RAPORT PISM

POINT OF NO RETURN?

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GLOBAL ORDER AFTER THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

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THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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INTRODUCTION

The day everything changed, a critical moment, a turning point in history—this is how many commentators have described the 24th of February 2022. The day of the massive Russian invasion of Ukraine became not only the nominal date of the beginning of a full-scale war but also symbolic of a fundamental change in the international order comparable to 1 September 1939, 9 November 1989, or 11 September 2001.[1]

But is it really the case that nothing will be the same in international relations after 24 February 2022? For many non-Europeans, the Russian-Ukrainian war remains a regional one, with limited consequences for other parts of the world. Some may add that these regions have also suffered from equally disastrous, if not more deadly conflicts in recent years. The Russian diplomats often point out that Moscow's relations with some countries have not deteriorated as compared to the pre-war period, and are actually deepening and intensifying.

To further complicate matters, some experts view the events of 24 February 2022 not as a singular turning point in history, but rather as the next stage of a war waged by Russia against Ukraine, or against the West, that had begun much earlier. It may also be possible to see this particular day as merely an element of a global *polycrisis*, a series of political, economic, health, humanitarian, climate, and social crises that are overlapping and mutually amplifying their negative impacts.

This collection of short analyses from experts with the Polish Institute of International Affairs attempts to answer questions about the scope, nature, and significance of the changes in the international system that were triggered or amplified by Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Central to this approach is the distinction between the *reaction* of states and international organisations to the war and a *change*, understood as a profound and difficult-to-reverse transformation of the conceptual framework of conducting policy, resulting in a significant and implemented (as opposed to announced) modification of foreign, security, economic or domestic policy. Documenting this change is the focus of the authors of this report.

In some cases, the change was radical and almost revolutionary. Examples include the upending of the pre-February 2022 model of the European Union's relationship with Russia in the energy sphere, as well as the decision by Sweden and Finland to join NATO. In most situations, however, the response to the latest Russian aggression fell within previously observed policy trends or plans, but with a significant acceleration and deepening. The rise of the Global South's self-identification, China's international self-positioning in opposition to the "collective West", or the evolution of the Atlantic Alliance towards a forward defence posture can be seen as falling into this category. Similarly, it was not altogether surprising that Russia's aggression has brought Ukraine and its European partners closer together, following on Kyiv's stated political goal. In this case, it is tragic that this change was accelerated by the brutal Russian aggression. The war has also fundamentally changed Russia and its place in the international system. The process is far from finished. So far, neither the predictions that full international isolation of Russia would be possible, nor Vladimir Putin's hope that victory over Ukraine would place Russia among the great powers co-shaping the global order in the 21st century, have come true.

The authors' adoption of this approach to and definition of change in international relations

[1] From the point of view of international law, Ukraine's war with Russia began in 2014 with the Russian attack on Crimea and the Donbas region.

explains the special place of the United States in this review. Although the U.S. plays a key role in supporting Ukraine and mobilising the West, its response represents a continuation of the foreign and security policy strategy adopted before 24 February 2022, rather than a reshaping of it.

Another challenge was the question of the permanence or irreversibility of decisions and processes initiated after 24 February 2022. Given the possibility of domestic changes (e.g., following elections in democratic states, but also changes in the power elite in Russia) or another radical transformation in international relations (e.g., following the use of nuclear weapons by Russia or North Korea), it is difficult to consider any process as fully irreversible. However, the authors of the individual chapters present arguments that, in each case, a political or structural critical mass has been exceeded, making the identified changes difficult to reverse. It is precisely our doubts about the sustainability and irreversibility of the German *Zeitenwende* that justify omitting it from this review. In the sphere of declarations, this is certainly a revolutionary change in German politics, but one year since the announcement, it remains only partially implemented and still appears to be controversial for significant parts of German public opinion and the political class.

We hope that the analyses and projections contained in this collection of essays will provide a starting point for discussion and polemics. The ongoing war is likely to cause further changes and transformations in the international system. The contours of the "new world" that is emerging from the darkness of war are not entirely new, or completely unfamiliar. The 24th of February 2022 became not only a tragic date in Ukrainian and world history but also the beginning of a significant change in international relations. A better understanding of its nature can help us shape optimal strategies for states and international organisations to operate in the new circumstances.

RE-BUILDING EUROPEAN SECURITY: AGAINST RUSSIA, NOT WITH IT

WOJCIECH LORENZ

By launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia wanted to destroy the European security architecture that ensured peace in Europe since the end of the Cold War. The consequences will be long-lasting and partially irreversible. Contrary to Vladimir Putin's expectations, Russia will not rebuild its former position by destroying the current system nor will it achieve a sphere of influence. Instead, a new security system will be created that must ensure the ability to protect European nations from Russia's aggressive policy and will be largely directed against it.

The post-Cold War security order in Europe was based primarily on the rejection of the logic of spheres of influence, and thus on the recognition of the right of all countries to independently decide on the directions of their foreign policy, including membership in alliances (e.g., NATO) and integration organisations (e.g., EU). This was possible thanks to the collapse of the USSR and the system of Soviet satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe. Overcoming the Yalta division of Europe opened up the prospect of Euro-Atlantic integration for these countries, the vast majority of whose citizens decided to implement democratic reforms. However, Russia's elites and the majority of its society did not come to terms with the collapse of the USSR and loss of position as a world power. Therefore, Putin has attempted to rebuild that empire and the Yalta security system, which after World War II provided the USSR with a sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe.[1] Russia continued to regard NATO and the EU as a threat because the enlargement of these organisations eastward could thwart its revisionist plans. Although Russia signed many agreements in which it assured that it would respect the sovereignty of other countries and would not threaten them with war, it did not intend to respect them. It maintained frozen conflicts in Transnistria and Georgia, and in 2008 it invaded Georgia, after which it undermined its territorial integrity by recognising the independence of North Ossetia and Abkhazia. In 2014, it attacked Ukraine, annexed Crimea, incited conflict in the east of the country, and attempted to enforce agreements that would limit Ukrainian sovereignty. Finally, Russia decided to play for the highest stakes. In December 2021, it issued an ultimatum to the United States and NATO demanding the renunciation of the Alliance's enlargement policy, the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops to pre-1997 positions, and a legally binding limitation of the Alliance's ability to conduct collective defence missions on its Eastern Flank.[2] A few months later, on 24 February 2022, it launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, seeking to completely subjugate the country and threatening NATO with escalation of the conflict.

The Russian aggression is therefore not only an attack on Ukraine but on the entire security system based on international law and agreed rules. It threatens the interests of all states that want to defend an international system based on the power of the law, not the law of the more powerful. It poses a military and strategic threat not only to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but to the entire NATO and the EU. If Russia senses victory and sees that Ukraine's partners are unable to provide it with the necessary support, it will direct all

1 "Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club 2015," President of Russia, 22 October 2015, http://en.kremlin.ru.

2 A. Legucka, "Russia Demands Security Guarantees from the U.S. and NATO," *PISM Bulletin*, no 214 (1910), 15 December 2021, www.pism.pl.

its efforts to achieving its goals of driving the U.S. and NATO out of Central and Eastern Europe. If Russia fails to achieve its goals, its revanchist and revisionist tendencies regarding the subjugation of Ukraine and the disintegration of NATO and the European Union could be additionally strengthened. Therefore, it is necessary to build a completely new security architecture that will re-establish peace in Europe and protect it from Russian revisionism for the long term.

FROM A SYSTEM WITH RUSSIA …

Western democracies put a lot of effort into building the post-Cold War order, trying to take into account the numerous interests of Russia, which emerged weakened from the collapse of the USSR. Despite calls from Poland and other countries to expand NATO eastwards, the U.S. delayed the decision so as to maintain political stability and encourage reforms in Russia. NATO underwent a profound transformation to lessen Russia's fears of enlargement and to engage it in cooperation. In 1997, the Allies and Russia signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act (NRFA), in which the Alliance declared certain self-limitations related to the conduct of its defence mission. NATO announced that if the security situation in Europe did not change, it would not deploy significant combat troops on the territory of its member states. The Alliance did not treat Russia as a threat, its defence plans were very vague, it rarely organised collective defence exercises, and the military potential of the Allies was diminishing. The Alliance even agreed that the new members could use post-Soviet equipment and cooperate with Russia in servicing it. It also set up special mechanisms for political consultations with Russia that no other country received (NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, or PJC, and later the NATO-Russia Council, or NRC). Sweden and Finland decided to join the EU, but, hoping that Russia would not become a revisionist, military threat, they did not seek NATO membership.

Western powers also attempted to satisfy Russia's superpower ambitions by admitting it to the group of the largest democratic economies in the world, the G7, although it was neither a democracy nor had the requisite economic potential. It also received a unique opportunity for economic development thanks to cooperation with the European Union, which for a long time treated Russia as a strategic partner. Many European countries were ready to risk becoming dependent on Russian energy resources, which provided almost half of Russia's budget revenues. The EU became the largest recipient of Russian gas, covering as much as 40% of its needs in 2021.

As part of the dismantling of Cold War divisions, Russia was admitted to the Council of Europe, the primary organisation that was supposed to facilitate the protection of human rights in Europe. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was transformed from mainly a political forum into a permanent organisation (OSCE) that was to promote a system of cooperative security among the more than 50 states. The organisation was to ensure collective ability to respond to crises and strengthen political and military security through arms-control mechanisms and confidence-building measures, such as the obligation to inform about military exercises and invite observers to them. Some countries were even ready to take into account Russia's appeals, repeated since the 1950s, to create a European security system without the U.S. This was reflected, for example, in the concept of EU strategic autonomy, which, on the one hand, reflected the EU's ambitions as a global power, but if extended to the area of military security, could weaken NATO and Europe's ability to defend itself in line with Russian interests. Although the EU did not decide to develop separate defence structures, the constantly diminishing U.S. military presence in

Europe brought closer the Russian vision of a continent detached from cooperation with the United States.

... TO A SYSTEM AGAINST RUSSIA

The ultimatum given to NATO and the U.S., and the subsequent invasion of Ukraine, changed the situation dramatically. This time, the scale of the aggression was so large and the way of conducting the war so barbaric (murdering civilians, rape, torture, deportation of children) that Western public opinion could not remain indifferent to the war. Decision-makers in most NATO and EU countries, but also in other democratic countries, decided that Russia cannot win this war, that it must be punished, and that Ukraine must receive the necessary support to defend itself.

As a result of the Russian aggression, the foundations of a new security architecture began to emerge. Europe began to make partially irreversible changes in its energy policy, giving up dependence on Russian gas and oil. The EU granted Ukraine and Moldova the status of candidate countries, overcoming the mental and political barriers that for many years prevented further enlargement to the east. Once neutral, and later outside military alliances, Sweden and Finland decided to join NATO. In its new strategy, the Alliance recognised Russia as the most significant and direct threat for the security of its members and decided to further augment its defence and deterrence capabilities. The presence of NATO and U.S. forces on the Eastern Flank has increased. The U.S. and most European countries (with some exceptions, e.g., Hungary and Austria) decided to provide significant military support to Ukraine. France came up with the initiative of the European Political Community, which was joined by most European countries—Russia and Belarus did not receive an invitation.

Even though Russia was unable to achieve its strategic goals during the first year of the war, it is likely to remain a long-term threat to European peace until it abandons its imperial policy. Therefore, it is necessary to further develop and strengthen the new architecture to ensure the long-term security of Russia's neighbours as well as to strengthen NATO and the EU's ability to defend against Russia.

The first pillar of such a system must be a sovereign and independent Ukraine, which will be able to defend itself and deter Russian aggression in the future. It should also be able to regain control over the territory occupied by Russia. If it has the necessary potential, it will be able to decide for itself how long to fight and when and under what conditions to negotiate with Russia.

Ukraine should receive credible security guarantees, ideally based on membership in NATO, that will ensure its political and economic stability in the long term. Regardless of when such guarantees may be given, Ukraine's security must be guaranteed through long-term support from its partners in building national defence and deterrence capabilities. It will be necessary to sign a series of bilateral agreements with Ukraine that will enable the production of equipment and armaments for the country, as well as the reconstruction of the Ukrainian industrial and defence base partly on the territory of partner countries, such as Poland. An example of such agreements may be a Polish-Ukrainian treaty, which both countries are already preparing.

Having been granted the status of an EU candidate country, Ukraine must have a real chance of becoming a Member State in the foreseeable future. Enlargement will be a strategic signal to Russia that using war to enforce its sphere of influence has not brought any benefits and

will not succeed in the future. This is the best way to get Russia to change its policy and accept Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, but also to discourage Russia from further aggression and reduce the risk of a confrontation between Russia and NATO.

The second pillar of the new security architecture must be developed on the basis of a real change in the approach of NATO and the EU towards Russia. Both organisations rightly point to Russia as a long-term threat. Therefore, they must give up those elements of cooperative security that Russia has used to undermine them.

