Economist James K. Galbraith argues the global dollar-based order has remained unchallenged “mainly by instability elsewhere and the lack of a credible alternative or compelling reason to create one.”¹⁸ Further, the U.S. has maintained its global hegemony because there has been “no clearly different, functionally superior economic development model.”¹⁹

War foretold

What is happening today in Ukraine is what I call a “war foretold.”²⁰ My case is this: Attempting to impose a military solution to a political problem will – already has – endanger more innocent people.²¹

¹⁵ McCoy, *In the Shadows of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of US Global Power*, Dispatch Books (Newburyport: Haymarket Books, 2017).

¹⁶ Patrick Smith, *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

¹⁷ “Gross Domestic Product Based on Purchasing-Power-Parity in Current Prices,” Knoema, <https://knoema.com/atlas/ranks/GDP-based-on-PPP>.

¹⁸ James K. Galbraith, “The Dollar System in a Multi-Polar World,” Institute for New Economic Thinking, <https://www.ineteconomics.org/perspectives/blog/the-dollar-system-in-a-multi-polar-world?fbclid=IwAR-13W6K49y2fWDTEENMiUdw02GY242e03NYIZFEmtDWLFFI|TA2Klo92K6dAo>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Christopher Zambakari, “War Foretold: Ukraine’s Crisis, 30 Years in the Making,” The Fletcher World Forum, September 13, <http://www.fletcherforum.org/home/2022/9/13/war-foretold-ukraines-crisis-30-years-in-the-making> (2022).

²¹ Open Letter, “We Call on Biden to Reject Reckless Demands for a No-Fly Zone,” *Guardian News*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/11/we-call-on-biden-to-reject-reckless-demands-for-a-no-fly-zone>.

The conflict in Ukraine is long foretold,²² because for decades the warning signs have been ignored by the architects of the U.S.-led NATO alliance.²³ Some 30 years ago, foreign policy wonk Anatol Lieven predicted²⁴ the coming crisis between Russia, Ukraine and the West, writing, “The really major question for Russia is Ukraine ... moves toward NATO membership for Ukraine would trigger a really ferocious Russian response, involving a complete collapse of cooperation with the West.”²⁵

More recently, in 1997, 50 prominent foreign policy experts scribed an open letter to U.S. President Bill Clinton, outlining their opposition to eastward expansion by NATO, which was in the process of admitting new members from former Warsaw Pact²⁶ countries in eastern Europe,²⁷ violating the pledge then-U.S. President George H.W. Bush made to Russian leaders at the end of the Cold War. The pledge: not to expand NATO eastward.²⁸ The message to Clinton emphasized: “In Russia, NATO expansion, which continues to be opposed across the entire political spectrum, will strengthen the nondemocratic opposition, undercut those who favor reform and cooperation with the West, [and] bring the Russians to question the entire post-Cold War settlement.”²⁹

The empty promises, broken pledges and assurances given to Russia have been

²² Resor.

²³ Senator Bernie Sanders, “Prepared Remarks: Sanders Senate Floor Speech on Ukraine,” U.S. Senate, <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/prepared-remarks-sanders-senate-floor-speech-on-ukraine/>.

²⁴ Lieven, “Russian Opposition to Nato Expansion,” *The World Today* 51, no. 10 (1995).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ The Warsaw Pact was a collective defense treaty established in 1955 by the Soviet Union and seven other Soviet satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania.

²⁷ Resor.

²⁸ C. J. Polychroniou, “Chomsky: US Approach to Ukraine and Russia has ‘Left the Domain of Rational Discourse,’” *Truthout*, <https://truthout.org/articles/us-approach-to-ukraine-and-russia-has-left-the-domain-of-rational-discourse/>.

