

# Sanctioning the future. New chapters of war and peace in the 21st century

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## Abstract

The question of war and peace has risen to the top of the list of wicked, seemingly insoluble problems in the first quarter of the 21st century, because of the threat of nuclear destruction and the unintended negative consequences of a protracted hybrid war.

Complex thinking, capable of dealing with paradoxes, must be part of the repository of governance capabilities for decision-making if we are to avoid unresolved conflicts that bury the achievements of human civilisation. The future is sanctioned by our decisions, wittingly or unwittingly, on a daily basis.

In order to understand the chain of wars that have many components and many sources of conflict, it is worth distinguishing between the immediate causes and motivations that trigger war and the emergence of deeper, long-standing conflicts and the economic and political interests linked to armaments and the use of weapons. The notion of the military-industrial complex has come to the fore again.

**Keywords:** human security, hybrid war, military industrial complex, new knowledge and governance, transformation of the world system, wicked problems

## Szankcionált jövő. Háború és béke új fejezetei a 21. században

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## Összefoglalás

A 3. évezred kezdetétől egyre erőteljesebben kapcsolódnak össze a már korábban is észlelt globális válságtünetek: A klímaváltozás, a nyomában járó migráció, az ehhez kapcsolódó szervezett bűnözés, a társadalmi polarizáció és a nyugati „konszolidált” demokráciákat is sújtó mély megosztottság tünetegyüttesét az elmúlt években a pandémia hullámai tették még komplexebbé. Ez a tünetegyüttes összefonódottsága és egymást erősítő spill over hatásai miatt nem kezelhető sikerrel összefüggéseinek megértése nélkül. A tudományos kutatás világából már hosszú ideje érkeznek javaslatok az egészlátó, holisztikus szemlélet és módszertan kiterjesztésére. Ezek a javaslatok azonban nem törték át a széttöredezett és rövidtávú gondolkodás határait sem a politikai, sem a gazdasági életben, sem a tudományos kutatások területén. A multi- és interdiszciplináris megközelítés és holisztikus szemlélet a társadalomtudományok terén is alulmarad a szétparcellázott, párhuzamosan folyó kutatásokkal szemben. Ennek következtében az elemzések során használt fogalmaink kezdenek kiürülni, esetenként saját ellentétükbe csapnak át. Ennek jellegzetes példája a biztonság fogalma, ami a mai szóhasználatban az államok, államhatárok biztonságával, sérthetetlenségével azonos. A gyakorlatban leginkább a gazdag és erős államok (kisebb mértékben szövetségeseik) katonai biztonságát jelenti. A társadalom, az emberi közösségek és az egyén biztonságának kérdését kerüli. Az állam területi biztonságát és

'érdekeit' fenyegető veszélyek elhárítására indított háborúk pedig éppen az emberek és közösségeik biztonságát ássák alá.

Az Oroszország által 2014-ben indított, majd „befagyottak” tekintett orosz területi invázió 2022 februárja óta Ukrajna egész területére kiterjedt forró háborúként folytatódik, veszélybe sodorva az európai biztonsági architektúrát, és eszkalációval fenyegetve a harcban álló felek szomszédos országait. Az Egyesült Államok vezette NATO és az Európai Unió minden lehetséges eszközzel támogatja Ukrainát, miközben mindenáron igyekszik elkerülni a közvetlen katonai konfliktust. A közel egy éve tartó háború azonban nem tartható mesterségesen zárt határok között: a gazdasági, politikai, kulturális és társadalomlélektani eszkaláció szándékolt és nem szándékolt következményeivel elkerülhetetlenül sűríti a globális válság tünetegyüttesét és szaporítja a megoldhatatlan, „gonosz” problémák sorát.

Veszélybe kerültek azok a civilizációs, kulturális és az emberi együttélést humanizáló írott és íratlan szabályok, amelyek a II. világháborút követő korszakban kezdtek érvényesülni. Nem csupán az európai biztonsági rendet forgatta fel, de globális méretekben is elindította a visszafordíthatatlan átrendeződés folyamatait. Reflektorfénybe állította a nemzetközi és regionális biztonság és emberi jogi szervezetek tehetetlenségét. Rávilágított a nemzet, a nemzet-állam, az állami szuverenitás és biztonság, és a társadalom és emberi közösségek fogalmai közötti feloldhatatlan feszültségekre.

Egy korlátozott atomháborút, vagy egy európai talajon vívott, elhúzódó és nem kalkulálható konfliktusok sorát előidéző háborút és nem szándékolt következményeit nem lehet alábecsülni. Ez a veszély új dimenzióba helyezi és erőteljesen rontja az összefonódó válságok megszelídítésének lehetőségét.

A számos forrásból táplálkozó konfliktus háborús esemény-láncolatát válásának megértéséhez érdemes megkülönböztetni a háborút kiváltó közvetlen okokat és indokokat a mélyebben fekvő, hosszú ideje lappangó ellentétek felszínre kerülésétől és a fegyverkezéshez és a fegyverek felhasználásához kapcsolódó érdekektől. Az amerikai, orosz és kínai katonai ipari komplexumok, a globális szinten is növekvő fegyvergyártás és fegyverkereskedelem szöges ellentétben áll a globális fenntarthatóság céljaival és az emberi biztonsággal.

Ebből a globális szövevényből nem létezik gyors kivezető út. Az alternatíva megtalálásához új, komplex látásmódra és fogalmi rendszerre, röviden paradigmaváltásra van szükség, és mindenekelőtt új partneri együttműködésre a tudomány, a kormányzás és a gazdasági élet szereplői között.

**Kulcsszavak:** emberi biztonság, hibrid háború, katonai ipari komplexum, új tudás és kormányzás, a világrendszer átalakulása, gonosz problémák

## 1. In mortal danger

In his latest essay, published in English, Tamás Szentes takes stock of and discusses all the factors that have led up to the most dangerous post-World War II crisis facing us today. (Szentes 2022).

The list constantly grows:

- climate change, extreme weather events, droughts and floods, *predictable and unpredictable natural disasters*, increasing destruction of land, livestock *and crops* and, as a consequence:
- *chains of agricultural and food crises*, with *hunger* in their wake, which *created* a vicious circle of organised local violence and forced migration in the *most vulnerable regions of the world*;
- *chain reactions of and against migration* in the transit countries as well as in the developed world (especially in the European Union); a *growing* rise of anti-immigrant *extremist political forces*;
- the *spread of Covid-19* and other as yet unidentified *epidemics*;
- the protracted and escalating nature of the Russian–Ukrainian war, also known as the ‘fratricidal war’, which has brought the *threat of nuclear war* back to the stage, *with the intensification of the arms race*, the legal and illegal arms trade and militarization.

And the list goes on to include with a shattering of faith in and functioning of democracy as we know it, and ultimately a crisis of democracy, as well as vigorous anti-

science sentiments and movements along the line of deepening social and political dividedness. (V-Dem Institute 2022)

In recent years, crisis phenomena (the energy and food crises caused by war, the threat of global recession, and the resulting sense of insecurity, vulnerability and threat) were exacerbated by their interconnectedness and deepened by the Covid-19 pandemic. Unpredictable reactions have generated on a scale not seen since the Second World War.