First of all, NATO should make it clear that it does not feel bound by the military constraints included in the NATO-Russia Founding Act. It should also be clearly declared that the presence of NATO and U.S. troops on the Eastern Flank is permanent. The feeling that this is a permanent presence capable of defending "every inch of NATO territory", as stated in new NATO strategy, will be essential for its members to bear the costs and risks of supporting Ukraine for the long term. It also will be a clear signal to Russia that it will not achieve its goals of enforcing a buffer zone on NATO's Eastern Flank.

The EU should review the five principles announced in 2016, which were to regulate its relations with Russia. The basic condition for a significant change in EU policy towards Russia should be the full withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

As long as Russia's goal is to rebuild its sphere of influence, to subjugate Ukraine, and to use military force for this purpose, there can be no return to a system of cooperative security built together with Russia. However, some elements of the old security architecture that are beneficial to the West should be preserved. Although Russia's presence in the OSCE is used by Putin's regime for propaganda purposes, it is useful for other states to put pressure on Russia and make it accountable for breaking international law and agreed rules. If the OSCE crumbles, the European Political Community created by France could take over its role, which would not necessarily be a good thing. It cannot be ruled out that the EPC will be used in the future to invite Russia and create structures without the participation of the U.S. Therefore, the survival of the OSCE should be in the interest of the states that perceive the U.S. and strong transatlantic links as indispensable for European security.

UNEXPECTED METAMORPHOSIS: EU EMBARKS ON AN AMBITIOUS POLICY IN ITS EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD

ELŻBIETA KACA, ALEKSANDRA KOZIOŁ

For many years, the EU's policy towards its eastern neighbourhood lacked transformative potential. The main reason for this was the absence of an ambitious offer for the region, including the prospect of membership or support in military field. Deep divergences in the EU Member States' perception of Eastern policy lay behind it. Many of them held the policy that, to maintain stability in Europe, Russia should be involved in cooperation at the political and economic levels while the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of neighbouring countries should be tempered. Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was a breakthrough in the EU's Eastern policy. The new approach manifests itself in the withdrawal from cooperation with Russia in key sectors and the imposition of unprecedented sanctions aimed at maximising its costs of waging war, military support for Ukraine, as well as giving EU accession prospects for countries such as Moldova and Ukraine. In light of the criminal nature of the Russian aggression, the EU's activity in the East will be a key element of its foreign policy for years to come.

STRATEGIC SLEEP

Despite Russia's increasingly aggressive policy in the EU's eastern neighbourhood, including wars it provoked in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), until February 2022 the EU as an organisation did not fully recognise the seriousness of the threat from Russia. Nor did it take any actions that would have actually curbed Russia's imperial ambitions towards its eastern neighbours. This was a consequence of the Member States' different perceptions of the threats from Russia and their divergent economic interests. A group of EU frontline countries, including Poland and the Baltic states, long considered Russia's policy dangerous and regularly warned others at the EU level about the need for countering Russian actions in the eastern neighbourhood. Some other Member States did not see as much risk and most of them were keen to continue importing Russian energy resources and interested in cooperation with it on, for example, economic or Middle East policy issues. In a way, the EU's Eastern policy was perceived through the lens of requiring at least correct political relations (and at the same time developing trade) with Russia. Moreover, after 2014 when Russia seized Crimea, fears prevailed that greater EU involvement in the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) would lead to a further escalation of Russian actions similar to its aggressive response to Ukraine's negotiations of an Association Agreement with the EU. Most Member States were not ready to bear the political and economic costs related to a more active policy towards the East and confrontation with Russia. As a consequence, the EU's approach was based on the lowest common denominator, and the policy level of ambition towards its eastern neighbourhood was low.[1]

Even though Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, which democratic states did not recognise and viewed as a clear violation of international law, and then started the war in Donbas, the EU introduced sanctions that were limited in scope. They covered only to a small extent the trade

[1] A. Kozioł, "Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020," *PISM Bulletin*, no 128 (1558), 16 June 2020, www.pism.pl.

and financial sectors. The EU specifically limited investments in Crimea and Sevastopol and banned the import of goods from the captured region. It also reduced access of Russian state-owned financial institutions to the EU capital market, imposed an arms embargo, and banned exports of some dual-use items and selected technologies used in oil extraction. However, sanctions did not affect the most important areas of EU trade with Russia, in particular the energy sector. Moreover, the EU did not sanction most key Russian oligarchs with business connections in the EU, only a few.

For years, the EU's cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries was selective, which hindered the region's stabilisation. Although Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine declared their willingness to join the EU and hoped for closer cooperation in the field of security with Western countries, these issues were red lines for many EU members.[2] As a result, EU membership was impossible for Partnership countries with such ambitions. The EU was only ready to recognise their European aspirations and to deepen economic integration in selected areas under Association Agreements or other settlements. Cooperation in the field of security concerned solely civilian issues, with just three EU missions in the eastern neighbourhood out of almost 20 missions and operations worldwide. Two were advisory missions—EUBAM on the border between Moldova and Ukraine, and EUAM in Ukraine—as well as one observer mission (EUMM) in Georgia, with the latter two being a consequence of Russia's escalations in 2008 and 2014. The limitation in this case was Article 41(2) of the Treaty on European Union, which excludes the possibility of financing operations with military or defence implications from the general budget. Although Member States used some off-budget instruments, such as the African Peace Facility (APF), they could not agree on financing deliveries of weapons under them, fearing abuses by partners. Therefore, the assistance covered only personal protective equipment, such as body armour and helmets.

The deepening impact of international crises on the EU's internal situation led to the launch of a single instrument in 2021—the European Peace Facility (EPF). It was meant to increase the possibilities of joint military assistance to third countries,[3] yet the Member States reduced its initial budget to €5 billion due to the economic problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, this new instrument did not change the EU's approach to security policy. Given the requirement for consensus for responding to each crisis, launching new foreign missions and operations was still difficult. The eastern dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy was almost non-existent, both at the level of strategic thinking and available instruments. On top of that, the EU planned to increase its operational presence and build partners' capacities through military missions mainly in Africa.

THE SHOCK OF WAR

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 united EU members in their assessment of the international situation, primarily with respect to Russia's foreign policy aims. In the Strategic Compass adopted in March 2022 setting out the EU security and defence policy directions for the coming years, Russia was for the first time openly described as a threat.

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2 E. Kaca (ed.), J. Benedyczak, A. Dyner, L. Gibadło, J. Pieńkowski, D. Szeligowski, "The vision of the Eastern Partnership after 2020," *PISM Report*, March 2019, www.pism.pl.

3 A. Kozioł, "The European Peace Facility: a New EU Security Initiative," *PISM Bulletin*, no 170 (1600) 14 August 2020, www.pism.pl.

Limiting Russia's ability to wage and finance the war in Ukraine quickly became the priority. The EU decided, in coordination with the G7, on unprecedented sanctions. From February 2022 and in less than a year, nine packages of restrictions were adopted, some of which also targeted Belarus, which has been supporting the Russian aggression. The most painful of them for Russia were the introduction of an embargo on seaborne imports of Russian crude oil and some petroleum products (in 2021, 50% of its oil exports were to the EU), cutting off Western technologies, and freezing the external reserves of the Russian central bank (32%, or €177.3 billion, were held in European currency).[4] The EU also excluded some Russian banks from the SWIFT system, restricted trade in many sectors, and banned Russian road hauliers from transporting goods to the Union. Russians were directly affected by the closure of airspace to planes and ports for ships registered to Russia, which limited the possibility of entering EU territory. At the end of 2022, the EU sanctions lists included 1,386 people and 171 entities—at least several dozen of them are oligarchs whose assets in the EU have been partially frozen (about €19 billion worth).[5]

The EU's unprecedented decision just four days after the Russian attack to finance weapons deliveries to Ukraine from the budget of the European Peace Facility was also of great importance for the course of the war. Already a year later, this support had reached €3.6 billion, with countries providing additional deliveries worth almost €9 billion.[6] By receiving weapons such as anti-aircraft defence systems, anti-tank missile launchers, and tanks, the Armed Forces of Ukraine not only managed to build up their defence potential while under attack but also launched an effective counter-offensive that resulted in regaining almost 40% of the territory previously occupied by Russia. However, the number and variety of the donated weapons required the Ukrainian soldiers to undergo advanced specialist training. To answer this need, the EU took another unprecedented decision and launched the Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). Its aim is to raise the potential of the Ukrainian forces to use Western weapons and conduct tactical operations.[7] As part of the mission, 30,000 troops are to be trained by the end of 2023.[8] The Member States' common assessment of threats thus became a turning point in terms of military engagement in the EU's eastern neighbourhood and broke the impasse on new foreign missions. The political U-turn is also evidenced by the EU's involvement in talks on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the launch of the civilian mission in Armenia (EUMA) in February 2023 to support mediation and border demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[9]

The EU's approach to enlargement policy in the eastern neighbourhood has also changed. The Member States' have found a consensus that the security of countries having European aspirations can be increased by giving them EU accession prospects. In February 2022, Ukraine, followed by Moldova and Georgia, applied for EU candidate status. Initially, this was met with scepticism by some Member States and there were even attempts to postpone

4 E. Kaca, "EU Aid for Ukraine Reconstruction—assumptions and challenges," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 88 (2005), 1 June 2022, www.pism.pl.

5 "EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine, since 2014," European Council / Council of the European Union www.consilium.europa.eu, 2023.

6 "Special meeting of the European Council – Conclusions," European Council, 9 February 2023, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1-2023-INIT/en/pdf.

7 A. Kozioł, "EU Launches Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine," *PISM Spotlight*, no 133/2022, www.pism.pl.

8 "Joint statement following the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit," European Council, 3 February 2023, www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/02/03/joint-statement-following-the-24th-eu-ukraine-summit/.

9 "Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/386 of 20 February 2023 launching the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) and amending Decision (CFSP) 2023/162," Official Journal of the European Union, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32023D0386&from=PL.

any decision until the end of the war. However, the Russian military tactics of destroying Ukrainian cities, including the bombing of civilian infrastructure, and crimes committed against the local population, forced the EU to promptly adopt an unequivocal position. As Ukraine and Moldova had successfully implemented the Association Agreements, they had already formally fulfilled the conditions necessary to obtain candidate status. Therefore, the European Commission gave a positive opinion to their applications, and in the case of Georgia set appropriate conditions. In June 2022, during the European Council meeting, the Member States granted EU candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, although they indicated that these country's accession process would take into account the EU's capacity to absorb new members.[10]

STRATEGIC AWAKENING

Due to the unequivocal support of EU members for Ukraine and the overall high financial outlays to strengthen the military potential of its armed forces, a return to the EU's previous policy towards the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia should not be expected. This would imply the risk of Ukraine losing the war, which would not only lower the political credibility of the EU on the global stage but, above all, pose a direct threat to the whole of Europe from Russia. Despite the Member States' differences regarding the scope of sanctions and military support, there seems to be a lasting consensus in the EU on the need to curb Russia's imperial ambitions, although the course of the war in Ukraine remains unclear.

A strength of the EU will be its new approach to enlargement policy as an effective tool to increase the security of the eastern neighbourhood. The decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova has already allowed the EU to include them in enlargement policy, setting a clear course of pro-European reforms. Given the high motivation of both countries' authorities and their societies for EU integration, the prospect of accession will have a transformative impact on them, and their relations with the EU have a chance to deepen gradually. The sooner Ukraine and Moldova meet the EU conditions in the accession process, the more difficult it will be for one or more Member States to refuse them EU membership. The success of this process will also determine the impact of the Union on the global stage as a strong and credible partner.

Lifting or weakening sanctions against Russia does not seem to be a likely scenario anytime soon—the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced in her 2023 State of the Union address that the sanctions will be maintained and that a policy of concessions is out of the question. Leaders confirmed in December 2022 at the European Council meeting that the EU is ready to further extend the restrictions and in February 2023 they adopted the 10th package of restrictions. At the same time, the Member States should remain cautious about a possible peace offer or de-escalation declarations made by Russia, bearing in mind its previous noncompliance with the Minsk agreements and the violation of arms control and disarmament arrangements. Gradual EU independence from Russian energy resources, which was the main element of Russia's political pressure on the Union in the past, can only strengthen the EU's new approach.

The EU's comprehensive engagement in its eastern neighbourhood will further strengthen the transatlantic partnership. Although the U.S. remains the Member States' main ally in this

[10] "The European Council meeting (23 and 24 June) – conclusions," European Council, 24 June 2022, www.consilium.europa.eu.

region, by launching military support for Ukraine, the EU has turned out to be an important security actor in a now war-torn Europe. This change is beneficial for the U.S. administration, which prioritises engagement in the Indo-Pacific and relations with China while expecting its European partners to take greater responsibility for ensuring Europe's security. The EU, positioning itself more actively as a counterbalance to Russian influence on the global stage, can also increase its importance as a U.S. partner. Strengthened transatlantic cooperation will contribute to further tightening of EU policy towards countries supporting Russia, such as Iran and China.

