

# Russia-Ukraine War and the Changing Global System

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the Russia-Ukraine war and the changing global system. The study is anchored on the balance of power theory as propounded by Hans Morgenthau in 1966 and later expanded by Kenneth Waltz and Christopher Layne. The Ex-Post Facto (After the fact) research design was used for the study. Data was gotten through secondary sources like, textbooks, newspapers, journal articles and internet materials. Qualitative analysis was used to analyse the data, although figure was presented where required. The study found out that before the Russia-Ukraine war there was a global system which is bipolarity with two opposing alliances during the cold war, controlled by United States and Soviet Union. The finding also showed that after the fall of the Soviet Union the global system changed to a unipolar system with United States in charge, this is seen in its resources were the GNP in 2011 was 15,290 billion dollars as compared to 7.298 billion dollars of China and Russia which was 1, 581 billion dollars. The finding of the study showed that Russia's notion of a polycentric world stems from the belief that, because of its decentralized nature, it will be easier for Russia to realize its ambitions as a pole, thereby expanding its power. However, the study concluded the global system that was in existence before the Russia-Ukraine war was bipolar and later changed to a unipolar system after the fall of the Soviet Union, but the Russia-Ukraine war has drastically changed the global system to a new polycentric system.

**Keywords:** Region, foreign policy, power, resources, states.

## INTRODUCTION

The current global system has been transformed by the Russia-Ukraine crisis. The conflict has ravaged eastern Europe and other parts of the world and is being waged by Russia in Ukraine. It is a wake-up call for the United States (US) and its Western allies. There is a long list of Western foreign policy failures, and each one appears to be worse than the last. But, because of the world's unbalanced order, the West has always gotten away with it (Suroor, 2022). It looks to have run out of luck with the Ukraine conflict as it tries to rally support for its proxy war with Russia. Whatever the crisis' final outcome, it is shaping up to be a watershed moment in postwar European history.

Many of the cosy Western assumptions about its dominion over international affairs are being challenged by the toppling of the West-centric world order (Suroor, 2022). Despite the president of the US, the prime minister of the United Kingdom (UK), and the president of France's brave public rhetoric, there is real concern among Western leaders about their failure to form a broader coalition against Russia, as well as alarm over anti-Western sentiment across large swaths of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Traditional Western allies like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, among others, have

declined to follow suit. Historically, though, major nations occupied the apex of the global power pyramid.

The most powerful of them were large empires. They were eventually supplanted by two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union (SU). Their key distinction from prior heavyweights was their unrivalled ability to project their influence practically anywhere in the world, and their proclivity for such projection was restricted mostly by mutual deterrence. Russia has been evolving as an autonomous transregional centre of influence with aspects of global power since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Gromyko, 2013). Russia is primarily a European country in terms of culture and history, but it is a transcontinental country in terms of mentality and psychology. With tens of thousands of kilometres of western, southern, and eastern borders, Russia cannot and should not concentrate its foreign policy in one direction, whether geopolitically, economically, or security-wise.

This assessment does not imply that Moscow lacks priorities in developing its international relations. The post-Soviet space, the European Union (EU) and other European countries, the US, China, and other BRICS members, and so on, are all well-known (Putin, 2013). Because any country's foreign policy and national interests are complex, such hierarchies of interests are diverse and dynamic in each situation. For example, nothing in the domain of strategic stability is more vital to Moscow than the US and China. However, some localities attract such a diverse range of interests from their neighbours that they become the primary point of reference.