### *Decision makers – the solution or part of the problem?*

The crisis has intensified ethnically and culturally based inward-looking tendencies which can stall or even reverse regional integration processes that were successfully initiated on several continents. Governments dealing with natural and man-made disasters and crises are increasingly pursuing individual state interests, thus contributing, wittingly or unwittingly, to an exponential increase in the sense of danger, risk factors and insecurity in vulnerable societies.

As products of the Cold War era, international institutions made up of nation-states are increasingly inadequate to deal with, or even dampen, crisis phenomena in a new context.

This inertia at the global, regional and local levels is a sign of the emptying of the international order. In short, the *international organizations and nation-state governments that are supposed to protect and extend the common good have, despite some well-intentioned efforts and attempts, become part of an increasingly opaque and fluid problematic rather than the solution. As a result, social contracts essential in democracies are breaking down.*

The management of the pandemic and the ‘vaccine war’ that followed has particularly highlighted the short-sighted egoism of nation-state governments and the negative effects of their games for short-term economic gain. This rampant process of *de facto* “*lack of solidarity across borders*” stands in stark contrast to the official mission of international organisations and governments. This contradiction is particularly acute in the case of the European Union. (Zelikow 2022)

### Science and governance

In addressing and mitigating many of the crisis symptoms, the results of rapidly developing and increasingly complex scientific research could offer significant help to decision-makers at all levels of governance.

In contrast, it was during the pandemic that there was an almost unreal increase in scepticism and often governmental rejection of science. Anti-scientific sentiment has gained ground in a way previously unimaginable not only among the kleptocratic elite of autocracies but also in the so called consolidated democracies of the most developed countries. It has become part of the narrative once again based on the principle of short-term political gain, and perpetuates the ‘friend-foe’ dichotomy in the world of big politics and everyday life.

The rapidly emerging signs of intermingled crises following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, and the contradictory government responses to them, have led to further political, intellectual, psychological, and moral uncertainty. This greatly reduces the resilience and re-organisation of societies and increases internal divisions. We are dealing with a downward spiral and do not know who, when, where, how or if it will stop.

The escalating war that has unfolded from Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 is confronted by a world without governance, consensus, shared goals or a point of alignment for all actors, and forces a choice and a resolution on the question of war and peace.

## 2. How much was this expected? Was science really not signalling?

The symptoms and dangers of the breakdown of the post-World War II world order have been highlighted by scholars, pundits and some prominent politicians for a long time. Elements of these complexities were not only

perceived and analysed in isolation. From the late 1960s, there was a succession of comprehensive assessments and proposals, from the famous reports of the Club of Rome founded by Aurelio Peccei to the Willi Brandt (North-South: a survival programme, 1980), Olaf Palme (Common Security, 1982) and Gro Harlem Brundtland (Our Common Future, 1987) reports of the 1980s. These works involved a wide range of eminent economists, sociologists, natural scientists and political experts. The UN and UNESCO pushed for a turn towards global problems by creating new programmes and institutions. In the mid-1970s, UN Secretary-General U Thant initiated the establishment of the UN University in Tokyo, which now operates a global network of campuses (the Bonn campus, called *Environment and Human Security*, was established in 2003).

Institutionalised efforts to turn towards global challenges and their interconnectedness have represented a shift from the closed world of disciplines operating overwhelmingly in isolation from each other, but have failed to bring about a paradigm shift, either in the sciences or in the world of fragmented political imagination and reality.

The most comprehensive and successful attempt to link social, economic and political change in a coherent methodological and empirical way is that of Immanuel Wallerstein, who also worked from the early 1970s on a revolutionary account of the emergence and decline of the modern world system. The ‘world-system approach’ was not readily accepted by the humanities and social sciences, and its rejection is still greater than its acceptance today. Its pioneering and complex approach was initially considered remarkable by historians and economists, but its rightly criticised deterministic features, and its methodology, which presupposed a deeper knowledge of other disciplines, kept it out of the mainstream of science.

The whirlwind acceleration of global transformation and the failure of a unilateral, disciplinary understanding of crises that originate in different areas, but are highly entangled, began to bring about a more comprehensive breakthrough in perspective at the beginning of the 21st century. Prominent examples include the analyses of Zygmunt Bauman, who uses the metaphor of fluidity to describe the ongoing changes (liquid life, liquid modernity, etc.) (Bauman, 2000, 2005). Another powerful observation is the (re)dawn of the era of interregnum (Bauman 2012): the old world (our present world) is dying with its laws, its written and unwritten rules of the game, while the new is not yet able to be born. Although Antonio Gramsci drew attention to this phenomenon in his Prison Notebooks,<sup>1</sup> written almost a century ago, its dramatic relevance to our daily lives is undeniable.

<sup>1</sup> Letters from Prison, Columbia University Press, 2011.

At the same time as Elemér Hankiss makes a similar point: in his words, at the beginning of the 21st century, humanity entered a new era of uncertainty. He observes that the grand narratives (welfare state, European model, American dream) and grand interpretations of the world (social democracy, conservatism, liberalism) that had previously played a major role in holding societies together have gradually lost their persuasive power since the end of the 20th century. In the words of Karl Jaspers<sup>2</sup> during ‘axial’ periods there is an increased risk of the collapse of beliefs and institutions and an increased need to create something new. But this is only possible if there is “the strength, the courage, the knowledge, the autonomy, the will” for human communities to “reinterpret the world, the social order, our human existence” (*Hankiss 2011*). And if they are able to agree that this requires a joint effort, a new consensus, and therefore compromise emerges.

Also in the early 2000s, Benjamin Barber, a world-renowned political thinker and public writer, formulated the global concept of interdependence, thanks to his analyses of civil society and strong democracy. He launched a series of international debates and intellectual movements called Interdependence, following the US Independence Day, to celebrate the Day of Interdependence in places around the world, from Mexico City to Brussels and Berlin, Istanbul and Dublin. Barber’s main aim was to draw attention to the growing tension between the increasingly globalised and interdependent world and nation-state democracies and decision-making, between the ‘global’ and the ‘national’, and the dangers that this poses. He stressed that democracy only has a future through cooperation and thinking together across borders, through the rebuilding of social capital and trust.

Several researchers and visiting professors at the Institute of Advanced Studies (iASK) in Kőszeg, established to study the interrelations between global, regional and local changes and to formulate development strategies, have continued the above-mentioned efforts.

Jody Jensen, also in the first decade of the new millennium, concludes that the new era of uncertainty is also an era of the mixing and hybridisation of seemingly separate phenomena. Jensen calls the new age a chaordic age, where chaos and order are simultaneously and inseparably present. The great interregnum is presented as a dynamic model in which old, traditional actors can mingle with new players of the new times, who together, in conflict or in agreement, create the new rules of the game (*Jensen 2010, 2011, 2014*).

Analysis of a world system showing signs of increasingly uncontrollable chaos and growing complexity constantly prompts researchers to search for the causes of

change and alternative solutions to introduce new questions and new concepts.