At the end of a day, however, the success of the EU's strategic awakening in the eastern neighbourhood will depend to a large extent on internal developments. That is, first of all, whether the EU can permanently overcome the economic problems aggravated by the war, without questioning support for Ukraine in individual Member States. A possible migration crisis resulting from the dramatically deteriorating humanitarian situation in non-European countries (e.g., Afghanistan, Syria) could also weaken the EU's involvement in the East. Only a strong, internally cohesive EU will be able to pursue effective policy towards Russia in the long term.

NATO RETURNS TO FORWARD DEFENCE FROM RUSSIA

ARTUR KACPRZYK

Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 sealed the return of collective defence as NATO's main task. For two and half decades after the Cold War, NATO neglected capabilities for defence of its territory while focusing on smaller crisis-management operations beyond the Alliance's borders and against much weaker opponents (including in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya). It took the Russian attack against Ukraine in 2014 to prompt NATO to stop overall cuts to defence budgets and forces in Europe and enhance deterrence and defence against Russia. Actions taken since then have facilitated the Allies' immediate response to the recent invasion of Ukraine in the form of a swift increase in the presence of air, land, and maritime forces in the eastern part of NATO. Decisions on the main ways to strengthen deterrence of Russia in the long term were then made at the NATO summit in Madrid in June 2022. The summit in Vilnius in mid-2023 will be devoted to their implementation.

NATO'S NEW STRATEGY

In Madrid, NATO adopted a new strategic concept. Like the previous one from 2010, it lists three main tasks for NATO, but this time it considers collective defence to be more important than crisis-management and cooperative security. It describes collective defence as the "key purpose and greatest responsibility" of the Alliance. NATO is to defend its members against threats from all directions, with Russia being described as "the most significant and direct" threat.[1] It is a stronger term than those used in communiques from 2014 to 2021, and a Copernican revolution compared to 2010. The previous strategy described Russia as a partner and considered the Euro-Atlantic area to be at peace. NATO still views terrorism as a threat and instability in its neighbourhood as a challenge; however, it is to counter them mainly through prevention, especially cooperation with partners (including training their military forces), rather than armed interventions.

While prioritisation of deterrence and defence against Russia generally reflects a shift that already happened in practice in recent years, a new element is the return to a Cold War concept—"forward defence". Under this approach since the 1960s, NATO planned to fight to stop the attack of Warsaw Pact forces on West Germany on its border. Similarly, NATO declared in Madrid in 2022 that it would defend "every inch" of Allied territory and prevail over any aggressor.[2] Previously, NATO's operational assumptions for defence against a Russian invasion had not been clear, at least publicly. The primary task of the multinational combat forces deployed in 2017 on the Eastern Flank has been to demonstrate Allied solidarity and the principle that an attack on the countries hosting them will be met with a NATO response. These units were to be reinforced during a crisis with larger forces, but there were significant doubts whether the Alliance would be able to send them in time or would struggle to retake lost territory.

1 "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept," NATO, 29 June 2022, pp. 3-4, www.nato.int.

2 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

The return to forward defence undoubtedly responds to issues highlighted by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. First and foremost, Russia misjudged Ukraine's ability and will to defend itself and Western resolve to support it. To lessen the risk of a similar Russian miscalculation with regards to a NATO member, the Alliance must communicate clearly that it will not only react decisively to such an attack but would do so in a way that denies the aggressor any gains. If deterrence fails, physically stopping the Russians at the border would avoid a long and bloody campaign to liberate Allied territory, which Russia would additionally try to deter with threats of nuclear escalation. Effective forward defence would also prevent Russian crimes against the civilian population, as seen in the Bucha massacre.

NATO NEW FORCE MODEL AND FORWARD PRESENCE

What is new is not the basic direction of changes in NATO military posture, determined by the decisions of the 2016 Warsaw summit and subsequent ones, but their desired scale and scope. NATO's top military commanders informed that the Madrid decisions are in line with the Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) adopted in 2020 but that only now had they received clear guidance and the mandate to fully transform the DDA into appropriate plans, forces, and command structures.[3]

NATO is to first and foremost further enhance the ability to deploy bigger reinforcements to a threatened area in a crisis. The NATO New Force Model aims at much faster movement of more numerous forces. Members are to maintain altogether 300,000 troops at readiness to deploy within 30 days, out of which 100,000 are to be ready with 10 days' notice (for comparison, in 2014, NATO aimed to be able to deploy 25,000-30,000 troops in 30 days, and in 2018, it pledged to bring tens of thousands more to this level of readiness). To facilitate this rapid reinforcement, NATO is returning to the Cold War planning practice of assigning specific units to deploy to specific locations. The Alliance is also to pre-position equipment and supplies in these areas, as well as expand command structures and conduct more realistic exercises.

However, a shift towards forward defence has not translated into as large a strengthening of forward-deployed Allied forces as expected by some countries on the Eastern Flank. From early 2022 to the Madrid summit in June, the number of troops deployed there from outside of the region grew significantly, from some 10,000 to around 27,000.[4] But from announcements to date it follows that this number will be closer to 20,000 in the longer term. Some of the additional forces have been deployed on a temporary basis to deter Russia from escalating against NATO in retaliation for its support for Ukraine. Therefore, they are expected to be withdrawn if there is a peace agreement or a ceasefire.

The purpose of the continuous presence of Allied forces is to secure NATO also for a time after the Russian war against Ukraine to help defend the flank states from a large-scale invasion like recent attack on Ukraine. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania called for the expansion of the three multinational battlegroups they host (around 1,000-1,500 troops each) to the size of brigades (3,000-5,000 troops each). Instead, their aggregate strength has been increased to around 5,000 (in total, another 1,000 troops or so are now rotated to these countries by the

[3] "Joint press conference by Admiral Rob Bauer, Chair of the Military Committee, General Christopher Cavoli, Supreme Allied Commander Europe and General Philippe Lavigne, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation," NATO, 19 January 2023, www.nato.int.

[4] Author's calculations based on data publicly provided by NATO member states and: "NATO's Eastern Flank: Stronger Defence and Deterrence," NATO, June 2022, www.nato.int.

U.S.). The remaining forces needed to form brigades are to be rapidly sent by the Allies in case of an immediate threat. The NATO battlegroup in Poland has not been strengthened of late as there was already a large increase in the presence of U.S. forces there. One year after the invasion, there are around 10,000 U.S. troops in Poland, twice as many as in late 2021. But the majority of additional U.S. forces there is to be withdrawn over time. As for longer-term measures, the U.S. has expanded the forward headquarters of U.S. Army V Corps, which will now be permanently based in Poland (previously, its staff rotated like other units in the region). A continuous military presence has grown to larger extent in other countries on the Eastern Flank from much smaller forces than in Poland and the Baltic states. New NATO battlegroups have been deployed to Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania, with the latter now also hosting a U.S. brigade combat team.

Discussion about the size of the forward-deployed forces is not formally closed. The Madrid summit declaration notes that NATO battlegroups will be scaled up to brigade-size units "where and when required".[5] Poland and the Baltic states will continue to bring up this issue because it would be better for them if more units were present on their territories at all times to ensure that NATO will respond to aggression from the very beginning with as large a force as possible. Opponents of further increases in forward presence argue, in turn, that NATO will detect preparations for an invasion of a member and will deploy additional forces before a Russian attack. This argument often refers to the experience of 2022 when some deployments on NATO's Eastern Flank started before Russia invaded Ukraine. This reason skips over the fact, however, that if faced with a large-scale attack on a NATO member, the Allies would have to deploy much bigger reinforcements than they did in response to the aggression against Ukraine. This operation would entail much greater logistic burdens on a scale that has not been tested by NATO for decades. Moreover, equipping and training the enlarged pool of rapid-response forces will be a costly and difficult process.

LONG WAY TO GO FOR THE ALLIANCE

NATO's recognition of collective defence as the priority in 2022 is a revolution compared to the situation from a decade ago, although it is more of an evolution in the perspective of the last few years. The planned NATO force posture is not optimal for Poland but remains very ambitious, and its effective implementation will significantly strengthen Polish security. At the same time, it will require overcoming a number of challenges. To a large extent, it will be hindered by the same factors that led some of the Allies to oppose a greater strengthening of the continuous presence of Allied forces on the Eastern Flank. These include views on the scale of the military threat posed by Russia, the financial costs, and the U.S. pursuit of more balanced burden-sharing.

Some might be incorrectly discouraged to adequately invest in defence due to Russia being weakened by its war against Ukraine. While it will take Russia years to rebuild its military, it should be stressed that NATO also has lots of catching up to do. Despite the growth in NATO countries' defence expenditures since 2014, many of them still struggle with substantial gaps in military capabilities. The process of providing materiel to Ukraine, which is a strategic necessity, highlights and deepens these problems. A year after Russia started its full-scale invasion, NATO officials openly informed that Ukraine's needs in terms of ammunition outstrip the production capacity of Alliance states, which have had to reach to their own

[5] "Madrid Summit Declaration Issued by NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Madrid 29 June," NATO, 29 June 2022, par. 9, www.nato.int.

stocks (and those in many cases were insufficient). Although European NATO members and EU states may have around 2,000 Leopard 2 tanks, many of these vehicles are in such poor condition that it proved to be a challenge to gather 60-80 of the tanks promised to Ukraine. Following the invasion, many NATO states announced increases in defence spending, but this growth needs to be bigger and such investments will not be implemented overnight. For example, a year since declaring €100 billion for the modernisation of the Bundeswehr, Germany made specific plans to spend only around €30 billion of that amount, while the German military calls for increasing the whole fund.[6] Since Russia is weakened, NATO has time to build adequate capabilities, but only if takes the right actions now.

The task facing NATO is also seriously complicated by the fact that most of the high-readiness forces for the pool announced in Madrid will have to be provided by the member states from Europe and Canada. The national defence strategy published by the Biden administration months after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine confirmed that the U.S. sees deterring China as still the top priority, while it perceives Russia as an urgent but secondary threat. On the one hand, the U.S. is leading the NATO response to the invasion, including by deploying more than half of the Allied forces on the Eastern Flank and increasing the overall presence of U.S. troops in Europe (in 2022, it boosted its forces on the continent by a quarter and reached 100,000 for the first time since 2005). On the other hand, the U.S. continues to demand that its allies assume greater responsibility for the security of Europe, especially in conventional defence. And it warns that the U.S. ability to support the NATO allies will be severely limited if there is a parallel war in the Indo-Pacific because it would involve the majority of U.S. forces. Meanwhile, such a war is becoming an increasingly real possibility.

6 "German army chief wants more money for equipment," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 February 2023, www.dw.com.

GOODBYE RUSSIA! THE EMANCIPATION OF EUROPEAN ENERGY

ZUZANNA NOWAK

The energy crisis in the European Union did not start on 24 February 2022, nor is it over yet. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has already become a turning point in the history of European energy policy and the beginning of the EU's emancipation from Russian influence in the energy market. There is no more room for "business as usual" with Russia. Moreover, this energy divorce is accompanied by a series of measures to strengthen the EU's resilience against any external threats to the energy system.

LENIENCY

The winter of 2021/2022 was expected to be a difficult one for the European Union. The post-pandemic recovery of economies had already led to a scarcity of raw materials on the global energy market, exacerbated by the temporary shutdown of some export infrastructure as a result of natural disasters and planned refurbishments in several countries, including the U.S. and Norway. Pressure from Russia was also mounting, exacerbating the weaknesses of the European energy market.

Although trade in raw materials such as oil and gas is an inherently geopolitical issue, especially in the case of Russia, the EU has long believed in demand-supply mechanisms and the immunity of its liberalised energy market to various kinds of distortions, including deliberate manipulation. Although for years the countries of Central and Eastern Europe had been sounding the alarm about the dangers to the Community's energy market of overdependence on Russian raw materials, especially gas, Western EU countries still treated Russia as a reliable business partner. Although Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 prompted reflection within the EU on the creation of a platform for joint gas purchases, increasing gas storage capacity, creating a solidarity mechanism, and intensifying LNG trade—all within the framework of the Energy Union to become more resilient to Russian actions—the real impact of this reflection was negligible.

Thanks to such leniency, Russia dominated the European energy market (supplying about 45% of its gas and more than 20% of the oil imported into the EU, as well as controlling 10% of the gas storage facilities) and hindered its expansion. Russia also repeatedly abused its market position (e.g., by using the Yamal and Nord Stream 1 pipelines), which led to division between the member states (including on the launch of Nord Stream 2). Under such conditions, Russia could fuel the energy crisis through obvious manipulation of gas supplies, prices and storage.