The region of greatest political, economic, financial, cultural, and security importance for Russia today and in the foreseeable future is and will be "Wider Europe," i.e., the European civilization stranding the landmass from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. The Old World can only acquire greater European status if it is based on wider Europe (Ivanov 2014; Gromyko 2013). Perhaps, in the future, after the end of the Russia-Ukraine war, the dynamics of global history will lead to a different set of goals in Russia's foreign policy as opposed to that of the US and its allies. It is against this background that this study seeks to find out what was the existing global system before the Russia-Ukraine crisis and how has the current Russia-Ukraine crisis changed the global system.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the balance of power theory as propounded by Hans Morgenthau in 1966 and later expanded by Kenneth Waltz and Christopher Layne. In international politics, the balance of power theory developed as a metaphorical term drawn from other domains (ethics, the arts, philosophy, law, medicine, economics, and the sciences), where balancing and its relationship to equipoise and counterweight had already received widespread recognition. The balancing metaphor was envisioned as a natural law underpinning most things, we find appealing, whether order, peace, justice, fairness, moderation, symmetry, harmony, or beauty, wherever it was applied (Vagts, 1948). However, Jean-Jacques Rousseau is of the view that the balance existing between the power of these varied membership of European countries is more of a work of nature than of art. It maintains itself without effort, sinking on one side but quickly reestablishing itself on the other (Haas, 1953).

This Renaissance notion of balance as an automatic response guided by a natural law still pervades analyses of how the idea operated in the realm of international affairs centuries ago. Morgenthau (1966) explained that the quest for power on the part of multiple nations, each striving to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads by necessity to a configuration known as the balance of power and to actions that aim to preserve it. Waltz (2000) argued that just as nature abhors a vacuum, so international politics abhors uneven power.

Layne (1997) is of the view that great powers balance against one another because structural restrictions compel them to do so. To explain opportunistic expansion, realists like Wolfers (1962) use the same "law of nature" metaphor: Since nations, like nature, are believed to abhor a vacuum, one may assume that the

powerful nation would feel forced to fill the vacuum with its own power.

Mearsheimer (2001) asserts that status quo powers are rarely found in world politics, since the international system offers tremendous incentives for nations to hunt for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals, and to take advantage of those occasions when the benefits outweigh the costs, using a similar structural-incentives-for-gains rationale. However, from the standpoint of a policymaker, balancing superior power and filling power vacuums do not appear to be natural rules. Instead, these behaviors, which have significant political costs and unknown policy risks, emerge through the political process; as such, they are the result of competition and consensus-building among elites with divergent views on the political-military world, as well as divergent views on the nation's goals and challenges and the means that will best serve those purposes (Schilling, 1962).

Political equilibrium is neither a gift from the gods nor an essentially stable reality (Spykman, 1942). It is the outcome of man's active intervention and of political forces at work. States cannot afford to sit back and wait for the happy day when a miraculously established balance of power brings peace and security. If they are to survive, they must be willing to go to battle in order to maintain a balance against the period's expanding hegemony. In an era of mass politics, the decision to use weaponry and friends to counterbalance uneven power and to go to war if these deterrent measures fail is very much a political act. War mobilisation and combat are clearly collaborative endeavors. As a result, political elites must weigh the potential domestic costs of balancing behavior against other options and the predicted advantages of restoring power balance.

Leaders are hardly ever, if ever, forced to adopt certain policies over others by structural imperatives; they are not sleepwalkers battered by unstoppable forces beyond their control. This is not to say they are unaware of the limits imposed by the international system. Instead, systemic influences are filtered at the domestic level through intervening variables to produce foreign policy behaviors. As a result, nations respond (or do not respond) to power transitions and the challenges and possibilities they bring in a variety of ways, based on both internal and external concerns of policy elites, who must establish consensus within an often fragmented and competitive political process.

