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The Ukraine war and the changing balance of power in the world

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The world's absolutely dominant superpower, the United States, is in free fall. And when empires fall, it can lead to desperate times.

These are exactly the kind of times we are living through at the moment – with all the unpredictability and danger that implies, as the old empire fights to the last to retain its position in the imperial world system.

It is not just the United States and the dominance of that empire that is on the verge of collapse – it is on the verge of taking the whole of the West with it.

The absolute dominance of Western imperialism is reaching its end – ideologically, economically and militarily. This is not something that the monopolised Western mainstream media is reporting. We live in a media ostracism that highlights Western ideology and values as universal and worthy of pursuit.

The struggle for access to natural resources and new markets is leading to a new cold war and an increasingly antagonistic, polarised and conflict-ridden world with the danger of all-out war. The nuclear danger is imminent.

The Covid19 pandemic exacerbated the global, systemic and multifaceted crisis of capitalism. Now the Ukraine war is adding new dimensions to this situation and accelerating the rapid change the world is undergoing.

The NATO summit in Madrid on 29 and 30 June made it clear that the Ukraine war is far from over, nor that real peace negotiations are on the way. Quite the contrary. The aggressive Western alliance is preparing for a protracted war that could escalate into a full-scale land war between NATO and Russia. This will not only be to the detriment of Ukrainians and Russians, but also of the European peoples who will actually be involved.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said directly on the sidelines of the summit, that “we must prepare ourselves for the fact that it could take years”

We are looking into hell on earth

In Britain, the Army's top general, Sir Patrick Sanders, recently wrote in a letter to British soldiers:

“We are the generation that must prepare an army to fight in Europe again ... It is my paramount duty to make our army as lethal and effective as it can be. The time is now, and the opportunity is ours to seize.”

The general has therefore told troops to prepare to “fight and defeat Putin's armies in a European land war”.

The general's demands of his soldiers are in line with the expanded war aims set by US Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III back in April: the US “wants to see Russia weakened to the point where it can no longer act as it has by invading Ukraine.” In other words: The dominant powers in NATO want a longer war to exhaust and strategically weaken Russia.

All this regardless of the human cost in terms of war casualties, devastation and starvation. As David Beasley, head of the UN Food Programme, said recently about the world food situation, we live in “very, very scary times”. If war does not end here and now, “we face hell on earth”.

At the same time, you can experience features on Russian TV where they threaten to use nuclear weapons, and state that London will be the first strategic NATO target to be hit by Russian missiles if a third world war breaks out.

The war of sanctions is hitting hard, with protests, industrial action and riots already taking place in several countries, in-

cluding in the West – and this before the expected recession in the world economy has set in. Demonstrations in London against deteriorating living conditions due to rising food and fuel prices and rising rents: “Cut the war budget – not welfare”. Similar in Belgium and more recently in France. Social unrest in Sri Lanka which is running out of fuel.

In other words:

The worldview that post-WWII generations grew up with, including the shifts brought about by the fall of socialism, is being reshuffled before our eyes these months. If we want a full understanding of what is happening, we cannot be content with taking the West’s perspective. The war and its consequences must be read in a global perspective.

So what are the trends and changes taking place? Where is the world – under the conditions of imperialism, of course – heading?

Earthquake-like changes

In mid-April, the annual St Petersburg International Economic Forum was held in the Russian city of St Petersburg. The conference had participants from 141 countries. There were 43 ministerial-level participants and 1500 top business people from every continent. Not an unimportant forum, and very characteristic of the developments underway: Outside the circle of powerful states whose doings and decisions we are privy to at home, processes are under way in other parts of the world that are helping to shape developments, outside the G7 circle.

It was Russia’s President Putin who opened the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, and his speech was neither incoherent, moronic nor otherwise sickly. Putin stated soberly, that “the era of the unipolar world order is over”. He confidently declares:

“The United States declared itself the winner of the Cold War, the messenger of God on earth, a power without obligations but only interests, even sacred interests. They do not seem to have realised that in recent decades new centres of power have emerged on the planet and that they are shouting louder and louder.”