Although at the end of 2021 the EU was producing only 20% of its electricity from gas, the structure of the market and the unavailability of alternative energy sources led to a situation in which the sudden rise of gas prices had a dramatic impact on the condition of the European economy. High energy costs have disrupted the value chains of many companies and escalated the problem of energy poverty among EU citizens. Growing concerns about the Union's energy security and continuity of supply, as well as about the competitiveness of industry and the affordability of raw materials, gradually diverted attention from the third

pillar of European energy policy: sustainable development and climate protection being the priority since the introduction of the European Green Deal. They were, after all, the pretext for increasing the importance of gas imports as a transition fuel in the European (and above all German) energy transition, which Russia scrupulously exploited.

WAKE-UP CALL

As soon as Russia began its invasion, supporting Ukraine's defence by limiting Russia's income from the energy commodities trade (making up about 40% of the federal budget revenues) suddenly became a priority topic, not just in discussions but also in the EU's actions. The Member States enacted restrictions and sanctions, starting with tightening exports of goods and technology for oil refining to Russia,[1] a ban on investments in the Russian energy sector,[2] a ban on coal imports,[3] and a ban on imports of oil and oil products from Russia,[4] as well as price caps on these raw materials.[5] Although the Member States did not opt immediately for an embargo on Russian gas, supplies to the EU fell sharply anyway, and the EU's import dependence on Russian gas decreased from around 45% in January 2022 to only 9% a year later. This was due, on one hand, to Russia's voluntary interruption of gas sales to some EU countries and companies and, on the other hand, to Gazprom cutting off supplies to the EU, followed by the explosion of the Nord Stream pipelines as a result of sabotage in September 2022. The blows from both sides of the pipe, in Europe and Russia, have led to further price fluctuations in the global energy market, deepening the already serious economic crisis in the EU itself.

RE-EVALUATION

Even if the energy sanctions against Russia have not yet translated into reducing its ability to continue its aggression against Ukraine (it has managed to compensate for smaller volumes of sold gas with higher prices and oil exports to alternative markets) and Vladimir Putin seems to think that he has not lost the war, there has already been a breakthrough in the EU, at least in the energy domain. The end of any illusions about the Kremlin's intentions, the open confrontation with energy blackmail that Russia used both just before and after the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and as a result, the move away from toxic dependence on Russia have allowed the economically weakened EU to look in a new way at its energy policy priorities.

The imminent threat to energy security has brought the issue of ensuring the continuity of supply of resources and diversification of their import routes back to the top of the EU political agenda. This was reflected in a number of rapidly adopted EU plans and strategic documents (e.g., REPowerEU[6]), organisational solutions (e.g., the platform for joint gas purchases[7]), as well as new initiatives by Member States, even those that looked favourably on Russia despite their heavy dependence on Russian raw materials (e.g., floating LNG terminals in Germany). These measures were aimed at making the EU independent of Russian imports as quickly

1 "Second package of sanctions," EU Council Regulation 2022/345, 1 March 2022.

2 "Fourth package of sanctions," EU Council Implementing Regulation 2022/427, 15 March 2022.

3 "Fifth package of sanctions," EU Council Regulation 2022/576, 8 April 2022.

4 "Sixth package of sanctions," EU Council Regulation 2022/879, 3 June 2022.

5 "Price cap for oil and petroleum products," EU Council Regulation 2022/2367, 3 December 2022.

6 "REPowerEU plan," European Commission Communication COM(2022) 230, 18 May 2022.

7 "EU Energy Platform," European Commission Communication COM(2022) 553, 18 October 2022.

as possible by reducing energy consumption and deepening cooperation with alternative exporters of oil, coal, and gas, while accelerating the ecological transition. According to European Commission (EC) estimates, effective implementation of these plans could allow the EU to reduce its consumption of gas alone by 155 billion m^3 by 2030[8] (equal to the imports from Russia in 2021). Moreover, energy solidarity, until recently regarded only as a difficult-to-implement treaty obligation, has acquired the practical dimension of good neighbourly energy cooperation between EU countries in times of crisis. Energy poverty, on the other hand, has been elevated from a development problem to a national security issue.

The dysfunction in the EU energy market that allowed Russia to manipulate it were exposed by the war and motivated the Member States to undertake emergency interventions to ensure the affordability of energy resources and electricity for consumers and to maintain the competitiveness of the European industry. The EC has set itself the goal of prioritising and subsidising investments in clean or cleaner energy (including gas, hydrogen, and the long overlooked option of nuclear energy), encouraging the Member States to coordinate national support policies so as not to build a competitive advantage for any of them within the EU, and motivating industry to switch to low-carbon processes to support EU competitiveness vis-à-vis the U.S. and China.

Seemingly less important in the face of war, climate protection has taken on new significance. The green energy transition, the issue most often considered in the EU with a 2030 or 2050 perspective, has taken on a tangible short-term dimension. The scarcity of energy resources, high energy prices, and political pressure have forced consumers to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption, which, according to the EC, are set to surpass plans in place since the adoption of the Fit for 55 package. Increasing the use of clean energy sources, renewables (RES), biofuels, and nuclear power are being seen as a way to fight Russia and save the energy market, mitigating the periodic increase in the use of fossil fuels.

RESILIENCE TO UNCERTAINTY

The last 12 months have been a difficult test for European energy policy. Every national energy mix in the Union, whether dominated by nuclear, coal, RES, or gas, has proved to be crisis-prone, so government interventions have had to compensate for free-market imperfections. The decisions on sanctions were not taken by acclamation at all, but were the result of difficult negotiations between EU states and overcoming divisions. The "nationality" of energy raw material molecules began to matter. The war and its consequences also showed that, despite the validity and flexibility of the EU's existing energy policy objectives of security, competitiveness and sustainability, they should be linked by an additional common denominator—the priority of building up the EU's energy resilience to the actions of external actors or energy resource exporters. Although this concept still needs to be defined at the EU level, it should be seen as the EU's internal capacity to protect itself against any external threats to the energy system.

Counter-intuitively, the world of energy has been made even more complex and opaque by the war in Ukraine, with friends becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish from foes. Russia still has vast natural resources and, like the EU, is seeking new partnerships, trade routes, and spheres of influence. Changes and tensions can be felt everywhere—in Africa, so eagerly offering to export gas to the EU instead of Russia; in Asia, soaking up Russian oil

[8] "Press Release—REPowerEU: Joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable Energy," European Commission, 8 March 2022.

and reselling oil products to Europe; in the U.S., strengthening its economic potential while bailing out the EU with LNG supplies; and in the Arctic, where Russia seeks to increase raw material extraction at the expense of climate concerns. Under such conditions, it is inevitable that new conflicts and dependencies will arise, and that energy problems will be transferred to other spheres—political, business, financial, technological, or cyber. It is even difficult to predict from which side the next crisis will hit the Union, but a hit will come.

Most importantly, however, "business as usual" with Russia has become a thing of the past for the EU. Turns out it got its fingers burnt on overdependence on a single—and now transparently hostile—supplier of raw materials and learned a hard lesson of energy policy. It will not repeat this mistake a second time. What's more, the EU has gained an awareness of its strengths and has begun to work on reducing its energy weaknesses. And although the global energy market is far from stable and economic anxiety continues to plague the Member States, the end of the bilateral energy relationship with Russia has laid the groundwork for the EU's own resilience and brought a sense of geopolitical relief.

THE NEW UKRAINE AND *HOMO UCRAINENSIS*

MARIA PIECHOWSKA

In 2021, Ukraine celebrated the 30th anniversary of its independence. Exhibitions, concerts, commemorative meetings, and festivals were held throughout the country. Ukraine demonstrated independence, unity, and strength. The celebrations showed how Ukrainian identity, state, and society had evolved over 30 years. The point of reference was no longer Russia—and for many Ukrainians it used to be; its place taken by Europe. Ukrainians began to emphasise that they no longer wanted to live in a state belonging to the post-Soviet space, dominated by a gloomy and passive *homo sovieticus*; they wanted to belong, and perhaps even already belonged, to the Western world, with freedom, democracy, and human rights as their core values. The evolution has been gradual, but it is easy to identify the turning points—the Orange Revolution of 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity of 2013. The changes that were taking place triggered interference from Russia, which did not want to accept the Ukrainian turn towards the West. Ukraine's 30th anniversary was marred by the war that had by then already been going on for seven years.

Exactly half a year later, on 24 February 2022, Ukrainians woke up to a new reality—a full-scale war. Then, something happened that the aggressor had not anticipated: the Euro-Atlantic direction of Ukrainian politics was sealed; Ukraine united as never before, the perception of history and Ukrainian identity was revised and a new kind, *homo ucrainensis*, emerged.

IDENTITY CHANGE

If before Ukrainians as a nation were divided, after 24 February the divisions disappeared. When, in the first years of the 21st century, there was an intellectual debate in Ukraine around the question "how many Ukraines are there?", some, such as the political scientist Mykola Ryabchuk, wrote about two, a western or national-civic one and an eastern, post-Soviet one, while the historian Yaroslav Hrytsak, who opposed him, jokingly wondered whether it would not be better to speak of 22. Few argued that there was one Ukraine, although there was an awareness of the great need for unity. The divisions stemmed from historical circumstances and concerned issues of identity, language, religion, and politics, which were clearly visible on the electoral maps and resulted, among other things, in different visions of the functioning of the state and the future of Ukraine in international structures. Some who saw Ukraine's place close to Russia were interested in deeper cooperation with its eastern neighbour, or at least believed that it should remain within its sphere of influence. Others, and this group grew as the years went by, pursued a vision of Ukraine in the western world, politically linked to the European Union. These approaches, which also touched on questions of identity, were so contradictory that it was hard to imagine that Ukraine would unite. But now, under the conditions of the Russian invasion and despite the results of various surveys that often show minor differences between the eastern and western regions, the divisions are almost non-existent.

The newly emerged *homo ucrainensis* considers itself first and foremost a citizen of its state—this was declared by some 80% of respondents in 2022[1] . Twenty years ago, only one in four was sure of this, and 30% preferred to describe themselves as residents of their locality. At that time, there was still a large group, which currently comprises less than 2% of the population (and almost 18% in 2021)[2], who considered the Soviet Union as a reference point for their identity. The language issue has also been affected by the change. The de facto bilingual state is slowly becoming Ukrainianised. This has been facilitated by the legal environment—the functioning of Russian in public space has been restricted in various ways in recent years. After the outbreak of the full-scale war, it was also a bottom-up process with the language of everyday communication beginning to change. In surveys, 78% of Ukrainians declared that they spoke Ukrainian more often than before. As a result, 76% of Ukrainians now report Ukrainian as their mother tongue, with only 20% reporting Russian. In 2012, the responses were almost evenly split (47% and 42%, respectively)[3].

IDEOLOGICAL TURNAROUND

Although the war began in 2014, it was only after the full-scale invasion in 2022 that a kind of ideological turn finally took place in Ukraine. Ukrainians began to reject everything Russian. De-sovietisation was followed by de-rusification in both the public space and, for example, the interpretation of history or everyday life. The renaming of streets associated with Russia or Soviet times, the dismantling of monuments, or the banning of Russian music in media all have public support. Thus, Moscow Street and Stalingrad Heroes Avenue, among others, disappeared from Kyiv. "Pushkin-fall" or de-Pushkinisation has become a new trend of removing ubiquitous monuments and plaques commemorating the Russian national poet. Monuments to other Russian heroes, such as Catherine II in Odesa, are also being removed.

The perception of Russia itself and Russians has also changed. Ukrainians, who previously blamed the Russian authorities primarily for the war, after February also hold the entire nation responsible. The majority of Ukrainians also say that after regaining full control of the country's territory, relations with Russia should be severed and Russians banned from entering Ukraine. This ideological shift also affects the historical narrative. For a long time, the point of reference in describing the past has long been primarily Russia or the USSR, but now other dimensions of history are being recognised. The heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is increasingly appreciated, and in popular science channels on YouTube, the Second Polish Republic is presented as a state in whose parliament Ukrainians had representatives. Ukrainians want to see Poland as a historical ally, and not—as promoted by Russian and Soviet propaganda—as an eternal enemy. Poland is being discovered not only as a neighbour, but also as a window to the West, a model of transformation, modernisation, and successful reforms that allowed it to join European Union. Europe took the place of Russia as the centre. And while in 2013 only about half of Ukrainians declared that they would vote for accession to the European Union, today almost 90% would like to do so[4].

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1 Sociological monitoring "Ukrainian Society", Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2023, https://kiis.com.ua.

2 O. Reznik, *Osoblyvosti prostorovo-terytorial'noyi identyfikatsiyi naselennya Ukrayiny*, Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2022, https://dif.org.ua.