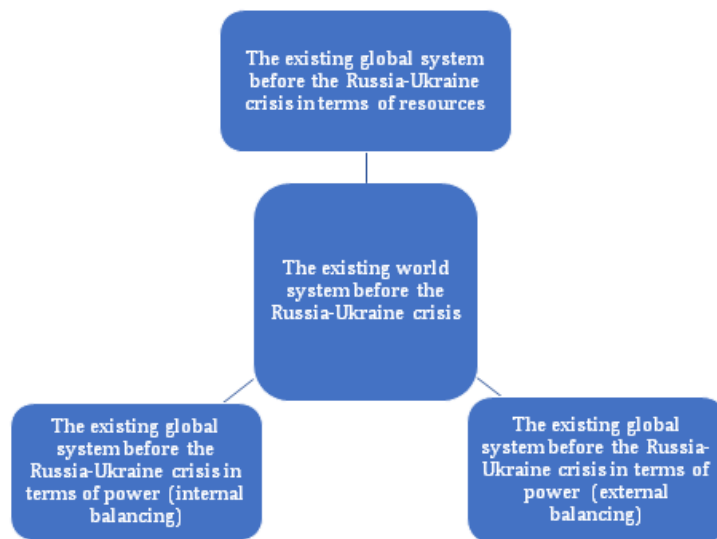
The relevance of the balance of power theory to this study is pertinent given the fact that there was an existing global system before the Russia-Ukraine crisis that was a bi-polar system with Russia controlling one pole and the US controlling the other pole during the cold war, but after the war it changed to a unipolar system with the US in charge of the global system. However, following the recent crisis going on between Russia and Ukraine, the global system has changed.

## **METHODS**

Given the problem of this study, the paper adopted an "ex post facto" (after the fact) research design. Materials for this paper was sourced through secondary sources of data which included here are textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, official documents from the government, internet materials, among others. Content analysis was used to analyse the data so generated. This is with a view to identifying a logical sequence of data as well as trends.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

At this point, figure was presented that help to address one of the objectives raised. In other words, this section is aimed at establishing an empirical link to the analysis of the Russia-Ukraine war and the changing global system.



**Figure 1: The existing global system before the Russia-Ukraine crisis**

Computed by the author based on data from <https://ojs.ehu.es/index.php/ceinik/article/view/13794/12178>

Figure 1 showed the existing world system before the Russia-Ukraine crisis in terms of resources and internal and external power.

### **The existing global system before the Russia-Ukraine crisis in terms of resources**

During the Cold War, the globe was marked by bipolarity due to the presence of two opposing alliances, the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), led by the two superpowers at the time, the Soviet Union and the United States. Because one of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union, collapsed, which led to the end of the cold war, the post-cold war system's structure logically evolved to be unipolar because only one superpower, the United States, survived. Despite this, the best and brightest (neo)realist scholars in the US, whether they adhered to defensive or offensive realism, predicted the return of multipolarity after a necessary but brief period of unipolarity. Waltz (1993) is of the view that the Balance of Power Theory leads us to assume that other powers will endeavour to bring American might into balance. Hegemony leads to equilibrium. That is now happening, but slowly, because the US still has benefits to provide and many other countries have become accustomed to their easy lives with the US bearing many of their problems.

Mearsheimer (1990) in his post-cold war Europe analysis established a causal link between the return of multipolarity and a greater risk of instability and wars; the multipolar distribution of power characterized the European state system from its founding, with the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648, until 1945; this multipolar European state system was plagued by war from beginning to end, Europe is reverting to a state system that created powerful incentives for aggression in the past. Accordingly, Barnett & Duvall (2005) argued that power can be viewed from two perspectives; 1. Power is traditionally defined in terms of resources available to an actor, and from this standpoint, a nation is a major power if the resources at its disposal are comparatively superior to the resources available to other states; 2. Power is also defined in terms of the influence an actor is likely to exert on another actor, and in this case, a state is said to be a power if it is likely to impose its will on another state and able to get it to do what it wants.

Positing that the two definitions are compatible with and complementary to each other, the following hypothesis can be made: that the global system is unipolar if there exists one and only one state benefiting

from such a gap in material resources, and that the other states are led to behave the way the major power wants them to behave or, at least, if they are induced to behave in a way unlikely to threaten the major power's national interest. Put differently, unipolarity exists if, and it prevails as long as, secondary powers do not try to balance the resources' gap that exists in favour of the preeminent power, in other words, if and as long as, secondary powers are unable, and/or unwilling, to replace an imbalanced, unipolar distribution of power resources by a more balanced, either bipolar or multipolar, distribution of power resources, unipolar distribution of power resources by a more balanced distribution of power resources, either bipolar or multipolar.