He describes these processes as “objective, as truly revolutionary earthquake-like changes in geopolitics, in the global economy, in the field of technology, in the whole system of international relations...”

If there is anything we can conclude at this stage after four months of war, it is that “these earthquake-like changes” have been amplified. The war is well on its way to nailing “the rest of the world” – China, Russia, India, South Africa and many more – more firmly together.

For even far from Europe and the Eurasian continent, the changes are taking hold.

Non-aligned movement and Africa on the move

A few more striking examples of what is happening:

The so-called Non-Aligned Movement, which has lived a reclusive existence for some decades with Pax Americana, marked the 60th anniversary of its founding in the autumn of 2021. That was with China and Russia as observers along with 105 countries.

They endorsed a document from the 2006 meeting of the non-aligned movement in Havana and a statement from a foreign ministers’ meeting in Venezuela in 2019 supporting the principles of the UN Charter and the principles of peaceful coexistence among countries and peoples. These were decisions in direct opposition to the US rules-based order. In other words: end the world order that has prevailed until now.

Turning our attention to the African continent, it is a fact that the vast majority of countries do not align themselves with the West’s sanctions regime, even though they have been under pressure to mobilise in favour of war. The vast majority of African countries have opposed the pressure campaign.

This was symbolically demonstrated on 20 June when Ukrainian President Zelensky held one of his much-publicised video conferences. This time with the 55-member African Union. Heads of state from four (four!) of them participated in the video conference. The four were the presidents of Senegal, Ivory Coast and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) and the NATO-installed head of Libya’s Presidential Council.

93 percent of the leaders on the African continent stayed away as a convincing expression of Africa’s neutrality in the proxy war between Russia and the West.

Threads to Latin America

Latin America is also stirring.

The recent Summit of the Americas provided a telling example. Held every three years, the high-profile summit is where the US usually meets its “South American backyard”. But that was not the case this year in Los Angeles.

The US started by excluding Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. That prompted several countries to send low-level participants, and a string of presidents stayed away. The criticism was most evident from Mexico, traditionally seen as one of the US’s core allies on the American continent. President Obrador said:

“There can be no Summit of the Americas if all the countries of the American continent do not participate.”



Mr. Obrador also took a swipe at the US over the blockade of Cuba, which he called “a policy of genocide” back in May and called for to be lifted at the June summit.

Washington “is losing its backyard”, as several analysts noted. They pointed out that countries, which until recently were totally in the pocket of the US – perhaps in competition with the EU – may now realistically turn to other international partners such as China.

BRICS consolidate and expand

The BRICS grouping is also consolidating at this time. It currently consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, but recently major countries such as Iran and Argentina have also applied to join.

Other countries like Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Thailand are just inside the BRICS perimeter, and when the organisation held its summit in Beijing in June, leaders from several of them were present.

Already, Bangladesh, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay have joined BRICS’ own development bank, the New Development Bank.

At the BRICS Business Forum on 22 June, it was announced that the grouping is discussing the creation of a new international reserve currency to challenge the dollar hegemony. At the 14th BRICS summit, held at the same time, Chinese President Xi called for “opposing hegemonism and power politics, rejecting cold war mentality and bloc confrontation, and working together to build a global security community for all”.

The five BRICS countries today contain 40 percent of the world’s population, 25 percent of the world’s economy, account for 18 percent of world trade and contribute 50 percent of world growth. A BRICS+ would pose an even more serious challenge to the Western G7 alliance.

Also part of the picture is the economic integration underway on the Eurasian continent, exemplified by the Eurasian Economic Forum, held in Kyrgyzstan at the end of May. It was attended by heads of state from Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia and, just as importantly, 14 other countries such as China, Vietnam and several Latin American countries sent delegations.

Many countries have had enough

Overall, then, a multipolar world is emerging, and if there was any presumption that the challenge to US hegemony could proceed peacefully, it is being effectively killed off.

The countries and groups of countries now reviving old

alliances and forging new ones – some call them the emerging countries – have so far bowed their heads and accepted an inferior position in the imperialist system. Now they have had enough. They “have decided that the use of force is no longer taboo and, above all, is no longer the monopoly of the United States, the European Union and their allies”, as Massimiliano Ay, leader of the Swiss Communist Party, put it.