3 *The Sixth National Poll: The Language Issue in Ukraine (19 March 2022),* Rating Group, March 2022, https://ratinggroup.ua.

4 *Foreign Policy Orientations of the Ukrainians in Dynamics (1-2 October 2022),* Rating Group, March 2022, https://ratinggroup.ua.

UNITY AND SOCIAL MOBILISATION

The Russian invasion made Ukrainians not only united, emphasising their national identity, but also politically around the authorities. President Volodymyr Zelensky has become a hero and enjoys enormous social trust. Today, the vast majority of Ukrainians (around 85-90%) approve of his actions, while in January last year only one in three supported him. The political consensus between the opposition and the ruling party has been in most cases maintained throughout the year of war.

One of the effects of the war crimes committed by Russia and the scale of the attack on Ukraine is also a high level of social mobilisation and unity in the defence effort. In the first days after the invasion, Ukrainians enlisted *en masse* in the army, the Territorial Defence Forces, and complementary volunteer formations. The majority of the population declared that they would fight in defence of the state with arms in hand. Quickly, this unification of the entire nation around defence was transformed into viral memes, such as those of farmers towing away Russian tanks, an elderly lady knocking down a foreign drone with a jar of preserves, or another who showed tremendous courage when, after handing sunflower seeds to a Russian soldier occupying her town, she warned him "that these flowers would grow on Ukrainian soil after his death". The message is clear—anyone can fight the aggressor. And they do, although often it involves voluntary work such as cooking soup for internally displaced people or weaving camouflage nets for the army. After a year of war, the level of support for the defence effort remains high, but focuses primarily on fundraising and equipment for the army. This happens on several levels, from collections by friends to buy equipment for a specific soldier, through buying vehicles needed to fight in the east of the country, to major campaigns coordinated by well-known figures. Among the most high-profile of them was initiated by Serhiy Prytula, a Ukrainian TV presenter and actor, who raised funds to buy Bayrakatar drones. Almost $10 million was raised in a few days.

The huge awareness among Ukrainians that everyone is responsible for the state is also contributing to high social mobilisation, an important characteristic of the new *homo ucrainensis*. If it were not for the ordinary people who protested first in 2004 during the Orange Revolution against electoral fraud, or later in 2013 and 2014 during the Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine would not now be on the path of European integration. Perhaps even its borders would have been completely different because it was ordinary people, a grassroots and self-organised group who de facto defended Ukraine in 2014. Ukrainians call this phenomenon the "volunteer" movement, but it encompasses a broader civil society that is alive and effective in Ukraine. It is not without reason that volunteers tend to rank very high in confidence polls.

TOWARDS EUROPE

In recent years, Russia has ceased to be Ukraine's political choice. Of its own volition, by interfering in Ukraine's internal politics and finally attacking its neighbour militarily, Russia has forced Ukraine to abandon thinking of any kind of brotherly cooperation with it. Ukrainians are now choosing Europe and the European Union—this is their sovereign decision—also because they have learned very painfully, often at the cost of their own lives, what it means to be part of *russkiy mir*.

In June 2022, Ukraine gained the desired EU candidate status, but it still has a long way to go. For Ukrainians, European integration does not just mean political belonging to the Western world. It is more than that. It represents the democratic standards they have long fought for,

respect for human rights, economic security, and the absence of corruption and oligarchs. Ukrainians also want their pro-Western choice to be accepted by the world so that they can finally become full-fledged Europeans, so that the high price they are currently paying for their European turn makes sense. The same applies to potential NATO membership, which would mean not only military security for Ukraine but also recognition by the world of its right to self-determination.

WHAT NEXT?

The new Ukraine and *homo ucrainensis* did not come into being overnight on 23/24 February 2022. It was a process that had been underway for years. The full-scale invasion only reinforced what could be observed then and before—the unification of the people and the formation of a new civic identity, social mobilisation and self-organisation, and the political choice of Western standards. These are profound transformations that have affected Ukraine and will stay with it for a long time. Of course, not all of them will be permanent. The wartime unification around the authorities will not last forever, and if the European Union does not present Ukrainians with a concrete timetable for membership, some people's views may waver. Russia will try to break the Ukrainian spirit at all costs, but the memory of its war crimes, brutality, and sadism of its troops will remain in the public memory. Russia will not become a political choice for future generations of Ukrainians. It will remain an enemy not only because it does not accept the European turn of its neighbour but also because it has shown over the past year that it is prepared to do anything to wipe Ukrainians from the Earth and Ukraine off the map.

With its heroic defence against the Russian invasion, the somewhat forgotten and marginalised Ukraine came to the attention of the world. It has shown that it is still possible to fight for the ideals of democracy, freedom, and human rights, and that the supreme sacrifice can be made for them. But the debate about supporting Ukraine is not just about its future. It is about the ideals on which the international order should be based, about respect for international law. Therefore, both for the sake of Ukraine itself and for the sake of what we want the world to look like, the Ukrainian effort must be supported, the new *homo ucrainensis* must be given a sense of existence. Respect its choice by giving a real prospect of security through NATO membership and allow as soon as possible what all Ukraine dreams of—EU membership.

RUSSIA TURNS ITS BACK ON THE WEST

AGNIESZKA LEGUCKA

With its invasion of Ukraine, Russia voluntarily took its place as Europe's pariah. However, it had been moving in this direction consistently for years. Russia has regarded the West as a threat for a while, at least to the survival of the political system that Vladimir Putin was trying to build. The tightening of cooperation with selected EU countries, mainly in terms of trade in raw materials, and the coquettishness of the political and business elites of certain European states were calculated to play up the divisions in Europe so that Putinism would not be threatened by further colour revolutions. However, the example of Ukraine, whose society and political elites have gradually turned to the path of Euro-Atlantic integration, has become an existential threat to Putin, to which he has responded with a full-scale war. The invasion thus seals the choice for Russia, which will turn now to coalesce with authoritarian China while also seeking to maintain its international standing through closer relations with the countries of the Global South.

RUSSIA'S MAIN RIVAL—THE U.S.

The international order that took shape after the collapse of the USSR was considered by the Russian authorities to be unfavourable to its interests. The United States, which emerged victorious from the Cold War struggles, became Russia's main rival and NATO was identified as the main challenge and then a threat to the security of the Russian Federation. In the 1990s, the Russian authorities negatively assessed, among other things, the process of NATO's eastward enlargement, considering the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia as a strengthening of the U.S. position in Europe. The USSR and Russian leaders Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, who agreed to the expansion of the Alliance, are to this day seen as weak and "betrayed" by the West.

The president who followed them, Putin, on the other hand, was keen to emphasise that Russia and the U.S. had equal status in the world, which is why Russia joined the international anti-terrorist coalition during his first term (2000-2004). In doing so, the president wanted to shut down discussion of human rights violations in Chechnya, where he waged war under the banner of an "anti-terrorist operation" and Russian forces, like now in Ukraine, committed war crimes. In May 2002, NATO offered Russia to establish the NATO-Russia Council in which the Russian representative would have an equal voice with Alliance members on certain issues (including counter-terrorism). Russia initially accepted the offer, although the practicalities of this cooperation did not meet the expectations of either side.

ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA'S PROPHECY

Russia's turning away from the West has continued as Putin's power within his country has strengthened. In 2004, journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who described the brutality of the Russian army in Chechnya, said that "with the consolidation of Putin's power, the return of the Soviet system is a matter of course". She was assassinated at the Kremlin's behest two years later, but managed to predict that the Russian president would build the state like a besieged

fortress in order to stay in power. The power elite began to create a vision of the "collective West" as the enemy in the context of events unfolding in the immediate neighbourhood. Putin saw the colour revolutions in Georgia (2003, Rose), Ukraine (2004, Orange) and Kyrgyzstan (2005, Tulip) as external interference in the Russian sphere of influence. Similarly, the Russian authorities interpreted the protests in Moscow's Bolotnaya Square in 2011-2012, when Russians took to the streets to express their opposition to the top-down and facade of the election swap of then-finalist President Dmitry Medvedev for then acting Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Since those events, the authorities have tightened laws on media activities, the internet and introduced legislation on the status of "agents of foreign influence", which has evolved to identify so-called "foreign agents". Strengthening of the power structures took place, repression of the opposition increased, the leadership sought to legitimise itself by referring to the imperial past (Russian and Soviet) and nationalist elements. In this way, a system called Putinism took shape in Russia. A key moment in this process was the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, which allowed for the consolidation of the authoritarian regime and the militarisation of domestic politics, combined with propaganda and disinformation directed against Ukraine and the West.

COCKTAILING THE EUROPEANS

The 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine made Putin realise that the European project as a systemic model in the post-Soviet space could be "more contagious"—and thus dangerous for Putinism—than the rivalry with the United States. Therefore, Russia decided to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its European allies to achieve its most important goal, that of weakening the "collective West". It used anti-American political resentment in Europe to do this, dividing the EU into friendly, "Russophobic", and neutral states. It preferred bilateral contacts, for example with Germany, Italy, or France, applying the principle of selective engagement in Europe, as a counter to the U.S. It used in particular energy projects, especially Nord Stream 1 and 2, which Russia intended as an instrument to influence the policy of Germany, Austria, and, indirectly, the EU. Through this policy, Russia succeeded in disrupting European and transatlantic unity. Some European politicians, in spite of voices from Ukraine and Central Europe arguing to the contrary, found it difficult to believe that the Russian government could give up such convenient economic interests that linked Russia to the EU. It was believed that economic interdependence worked both ways, that is, that the EU could influence Russian policy because of its importance to the Russian economy. In 2020, the EU was Russia's top trading partner, accounting for 37.3% of its total trade in goods with the world, while 36.5% of Russia's imports came from the EU and 37.9% of its exports went to the EU. At the same time, there was a misconception that the West could "Westernize" the Russian elite, since, among other things, the children of this elite were being educated at universities in France, Germany, and Czechia (and, earlier, just as readily in the UK). Meanwhile, the Russian power elite were securing their assets abroad (and themselves) through this access, while corrupting Western states politically and in business, undermining the strength and firmness of EU policy towards Russia. The contacts with European states were dictated by the interests of the oligarchs and Russian politicians, who thus gained financial instruments to influence the EU. The Russian government in turn successfully corrupted Western politicians who lobbied for Russian interests in Europe. Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder became the head of the board of directors of the oil company Rosneft in 2017 and lobbied for many years to make Germany dependent on Russian energy resources. Former Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl, whose wedding was hosted by Putin and who was also nominated by the Russian government to Rosneft's board of directors, was to be given similar tasks.

NO MORE COQUETRY—RUSSIA'S TURN TO ASIA

The Russian invasion of Ukraine marks Russia's final break with the "collective West" (not just the U.S.) politically, economically, and socially. Russia was taken by surprise by the EU's strong response to the 24 February 2022 attack and the coherent action of the U.S.-led transatlantic community. The Russian authorities were not prepared for such decisive sanctions, but above all for the rapid reduction of the EU's energy dependence on Russia, which in terms of natural gas has decreased from about 40% to about 9%. In order to force a reduction in the introduction of sanctions, they decided to use energy blackmail by stopping gas supplies to certain countries (first those that did not agree to make payments in roubles, such as Poland and Bulgaria, and later Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden). This drove up gas and oil prices on the European market. After the explosion of the Nord Stream pipeline last September, natural gas transmission through it was halted. At the end of 2022. The EU introduced sanctions on crude oil and petroleum products (from February 2023), which reduced the potential for price blackmail from Russia in the energy sphere. As a result, Russian oil and oil products were diverted by Russian producers at a discount to Asian markets, mainly to China, India, and Turkey. Also, coal exports from Russia to China, including lignite, increased by 41% from January to November 2022, to 7.2 million tonnes.

In March 2022, Putin labelled as traitors to the nation those who not only get rich in the West and live in Russia but who also think like they do in the West (viewing these people as a potential "fifth column"). This was the end of a sense of security for members of the power elite and their children, and a form of elite discipline under the slogan "either you are with us or against us". Despite the imposition of Western sanctions on around 1,300 people, including politicians and oligarchs, the elite remains loyal to Putin. This is due to the belief that a Russian victory in Ukraine is still possible, the lack of an alternative to Putin's leadership, and the profits made from the war by some politicians and oligarchs. Loyalty to Putin continues to be a fundamental feature of personnel selection.

Russian society has recognised that the war will be protracted and has adapted to the situation. The Russian middle class, which had enjoyed the benefits of consumption of European products, moved their savings to the United Arab Emirates, while oligarchs and their families—banned from flights to the EU and under sanctions—spent their holidays in Dubai. The number of tourists visiting Russia last year fell from 4.9 million to 200,000, most of them from China.