The post-cold war world order, on the other hand, is unipolar because it is marked by an uneven, unequal distribution of power resources in favour of the US, and this resource gap is so large that it discourages any secondary power from attempting to correct the imbalance by adopting a balancing behavior. Furthermore, Organski (1958) looked at the factors regarded to make up the most important power resources, namely, economic resources as measured by state GNP and military resources as measured by national defense budgets, concludes that there is no doubt that the post-cold war world is marked by the US's dual supremacy; 1. The US GNP in 2011 was 15, 290 billion dollars, while China's GNP, expressed at the official exchange rate, was 7, 298 billion dollars and Russia which was 1, 581 billion dollars, in other words, China and Russia's economic resources represented less than half of the US wealth; 2. Military expenditures in 2011 were 711 billion dollars, or 4.6 percent of the US GNP, and US military expenditures in 2012 were 711 billion dollars, or 4.6 percent of the US GNP. China's military budget was 143 billion dollars, nearly 2% of its GDP, and about a quarter of US military spending (SIPRI Yearbook, 2012).

These economic and military data demonstrate that, twenty (20) years after the conclusion of the Cold War, the interstate system remains unipolar in terms of power distribution. As a result, unipolarity is a historical epoch, not just a moment (Krauthammer, 2002). Not only is the US primacy in the global distribution of capabilities a prominent element of the present interstate system, but the US "grew even more so" after the cold war ended. In the post-Cold War era, the global world order is viewed as a one-superpower world, which is unprecedented in the contemporary age. No other great nation has had such material, economic, geographical, military, and technological advantages (Kenberry, Mastanduno, & Wohlforth, 2011).

### **The existing global system before the Russia-Ukraine crisis in terms of power (internal and external)**

Power is defined as the ability of one state to exert influence on another. The distinction made between the two balancing strategies at the disposal of states when thinking about how to put an end to the pre-eminence of one major power, that is, internal balancing and external balancing, shows the US capacity to influence other states' behaviour in order to ensure that their foreign policies are compatible with or at least not contradictory to US interests (Waltz, 1979). Furthermore, internal balancing entails expanding one's own military resources, but external balancing entails forming or joining alliances in order to pool the varied military resources of the member states in a coalition of troops. However, looking at other countries' foreign policies since 1989/1991, there is little question that neither domestic nor external balance has been adopted as a strategy.

In terms of internal balancing, an examination of the evolution of military budgets reveals that, while all powers now devote less resources to military expenditures than they did during the cold war, the US is the one power whose military resources have been significantly less downsized as a percentage of national wealth: in other words, the US military advantage is higher in relative terms than it was some twenty years ago, as acknowledged by Paul Kennedy, who after predicting the relative collapse of US preeminence at the end of the 1980s said, "One cannot but accept that nothing has ever existed like this inequality of power."

"I have gone over all of the comparative defence budget and military manpower numbers I compiled in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers over the last 500 years*, and no other country comes close" (Ikenberry,

Mastanduno, & Wohlforth, 2011).

In addition to external balancing, secondary states have formed neither a formal alliance nor an informal coalition to offset America's dominance. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, founded in 2001 by China and Russia in collaboration with four Central Asian states and former Soviet republics Shanghai Cooperation Organization, founded in 2001 by China and Russia in collaboration with four Central Asian states and former Soviet republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), whose main objectives are cooperation in the domain of regional security concerns such as terrorism and separatism rather than prospective attitudes towards the US, They are afraid of becoming targets of Islamic activists, in particular. The most visible indicator of the present interstate system's unipolar nature is the absence of any attempt to balance US dominating capabilities. The mere presence of secondary powers, as well as the rise of the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), is insufficient to make such a structure multipolar.