²⁹ Resor.

largely ignored,^{30, 31, 32} including then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's adamant "not one inch eastward" pledge about NATO expansion in 1990.³³ Recently declassified documents reveal Baker assured Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "Neither the President [Clinton] nor I intend to extract any unilateral advantages from the processes that are taking place."³⁴

Double standard

For Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ukraine represents a national security matter; the West continues to ignore Russia and its superpower status. If this is indeed the case, it is because what is often referred to as the "American-led open-democratic political order"³⁵ or "U.S.-led liberal, rules-based international order"^{36, 37} favors the strong. The U.S. has manhandled the unwritten rule whenever it has suited its national interest. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Adam Johnson contends, "If any other country engages in aggressive war without U.S. sanction, they are said to undermine the 'liberal, rules-based order.'³⁸ But such an order never existed, it's not an actual document or a series of laws. 'Rules-based'

³⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, 93, no. 5 (2014).

³¹ Lieven, "Russian Opposition to Nato Expansion."

³² Noam Chomsky and David Barsamian, "Welcome to a Science-Fiction Planet: How George Orwell's Doublethink Became the Way of the World," *TomDispatch*, <https://tomdispatch.com/welcome-to-a-science-fiction-planet/>.

³³ National Security Archive.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ G. J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no. 2 (2005).

³⁶ Ben Scott, "The United States and the Rules-Based Order," Lowy Institute, <https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/usa-rules-based-order/>.

³⁷ Robert Kagan, "The Twilight of the Liberal World Order," The Brookings Institution. Accessible from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-twilight-of-the-liberal-world-order/>. 2017.

³⁸ Johnson also lists a number of international treaties the U.S. refused to ratify, including the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention of 1958, the Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1962, Convention on the Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages of 1962, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, Minimum Age Convention of 1973, the Moon Treaty of 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996, Kyoto Protocol of 1997, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Convention on Cluster Munitions of 2008, and the Arms Trade Treaty of 2013, "The NYT's Casually Racist, Arrogant Chauvinism in Two Paragraphs," Substack Inc., <https://thecolumn.substack.com/p/the-nyts-casually-racist-arrogant>.

simply means ‘American rules’ that the U.S. and its NATO allies assert when it suits them.”³⁹

The proxy war the U.S. chooses to fight against Russia has drawn the Bear and the Dragon closer together in their opposition to Western ideals.

Renewed Sino-Russian entente and the rise of the petro-ruble and petro-yuan

All this leads to the wildcard transpiring in Ukraine.

Enter China, a force once referred to as “The Sleeping Giant,” a force that, like Russia, seeks to weaken the U.S. stranglehold on the world economy. No government – until now – has been powerful enough to upset the U.S. dollar’s status as the global reserve currency.⁴⁰

Today, a very real test to the dollar comes from Russia and China, both seeking to snap the Anglo-American-controlled finance system. In response to invasion-spurred sanctions instituted by Western countries, the Putin administration has moved to require purchases of Russian energy be transacted in Russian rubles, or gold instead of the dollar or Euro.⁴¹

All this leads to the wildcard transpiring in Ukraine.

Despite Russia’s GDP being less than a tenth of that of the U.S. or China, Russia is a major global supplier of key commodities; as a result of Putin’s rubles-or-gold dictate, the ruble has risen in value on global exchanges. The effect has been reminiscent of the 1970s, when the petrodollar – crude oil exports revenues – propped up the value of U.S. dollar in the global marketplace.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Ellen Brown, “The Coming Global Financial Revolution: Russia is Following the American Playbook,” *scheerpost.com*, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/04/04/ellen-brown-the-coming-global-financial-revolution-russia-is-following-the-american-playbook/>.

⁴¹ Stephen Alpher, “Russian Lawmaker Suggests Nation Could Accept Bitcoin for Oil Payments,” *Yahoo! News*, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/russian-lawmaker-suggests-accepting-bitcoin-161918687.html?guccounter=1>.