Russian propaganda and disinformation, meanwhile, which was partially blocked in the EU last March (RT and Sputnik), has unprecedentedly taken aim not only at Ukraine but also at the "collective West". Since the start of the military intervention, terms such as the "Kiev regime", "Washington's puppets", "fascists" and, above all, "Nazis", "neo-Nazis", and even "satanists" have been used with greater intensity in the rhetoric of the Russian government and the Kremlin media. This means that Russia does not recognise Ukraine's statehood or the Ukrainian people, and sees the war in Ukraine as a struggle against the West. Russian propaganda and the Russian authorities have insinuated that the Americans were operating biotechnology laboratories in Ukraine and are responsible for spreading viruses that could threaten international security. This kind of content was presented by Russia at the UN Security Council in March and October 2022, among others. The Russians particularly accuse Poland ("Washington's puppet") of anti-Russian actions, and also Germany, which they blame for supplying "weapons to Ukraine" as the Nazis once did. At the same time, Russia threatens to use nuclear weapons in an attempt to discourage Western states from supporting

Ukraine militarily, while convincing the Global South, for example, that the West is behind the destabilisation of Europe.

THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER ACCORDING TO RUSSIA

The war with Ukraine, if it does not end in Russia's defeat, will contribute to the further militarisation of its domestic and foreign policy. At the same time, the Putin regime has the capacity to replicate its action. This means that even if Putin's successor takes power, he will replicate the aggressive actions towards Russia's neighbours (possibly NATO countries), allowing the new leader to consolidate power and Russian society around slogans of defence of the homeland and Russia's imperial past.

In Russia's perception, the U.S. will remain the main rival and the Russian government will stop looking for partners in the EU (Hungary may be an exception). Russia's policy objective will still be to try to weaken the "collective West", but the place to seek allies and international partners will become more the Global South—Africa, the Middle East, Latin America. Russia will strengthen its diplomatic efforts within the BRICS (Brazil, India, China, South Africa), for example. However, it realises that it is not in a position to become an effective alternative to the West, which will lead to disappointment among the authorities of the countries of the South and local societies.

China will be Russia's strategic partner, as the survival of the Russian economy and the attractiveness of its political model depend on Chinese economic and technological support. Although China only describes the relationship with Russia as "strategic cooperation", from the perspective of the security of the NATO countries it has a crucial dimension. Russia is China's "armed hand" in international relations and how it "handles Ukraine" will shape China's future actions in Taiwan. The strengthening of Russian-Chinese relations will reinforce threats to democratic states in the West, including undermining societal resilience (through disinformation activities) and the security of supply chains and technologies.

Russia has turned its back on the West, which must learn from this struggle for survival, as Russia will continue to pose an enduring threat to the transatlantic community. The dividend from the peace that prevailed after the Cold War has long since run out and despite offers of cooperation, Russia has not accepted them. The West must learn to contain the Russian-Chinese challenge on two fronts, realising that a shift in alliances has already taken place. The sooner it understands this and acts, the better.

CHINA: END OF ILLUSIONS AND CONFRONTATION WITH THE WEST

MARCIN PRZYCHODNIAK

China's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine was closely followed by the political leaders of many countries, experts, and the general public. China's disingenuous attitude of, on the one hand, calling for peace, while, on the other, supporting Russia economically and diplomatically, obscured the sealing of a breakthrough in Chinese foreign policy. After years of development based on closer economic cooperation with the West, China is turning inward and challenging the West to defend the rules-based international order, perceived by Chinese political elites as a threat to their power in the long term.

China's turn is the result of the long-term process of idealisation of China's foreign policy, which has been additionally strengthened by the effects of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. China's goals, like those of Russia, are revisionist in nature. Their methods may be different, but both countries (or, more precisely, the elites) share an understanding of the current international situation as threatening, in particular the U.S., to the future of their power and interests. So, they view it as necessary to "escape forward". For the time being, China is implementing this strategy peacefully: in its nationalist policy, expansion of the military, and economic potential. However, the Chinese are clearly changing their attitude towards a possible confrontation with the West. The decisions of the Chinese authorities taken after the Russian aggression against Ukraine fit in with the dynamics of existing internal processes, especially the pursuit of self-sufficiency (e.g., control of exports of rare metals, electromobility technology) and the plans to focus on the internal market instead of interactions with foreign countries, which was the basis of China's economic development over the last several decades.

CHINA'S PRIORITIES BEFORE THE RUSSIAN INVASION

Since 2012, when President Xi Jinping took power, China's assertiveness in foreign policy has been growing, especially towards the U.S. and the EU,[1] which were still China's main economic partners at the time.[2] This was accompanied by the centralisation of power and use of nationalist ideas to discipline both society and, above all, the party apparatus, which, in the eyes of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) leaders, was undergoing progressive "oligarchisation", threatening the power of the leadership and the ability to effectively govern China. The Party's rhetoric was dominated by the belief in China's growing global role and the advantages it had over the United States.

China's goal as set by Xi was to finalise the status of the socialist state as a "world superpower" by 2049. The previous caution in foreign relations and calculated declarations in the international arena were abandoned, and the basis of action in Xi's time has become assertiveness towards the West and faithfulness to slogans such as the pursuit of the "Chinese dream". China has gradually—from the phase of developing its economic, political, and

1 M. Przychodniak, "Dominujące pragnienie kontroli. O dekadzie Xi Jinpinga [The dominant need for control. About Xi Jinping`s decade]," *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny,* no. 4 (91), 2022.

2 In 2022, China's main trade partners were the ASEAN states, followed by the EU, and then the U.S. See: "2022 nian 12 yue jin chukou shangpin zhuyao guo bie (diqu) zonh zhi biao [Table of imports and exports of goods by main partners in December 2022]," General Administration of Customs (PRC), 13 January 2023, www.customs.gov.cn.

military potential—moved to the active use of these areas in defence of its own interests. Related investments in European technology companies, cybersecurity breaches against U.S. entities, or the militarisation of the South China Sea have meant that, first, in the United States and then in the EU, the need for political and economic tools to contain China became key.

The turn of 2021 to 2022 in Chinese politics was dominated by preparations for the 20th Congress of the CPC, scheduled for October 2022. The leadership was working on a new composition of party institutions, as well as the election of Xi Jinping for a third term as secretary-general. The socio-political reality was constrained by the country's "zero-COVID" policy, the centralisation of power (with greater control of the authorities over the apparatus, also in the context of relations between Beijing and individual provinces), and the idealization of public life, including promoting an atmosphere of confrontation with the West. All these elements strengthened the legitimacy of the CPC in society and, above all, ensured the mobilisation of the party apparatus in an increasingly difficult economic and social situation.

The structural problems of the Chinese economy, combined with the global slowdown, have hampered the implementation of the CPC's plans since the 2017 party congress to focus on the internal market and strengthen the potential of the middle class, among other goals. The situation was aggravated by the "zero-COVID" policy, the continuation of which in 2022 resulted mainly from the need of the authorities to control the political and social situation rather than to deal with the pandemic. Even the lifting of the policy in November/December 2022 did not save China's economy in 2022 from recording the second-weakest growth rate since 1976, at just 3%.[3] Social problems also increased, including unemployment.[4] In the CPC's view, the solution to escape these political and economic dilemmas was a further "tightening the grip" on society and the Party, as well as amping up the confrontational policy towards the U.S. or the EU, motivated also by growing security considerations.

GROWING RIVALRY WITH THE EU AND THE U.S.

On the eve of the Russian invasion, China's relations with the European Union and the United States remained in crisis. The EU continued to stiffen its policy towards China, which was reflected, among others, in the development by the European Commission (EC) of legal instruments that, for example, protect the EU market against the unfair trade and investment practices of the Chinese. Confirmation of the change in China-EU relations was the mutual imposition of sanctions in 2021 when the Chinese responded to EU restrictions because of China's policy towards the Uyghurs in Xinjiang[5], as well as the Chinese attempt at coercion against Lithuanian and EU companies in December 2021 to punish Lithuania for intensifying relations with Taiwan.[6] However, the concept of "partnership, competition, and systemic rivalry" as the basis for the development of relations with China was still valid in the Union's policy. The Chinese authorities approached relations with the EU in a utilitarian way, trying to convince European leaders (from EU institutions, but also the governments of Germany, France, Italy, and Spain) to increase the EU's "independence" and develop "strategic autonomy", which in the Chinese view meant a decline in cooperation with the U.S., in return

[3] "National Economy Withstood Pressure and Reached a New Level in 2022," National Bureau of Statistics (PRC), 17 January 2023, www.stats.gov.cn

[4] *Ibidem*.

[5] M. Przychodniak, "The Impact of the repression in Xinjiang on China's relations with other countries, *PISM Bulletin*, no. 85 (1781), 22 April 2021, www.pism.pl

[6] M. Przychodniak, "Regression and Pro-Russia Rhetoric: China's Reaction to Lithuania's Change of Policy," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 191 (1887), 16 November 2021, www.pism.pl

for economic benefits related to, for example, access to the Chinese market. China's overriding goal was to counteract the intensification of transatlantic cooperation, in particular in relation to security, including within NATO.

The change in China's policy imposed by Chairman Xi also influenced U.S. policy towards China. Just as the Obama administration tried to settle contentious issues with China through dialogue and compromise (although without any illusions as to the Chinese intentions),[7] President Donald Trump entered into open confrontation with China, concerning, above all, modern technologies, of which the symbolic element was the involvement of Chinese firms and hardware in the development of 5G networks. However, Trump's was an inconsistent policy, and due to its unilateral character and lack of arrangements with allies and partners (including the EU, but also Southeast Asian countries), it was not entirely effective. The transactional nature of this cooperation was also expressed in Trump's readiness to develop personal relations with Xi Jinping, as well as the conclusion of agreements increasing the Chinese-American trade volume (the so-called "phase-one agreement"). However, the need to strengthen policy towards China in the face of upcoming and existing threats was not the subject of a party dispute in the U.S., which meant that after winning the 2020 elections, the Biden administration continued to emphasise China as the main threat to American interests. However, it has tried to include the rivalry in the transatlantic dialogue and it has also definitely activated cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, for example by strengthening the defence capabilities of the countries of the region and, above all, by intensifying cooperation with Taiwan.

The normalisation of relations between China, the EU, and the U.S. was also hindered by their different assessments of Russia's policy in Central and Eastern Europe. Controversial in this context was the visit of President Vladimir Putin to China in early February 2022 during the Olympic Games in Beijing. The leaders of Russia and China then signed a declaration on "international relations entering a new era and global sustainable development", announcing the creation of a "partnership with no limits".[8] For the first time, it included mutual support for Chinese interests in the Indo-Pacific (including the possible takeover of Taiwan) and Russian security demands in Europe, including those concerning Ukraine and NATO enlargement. The document also emphasised the importance of China-Russia cooperation to change the international order.

WAR AS A CATALYST

The Russian aggression against Ukraine forced China to modify its assessment of international reality, and thus the ways of achieving the state's goals in foreign policy. In the opinion of the Chinese authorities, the conditions for China's actions in the global community have become more difficult, for which the U.S., not Russia, is responsible. This negative assessment of the international situation was the main motive behind certain passages in Xi's report for the 20th CPC Congress in October 2022.[9] He directly said that there is no going back, either in the political or economic sense, to the times of "peace and development", which gave China, among others, decades of dynamic economic growth. The context of this change was later

[7] "Fact sheet: President Xi Jinping's state visit to United States," The White House (Archives), 25 September 2015, obamawhitehouse.archives.gov.

[8] "Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on International Relations Entering the New Era and Global Sustainable Development," President of Russia, 4 February 2022, www.en.kremlin.ru.

[9] "Full text of the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China," The State Council (PRC), 25 October 2022, english.www.gov.cn.

clarified by an analyst with the Chinese Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (a research facility associated with Chinese intelligence), who wrote about the impact of the Russian aggression on the international community, including the end of the post-Cold War era and the related acceptance of the existing global order, a change in the perspective of countries from a pro-development orientation to strengthening aspects of hard security, and threats to globalisation processes.[10] From now on, self-dependence (especially in the economic context) and security potential are to be of key importance from China's perspective.

One of the elements of these plans is therefore the reconstruction of the international order, including the reduction of the importance of the U.S. within a new system that would allow the use of force against other countries. The concept of "security indivisibility" (used by the Russians as one of the justifications for invading Ukraine) is also part of the Global Security Initiative (GSI) announced in April 2022 by Xi Jinping (and clarified in a concept paper published by China's MFA in February 2023). China, by repeating together with Russia the thesis about a threat coming from NATO and U.S. instigation of the war in Ukraine, is strengthening its image as a country that opposes the escalation of the war, criticising, among other things, Western arms deliveries to Ukraine. From the Chinese point of view, the current situation is heading towards bloc rivalry, and the anti-war narrative allows China to present itself (in opposition to the U.S.) as a stabiliser of the international situation. This is intended to win over the countries of the Global South, which are reluctant to side with the U.S. and look with favour on China's policies and possible economic support.