First and foremost, such secondary powers must engage in balancing behavior, either by increasing their military resources or by pooling their military resources within alliances or coalitions, with the explicit goal of achieving balance by narrowing the gap between the superpower and the other powers. This was not the case until Russia's invasion of Crimea in Ukraine and the current "special operation" carried out by Russia in Ukraine, and therefore the world system was unipolar. Most countries do not see the US as a danger to their national security interests, and this attitude dates back to 1945. Since abandoning isolationism and intervening in world affairs, the US has acted more like a benevolent hegemon than an imperial power, thanks to its readiness to associate secondary powers, who accept the present order, with its benefits.

From a historical perspective, such displays of immense power are uncommon. The only comparable precedent was the UK during the so-called Pax Britannica in the early nineteenth century, but France, after winning the Thirty Years War in 1648, did not practise self-control; rather, it opted to take advantage of the window of opportunity offered by its success over its Austrian and Spanish opponents to try to expand its domination, forcing the other European powers, the UK, Prussia, and Russia, to ally in order to deal with this threat to their own security. In its relations with secondary powers, the US acts like a beneficent hegemon, but not altruistically: Obviously, the US exercises self-control because it is in its long-term interests to maintain its dominance by refraining from abusing its power, but whatever the causes, such behaviour precludes the rise of possible opponents anxious to destroy US dominance (Ikenberry, 2000).

Furthermore, many countries view the US not only as a non-threatening powerhouse but also as a vital ally and/or an honest broker. The amazing thing about the US is that it has succeeded in gaining acceptance as an ally from past foes, such as Germany and Japan, which were both smashed by the US during World War II but are now among the US' closest allies since 1945. Because the US waged a terrible war against Vietnam in the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, the evolution of their relationship is just as noteworthy. However, Vietnam now requires US assistance in order to deal with China's obstructive presence on its northern border. Even US adversaries must go to Washington if they want their interests furthered, as the Palestinians have demonstrated. They realise that their opponent, Israel, is backed by the US, but the only way for them to get their own state is to ask the US to try to moderate Israel's behaviour (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

In a nutshell, the US has successfully implemented Bismarck's so-called "Bad Kissingen" strategy, making itself more vital to any given state than any other third state: suffice it to say that even states that do not require US protection or arbitration, such as France or the UK, rely on its resources, as do France and the UK, which require US or NATO's support whenever they decide to intervene militarily, as they did during Operation Odyssey Dawn against Libya (Joffe, 1997).

The preponderance of the US does not cause secondary powers to act as balancing forces. This rationale is

relevant to western democracies: European countries, as well as Canada and Australia, share the same ideals and collective identity as the US.

According to Nicolas Sarkozy's statement in 2009, he announced France's reintegration into NATO's unified military command, which is particularly noteworthy in this context. Nicolas Sarkozy: "America is our ally; America is our buddy." It's no coincidence that he chose the term "friend"; France, Germany, the UK, and other countries regard the US as a friend rather than an ally, and this perception is mutual. In other words, the Atlantic Alliance isn't strictly speaking an alliance; it's a security community made up of countries that wouldn't dream of going to war with one another and who will spontaneously assist one another in the event of a threat from a third party (Adler & Barnett, 1998).

Given the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the absence of any substantial threat to deal with, NATO would have been dissolved if it had been only an alliance after the conclusion of the Cold War. NATO, on the other hand, did not vanish after being established in 1949 to face the Soviet communist menace; on the contrary, it grew, recruited new members, and staged military missions it had never conducted during the Cold War. NATO's continued existence demonstrates that US allies, or rather, friends, regard US global leadership as legitimate and that they have internalised and regard the existing Pax Americana as a legitimate order. They do not even consider the notion of attempting to change this order by adopting a balancing behavior, therefore defying forecasts of a disintegration of North Atlantic unity twenty years ago: "In a multipolar world, the strongest power, the US, would frequently find other states creeping away from it: Germany going towards Eastern Europe and Russia, and Russia moving towards Germany and Japan.... We have to wonder how long NATO will function effectively. Organizations are often thought to be founded by their adversaries.