The debate over Russia's demand that foreign buyers pay for gas in rubles has tested the resolve of European governments to take a hard line against Moscow over the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile – listen for the sirens and the bells going off in the background – Russia continues to knot closer economic ties with China and other non-Western countries. As an example, Moscow's September agreement to begin switching payments for gas supplies to China to yuan and rubles instead of dollars is a "move over" announcement to reduce its reliance on the U.S. dollar, the Euro and other hard currencies in its banking system and for trade.

In 2014, Russia announced a pivot to China with a deal to build two natural-gas pipelines to carry a fifth of China's gas imports.⁴² Alongside the energy pipeline, China agreed to build a \$24.2 billion,⁴³ 4,300-mile high-speed railway⁴⁴ from Beijing to Moscow. Now, Western sanctions have drawn the two regimes even closer together. According to geostrategist Brahma Chellaney, "By effectively putting Russia, the world's richest country in natural resources, in Beijing's pocket, the [Western] sanctions will yield major dividends for a resource-hungry China, including allowing it to dictate the terms of the bilateral relationship and secure greater access to Russian military technology."⁴⁵

If Russia poses complexities for the West, China offers, quite possibly, an even greater adversary. Says FBI Director Christopher Wray, "There is just no country that presents a broader threat to our ideas, our innovation and our economic security than China."⁴⁶ Echoing the director's contention, U.S. President Joe Biden

⁴² James Paton and Aibing Guo, "Russia, China Add to \$400 Billion Gas Deal with Accord," *Bloomberg News*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-11-10/russia-china-add-to-400-billion-gas-deal-with-accord#x-j4y7vzkg>.

⁴³ Steve LeVine, "China is Building the Most Extensive Global Commercial-Military Empire in History," *Quartz*, <https://qz.com/415649/china-is-building-the-most-extensive-global-commercial-military-empire-in-history/>.

⁴⁴ "Moscow to Beijing in 2 Days: China to Build \$24.2bn High-Speed Railway," *RT News*, <https://www.rt.com/business/225131-russia-china-speed-railway/>.

⁴⁵ James Griffiths, "War in Ukraine Could Put Russia Deeper in China's Pocket Than Ever. Here's How Beijing Could Use that Economic Leverage," *The Globe and Mail Inc.*, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-war-in-ukraine-could-put-russia-deeper-in-chinas-pocket-than-ever-what/>.

⁴⁶ Christopher Wray, "Countering Threats Posed by the Chinese Government Inside the U.S.," Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/countering-threats-posed-by-the-chinese-govern->

has remarked, “China ... is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system.”⁴⁷

Sleeping giant? Certainly a metaphorical giant, but no longer sleeping.

According to a World Bank report, China’s GDP stood at more than \$19.6 billion in purchasing power parity in 2017.⁴⁸ The U.S. boasted a \$19.5 billion GDP. Together, the two powers accounted for one third of global GDP. China’s growth is fueled by its central management of the economy, its large-scale capital investment and rapid expansion of manufacturing and production. Recent forecasts by UK-based Centre for Economics and Business Research show that China will overtake the U.S. as the world’s largest economy by 2030, five years earlier than the pre-pandemic prediction.⁴⁹ The prognostication is consistent with International Monetary Fund predictions that China’s total GDP could equal that of the U.S. in 2027 to 2028.⁵⁰

In the technology race, the U.S. appears to be losing to the Red Dragon. In his book, *The New Silk Roads*, Peter Frankopan notes that important decisions shaping this and the next century will not be made in the West “but in Beijing, Moscow, in Tehran and Riyadh, in Delhi and Islamabad, in Kabul and in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan, in Ankara,

‘Technological innovation has become the mainbattleground of the global playing field.’

– Chinese President Xi Jinping

[ment-inside-the-us-wray-013122](#).

⁴⁷ President Joseph R. Biden, “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance: Renewing America’s Advantages” (Washington, D.C.: The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>, 2021).

⁴⁸ “Purchasing Power Parities and the Size of World Economies : Results from the 2017 International Comparison Program.” (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33623>, 2020).

