

Upending the International Order: Russia's War Against Ukraine

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Abstract

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 shook the foundations of the current World Order. It exposed how fragile and fragmented international security, global economic structures, and old geopolitical alliances are under severe pressure from state actors in self-help security environment. This analysis looks at how the conflict started in 2014, tracing back the years of tension between Russia and NATO especially around Ukraine's desire to move closer to the West. The war has made it clear that international rules are only as strong as countries willing to follow them. It also demonstrates that global organizations like the UN often fall short in preventing these wars as Russia ignored widespread international condemnation and the Security Council was unable to act in due time to avert such crisis.

The analysis digs into the far-reaching effects of the war - Western sanctions on Russia's economy but also pushed Russia to find new partners outside the Western sphere thereby making the world more divided. As new alliances are forming, some openly challenged democratic values creating more diverse opinions on the fundamental human right principles. All of these points to serious weaknesses in the security arrangements built after the Cold War, creating more conflicts amongst states. As countries find it difficult to cooperate in a delicate world order, instability and security dilemma often result from such a situation.

Using ideas from realist thinkers such as Waltz and Morgenthau advocating power between states as a means of survival, critics of unchecked power like Bull and Mearsheimer often underline the need for cooperation in upholding a peaceful security environment. This study

argues that the Ukrainian crisis is a major security test for the global security community, and it continues to divide global community in search for a common solution. Unless there are real changes to fix power imbalances between states and the flaws in international institutions, the current security atmosphere might be heading toward a fractured and chaotic world order. The paper calls for a fresh look at how peace can be maintained in a self-help security environment and opine cooperation as an inclusive policy in a world that's growing more complex and multipolar.

Keywords: Ukraine War, Russia-NATO Tensions, Global Security, International Order, Sanctions, Realism, Un's Limits

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is one of the major socio-political events shaping the current geopolitical landscape of the New World Order since 2022. This war has had significant ramifications across various economic, political and social structures in the World. By adapting to new prevailing realities which aimed at distorting the Western dominated hegemon that established itself after the cold war, some states still feel insecure as the case with Russia. The Russian war in Ukraine came into existence because of insufficient security cooperation malfunctions accumulated for years between Russia and NATO. This war has had significant implications on the world stage by affecting security structures, international norms and geopolitical dynamics. The conflict in Ukraine challenges traditional conceptions of security and highlights the complexities and challenges of the international system (Booth, 2018).

After the collapse of the Berlin wall and the Soviet Union the in 1990s, NATO expansion Eastward was not to become a reality in post-Soviet states including Ukraine as claimed by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. However, this was not the case as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania when they eventually joined the alliance undermining Russia's security concerns. Nevertheless, Ukraine has a sovereign right to defend its territorial borders and deliberate on national policies that suits its interests independently without consultations or provocations with or from other states (Bull, 1977). The question is, why did Ukraine suddenly become a geopolitical hotbed between the West and Russia? The realists such as Waltz and Morgenthau seem to answer these questions. If war is inherent in human nature, then why is peace prevailing between Canada and the United States and not with Russia and its former satellite states? the aspect of trust among states and global institutions aimed at preventing the outbreak of wars amongst them does not seem relevant or resonate in the current geopolitical landscape. However, the existence of a bi-polar world order with the Soviet Union and United States could have prevented such discord (Mearsheimer, 2001). In a self-help environment, states have very little options based on agency than defending themselves from being annihilated by bigger ones.

Ukraine territorial integrity is very important in maintaining global security through cooperation with other states in search for peaceful mechanisms necessary to uphold an effective balance of power from any regional or global actors. In doing such, Ukraine does not need to be dictated how its sovereign rights are supposed to be maneuvered with respect to other states, but only Ukrainian interests should be prioritized without external influence. At the same time, Ukraine reserves the right to cooperate with any country or global entity without pre-conditions supposed it does not jeopardize peace and security in the region. This creates a paradoxical and very complex situation about Ukraine's right to navigate its own security policies with friendly states without provoking Russia. Ukraine being a sovereign state has the right to uphold international norms and conduct unprovoked security mechanisms with any states without the permission from Russia. This aligns with the principle of sovereign equality and article 2 of the UN charter denouncing any kind of aggression by force from another state on others.

Meanwhile, article 2(4) of the UN charter denounces security agreements by a state which undermines its neighbor peace co-existence or creating any sort of provocation vis a vis such an entity in question. Russia as an important player in the region does feel threatened by Ukraine's persistent call to join NATO creating a security dilemma in the region. Russia, as a nuclear power also has the capacity to deter Ukraine from collaborating with allies which may as well seem nice for those who dislike international law. Moreover, Moscow as an important economic powerhouse in the region does exert enormous influence on Ukraine's ability to grow economically especially with gas incentives it has been receiving since after the break of the Soviet Union. However, Ukraine's future lies with prosperous Western countries though it makes more sense to uphold a balance approach by cooperating with everyone in order to maintain a sustainable peaceful secured environment.