Alliances are formed in response to perceived threats. How can an alliance survive without a good adversary? ... The days of NATO are not counted, but the years are (Waltz, 1993). The strongest proof of this denial was brought in some years ago, when the Iraqi issue and Operation Iraqi Freedom produced a rift between the US and the UK on the one hand, and France and Germany on the other. Pape (2005) believes that, despite being accused of using a soft balancing strategy by joining China and Russia in criticising Washington's willingness to go to war against Saddam Hussein, France and Germany reaffirmed their support for US policy once Operation Iraqi Freedom was followed by a state building policy in Iraq legitimised by UNSC Resolution 1483 (2003).

### **The Russia-Ukraine crisis and the changing world system from the eastern front**

The crisis in Ukraine has repercussions on the eastern front, affecting Transcaucasia, Central Asia, and the Far East. Like the polycentric world itself, the mechanisms underlying these changes are numerous and varied and cannot be precisely structured. The result is complex, and it promises to heighten the stress. Even in the absence of malicious intent on anyone's part, the accumulation of tension in vulnerable locations in a polycentric world can lead to the emergence of threats. The Russian Caucasus has been drawn into the Ukraine conflict, if only because the bulk of Russia's forces in Ukraine were made up of so-called national battalions in Russian military units under the Southern Operational Command. During the early phases of Russian military intervention in eastern Ukraine, this group bore the brunt of Russian casualties (Izhak, 2016).

The relationship between Russia's Slavic people and Caucasians is complicated. They have frequently erupted into large-scale social clashes along ethnic lines in recent years. The Russian leadership has devised a strategy for fast diverting internal turmoil and directing it on Ukraine's Slavic people. The conflict, however, now threatens to return to Russia via the porous border with Ukraine that Russia itself created. Another key factor is that another battle has been pushed across the border in Chechnya, historically Russia's most renowned separatist republic. The so-called Kadyrovtsy fighters in Ukraine are supporters of

Ramzan Kadyrov, the Chechen ruler, who is loyal to Russian authority (thanks to generous financial injections). At the same time, Ukraine has received backing from Chechens who remain committed to the beliefs of the late president, Dzhokhar Dudayev (Izhak, 2016).

They are a minority, yet under certain circumstances, they would be willing to attack their motherland. The Caucasus could erupt once more in this scenario. There are three frozen conflict zones in Transcaucasia: South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. For the time being, Georgian political processes rule out any attempts to aggravate relations with Russia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Escalation is possible in Nagorno-Karabakh, though. The viewpoint of Azerbaijan is uncompromising: sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh must be restored sooner or later. Azerbaijan's economic and military power might be on the rise, with only a convenient line of defence in Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian economic aid to Armenia, and the establishment of a Russian military post on its soil to keep it in check. If Russia becomes engulfed in the Ukrainian conflict and is weakened by international sanctions, Azerbaijan may have the opportunity to force a solution.

A reprise of the fighting occurred in July and August of 2014. So far, Russian diplomatic interventions have kept it quiet. From Nagorno-Karabakh to Central Asia, there is a web of interconnections. However, Russia persuaded Armenia to reject EU membership in favour of membership in the Eurasian Economic Community, in an attempt to derail the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative on all fronts (this was one of the incidents in the development of the Ukraine conflict). This resulted in more friction between Russia and Kazakhstan. With Azerbaijan as a partner, the latter demands that if Armenia joins the unified customs space, Nagorno-Karabakh should not be included. Armenia finds such membership conditions difficult to accept. The Eurasian Economic Community's contradictions have been compounded by the Ukraine conflict. Kazakhstan has become more cautious in its approach to further integration with Russia.