Like Wallerstein, Ervin László, a systems philosopher and author of one of the reports of the Club of Rome (*Humanity at a Turning Point, 1983*), also sees the complete transformation of the world system as inevitable and believes this will take place in the foreseeable future. If mankind is to emerge victorious from this transformation, it is essential that a planetary consciousness emerges in contrast to the current fragmented and hostile forms of consciousness, he argues.

Sándor Kerekes has enriched the emerging new conceptual web with the expression of ‘wicked’ problems that are insoluble on the basis of our present knowledge. Not only is the great transitional era uncertain, contradictory, hybrid and chaotic, but it is also full of unsolvable problems, of unsolvable equations. Wicked problems cannot be swept under the carpet, we must make decisions in the absence of solutions, and we are constantly correcting them as we go along. In doing so, unwillingly, we can contribute to the chaos and uncertainty, meanwhile hoping to reach a state of solution.

Climate change has multiplied the number of disasters and risks. In almost all areas of life, rapid responses and resilience are needed to survive. Air, soil and water have become expensive commodities due to natural and man-made disasters. The increasing interconnectedness of ecosystems and social systems requires interlinking and a new and permanent cooperation between disciplines.

The need for forecasting, managing expected disasters and risks, ‘risk management’, i.e., the use of new knowledge, has increased. All this means that the producers and transmitters of new knowledge are faced with radically new challenges and direct social responsibilities. Just as between disciplines that previously operated in isolation, so between the knowledge and decision-making landscape, a new relationship is needed, an institutionalised, horizontal type of cooperation.

The American–Canadian evolutionary biologist Dan Brooks has been working for years to translate his rich life’s work into the language of policy- and decision-makers. In several papers and lectures (*Brooks 2019, 2020a, 2020b*), Professor Brooks raised awareness of the dangers of impending pandemics and proposed ways to prepare for and protect against them. Timely warnings and proposals for their prevention and management have been ignored by decisionmakers.

János Bogárdi, has made outstanding contributions to the hydrology of extreme environmental events, risk and vulnerability studies and environmental migration research. As Deputy Rector of the UN European University and Director of its institute in Bonn, he has put the environment and human security at the heart of the institution’s research. In his volume entitled: *I am water, I will be water. Why the world revolves around the cycle of water*, he presents global problems through the lens of water management (*Bogárdi 2022*). In the iASK work-

<sup>2</sup> Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), German philosopher.

shop, he developed the concept of Landscape – Water Landscape – Soundscape together with Gergely Tóth and Zoltán Mizsei.<sup>3</sup>

With the exponential growth in the number of interfaces, there is an increasing need to bridge the gap between science and practical life (economy, culture, politics). A distinguished scholar and MEP, György Schöpflin's life's work shows how success sets the stage for failure when power (whether in smaller or larger states) loses its capacity for self-reflection. Despite a successful start to the integration process, the European Union, as a whole, is now in a state of flux concerning self-interpretation, in Schöpflin's words an "epistemological crisis", from which it can only emerge if it is able to reformulate its goals and methods of integration in a changed historical context.

In addition to the few examples highlighted in the research programme of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Kőszeg, there are countless other academic initiatives around the world. Nevertheless, to date, no adequate institutional system for mediation between science and decision-making has been established. There is no bridge or channel for relevant research results to reach their destination with the appropriate speed and efficiency, and for the right level and quality of dialogue and coordination between governments and socially responsible scientific communities.

It is possible that often the clear need for this is not clearly articulated due to the rigidity, slow reaction times and inward-looking and incompetent nature of our institutional systems.

These shortcomings will exact an ever-increasing price if we do not urgently start to transform and connect our own areas.

### *The escalation of war and the threat of doom*

In his article, Tamás Szentes, in addition to presenting and linking the factors of the crisis, places special emphasis on the Russian–Ukrainian war that unfolded in 2022 and its catastrophic consequences that are escalating before our eyes. The title of the paper refers to the threat of nuclear war, which is once again a real danger. The Russian–Ukrainian war has given a big boost to the escalation of violence and the spread of a sense of collateral threat (e.g., food crisis in Africa, energy crisis in Europe). It is as if we should see the war, geographically close to us, but present in every corner of life, as a new normal.

<sup>3</sup> The Sustainable Water Future Project, led by András Szöllősi Nagy and Anik Badhuri, with the participation of Professors János Bogárdi and Charles Vorosmarty (City University of New York), held its preparatory meeting in 2016 in the Bibó István Room of the iASK. Cooperation on complex analysis of global and regional problems has continued since then. This is reflected, among other things, in the development of the Insula Magna – Szigetköz – Csallóköz development strategy, the local application of the circular economy concept.

The written and unwritten rules and achievements of civilisation, culture and humanity's coexistence, achieved by social and political movements and aspirations that had made the avoidance of violence a primary value in the post-World War II period, are indeed under threat. (*Special Report on Human Security 2022*) The potential consequences of a nuclear war, imagined as limited, cannot be underestimated. This threat comes from hardly controllable and unpredictable actors and adds a new dimension to the possibility of taming interlocking crises.

In order to understand the chain of wars that have many components and many sources of conflict, it is worth distinguishing between the immediate causes and motivations that trigger war and the emergence of deeper, long-standing conflicts and the economic and political interests linked to armaments and the use of weapons.

### *A new phase in the nine-year war*

Beijing, 4 February 2022: President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China and President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation made the following remarks at a joint press conference ahead of the opening of the Winter Olympic Games:

- the potential for developing Sino-Russian relations is limitless;
- both countries are committed to democracy; and to an open world order with the UN at its heart;
- China and Russia are committed to the principles of international law.

On 24 February 2022, the Russian "special military operation" and territorial acquisition campaign that had the hallmarks of a new type of hybrid war in 2014, continued with Russia's open military aggression. This has resulted in unprecedented destruction in post-1945 Europe, razing to the ground industrial and civilian facilities, with the continuous bombing of kindergartens, hospitals, residential buildings, hydroelectric and nuclear power plants, energy storage and distribution centres, and the unprecedented pollution of land, water and air, with incalculable consequences in terms of human suffering and trauma. Various estimates put the death toll at over 200,000 by the end of November 2022. The number of displaced persons will be in the millions.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ukraine refugee situation. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine> [Accessed: 29.11.2022.]

Table 1 | The war in numbers

<b>Number of refugees from Ukraine</b> (Last data: 29.11.2022, UNHCR)	7,891,977
<b>Number of internally displaced persons in Ukraine</b> (Last data: 27.10.2022, UNHCR)	6,540,000
<b>Number of civilian casualties – killed</b> (Last data: 06.12.2022, OHCHR)	6,755
<b>Number of civilian casualties – injured</b> (Last data: 06.12.2022, OHCHR)	10,607
<b>Russian military casualties</b> (Last data: 17.11.2022, estimate, US)	more than 100,000
<b>Ukrainian military casualties</b> (Last data: 17.11.2022, estimate, US)	~100,000
<b>Estimated damages (billion \$)</b> (Kyiv School of Economics, 2022.09.01.)	
Residential buildings	50.5
Infrastructure	35.3
Business assets, industry	9.9
Agriculture and land	6.6
Social sphere	0.2
Vehicles	2.7
Education	7.0
Trade	2.4
Energy	3.6
Health	1.6
Public utilities	2.3
Culture, tourism, sport	2.0
Public administration buildings	0.8
Digital infrastructure	0.6
Financial sector	0.1
Environment	1.5
<b>Total:</b>	<b>127</b>

Source: Compiled by the author based on the related information.