With the invasion of Ukraine and the months of war that followed, Russia has shown that it too is prepared to use heavy-handed means – whoever is in the presidential chair there. Where once Russia was content to complain about NATO’s expansion to its borders, it is now trying to force its way through by other means.

China and Russia in a pragmatic alliance

In the great shifts taking place, Russia and China have formed a pragmatic alliance.

During the Beijing Olympics in January – just a few weeks before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine – the two powers issued a joint statement. In it, they said that together they will “promote multipolarity and democratisation of international relations” and “create a more prosperous, stable and just world”. In other words: an end to the world order that has prevailed until now.

And recently, in a telephone conversation between the two leaders on 15 June, China pledged support for Russia when it comes to “sovereignty and security”.

So it is not wrong to say that the war, and not least Western sanctions, have strengthened relations between China and Russia. In fact, the US has succeeded in making the two giants of the Eurasian continent forget old antagonisms and conflicts and create a close economic, political and military community.

The war in Ukraine could have developed into a wedge between the two, but it has not. There was no split between China and Russia, which is the guarantor of the world’s development in a multipolar direction.

Russia and China are not the same

When we call the alliance between the two great powers pragmatic, it is because there are major differences between them – economic, political and in terms of their geopolitical position. Sometimes the mainstream media gives the impression that China and Russia are one and the same, that they are two identical “autocratic” regimes. This is a gross oversimplification and misconception.

Capitalist Russia, as we know, is economically on the periphery of the imperialist world system. The war in Ukraine

certainly did not turn out as the Russian leadership had expected – it was not a war of glances, and Western sanctions have undoubtedly had major consequences, even if Russia has skilfully managed to avert an outright catastrophe.

At the aforementioned St Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russia's National Bank chief Elvira Nabiullina said:

“The external conditions of the Russian economy, which have changed against the background of events in Ukraine and the subsequent Western sanctions, may remain forever.” Nabiullina pointed out that Russia's place in the international division of labour is now “unfavourable”.

One of the Russian communist parties KPRF, whose leader Zyuganov attended the meeting in St. Petersburg, noted after the meeting that the main representatives of the Russian government acknowledged for the first time that “the main problems in Russia are a large proportion of the population's poverty and extremely strong social stratification.” The party also points out that the Russian leadership continues to stand for neoliberal policies.

China, whose course is defined by the Communist Party of China, has chosen a different path of development. This is also why the US and NATO speak of China as a systemic competitor:

On the one hand, a West with a neoliberal system, a minimal state where the market controls everything in order to make profits that benefit the super-rich, and where human health, safety and security are subordinate to this. On the other hand, a China with a centralised state, with a large state-owned sector of companies, where profits have been used, among other things, to lift people out of poverty and to improve social and health conditions.

The US's strategic enemy is China

The West, that is the US and NATO, makes a distinction between the two.

At the NATO summit in Madrid, the alliance's new strategic concept on Russia states that it poses “the most important and direct threat to the security of the alliance and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area”. It is against this background that the summit adopted the most comprehensive and dangerous military build-up in the history of the alliance.

In doing so, an aggressive NATO continues and reinforces the encirclement of Russia that was part of the backdrop to the Ukraine war – and once again shows a lack of respect for Russia's need for security guarantees. In this light, the Ukraine war is not an unprovoked war.

But Russia is only the way to gain dominance over the Eurasian continent. For the US, China is the great systemic rival.

Hence NATO's new Strategic Concept, which otherwise balances the Chinese threat in many ways:

“As Allies, we will work together responsibly to address the systemic challenges posed by the People's Republic of China...”

The US does not hide the fact that China is its great economic rival. On 26 May, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken gave a speech at George Washington University on US China policy. In it, he states that China poses “the most serious long-term challenge to the international order”. He also says: China has become “more oppressive at home and more aggressive abroad”.