The Sino-Russian declaration of 4 February confirmed the existence of an asymmetric partnership in which China is the stronger partner. Hence, the Chinese decision to adopt a pro-Russian stance and to intensify political, economic, and even military cooperation (including the deliveries of satellite imaging for the Wagner Group, small amount of rifles and drone spare parts) with Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. The change was not radical and sudden, but a process that started gradually; and with the passage of time and the degradation of Russia's military and economic potential, China is becoming a key international actor de facto backing Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Its support for Russia, accompanied by rhetoric about the need to stabilise the situation in Ukraine, allows China to pursue its own political goals.

For China, Russia's possible victory in the war with Ukraine, but above all Putin's regime continuing, would mean weakening the West, which is important for China, especially in the context of its policy in the Indo-Pacific, including plans towards Taiwan. The Russian aggression against Ukraine has not accelerated the Chinese authorities' decision to escalate—or even take over the island—on the contrary, the Russian military failures and the cohesion of the West have extended the time for preparations in China's view. However, the interpretation of China's actions with respect of the Russian aggression, suggesting that it recognises the use of force by Russia as justified, may mean that a possible invasion of Taiwan has become more realistic. This does not mean that it is close because China needs time to strengthen its military potential and economy. Therefore, the CPC leadership is preparing a new narrative of a peaceful "connection" with Taiwan. China would like to use this narrative, especially in view of the presidential and parliamentary elections on the island in 2024, to strengthen its image as conciliatory among the Taiwanese, in particular because the "one country, two systems" principle has been discredited in Hong Kong. Therefore, China does not give up the priority of "integration" with Taiwan, but wants to gain time by trying to influence a possible change

[10] Ding Xiaoxing, "Wukelan weiji de zouxiang ji dui guoji geju de yinxiang [The trends of the Ukrainian crisis and influence on the international community]," Aisixiang, 4 January 2023, www.aisixiang.com.

in the policy of the authorities on the island after the elections. They are also watching the course and effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, especially in the context of attracting the attention and engagement of the U.S. and the EU. Despite Russia's problems and the unanimous reaction (in China's perspective) of America's partners, the United States seems to view the option of forcibly annexing the island as more feasible in this context.

PROSPECTS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

China sees the Russian aggression against Ukraine as an opportunity to speed up the process of modifying the international order. It assumes a central role for China in shaping relations with partners around projects along the lines of the Belt and Road Initiative or the equally unspecified security (e.g., GSI) and development initiatives (e.g., GDI). The main goal is to reduce the U.S. potential (influence on budgets, personnel nominations, or rhetoric used in documents), while increasing China's influence on the operation of international institutions, including the UN. Here, cooperation with Russia and support for developing countries, but also, for example, ties with Iran or South Africa, are important. From the Chinese point of view, it is also important to stop NATO's actions against China. Thus, China's policy affects transatlantic cooperation, which, for example, in a situation of growing U.S. involvement in the stabilisation of the Indo-Pacific, may jeopardise European security, given the existing threat from Russia, supported by China.

The effect of the escalation of China's actions towards Taiwan, including military exercises in its vicinity, is to raise the international importance of the island. Activation of the global community (led by the U.S., Japan, and some EU countries) is underway to increase economic cooperation with Taiwan, as well as to support the defence potential of the island. The vision presented by the Chinese authorities of increasing China's self-sufficiency, combined with weakening economic growth, the idealisation of foreign policy, and the prospect of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, is also changing the attitude in some countries that cooperation with China, due to its population, capital, or economic resources, should be a priority. Concepts of reducing interdependence with China as tools to reduce the political risk arising from these relations is gaining popularity, especially in Western countries.

The trends in Chinese foreign policy catalysed by the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine (especially given its long-term nature) have a long-term context and—without extraordinary, currently unforeseeable sudden events—will not change. Depending on the internal situation in China itself, they may even accelerate. The resulting threats to the interests of the transatlantic community will perpetuate the existing rivalry between the U.S. and China, which, in the worst-case scenario, may even take the form of open confrontation. This poses challenges to the EU, which at present openly refuses to fully support the U.S. negative view of China, even with the Sino-Russian partnership, and the resulting continuation of Russian offensive activities in Europe offers no chance of returning to business as usual in relations with China. The context of this rivalry will to a large extent define relations between the EU and the U.S. with other countries (such as Iran, Egypt, South Africa, or Brazil), which are also states China would like to win over as their patron (not a partner).

EMANCIPATION OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

PATRICK KUGIEL

One of the most important and less noticed effects of the Russian aggression against Ukraine is the confirmation of the political emancipation of developing countries, the Global South. Many of these states have refused to take sides in the war or openly condemn Russia, seeing it as an opportunity to assert agency in international relations and accelerate changes in the global order. Although their attitude usually does not mean acceptance or support for Russian policy, it will in effect weaken Russia's international isolation and the effectiveness of Western sanctions.

GLOBAL SOUTH UNDER PRESSURE

When Russian tanks moved on Kyiv on 24 February 2022, it seemed that such an open violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an independent state would cause widespread indignation and ostracism from the entire international community. In fact, the vast majority of states (141) supported a resolution condemning Russian aggression in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 2 March. However, nearly 50 disagreed, rejecting the UNGA resolution (5), abstaining (35), or not showing up for the vote at all (12). These 50 come from the Global South, including 24 from Africa, a dozen from Asia, and several from Latin America. No Southern country has joined the Western sanctions and few feel the need to isolate Russia internationally. The vote in the UNGA on a resolution condemning the annexation of four Ukrainian regions (12 October) brought only minor changes and showed the permanent division of the world on Russian aggression (143 for, 35 abstentions, and 5 against).

While the group opposed to the resolution is in the minority, it includes such heavyweight players as China and India and represents in fact the majority of the world's population. A majority that does not share the Western assessment of the war in Ukraine at all.

Although the 143 votes against the 2022 Russian aggression is a much better result than the 100 countries that criticised the annexation of Crimea in 2014 at the UN, the question still remains as to why 50 UN members did not vote against such a clear violation of international law. Rejecting Western pressure to condemn Russia, developing countries wanted to assert their independence in international relations. This was to show that they did not make decisions based on external pressure, but on the basis of a calculation of their own national interest. Thus, Russian aggression was not the cause of the emancipation of the Global South, but rather an opportunity to manifest agency.

RUSSIA STRONG WITH THE WEAKNESS OF THE WEST

Before the war in Ukraine, Russia had limited influence in developing countries, a legacy of their strong ties with the USSR during the Cold War. They focused on arms supplies, military, and energy cooperation. In recent years, Russia has tried to rebuild its presence by sending Wagner Group mercenaries to African countries, tempting them with contracts for the construction of nuclear power plants and strengthening propaganda campaigns. Russia built influence by taking the place of ideological opposition to the liberal order and criticising

unilateral interventions and aid conditionality perceived as imposing Western values. What strengthened Russia was not its attractiveness, but the mistakes of the West.

The authors of a recently published PISM report show that the Russian narrative on the war found fertile ground in Africa and the Middle East, composed of anti-colonial resentment, accusations against the West of hypocrisy and double standards, and disregard for conflicts and crises in other parts of the world. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, during a conference in Slovakia in June 2022, put it into words: "Europe must grow out of a state of mind in which Europe's problems are world's problems, while world's problems are not Europe's problems".

Many countries of the Global South not only recognised the distant conflict as "not their war" but also as a clash between the West and Russia. And just as they previously rejected the pressure of the Trump administration to make a choice in the U.S.-China rivalry, now they did not want to choose between the West and Russia. Pointing to earlier interventions in developing countries, sometimes, as in the case of Iraq in 2003, without a UN mandate, they do not assess the war in Ukraine in normative terms. They do not feel obliged to defend the international order based on law because they often considered it unfavourable and unjust for developing countries. As a result, they are more concerned with the effects of Western sanctions than of Russian aggression.

RISE OF THE REST

While the reaction of developing countries to the war in Ukraine signalled an important change in the world, the subsequent events of the past year only confirmed it. An interesting example was the football World Cup tournament in Qatar. It was interesting that the country of the Global South, Argentina, defeated the representative of the North, France, in the final, and Morocco was the first African country to reach the semi-finals. More important, the change was visible in the stands, which for the first time were dominated by fans from developing countries, which also proves their growing wealth. In addition, criticism of Qatar in Western media, focusing on violations of labour rights or limiting freedom of expression, did not find many supporters in the Global South and did not discourage local football fans. More popular, however, were the words of Gianni Infantino, the head of FIFA so criticised in the West, who said that "Europeans should first apologise for 3,000 years of history before they start giving moral lessons to others".

If, according to the reader, an anecdote about a sports event says nothing at all about the new political role of developing countries, clear confirmation of the importance of the South was visible in the COP27 climate conference in Sharm el-Sheikh in November 2022. Instead of setting new ambitious targets for reducing CO_2 emissions, important for the North, the discussion focused on the key financial issues for the South, the solution of which is necessary to adapt to climate change. Under pressure from the South, the EU and rich countries agreed to create a special "loss and damage fund" to cover destruction caused by climate change. While the fine-tuning of the details has been left for later, you can bet the South will want to put a heavy bill on the North for decades of unrestrained development.

However, climate will not be the only issue where the voice of developing countries will be heard more. The aspirations of developing countries are well expressed by India, which in January this year organised an international conference under the significant title Voice of the Global South. Prime Minister Narendra Modi assessed that "the world is in chaos" and

although "most of the global challenges have not been caused by developing countries", they are the ones who feel the costs the most. He announced that "the time is coming" for the Global South, whose inhabitants "constitute three-quarters of humanity" and "can no longer be excluded from the fruits of development", so they must "try to transform the global system of political and financial governance".

THE GLOBAL SOUTH COMES INTO PLAY

The emancipation of the countries of the Global South is the result of a long-term process of a relative rise in their wealth and international importance. If they decided to assert their independence now, it was because they thought they were ready for it. When the Cold War ended, the seven richest countries in the world (G7) accounted for more than half of global GDP (in terms of purchasing power parity, ppp), while in the countries of the Global South, 2 billion people lived in extreme poverty (on less than $2.15 a day). Thirty years later, the share of G7 economies in global GDP has fallen to 30%, and the number of people living in poverty in the South has shrunk to 650 million. The share of developing countries in global GDP rose from 37% in 1990 to 58% in 2022. China and India alone have lifted more than 1.2 billion people out of poverty in recent decades, who now form an aspiring middle class and demand a better life corresponding to Western standards.

After the collapse of the USSR, the only source of development aid and capital for developing countries was the West and the global financial institutions controlled by it, including the IMF and the World Bank. Thirty years later, in 2021, China was already the largest bilateral lender (it was responsible for 66% of the cumulative debt of the poorest countries), and the countries of the Persian Gulf, India, and Turkey became an important source of aid and investment. In the years 2013-2021, China allocated nearly $900 billion for investments in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Whether the West likes it or not, China has gained sympathy in many parts of the world by helping to meet real infrastructure needs.

The West also lost its dominant position in trade. In the 1990s, Europe and the U.S. were the largest trading partners for all regions of the world. Today, China has replaced the U.S. as the main partner of Latin America and Asia, and has caught up with Europe, taking the place of Africa's largest partner. The share of the 10 richest countries in world exports fell from over 60% to 37% at that time. Developing countries have not only become richer and more self-confident but also have gained economic and political partners that are alternative to the North. Western influence is at its lowest in decades, and the South finally has a choice and intends to use it. Russia is an important element of this puzzle, increasing the independence of these countries in international politics.

TOWARDS A NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE?

The growing importance and independence of the South will make the world more complicated, chaotic and competitive. Western influence in these countries can no longer be taken for granted. The Global South is becoming a place of increased competition and efforts by major powers. Isolated by the West, Russia will try to maintain and strengthen its influence in developing countries, presenting the war in Ukraine as an ideological clash between the rich North and the rest of the world and an attempt to maintain U.S. dominance. In addition to military cooperation, Russia has gained additional tools of influence, offering

energy resources, food, and fertilisers at competitive prices. At the same time, Russia will want to emphasise the new North-South divisions in order to gain political and economic partners, thus weakening the importance of international isolation and sanctions. To limit such risks, the West would have to act in two ways.

WHAT IS THE WEST'S RESPONSE?

In the short term, the West should actively join the information war in the Global South, counteracting the Russian narrative and emphasising, among other things, that the best way to stabilise food and energy prices is for Russia to end its aggression against Ukraine. The West must consistently show why the superpower's attempt to conquer a sovereign state is also a threat to developing countries. It is also worth reminding that contemporary Russia is not the same as the USSR in its support of national liberation movements; on the contrary, it is an imperial power trying to reverse the effects of decolonisation.