The Eurasian Economic Community Agreement, which was signed at the end of May 2014, deleted any references to an eventual political union. Russian attempts to impose coordinated trade sanctions against Ukraine were rejected by Kazakhstan and Belarus. Furthermore, Kazakhstan explicitly stated that it does not see any economic dangers to the Eurasian Economic Community as a result of Ukraine signing association agreements with the EU, despite Russia's claims to the contrary. The situation deteriorated further at the end of August 2014 as a result of Putin's blundering remark regarding Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev: "He created a state in territory where there had never been a state." "The Kazakhs lacked sovereignty" (Tengri News, 2014). Only lower-level Russian leaders had previously expressed reservations about Kazakh sovereignty. A significant scandal erupted, as did Nazarbayev's rebuttal to the Eurasian Economic Community: "Astana would never join organisations that undermine Kazakh independence" (Ak Zhayyk, 2014).

The objectives of Russian officials in provoking Kazakhstan against the backdrop of the Ukrainian crisis, whether purposeful or negligent, are less significant in this case than the reality that tension in polycentric linkages is high enough to spark a new crisis. The Eurasian Economic Community's situation has worsened as a result of the Ukrainian crisis, which has impacted relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China's neutrality in the Ukraine crisis is vital to Russia, since it is more important than direct support. The consequence of Shanghai Cooperation Organization operations in Central Asia, on the other hand, is to increase Chinese influence while decreasing Russian influence. China is gaining ground on Russia in terms of commerce and investment in the region. In addition, Russian influence has been connected to a worsening of tensions between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan over the so-called hydroelectric issue. Turkmenistan has also largely eluded Russia's grasp. The extension of Chinese influence has now reached all of the region's countries, with no signs of war thus far.

The situation in Central Asia, on the other hand, exposes two key characteristics. First, a like-for-like comparison of each country in the region's trade turnover with foreign players reveals significant



asymmetries. For example, in customs data for the identical flow of products between China and Kyrgyzstan, one country recorded a figure several times higher than the other (Toktakunov, 2014). These disparities have narrowed recently, but they remain too large to be explained only by computations. Statistical data on trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Russia presented by Yernar (2014) suggest a substantial discrepancy of more than 10% in 2013 (USD 23.8 billion according to Kazakh statistics and USD 26.5 billion according to Russian data). According to Willerton and Cockerham (2014), this shows a high volume of “grey” Chinese products traded with Kazakhstan and Russia via Kyrgyzstan. The prospect of Kyrgyzstan joining the Eurasian Economic Community exacerbates the dilemma.

The Ukraine issue has spilled over into Russian policies towards Iran and the Far East, starting in Central Asia. On the subject of Western sanctions, Russia has long backed Iran. However, recent progress on nuclear talks, which have threatened a long-term agreement and the lifting of Iran’s isolation since November 2014, coincided with the escalation of the Ukraine conflict. Given Russia’s vital reliance on global energy pricing, Iran’s entry into global oil and gas markets poses a direct threat to the Russian economy. Russia attempted to link huge volumes of Iranian oil to barter activities without having a good reason or an opportunity to stymie the positive progress of the nuclear discussions with Iran. Long-winded negotiations ensued regarding the annual bartering of around 25 million tonnes of Iranian oil for Russian product supplies. So far, these talks have only resulted in the signing of a very modest memorandum on the barter of around 2.5 million tonnes of oil per year in early August 2014.

According to Baczynska and Soldatkin (2015), Russian interests in Ukraine have thus proven to be linked to Iranian interests. The Ukraine crisis has also resulted in some redistribution of forces in the Far East. The sanctions were backed by Japan, which has a territorial dispute with Russia. South Korea has remained impartial. As previously stated, China has provided covert support in order to further its own objectives. The Ukraine crisis weakens Russia and the West, giving China more leeway to maneuver. North Korea has allied with Russia, but Russia is unlikely to gain anything from this other than the potential to exert more negative influence on the situation by increasing the dispute over North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs.