Although opinions are divided on the specific reasons for the outbreak of war, many believe that the US and the ‘West’ provoked the conflict through NATO expansion and their efforts to isolate Russia, which the Russian President, who has been in office since 2000, has repeatedly condemned in international fora. According to Putin, Russia bears no responsibility, and it is up to the West alone to decide when the war will end. To this day, this is the official Russian position. Few, however, doubt that Russia is carrying out unilateral aggression by invading Ukraine and systematically destroying its infrastructure. It would be misleading, however, to see the war solely as a manifestation of resurgent Greater Russian imperialism, or perhaps as a ‘colonial’ war for the mere acquisition of territory (Snyder 2022). This triggers short-term or even strategic calculations of the opposing parties in combination with the unexpected surprises of

an uncertain and unpredictably changing chaotic world. Spontaneous or forced responses are complex and condensed, and dynamic manifestations of hybridity and wicked problems. However, the deeper layers of the protracted nature of the crisis can be understood in the context of market fundamentalism, the crisis of the neo-liberal economic world system (Kaldor 2007; Szentesi 2022) and its irreversible transformation.

### *Pre-history of the war*

On 10 February 2007, at the Munich Security Summit, President Putin was clear:

*“NATO enlargement has nothing to do with modernising the Alliance or enhancing Europe’s security. On the contrary, it is a serious risk of explosion that reduces the level of mutual trust.”*

He reminded the Western leaders present of the speech made by then NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner on 7 May 1990: *“...the very fact that we are able not to deploy NATO forces beyond the borders of the Federal Republic is a stable security guarantee for the Soviet Union.”*

Putin reacted to NATO’s plans to expand in Ukraine. He did not receive a substantive and clear response from NATO leaders, except to reiterate that each country is free to decide whether it wants to be a member state – so the way is clear for Ukraine to join. The confrontation has escalated.

Putin, the ‘young, capable leader’ chosen by Yeltsin initially wanted to continue along the path of his predecessor: democratisation and the building of a market economy by Russian means but respecting the rule of law and international law. The precariousness of this path, its cumulative failures, the increasing marginalisation of Russia, the consequent growing frustration of society and its admittedly growing nostalgia for the world power aspirations of Stalinism, soon became clear. The conviction, also instilled by the Kremlin, that the country’s slide was caused by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev’s permissive, détente policy, and his ‘betrayal’ through unilateral disarmament and the end of the Cold War. The conviction that the West, and in particular the United States, which controls NATO, was seeking to contain and ultimately destroy Russia, led to the development of a geopolitical doctrine that was completely at odds with the previous one.

In the Russian view, Russia must regain its former influence and recognition as a world power and be given its rightful place in shaping world affairs. This is only possible if it abandons the path set by the West, stops succumbing to the ideological pressures of liberalism, stops worrying about the rule of law and stops following values and rules dictated from outside. On the contrary, it should seek to strengthen itself economically, militarily and culturally, and to develop a sphere of interests that



**Figure 1** | Is it really possible to ‘contain’ Russia?  
 Source: [https://monarchaphuman.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/heartland\\_rimland.jpg](https://monarchaphuman.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/heartland_rimland.jpg)

corresponds to its own interests and values, in other words, Russia First (see *Figure 1*).

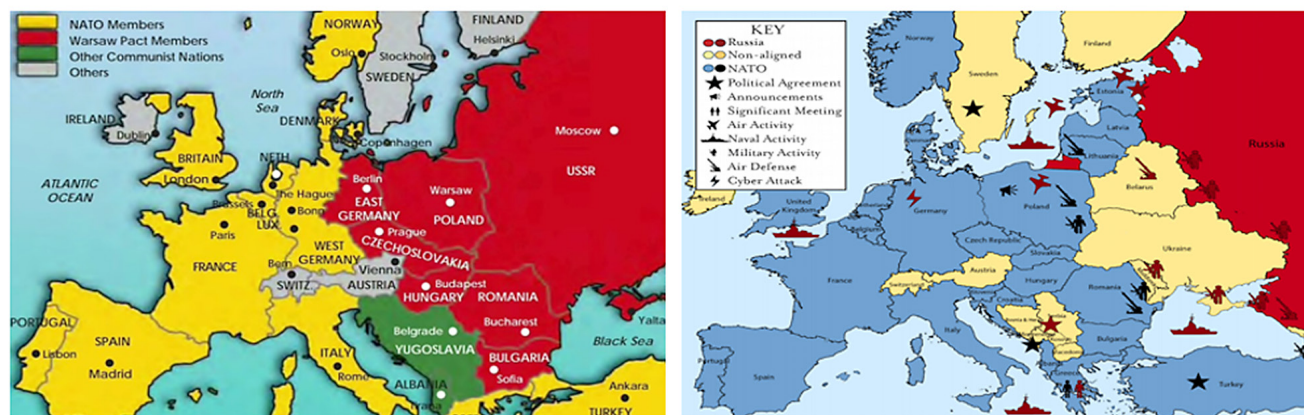
For this 180-degree turn and the promotion of a new Russian doctrine, Putin appealed to the widely accepted view in Russian society that Russia is a special entity operating according to its own internal laws and values, whose world-historical vocation is to fight inexorably against evil (the United States and NATO, above all). Literary and philosophical works expressing a particular Russian destiny and sense of mission came into vogue, above all in the writings of Ivan Ilyin, who was forced to flee the Soviet Union because of his democratic views, and the teachings of Alexander Dugin, who is still active.

During his emigration to Switzerland, Ilyin made a major ideological turn: turning his back on democracy and the rule of law, he proclaimed, following Carl Schmitt, that the task of politics is to identify and neutralise the enemy. According to him, Russia’s vocation made the use of ruthlessness and violence not only acceptable but inevitable: “My prayer is my sword and my sword is my prayer”, he wrote.

Alexander Dugin is still an influential guru and ideologue whose most important contribution to the new doctrine is the Eurasia vision, according to which Russia must not only restore the former borders of the Soviet empire, but also forge a strong alliance with its neighbours (Iran, Syria, Iraq, Uzbekistan, etc.). After the crushing by police violence and arrests of opposition movements demanding democracy organised by the Russian world chess champion Kasparov, Dugin launched a new nationalist-populist counter-movement, with one main demand to purge Russian public life and politics of international influence. His main slogan, “Russian Russia!”, fits perfectly into the nationalist-populist movements of the 21st century. Protests with militaristic overtones have successfully promoted the new Russian geopolitical doctrine.