In the longer term, it is necessary to counteract Russian attempts to present the war in Ukraine as a clash between the rich North and the poor South in which the U.S. defends the unfair distribution of power. The attractiveness and possibilities Russia's direct influence (weakened by the war) in developing countries will naturally decrease. However, its role may persist there for a long time if Russia manages to convince its partners that it better understands their fears and expectations and that it is fighting for a fairer international order.

To encourage the emancipation of developing countries from Russian influence in a way that the new rivalry between the North and the South does not harm the possibility of achieving common global goals (such as those related to mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to it), the West should abandon the divisive logic of "you are with us or against us" and stop seeing any activity by Russia or China in developing countries as a zero-sum game. The Global South does not want to choose between West and East, North and South, or between a coalition of world democracies and a bloc of authoritarian states. The rivalry between the superpowers must therefore concern more attractive offers of cooperation and more equitable regulations that take into account the vital interests of the South.

The West must draw conclusions from its own past mistakes and treat the countries of the South more subjectively and equally, not by imposing its own solutions on them but by supporting them in response to their challenges. When the West recognises that a more just world is in its common interest, one in which the benefits of globalisation are more evenly distributed and the extreme poverty, instability, and climate change driving mass migration are better addressed, then cooperation between the West and the Global South will have the chance to meet many contemporary challenges. This view is necessary to weaken the support for Russia in the world and strengthen the rule-based international order.

NO CHANGE? THE U.S. FOCUS ON CHINA AND AMERICAN POLICY ON RUSSIA

MARCIN TERLIKOWSKI

Just over a year before the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in January 2021, it was the transition of power in the U.S. that was broadly seen as the most important change in world politics. The incoming president, Joe Biden, was expected to reverse Donald Trump's policies on international security, trade, and climate change. Perhaps the greatest expectations were coming from Europe. It was hoped that Biden, unlike Trump, who questioned the U.S. commitment to NATO and the relevancy of the Alliance itself, would reaffirm America's pledge to defend its European allies under Art. 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and seek deepened transatlantic cooperation on key issues.

The new administration's approach to Russia remained, however, uncertain. On the one hand, it was assumed that Biden, again, unlike Trump, would not display a transactional attitude towards Russia or seek an unspecified historic "deal" with Vladimir Putin. Bilateral relations were too burdened with Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections when Russia exploited and abused social media to support Trump, seen at that time by Moscow as potentially more favourable to Russia than his rival, Hillary Clinton. On the other hand, it was the Obama administration, with Biden as vice-president, that made a number of decisions between 2009 and 2014 that were perceived as unilateral concessions to Russia (this view was particularly held by Eastern Flank nations, primarily Poland). Those decisions included a change in the architecture of the American missile defence system that was to be deployed to Europe and the withdrawal of the very last U.S. armoured units from Germany. It was only towards the end of Obama's second term when, in 2017, the U.S. reaffirmed—albeit not without hesitancy—its leadership in strengthening forward deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank by establishing a rotational presence of an additional U.S. Army brigade and some other units in the region, mainly in Poland. Against Obama's record on Russia, the Trump administration's approach seemed—regardless of the president's own, controversial statements—to be more confrontational towards Russia. The U.S., for instance, formulated conditions for Russia with regards to the extension of the New START treaty on strategic arms control, which was due to expire in January 2021 and which Russia wanted to prolong.

Immediately following his inauguration, Biden sent the first signal of how his administration's policy towards Russia might look like—he extended New START without any conditions, marking a clear departure from Trump's approach. Biden's meetings with Putin in June 2021 in Geneva focused on strategic stability and cybersecurity and were presented by the U.S. as an effort to establish a stable and predictable relationship with Russia, necessary to prevent confrontation (although the U.S. also signalled readiness to confront Russia if it escalated the conflict, particularly in cyberspace). It should be this context in which the U.S. reaction to the build-up of Russian forces at the borders of Ukraine should be seen. When Russia presented its ultimatum to the U.S. and NATO in December 2021, almost openly declaring escalation if Allied forces were not withdrawn from countries that joined the Alliance after 1997, the U.S. clearly focused on the threat of unprecedented sanctions as the main element of pressure on Russia. It was the perspective of economic costs that was expected to change the Russian calculations regarding waging a larger war against Ukraine, while the promise of increased

military aid to that country (very modest against the backdrop of Ukrainian needs at the time) or strengthening the U.S. posture on NATO's Eastern Flank, played a secondary role in the American signalling towards Russia.

What happened next can be looked at in two ways. On the one hand, without American leadership, the Western support for Ukraine would certainly not have been as broad as it is today. It is the U.S. that has donated the most armaments to Ukraine by value. The additional American forces deployed to Europe after 24 February 2022, and particularly to Poland, provided a kind of umbrella for arms transfers to Ukraine and arguably contributed to deterring Russia from escalating against NATO, long considered by Allies a real risk. Finally, it is the U.S. that has set the goal of Russia's "strategic defeat" in Ukraine and remained committed to the assumption that Ukraine must remain a fully sovereign state, as Biden confirmed during his historic visit to Kyiv in February 2023.

On the other hand, the U.S. established red lines regarding types of weapons eligible to be transferred to Ukraine, like ATACMS missiles that have a range of up to 300 km (therefore capable of reaching Russian territory). So far, the Biden administration has clearly excluded these kinds of weapons from the scope of subsequent Ukrainian aid packages. The U.S. also was reluctant to take the lead in supplying Ukraine with more advanced weapon systems of NATO standards, such as modern tanks. This, in turn, allowed Germany, which was expected to supply these systems from its unique stocks in Europe to conveniently use the Americans for cover. The U.S. has been silent on Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic future, including its gradual integration with NATO, even if for the time being it would be—for obvious reasons—in a very limited form. Finally, the U.S. is still unwilling to fully walk away from the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, in which the Alliance voluntarily restricted itself with regards to the number and nature of its potential deployments in the Eastern Flank, including a promise on not deploying U.S. nuclear weapons there. The latter is particularly unhelpful as regards the prospects for further developing deterrence and defence against Russia.

This clear inconsistency in U.S. policy towards Russia since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 cannot be explained only by concerns over Russia escalating the current conflict. After all, deliveries of weapons to Ukraine have been crossing the Kremlin's red line after red line (e.g., the delivery of Western types of tanks) and have not provoked any particular Russian response. Hence, it appears that the American approach towards Russia in Ukraine is informed to a large degree by a broader vision of long-term relations with Russia. Biden's actions and declarations from the beginnings of his presidency can be interpreted as an attempt to avoid further antagonising Russia into conflict with the West. A combination of deterrence and dialogue, coupled with a tacit respect for Russian red lines (particularly regarding Ukraine, which was clearly not a priority for the U.S. until the 24 February invasion) was meant to ensure that Russia would not escalate tensions in Europe further. This, in turn, was meant to remove the prospect of the U.S. again committing a large chunk of its forces and resources to defending Europe against Russia, like during the Cold War.

This goal of the U.S. has arguably not changed following the Russian invasion, only the means of achieving it have evolved. Russia's "strategic failure" in Ukraine could be defined then as an end state to the war in which Russia fails to achieve its strategic goals against Ukraine (subjugation) and at the same time is weakened economically and militarily enough to enable a reduction of American involvement in Europe. With Russia a loser and posing relatively less danger to NATO, the bulk of the burden of deterrence and defence against Russia would be then taken over by the European allies. The U.S. role would mainly involve providing

nuclear deterrence for its European allies and offering some key non-nuclear enablers in the event of an unlikely (at least in U.S. view) escalation by Russia against NATO. As a result, American strategic attention and military resources could be further focused on the priority threat—China.

For it is China, not Russia, which is seen—and has been for more than a decade—as the main and most serious rival of the U.S. This assumption is fully reflected in the strategic documents of the Biden administration. The National Security Strategy and the National Defence Strategy, both unveiled in the autumn of 2022, more than six months after the Russian invasion, explicitly contrast China and Russia, presenting them as threats of a different nature. China is considered an actor that has both the intention and the capabilities—economic, military, diplomatic, and technological—to "reshape the international order" to serve its interests and to become the "world's leading power". In military terms, China, according to the National Defense Strategy, presents a "pacing challenge". What perhaps worries the U.S. the most is the very rapid Chinese naval build-up—it has built more than 130 new vessels between 2015 and 2019 and as of today deploys more ships in total than the U.S. Navy will operate for the next several years. China is also aggressively expanding its nuclear arsenal, both warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles, as well as other means of delivery. The Pentagon estimates that by 2035, China's strategic forces could deploy about 1,500 warheads, more than five times as many as in 2020. On top of that, China has been successfully testing advanced hypersonic missiles with equivalent U.S. technology only just developing. Another point of concern to the U.S. is China's potential ability to use innovative ICT technologies, particularly AI or 5G, for military purposes.

Russia, meanwhile, is seen in the U.S. administration's strategies as "an immediate and ongoing threat to the regional security order in Europe", being merely "a source of disruption and instability" on a global scale. American experts and politicians argue that the structural handicaps of the Russian economy and adverse demographic trends will result in the long term in Russia having not enough resources to effectively rival the world powers like the U.S. Due to its flawed political system, Russia also will be unable to promote itself as a reliable alternative to the current international order. For American military analysts, meanwhile, what emerges from the battlefields in Ukraine is a picture of Russian armed forces that are largely incapable of conducting modern combined operations or managing complex logistical chains, lack electronic communications systems crucial to building situational awareness and superiority on modern battlefield and rely on poorly trained recruits with low morale.

Behind the language of both strategies is the key assumption, widely shared among American political and military elites, that sometime in the near future the U.S. will find itself in a military crisis—or even armed conflict—with China. Hence, America will need to commit the bulk of its military resources to effectively defend its interests in the Indo-Pacific. These revolve obviously around Taiwan and freedom of navigation issues. Consequently, it is in this region—not on NATO's Eastern Flank—where the U.S. sees a potentially deadly challenge to its position as the world's hegemon.

The U.S. response to the Chinese threat defined in this way encompasses many dimensions. At the cost of borrowing hundreds of billions of dollars, the American economy has been set on a path towards increasing independence from China in the most advanced technologies or rare earth minerals, while the U.S. armed forces are to make a quantum leap and close the perceived gap in military capabilities, which are seen as crucial in the context of a potential conflict in the Indo-Pacific (priority investment areas are next-generation aerospace,

naval and space systems, as well as cyber capabilities). To strengthen its position vis-à-vis China, the U.S. is also seeking new alliances and strengthening cooperation with existing partners. Cooperation with the EU is gaining new momentum now, even if it has not been an American priority for years, as epitomised best by the failure of the TTIP trade and investment agreement, negotiated under the Obama administration. Above all, however, the U.S. is developing and strengthening its network of alliances in the Indo-Pacific, as illustrated by the AUKUS agreement with Australia and the UK, or the QUAD format involving India, the world's largest democracy and China's main regional strategic rival.

It is then fair to say that the U.S. seeks to use its full diplomatic, military, and economic potential to mitigate the risk that an escalation with China—considered almost unavoidable in the U.S. expert debate—will induce a transformation of the international order, leading to the U.S. losing its position of global hegemon. If this is the case, than the Russian threat will increasingly be seen by American political and military elites as secondary, and Russia itself as an actor that should be kept at bay with the least possible costs to the U.S.

CONCLUSION

The Russian invasion of Ukraine should indeed be considered a transformative moment for the international order, as the authors of essays collected in this report demonstrate. The war has brought fundamental changes to NATO and the EU, set out new perspectives on Russia and Ukraine, transformed thinking about Europe's future security architecture and energy policy, and sealed the changes that have been taking place for some time in the policies of China and the countries of the Global South. If we reject extremely unlikely scenarios, which might change the course of the war (like the use of nuclear weapons by Russia), the new international order that will emerge when the guns go silent in Ukraine will, however, involve a significant element of continuity: some well-established strategic concepts and assumptions will continue to inform the policies of key actors. The United States will continue to consider China, not Russia, as its most dangerous strategic rival and the one international actor that can undermine America's global position in the long run. Germany, if it ever delivers on its historic foreign policy shift, will not abandon one of the foundational stones of its strategic culture, which is to limit the risk of confrontation with Russia. Meanwhile, Russia will continue to be a fairly attractive partner for a relatively large group of countries in the Global South willing to cooperate with Moscow and indifferent to Western calls regarding sanctions or containing Russian disinformation and propaganda.

At the same time, it is crucial to be fully aware of the real scale and true nature of the changes in international politics that were triggered or accelerated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The stakes are to avoid a repetition of 24 February. Indeed, the response of the free world, which clearly has rejected Russia's policy of force, which violates basic principles of international law and the peaceful coexistence of nations, should have one overarching objective—to ensure that the new international order, and in particular the security architecture in Europe, does not contain the seeds of another war. It is for this reason that a wide debate about the significance and effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is needed, and one to which this report, the authors and editors hope, is an important contribution.

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