The Implications of the Ukrainian War on Global Institutions UN/ UN Security Council

The UN general assembly has condemned the war on several occasions in 2022 and 2023 respectively but did not actually take any concrete action to put an end to it. After the league of nations failed in 1939, the UN was created to restore global order characterized by peace and security thus help prevent war amongst states. This has not been the case as anarchy remains dominant and prevails excessively in international politics (Waltz, 1979). Russia and its allies have vehemently refused to acknowledge its illegal actions in Ukraine as a violation of international norms. On the other hand, Russia as a revisionist power sees this war as an opportunity to re-emerge on the global stage after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Edmond, 2025). Russia believes the existence of NATO threatens its sovereignty and thus, has every right to conduct a special military operation in Ukraine to avert NATO approaching to its borders. Critics such as Jeffrey Sachs and Mearsheimer often ask, if we invaded Iraq, Libya, Vietnam and Bosnia and

these same international structures did not condemn our actions then, why should that be the contrary with Ukraine? There is a need to rebuild trust in the international system, and this can only be done through collective security where the defense of one state under attack is a priority for everyone. When order is maintained through common interests, it is difficult for states to attack their neighbors (Bull,1977). Unfortunately, this was not the case with Ukraine as NATO and Russia see each other as adversaries thus, the war in Ukraine was inevitable.

Socioeconomic and political implications. Political implications

The re-emerging Russia is making tremendous influence in some parts of the World as it seeks to legitimize its actions on the international arena. Some parts of the World especially anti-Western nations have welcomed its invasion in Ukraine. Meanwhile Western Nations have mount enormous pressure on Moscow but still did not yield any fruits in dissuading Putin from his actions in Ukraine. Most of African countries and China have refused to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine thus, a big boost to Putin. On the same grounds, it instead accelerated cooperation between Russia and other parts of the globe with the exceptions of North America, Western Europe and Australia. Maybe there is still some hopes dialogue will prevail in any given time between Russia and the West. Nevertheless, sanctions have not moved an inch to stop Putin's war in Ukraine. As it stands, political boycott and isolation has not yielded any tangible results in slowing down the conflict and there is a need to restructure the existing political systems aimed at guaranteeing global security and cooperation. The West obviously seems frustrated in retaliation as they also pulled out of most international security agreements with Russia including ICMB, START thus heightening the risk of another global tension. This will undoubtedly contribute towards a disastrous global disorder environment thereby creating a security dilemma amongst states in the near future.

In an attempt to reignite its influence, Russia has intensified its alliance with Iran, North Korea all rogue states aimed to boost its image despite western condemnation of its actions in Ukraine. This alliance and China will have a very crucial role to play in the nearest future thus, creating a huge front of anti-democratic adversaries against Western hegemon which is critical in a search for a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous world order currently championed by the collective West. The emergence of Russian para -military groups such as Wagner eventually gain popularity on the African continent as it seeks to provide a new form of security paradigms different from what former colonial masters use to offer with preconditioned clauses.

The socio-economic ramifications

After harsh criticism from its incursion into Ukraine, sanctions from the West begins to mount on Russia's economy as global supply chain routes starts to stiffen on the global economy. The West stopped importing critical minerals and energy products from Russia as well as sanctioning

it from exporting them elsewhere. This created nothing but massive inflation hitting the global economy with India, China, Asia, South America, Africa and Middle East still relying heavily on Russia for imports. Russia may have lost huge sums of income from the sale of its raw material from the West, but it equally gained new markets elsewhere. I equally agree with Keohane and Kant to a certain degree when there is cooperation, the chance of war becomes slim amongst nations but unfortunately the expulsion of Russia from the G8 was a strategic mistake made by the West to advert Putin's incursion into the Ukrainian territory. This decision inflicted more pains on Ukrainian lives and properties than even the West could imagine happening within a short period of time. If postmodern states do not go to war, it is because they value cooperation and interconnectedness amongst themselves thereby making it almost impossible to attack one another's territory (Cooper, 2000). To reiterate, sanctions imposed against Russia has failed to materialize its objective as intended thus, making Putin look more relevant on the global scene.

On the social domain, the current flaws of the new order judicial systems are weakened from the operational dimension making most Western nations immune from it. If there is a justice system, then it should reflect an impartial nature not biased against states because of their alliances with democratic or authoritarianism regimes. They have been outright criticisms from the beginning when Iraq was invaded, Yugoslavia and Libya but no concrete action was taken against those responsible. Russia as an imperialist also attacked Georgia and currently stationing troops in Moldova, but the international system has not made any concrete rulings to hold those responsible for these aggressions into account. Even Israel actions against Palestine have not garnered enough criticism from the World seeking justice, then why should that happen with the Ukrainian crisis? This only leads to one conclusion; the Western dominated hegemon is under serious threat, and these can only be maintained if there is genuine political cooperation, considering concerns and pragmatic consultations (Bull, 1977).

To conclude, the war in Ukraine came into existence due to the fragile international security structure which has failed to prevent or act unanimously on aggressive states from the very beginning thus, gives room for anarchy to prevail amongst states. Russia – Ukraine war only adds to one of those cases which poses a serious challenge to regional and global security framework where great powers settle their differences. This also concludes what is known as the need to enhance the current global security and political framework to reflect the current dispensation faced by states. The need to cooperate on complex issues is vital in maintaining a less anarchical environment favorable for all nations to prevail and co-exist peacefully as well as respecting a common sustainable development goal. A democratic society made up of civilized states is worth maintaining the current status quo in the current global order – but if it fails to materialize into anything concrete thus, resulting to persistence chaos, then the emergence of an anti-democratic World order is eminent and inevitable. The Ukrainian crisis was a test to

demonstrate how fragile the global security framework needs to be improved upon [1-6].

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