This turning back to earlier periods of history has laid the foundations for a security and military doctrine for the future. A new image of the enemy was born, based on a complete rejection of the West, with the central idea, dusted down and developed further, that the ‘West’ seeks to encircle, weaken and ultimately destroy Russia. The antidote to this is the creation of a new Russian empire, more extensive and more powerful than ever before, which is also the central power of the New Eurasia. The new imperial demands include that the former Soviet satellite states must become neutral, withdraw from NATO, in other words, Russia will push NATO back to the 1990 borders, reintegrating the former Soviet allies into its sphere of interest (see *Figure 2*).

In its official rhetoric, Russia insists on emphasising its peaceful objectives, in addition to its proclaimed old-new military security interests. To this day, it terms the nine-month war a ‘special military operation’. This transparent self-contradiction highlights and explains the confusion and failure of the Russian military leadership to date. Without clear and stated objectives and a command and army that identifies with them, a territorial war cannot be fought successfully. This is why Rus-



**Figure 2** | Before 1989 | After 1991  
 Source: Strategic Foresight in an Age of Disruption. The Challenge of Complexity. Seán Cleary, iASK – 8 November 2022

sia's 'special military operation' has failed, despite its superiority in manpower, military might and widespread capability of destruction and intimidation.

*The moment has come: the world according to Putin – miscalculations based on real elements*

At the end of 2021, following the unexpected, unexplained and embarrassing US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Putin saw the time as ripe to neutralise Ukraine and install a pro-Russian government. His plan was to scare the Ukrainians into giving up the fight with a quick military action, and he was sure the locals would welcome the Russian soldiers as half-brothers with bread and salt, that President Zelensky would flee, and "free elections" under the shadow of Russian bayonets could be called soon. What were these ideas based on? In short: the fascination with numbers, might (human and physical resources such as land and energy) and economic interests. In more detail:

- the country's vast territory, with its inexhaustible natural resources, raw materials, especially oil, on which the viability of many European countries depend;
- the enormous superiority of the military capacity of armed forces and their supplies over the opponent;
- the dependence on Russian oil of EU countries that are militarily unprepared, neglecting their NATO responsibilities, corruptible and unwilling waging war;
- the passivity, pacifism and inaction of NATO, and especially of its European member states, which are increasingly disorganised, weakened and, in the words of former US President Donald Trump, "brain-dead", and friendly with Putin;
- a still militarily strong, but economically weakening US, unable to cope with its internal social divisions, to turn further inwards, which would continue if Trump wins the election as hoped;
- the growing hostility to America and the West in the Global South, the less developed countries, or at least the rejection of the Western neoliberal doctrine, the Washington Consensus;
- despite deep-rooted cultural antagonisms and previous power rivalries, a rising China and Russia, which are again openly aspiring to become world powers, have overlapping global political interests and a tacit alliance based on these interests.

Putin and the power apparatus around him must have believed that the moment had come to launch a hot war following the cold, with consequences Russia had little to fear. The West would impose the usual sanctions and make political declarations on Russia, while the exposed European countries would continue to pay for cheap Russian oil, and while most of them would want to avoid any direct or indirect armed intervention. Russia is prepared for sanctions, political tempers will subside, Ukraine will quickly return to the embrace of Big Brother, and the two peoples (which are one anyway) will merge again. In

the words of former President Medvedev: in a few years' time, no one will remember the Ukrainians.<sup>5</sup>

Russia can march on towards the realisation of its revived and perceived imperial dreams. In a kind of alliance of interests with China, in a ring of Eurasian nations and friendly countries, it can create a new and strong global pole of Techno-Autocracies, as opposed to a weakening and geographically shrinking pole of Techno-Democracies. The bipolar world thus reborn owes its existence to Russia's capacity to act, which, according to Ilyin's recipe, correctly and precisely identified and neutralised the enemy assigned to it. That is why its popularity, prestige and influence at the global level will continue to grow. With Russia at the centre, things will fall into place. That is not what happened. Putin miscalculated.

- Ukraine did not capitulate, it was ready for a Russian attack;
- Russian soldiers were greeted with antipathy and unprecedented resistance instead of bread and salt;
- Putin has achieved what no one else has managed to do in the last thirty years: unite Europe and NATO, instead of standing idly by as the wheels of history turn back;
- the United States was not taken by surprise by the war, and the events of the war show that the US military-industrial complex was not idle, although it wanted (and still wants) to avoid open military confrontation with Russia, but
- together with the European Union, it has helped and supported Ukraine's resistance with all possible means;
- European public opinion, after initial hesitation and contradictions, was almost unanimously in favour of Ukraine, supporting its sovereignty and full independence and its wartime application to join the European Union;
- Europeans have taken in and put to work millions of Ukrainian refugees;
- Ukrainian identity and internal social solidarity strengthened, a new modern European nation was born as a late child (with all its expected internal contradictions);
- the political identity of the European Union has been unexpectedly strengthened;
- the European wing of NATO is united in an unprecedented unity with the expected accession of Finland and Sweden;
- China has not directly or indirectly sided with territorial aggression, but it did stand up for the principle of territorial sovereignty at the G20 summit on 15–16 November 2022, although it did not openly condemn Russia's war;<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> US using Ukrainians as bargaining chip in 'great game', says ex-Russian president. <https://tass.com/politics/1528119> [Accessed: 09.11.2022.]

<sup>6</sup> G20 Bali Leaders' Declaration. Bali, Indonesia, 15–16 November 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/60201/2022-11-16-g20-declaration-data.pdf> (Accessed: 20.11.2022.)

- Africa and the Global South, while condemning the sanctions that triggered the food crisis, remained largely neutral;
- On 14 November, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning Russian aggression, with a few votes against (14) and a large number of abstentions (73).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2** | Distribution of votes (UN, 14 November 2022) – for (green), against (red), abstained (yellow)

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, South Korea, South America, United States of America, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Federated States of Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, Italy, New Zealand, Niger, Northern Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tuvalu, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Zambia, Cape Verde
Bahamas, China, Central African Republic, Cuba, Eritrea, Ethiopia, North Korea, Iran, Mali, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Syria, Russia, Belarus
Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Burundi, Cambodia, Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland, Gabon, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen

Compiled by the author based on the related information.

### *Deeper causes: irreconcilable models of social and political organisation*

Andrei Kortunov, Russian political analyst and head of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) in Moscow, outlines three scenarios for the outcome of the war:

#### 1) ‘The victory of liberal hegemony’

Russia loses the war, becomes ‘tame’ and retreats. The US-led monopolistic world order will return, with China

as its only potential challenger, and the West will find it easier to reason with it.

#### 2) ‘No winner’ scenario

The military conflict ends indecisively, leaving the two (Russian and Ukrainian) post-Soviet political and social systems in sharp and irreconcilable contrast. The West is forced to compromise with China, the rapprochement is prolonged and requires more flexibility and accommodation from the West. All this leads to a reform of the global order: the UN and its institutions are overhauled, the archaic norms of international public law are also transformed, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, etc. are rethought.

#### 3) The ‘Incessant conflict’ scenario

A scenario of permanent chaos, where longer and shorter ceasefires alternate with renewed armed conflicts. The global arms race intensifies, international institutions collapse under pressure and internal inertia. (Kortunov 2022)

Kortunov sees the irreconcilable conflict as the irreconcilability of two different models of post-Soviet social and political organisation.