Military escalation is already taking place in the South China Sea, where the EU has also declared its readiness to engage in escalation against China. On the economic front, President Joe Biden toured Asia in May, pleading for expanded economic cooperation between the US and a number of Asian countries – without, however, being able to pour substantial funds into it.

Economic sanctions – success or failure?

Let's also look at the concrete upheavals that the Ukraine war has created both regionally and globally. First, the world economic war unleashed by a small minority of the world's countries, imposing one sanctions package after another on Russia.

At home, we hear only the Western version of the state of the world. It is therefore worth noting that only the West imposes sanctions, while very large parts of the world remain outside the sanctions policy.

At the same time, four months of sanctions have ended up boomeranging on the West itself, while Russia has not cracked.

Immediately, the sanctions triggered a dramatic fall for the rouble. Russia responded in turn by pegging its currency to commodity production and gold. This led to the rouble quickly establishing itself as the world's strongest currency, reaching its highest level in five years.

Russian commodities are reaping unexpected profits and Russia's trade surplus is expected to hit a record high this year. Sales of oil and natural gas have ironically risen sharply. Russia has simply strengthened its trade links with countries outside the West. Gas and oil are sold to China, India and Turkey, for example.

More than half of Russia's crude oil exports now go to India and China. In the weeks leading up to the invasion of Ukraine, it was 40%. It is India in particular that has increased imports: in the first 100 days after Russia invaded Ukraine, India's

purchases of Russian crude oil rose from 1 to 18 percent of Russian exports by value.

So far, Russia has resisted the sanctions attacks, but the impact of a 40% reduction in gas flows to energy-dependent Germany has yet to be assessed.

So there is no evidence that Washington's sanctions have achieved their goal of "weakening" Russia or hurting its economy. There is, however, ample evidence that the sanctions have backfired and taken a toll on their supporters and the peoples of the world, including in the West itself. It is not possible to make a complete list of the damage done by sanctions, but the most dramatic are these:

A sharp rise in food and energy prices (exacerbating inflation)

Major disruptions in global supply chains (de-globalisation)

Greatly increased food shortages and risk of hunger

A severe downturn in the global economy.

Economic deals outside the West

Sanctions policy also greatly reinforces the multipolarity that has been developing for a number of years. A large number of economic agreements are being concluded outside the Western world. A few examples:

Algeria concluded two major agreements with China in May, one of them an oil and gas deal. This comes at a time when Algeria is in conflict with Spain, an EU country, over Spain's new policy towards Morocco and the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. Algeria is Africa's second largest gas supplier and has threatened to cut off its gas supplies to Spain.

Iran and Venezuela – two oil countries subject to US sanctions – struck a 20-year deal as recently as 11 June. The deal includes financial cooperation in a joint development of the bank, tourism, oil and gas, the petrochemical sector, refineries and food production in Venezuela for export to Iran.

In addition to the sanctions, many countries are feeling the pinch of having their assets seized or stolen outright. The US has confiscated half of the assets of the Afghan National Bank. Iran, Venezuela and Russia have followed suit. This naturally leads countries outside the West to ask the question: Why put our money or currency reserves in Western banks or in US currency if we risk having them seized if it suits the US and the West?

Hence also efforts to build alternative international payment systems to SWIFT. And hence the tendency to trade in currencies other than dollars and build up alternative reserve currencies.

The official Chinese newspaper Global Times writes that "behind the sanctions lies the dollar hegemony" and criticises the dollar's "oversized role in the global payment system" and as a "weapon to punish its opponents".

Unstable capitalist economy

There are, of course, many unknown factors, uncertainties and unpredictable events that will affect developments in the months and years ahead. Among them, in particular, are the mechanisms of the capitalist economy, which, beneath the surface and far from economic conferences and negotiating tables, lay the foundations for any meaningful action.

We will not go into detail here and give even an approximate analysis of the state of the world capitalist economy, just state that both the pandemic, the Ukraine war and increased imperialist competition come in a situation where the economy of the main Western countries has been on a knife edge since the financial crisis, and in what some describe as a prolonged depression. And now a recession is knocking at the door.