⁴⁹ “World Economic League Table 2022,” 13th edition (London, United Kingdom: The Centre for Economics and Business Research, <https://cebr.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/WELT-2022.pdf>, 2021).

⁵⁰ Cited in Huang Renwei, “What Does the Future between the Us and China Look Like?,” *scheerpost.com*, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/07/24/what-does-the-future-between-the-us-and-china-look-like/>.

Damascus and Jerusalem.”⁵¹ Chinese President Xi Jinping knows of the shift. “Technological innovation has become the main battleground of the global playing field, and competition for tech dominance will grow unprecedentedly fierce,” he writes,⁵² announcing his intentions to “develop indigenous capabilities, decrease dependence on foreign technology, and advance emerging technologies.”⁵³

Unipolar, bipolar and multipolar

World order can be distinguished by its polarity in terms of power distribution within the state-led system.⁵⁴ There is unipolarity (one dominant power), bipolarity (two dominant powers) or multipolarity (more than two dominant powers). For example, the Cold War contest between the Soviet Union and U.S. created a bipolar world with two core centers of power. When the Cold War ended, the U.S. enjoyed a brief moment of unipolarity when the Soviet Union collapsed.

Some 30 years ago, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Charles Krauthammer argued that to see the U.S. as anything but the world’s “unchallenged superpower”⁵⁵ was fantasy. The U.S. could not retreat from the world because, according to Krauthammer, “The alternative to unipolarity is chaos,” he wrote. “If America wants stability, it will have to create it.”⁵⁶

Now, according to political scientist and international relations expert John J. Mearsheimer, it is a liberal international order that has accelerated China’s rise, and ultimately transformed the system from unipolar to multipolar.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads A New History of the World*, New History of the World (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁵² Graham Allison et al., “The Great Tech Rivalry: China vs the U.S.,” in *Avoiding Great Power War Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, <https://www.belfer-center.org/publication/great-tech-rivalry-china-vs-us>, 2021).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability,” *World Politics* 16, no. 3 (1964).

⁵⁵ Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* (New York, N.Y.) 70, no. 1 (1990): 23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 32.

⁵⁷ Mearsheimer, “Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order,” *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019).

The growing relationship between Moscow and Beijing is not lost on President Biden, who has reportedly warned Chinese President Xi Jinping that China would face consequences if it were to provide material support to Russia amid the war in Ukraine. The call is part of longstanding U.S. efforts to check the emerging Sino–Russian betrothal, says historian McCoy, adding that, as U.S. global power declines, China and Russia “are going to emerge as the new centers of global power on the planet.”⁵⁸

The growing relationship between Moscow and Beijing is not lost on President Biden.

McCoy further contends that China’s ascension is different from that of previous great powers.⁵⁹ The behemoth of a country is not relying on building a blue-water navy like the British or a global aerospace armada akin to America’s. Instead, it is “using its cash reserves to reach deep within the world island to the heart of Eurasia in an attempt to thoroughly reshape the geopolitical fundamentals of global power, using a subtle strategy that has so far eluded Washington’s power elites.”⁶⁰

As Russia and China work to break U.S. dominance over a Eurasian landmass that is home to 70 percent of the world’s population, there is more evidence the decades-long alliance is nearing formal consummation. An example is China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. A massive infrastructure program of railways, energy pipelines, highways and streamlined border crossings, the BRI could expand the international use of Chinese currency and create as many as 50 special economic zones, turning the “middle of nowhere”⁶¹ into the center of the world economy. “[T]he United States shares the concern of some in Asia that the BRI could be a

⁵⁸ McCoy.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Ben Mauk and Andrea Frazzetta, “Can China Turn the Middle of Nowhere into the Center of the World Economy?” *The New York Times*, February 1, 2019/ January 29, 2019.