Ukraine has clearly chosen the Western model. With its setbacks, contradictions and many internal weaknesses ranging from pervasive corruption to extreme nationalism and abysmal record on minority rights, it has irreversibly embarked on a path of democratisation, and envisages its future within the European Union.

Russia, after a few years of hesitation and failed attempts, has gone in the opposite direction over the past two decades. Despite its vast territorial, natural resource and population superiority, it has been left rather alone in the escalation of the war, while Ukraine enjoys the unlimited support of the West in all areas.

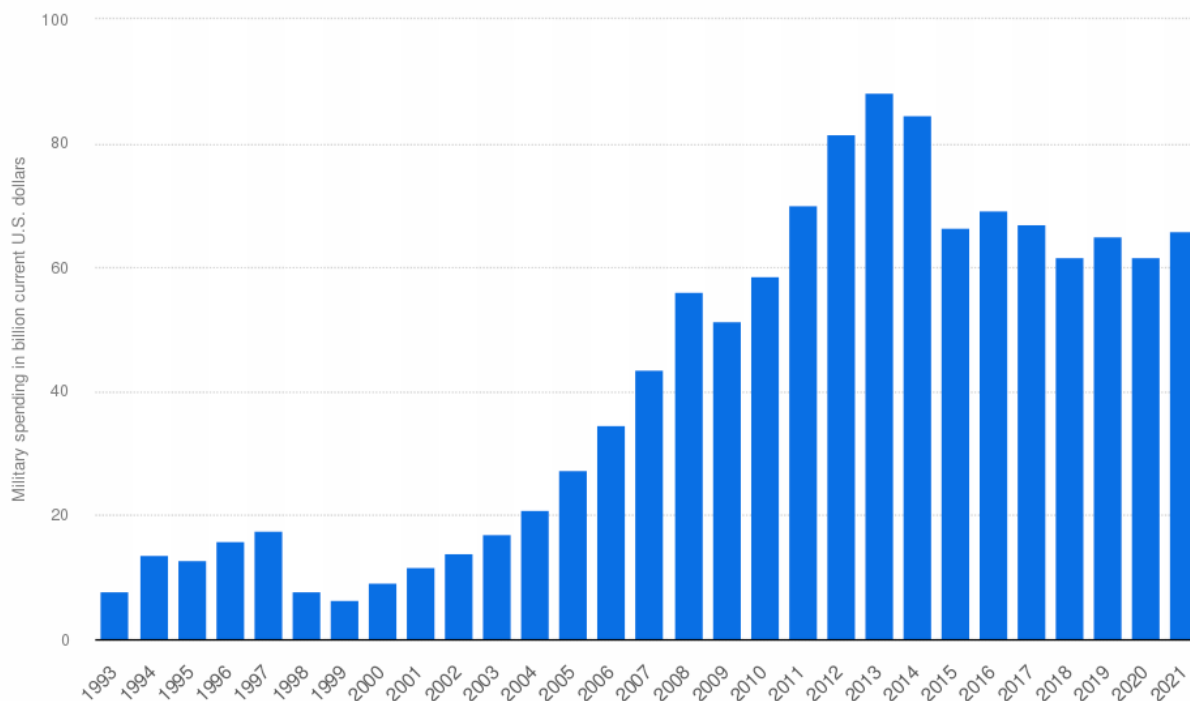
### *Self-image and self-correction of the West – Putin and Gazputyin*

*“We stand tall and we see further.”*  
(Madeleine Albright)<sup>8</sup>

Despite the proliferation of threatening omens, which were either not taken seriously or deliberately ignored, Europe was caught unprepared by a war that, on the surface, bore the hallmarks of conventional warfare, and at first sight seemed an atavistic phenomenon. Europe’s leading politicians hoped, and some even proclaimed until the last moment, that with their mediation the conflict could be settled peacefully through negotiation.

<sup>7</sup> Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3994052?ln=en> [Accessed: 18.11.2022.] <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N22/679/12/PDF/N2267912.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>8</sup> Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright. Interview on NBC-TV “The Today Show” with Matt Lauer. Columbus, Ohio, 19 February 1998.



Source  
SIPRI  
© Statista 2022

Additional Information:  
Russia; SIPRI; 1993 to 2021

**Figure 3** Military expenditure in Russia between 1993 and 2021 (billion \$) SIPRI. (April 25, 2022). Military spending in Russia from 1993 to 2021 (in billion current U.S. dollars) [Graph]. In Statista. Retrieved November 06, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1203160/military-expenditure-russia/>

The outbreak of open armed conflict, however, was marked by Russia's conscious and systematic development of its military potential over the years, which has been traceable since 2008, an attempt to "modernise" the Russian army, and thorough preparations for all possible variants of hybrid war.

The continent's dependence on cheap Russian gas and oil has led to a one-sided vulnerability and impoverishment, and in many cases has created new forms of corruption. (Former German Chancellor Schröder could hardly be persuaded to give up his seat on the Gazprom supervisory board. His close and simultaneous ties to Putin and money earned him the nickname Gazputyin.)

The German industrialist Martin Brudermüller's world view and his particular vision of the market testify to a total lack of foresight and complex thinking: "cheap Russian energy is the basis of our industrial competitiveness."<sup>9</sup> The statement is true, but it lacks the price calculation of cheapness.

Treating as a given the economic advantages based on hubris mixed with triumphalism and unilateral energy

dependence has not helped in understanding the dangers inherent in Russia's radically changed strategic and security concept. The European component of NATO, and the European Union itself, relied on the military strength of the United States and its reasserted leadership after Trump's fall. It has sought to maintain good economic and other relations with Russia and hoped to avoid armed conflict, or at least keep it at bay. An excellent insight into the European NATO member states' alarmingly diminished sense of threat and responsibility is provided by retired General Richard Shirreff's novel *War with Russia* (2016), based on his own experiences.

The United States has itself provided a rationale for Russian rearmament by supporting Ukraine's membership in NATO, has monitored Russia's military re-modernisation and has been involved in Ukraine's defence preparations since 2014. The CIA's strong determination to use all means to prevent further attempts by Russian intelligence services to interfere in US domestic politics, particularly with regard to elections, may have played a role.

The European Union has been shocked by the outbreak and early manifestation of the protracted nature of the hot war that followed the radicalisation of Cold War rhetoric. The shock was followed by an unexpected turn of events: A 180-degree turn in Germany's pacifist and

<sup>9</sup> Ukraine war pushes Germans to change. They are wavering. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/12/world/europe/germany-russia-ukraine-war.html?searchResultPosition=1> [Accessed: 08.11.2022.]

pro-Russian policy, the unambiguous formulation of a new military doctrine, a boom in arms production and a multiplication of military aid to Ukraine, and the entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO.

### *Sanctions*

The issue of sanctions has divided world public opinion, including economic, political and strategic defence experts, from the moment they were introduced, at the beginning of the war. The first critics pointed out that the sanctions could have been prepared well in advance, but instead they hit vulnerable societies and the poorest countries in the world, especially Africa, because of their spill-over effects. They are therefore morally and politically unacceptable. Because of their spill-over effects, they do more harm to those imposing sanctions than good.<sup>10</sup>

In the short term, this argument might have seemed more or less valid. Russians are buying fewer luxury cars; they need to find local alternatives to IKEA and McDonald's for consumption and leisure. It has become more difficult, for many, impossible to maintain Western consumption habits and tourism, but all that has not stopped the war economy.