From Germany come reports that industrial production is "falling so much as to indicate recession". A recession in Germany, by far Denmark's biggest trading partner, would have immediate consequences here at home. Reports from the US are also gloomy: A new report from Danske Bank shows that there are growing signs that a recession may be on the way, especially in the US economy.

This is in line with what the CEO of J P Morgan, America's largest bank, Jamie Dimon, said recently about the world economy::

"I have said before that there are storm clouds, but I correct that. It is a hurricane. ... We don't know if it's going to be a small hurricane or superstorm Sandy ... The hurricane is right out there, down the road, and it's coming our way."

Not surprisingly, in this situation, economists are suggesting that the working class will pay in the form of unemployment and wage cuts.

So, when we talk about food crisis, supply bottlenecks, deteriorating living conditions, expensive time, coke in the supply lines – and it will get worse in the coming period – we are talking about problems that go beyond but are heavily influenced by a Ukraine war and a turbulent geopolitical situation.

Something can and must be done

These are indeed dramatic times. The end points of events are hard to predict. We do not know whether there will be a new all-out war or a land war directly between Russia and NATO. Civil and social unrest may break out, for example in the United States, which is already being torn apart. People

may be forced from their homes. We may see a totalitarian and militaristic development, where the needs of the military rule.

We are quite clear that a completely different social system is needed to put an end to war, militarism and armament once and for all. But we are also of the opinion that we cannot wait for that. In the struggle for a different society, we must at the same time take up the struggle for peace in a very concrete way. There is a real danger that otherwise there will not be a habitable planet on which this second, socialist society can be created.

For many people, developments at this time are incomprehensible, inexplicable and even paralysing.

As communists and peace-loving people, we are therefore faced with the important task of finding ways to overcome paralysis and apathy. We ask the question: is it possible to do anything – and we answer: yes, it is!

But this requires, first, a recognition that the United States and the West are not the beacons of human civilisation, that there is a breakdown in the systems of alliances, and that this also has consequences for our struggle. We must therefore make demands of “our” politicians that take account of this situation and work clearly and consistently for de-escalation and peace.

For example: it is okay for countries other than the Western ones to demand guarantees for their security and independence. It is okay and not an expression of appeasement and softness to give Russia a real opportunity to stop militarily. It is perfectly all right for countries other than the West to demand equality in economic relations, non-interference in their internal affairs and mutual respect. On the other hand, it is not acceptable for Danish and other politicians to engage in value imperialism and to consider themselves entitled to sit in judgment on other peoples, nations and cultures., or even demonise them.

Solidarity and understanding between peoples are key words for us.

Welfare rather than weapons

Demanding an end to NATO’s eastward expansion and a rollback of economic warfare and sanctions policy is a natural step. But we also need to be very concrete. Recognising that the Danish working class cannot take on the burdens of the whole world, there is a need to carefully weigh up what we can do here in the circumstances we now have.

We envisage action in four directions:

Welfare rather than weapons – for peace and disarmament

The working class must not pay for the Western monopolies’ demands for continued predation on the working class and the peoples of the world. The struggle for wages and working conditions and against future unemployment and poverty is at the centre. Our economy must not be militarised. Roll back the “national compromise” and spend the extra NATO billions on social rearmament and cost-of-living compensation.

Denmark must work for peace – stop Danish contributions to war

NATO is an aggressive military alliance. Until we get out of it, we must do everything not to contribute militarily, economically, politically and intelligence-wise to armament and war. Here and now: No weapons, no military equipment, no military personnel for Ukraine. Denmark must stand on the side of peace and demand real peace negotiations. The UN system must be allowed to play a role.

No foreign soldiers and bases on Danish soil

The Danish government is secretly negotiating a base agreement with the US. It would be a serious violation of our sovereignty, making Denmark a bombing target and a launching pad for US military action. We therefore say no to American bases and military ports in Denmark.

Defend Denmark and the world against nuclear danger

The danger of a nuclear hell is real and growing. It is important to reject all forms of nuclear weapons use – and blackmail. Nuclear weapons must never be allowed on Danish soil. The Danish government must sign the UN treaty prohibiting the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Any activity along these lines deserves support.

Translation: [deepl.com](https://www.deepl.com)