Trojan horse for China-led regional development and military expansion,” says the U.S.-based nonprofit think tank Council of Foreign Relations.⁶²

For years, China has been engaged in what Nadège Rolland calls its “southern strategy,”⁶³ the creation of a grand coalition in its lower stretches to constrain U.S. strategic ambitions there. Rolland, a senior fellow at the National Bureau of Asian Research, argues that Chinese policymakers are building a global sphere of influence comprising the “non-Western, and largely nondemocratic world”⁶⁴ – what she calls the “global south.”⁶⁵ If China succeeds in shoring up support by unifying the global south, Rolland warns that U.S. global hegemony could come to an end.⁶⁶

Russia and China are not exactly monogamous partners. Moscow and Tehran have jumped into bed on a recent \$40 billion project, a deal tying together the resources of the National Iranian Oil Company NIOC and Russia’s state-owned multinational energy giant Gazprom.⁶⁷ China, meanwhile cemented a 2021 agreement with Iran worth \$400 billion that will enable tech transfer, infrastructure development and oil sales between the two countries. The economic and security deal will help ease Iran’s international isolation and also reflects China’s growing interest in expanding its profile in the region – a region that has been a strategic preoccupation of the U.S. for decades, notes *The New York Times*.⁶⁸

Really, such partnerships as those developed with Iran by Russia and China are but the tip of a Titanic-sized iceberg. The two powers are taking orders from and

⁶² Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, “China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative,” Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

⁶³ Nadège Rolland, “China’s Southern Strategy: Beijing Is Using the Global South to Constrain America,” *Foreign Affairs*, June 9, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-06-09/chinas-southern-strategy> (2022).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Patrick Lawrence, “21st Century Order,” *scheerpost.com*, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/07/26/patrick-lawrence-21st-century-order/>.

⁶⁸ Farnaz Fassihi and Myers Steven Lee, “China, with \$400 Billion Iran Deal, Could Deepen Influence in Mideast,” *The New York Times*, Mar 27, 2021.

fulfilling commitments to any number of countries that are helping swing the world order away from its current Western base.

Conclusion

Modern war rarely ends in decisive military victories. Left behind are devastation, death and destruction. The war in Ukraine has shown the limits of American power in corralling a global coalition to positively impact its proxy wars. China's ties with Russia grow stronger in the war's wake.

'We are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it's supposed to lead to.'

– Former U.S. Secretary of State
Henry Kissinger

The world, says elder statesman Henry Kissinger, is on the edge of a dangerous disequilibrium: “We are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it's supposed to lead to.”⁶⁹

The challenge for America in an emerging world order will be less about stopping the rise of other powers and more about finding its place among world powers. It is time for the U.S. to make a decision. Diversity in powers makes for greater options and

democratizes the global arena. Alternatives to the hegemony of the dollar-based order may help revive U.S. manufacturing while offsetting reliance on traditional energy sources. By diffusing the burden of leadership, delegating some tasks to regional powers, the U.S. can redirect valuable resources inward.

What this could mean for a country divided, a nation torn apart politically and socially, is a greater – and a more necessary – inward focus. While a side eye must be cast toward the melding of non-Western alliances and their impact on the

⁶⁹ Laura Secor, “Henry Kissinger is Worried About ‘Disequilibrium’; the 99-Year-Old Former Secretary of State has Just Published a Book on Leadership and Sees a Dangerous Lack of Strategic Purpose in U.S. Foreign Policy,” *The Wall Street Journal (Online)*, Aug 12, 2022.

U.S., internal challenges in the U.S. have been put on the backburner for too long. The advancement of what should be our real “national interests” – education, healthcare, environment, infrastructure, race relations and social services – are at stake.

About the author

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A native of Sudan, Zambakari is a valued contributor to UN agency publications and in the journals and digital offerings of U.S. embassies across Africa. He is a leading voice in African Union discourse and is also a voice for the UN’s Economic Commission for Africa. His research has been ranked in the “Top-10% Authors, 2017–2020” by Social Science Research Network (SSRN) and featured in “Most-Read African Studies papers Since 2013” by Routledge, a world leader in academic publishing centered on the humanities, social sciences and STEM. His work has been published in law, economic and public policy journals.