However, the unforeseen prolongation of the war means that the situation is different in the medium and long term.

The loss of imports of high technical value-added items, chips and semiconductors affects all aspects of life, but its negative impact on arms production and the continued supply of components for military equipment has disastrous consequences for the outcome of the war. In the medium-long run, it will also set back the country's economic growth and undermine its capacity to deliver for a long time to come.

The transition away from cheap export oil will not be a quick and painless process. But the search for alternatives is on. To the extent that it succeeds, Russia will lose its most important blackmail potential vis a vis the European Union. In this case, it is also true that smaller and more exposed countries, especially in Russia's neighbourhood, will have to make greater sacrifices and show less enthusiasm for maintaining and further imposing sanctions. The twists and turns of the debate within the EU are instructive for the development of a new European defence architecture.

Another important lesson is the paradoxical nature of the initial reactions of European societies and their political leaders. The justified indignation born of senseless sacrifices and atrocities proved ill-advised when the exclusion extended to representatives of Russian high cul-

ture, science and sport. The banning of Tchaikovsky from Europe's concert halls has greatly increased the popularity of President Putin and the war within Russia.

### *The new features of war*

It takes countless forms, from conventional warfare, now almost forgotten and thought unthinkable in Europe, to cyber-attacks and the most varied technical levels of disruption and fearmongering. Among the many new visible and invisible features, the Russian-Ukrainian war is the first in the world to be fought with drones.

The living conditions of the civilian population and the continuous and brutal attacks on human security have been added to the list of war crimes. There is no accurate data on the deportation of Ukrainian border residents to Russia, nor on the destruction of the environment caused by the war, nor on the ongoing and planned rapes, torture and executions of prisoners. What is certain is that the list will be long.

The threat of a limited nuclear attack, however, has led to an escalation of the threat of escalation and has opened up a new dimension of complex crises: it has brought the possibility of the destruction of human civilisation as we know it - the threat of the end. The pendulum of self-destruction has reached the swinging limit. The spectre of exterminism in E.P. Thomson's wording started to haunt again.

The question now, as forty years ago, is whether we can, and want to, act together to move forward, and if so, who can act and what can be done?

### *Cui prodest?*

Interestingly, few people ask the most basic question: who benefits from the war? The protracted armed conflict has benefited the military-industrial complex on both sides, illegal arms dealers, cartelised oil producers and suppliers such as OPEC. The Russian oligarchs have suffered heavy losses during the war, with several suffering unexpected deaths. But the international network of oligarchs profited greatly. The US military-industrial complex was also a clear winner in the protraction of the war: a large part of the rapidly aging state-of-the-art weapons given to Ukraine as aid, allowing them to be tested and amortized. In addition, new orders are stimulating technical innovation (*Devlin 2022*).

Even if Ukraine, which is fighting for independence, achieves its goal, it will find it very difficult to recover and meet the conditions for EU membership. For the time being, however, there is no sign of a ceasefire or compromise. After the war, the devastated country will need to be rebuilt including attention to mass graves, bombed civilian infrastructure, weapons graveyards, hidden mines and unexploded missiles.

<sup>10</sup> Could the Ukraine conflict be an opportunity for the global south? <https://frontline.thehindu.com/world-affairs/interview-jomo-kwame-sundaram-could-the-russia-ukraine-conflict-be-an-opportunity-for-the-global-south/article65958537.ece> [Accessed: 14.11.2022.]

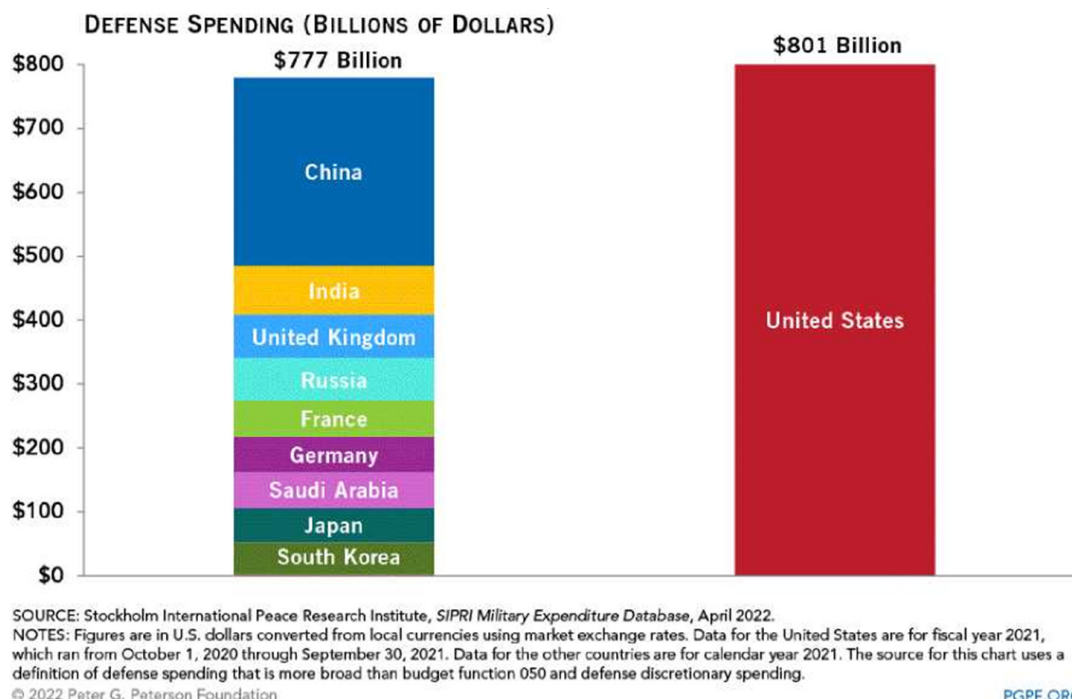


Figure 4 | The United States of America spent more on military spending in 2021 than the other 9 countries combined

### *The military-industrial complex gets a new lease on life*

In his 1961 farewell address, President Eisenhower drew attention to the dangers of overexpansion of the military-industrial complex. The general believed that a sector that guaranteed profits from the interweaving of the state and the private sector could undermine American democracy. Military-industrial complexes control America, but slowly the whole world, and this raises the danger of the influence of power in the wrong hands (*Lead-better 2011*). Today, sixty years after Eisenhower's warning, the US military budget is three times that of China, considered its main rival (*Figure 4*). As soon as the arsenals were emptied, the production of the 'next generation' of weapons began. For the deployment of the latest military technology to be effective, some 60–70% of existing capacity needs to be destroyed.

The notion of the military-industrial complex, almost forgotten after the Cold War, has come to the fore again.

It seems that after the unexpected, unexplained and embarrassing consequences of the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the suppliers to the defence industry did not have to mourn for long. The US quickly found the 'good war'. The military-industrial complex is back on the rails, with Republicans and Democrats so far jointly supporting the Pentagon's war budget (*Bacevich 2022*).

By 2023, the US military-industrial complex is expected to come to a standstill, shedding its weapons in storage and testing the latest military technology. Long-term orders will be placed and further financial sacrifices will

become unnecessary. If the war reaches a stalemate, it will be time for a peace agreement or at least a ceasefire.

The Russian military-industrial complex presents a more difficult picture. Putin continues to arm by any means necessary. The significant advantage in nuclear weapons gives Russia considerable potential for blackmail and threats.

### *If not now, when? A new chance for the European construction*

Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has been outspoken in his condemnation of the aggression since the beginning of the war, calling on President Putin, to reverse his decision and start peace talks for Russia, Ukraine and Europe. Putin has to admit, the argument goes, that the military invasion has done the opposite of what he had hoped: it has reinforced the cultural and linguistic identity and commitment to sovereignty of Ukrainian society. It has also welded the European Union and NATO into an unprecedented unity.

The European Union is supporting Ukraine in every possible way: financially, with humanitarian aid, by taking in refugees from the war and providing the military equipment and aid supplies needed to defend the country. It has also begun the costly, cumbersome and protracted process of cutting off Russian gas supplies and switching to alternative energy sources. Borrell believes that this will lead to a strengthening of the EU's international role and that a new geopolitical union is emerging

(European Union External Action,<sup>11</sup>). By coming to Ukraine's defence against Russian invasion, the EU is rejecting "the law of the jungle that 'might makes right'," says Borrell. Neutrality is unacceptable in this situation, and there can be no equivalence between the aggressor and the attacked. The framing of 'special military operations' as self-defence, of Ukrainian society and political leadership as Nazis, are part of an ideological narrative based on a falsification of history, which serves domestic political ends. It is by reference to this that anti-war rallies can be crushed.

Emmanuel Macron proposed the creation of a European Political Community (EPC) at a conference on the future of Europe at the European Parliament on 9 May 2022. Josep Borrell launched a consultation on the proposal on 10 June, involving the leaders of 44 countries. On 6 October, leaders from 40 countries held the first meeting of the EPC in Prague Castle. The meeting was attended by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel. Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, joined the meeting online. In addition to the EU Member States, the Heads of State and Government of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Turkey and the United Kingdom attended. Russia and Belarus were not invited. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called the EPC a "great innovation" that will allow European leaders to freely agree on their common problems. The EPC is scheduled to meet twice a year, next in Moldova in spring 2023 and in Spain in autumn 2023.

Olaf Scholz delivered a wide-ranging speech on the challenges and opportunities facing Europe and the European Union at the University of Prague on 29 August 2022, focusing on solidarity, but also on restoring Europe's original peace mission, close cooperation between NATO member states, relations with the United States, China's aspirations to superpower status and the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union. The German Chancellor spoke self-critically about the EU's weaknesses, the unfulfilled promises of enlargement to the East, and the overdue reform of treaties and conventions. European rules are not set in stone – they can be changed if necessary, and relatively quickly. Rapid decisions, majority voting to replace the veto right, and the effectiveness of the Commission will be essential to the accession of the ten potential Member States, including Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. For the European Union to take greater responsibility for its own security and to become a global player, it needs stronger sovereignty, but above all it needs to free itself from unilateral dependencies on energy imports. Equally, there is a need

for defence synergies – the creation of a common European defence organisation.

Alongside this, of course, NATO would remain the main guarantor of European security and the United States would remain the most important ally of an enlarged and strengthened EU.

"When if not now?" and "Who if not we?", the great questions of the Velvet Revolution of '89, which are preserved on a bronze plaque on the wall of the University of Prague.

Thirty three years later Olaf Scholz repeats the question of the heroic time "When if not now shall we lay the foundations of freedom, security and democracy?" "When, if not now, will we overcome the differences that hinder our cooperation? Who if not us would stand up for European values, at home and abroad?" Scholz's speech lacked the lecturing tone and generalisations that typically characterise European politicians.<sup>12</sup>

The European Union's proposal for a new Marshall Aid<sup>13</sup> to the new candidate countries is also a self-reflective proposal for long-term thinking and shared responsibility.<sup>14</sup>

Putin and the Russian military leadership and army are being held accountable for war crimes in increasingly concrete and articulate terms, but for the time being they are not confirming the end of the war, but rather its prolongation. The communiqué following the official visit of the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, to Washington on 2 December 2022 illustrates this dichotomy. With Macron and Scholz, the Franco-German axis could be set in motion again, and it is possible that Ursula von der Leyen and Josep Borrell will carry this momentum to the EU as a whole. The sad fact is that this new opening could hardly have taken place without war.

### *Forever war – Afghanistan forever?*

I asked this question in a presentation I gave recently.<sup>15</sup> In the six months since then, there have been glimpses of a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement, and there have been some candidates for mediation, but the two warring sides and NATO (and the 'West'), which supports Ukraine, are irreconcilably clinging to their own agendas and unilaterally imposed negotiating conditions. Given Russia's human and material resources, despite all its military failures to date, and the ideological, political and

<sup>11</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS). [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/_en) [Accessed: 26.04.2022].

<sup>12</sup> Speech by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the Charles University in Prague on Monday, 29 August 2022. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/scholz-speech-prague-charles-university-2080752> [Accessed: 18.10.2022.]

<sup>13</sup> International Expert Conference on the Recovery, Reconstruction and Modernisation of Ukraine. Berlin, 25 October 2022.

<sup>14</sup> A Marshall plan for Ukraine: G7 Presidency and European Commission to invite experts to a conference on the reconstruction of the war-torn country. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/AC\\_22\\_6385](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/AC_22_6385)

<sup>15</sup> Ferenc Miszlivetz: Afghanistan Forever? 27th International Summer University, 29.06.2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMvW1U6hNc> [Accessed: 10.11.2022.]

organisational belligerence of the entire political system, a complete victory for Ukraine is unrealistic, despite constant Western military assistance. Russia may give up some of its newly conquered territories, but withdrawal from Donetsk and Luhansk is unlikely in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the West's determination at the ideological and political levels is undeniable, but in terms of expendable resources, this support is finite.

Another wicked problem or paradox does not aid the start of peace negotiations. While the German chancellor is on the phone with the Russian president to discuss possible conditions for starting negotiations, international organisations are constantly updating and publishing a list of Russian war crimes and culprits, with Putin at the head. This double message is hard to make clear: 'let's sit down, let's compromise, let's have peace, then you can go to prison for life!'

However, it is the threat of nuclear war and the expected turnaround in public opinion and the political situation that could hasten a negotiated settlement.

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The question of war and peace has risen to the top of the list of wicked, seemingly insoluble problems in the first quarter of the 21st century, because of the threat of nuclear destruction and the unintended negative consequences of a protracted hybrid war.

Complex thinking, capable of dealing with paradoxes, must be part of the repository of governance capabilities for decision-making if we are to avoid unresolved conflicts that bury the achievements of human civilisation. The future is sanctioned by our decisions, wittingly or unwittingly, on a daily basis.

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