### **The Russia-Ukraine crisis and the changing world system from the western front**

The Ukraine crisis can be seen from different angles; foreign-backed separatism and the regime change toolbox are at work. However, investigation reveals Russia’s attempt to reassert itself as one of the poles by exploiting the world’s flaws. This is a project with global implications. “International relations are going through a transitional period, the nature of which is the establishment of a polycentric international order,” Russia’s foreign policy states (Putin, 2013). This system’s construction is not merely assumed; it is Russia’s desired ultimate state. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently noted “The fact that the crisis in Ukraine is one of the expressions of the pains in which a really polycentric world is created” (Lavrov, 2014).

According to Russian reasoning, Russia is establishing a polycentric world by its actions towards Ukraine, while the West is obstructing it in order to insincerely hold down the advent of this multi-polar and polycentric world, which is the objective result of tendencies in world development (Borrell, 2022). Russia’s fascination with the notion of a polycentric world stems from the belief that, because of its decentralised nature, it will be easier for Russia to realise its ambitions as a pole, expanding both power and influence, even if this expansion is accompanied by bloodshed, human suffering, and economic losses. This is the new opportunities’ negative interpretation. The justification for Russia’s activities was given out in detail by the head of the Russian General Staff in early 2013, as follows: the emphasis is changing towards widespread employment of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military means, implemented in tandem with the population’s protest potential.

All of this is augmented by covert military tactics such as information warfare and special forces operations.

Under the pretext of peacekeeping operations and crisis management, the overt use of force is frequently used only at a given point in a conflict, usually to assure absolute victory (Gerasimov, 2013). This commonly referenced passage is intriguing for several reasons. Gerasimov discussed the Arab Spring, but as seen by these and other utterances, he viewed the phenomenon in the context of contemporary Russian conspiracy theories. The central premise is that colour revolutions and other political upheavals are a new form of warfare waged by the US and the West in general, with Russia as the target, thanks to her constructive political regime and indescribable natural riches (Izhak, 2016).

The confrontation with Ukraine is considered a fair response to US operations in Russia, not just among the leadership but also among the general public. If it were not for the fact that Russia's actions in Ukraine caused the degradation of ideology, politics, and the economy at each successive step of conflict escalation, some of the Russian claims could be worth considering. The Russian information space initially supported the theory that a "fascist junta" had taken control in Kiev. If not for the extent of the propaganda, this could be considered a curiosity of the information war. The majority of the Russian population, as well as a significant portion of the population of occupied Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, believed that fascism had resurfaced in Ukraine as a result of Western actions and that Ukraine had vanished as a state, while Russia had every right to use all tools at its disposal to neutralise the threat.

The demonization of one's adversary has a long history in the Western press, but the scope of the propaganda is crucial. Russia's view of Ukraine's authorities is comparable only to how the Western information space would react if a foreign body deserved as much hatred as Hitler, Hussein, Gaddafi, and Kim Jong-un, all in one person, and if it was also stated that such a monster regime was produced by Russia. The success of this destabilising information campaign, as well as Russia's following steps to exacerbate the conflict, cannot be explained just by a state monopoly and centralised control. Commercial public relations firms, as well as public organisations and financial and industrial enterprises with a patriotic orientation, were all extensively used (Izhak, 2016).

The military element of the annexation of Crimea was carried out by "little green men" or "polite people" (well-equipped soldiers without insignia) and was coordinated by the Russian Defense Ministry and secret services. However, the social and political element was the neutralisation of pro-Ukrainian forces, the switching of local authorities from Kiev to Moscow, and the holding of a referendum, all of which were carried out with the help of well-organized structures and funds from one of Russia's major financial and industrial conglomerates (Izhak, 2016). When the "blitzkrieg" failed, Russia was forced into a military escalation that resulted in the deployment of regular Russian troops without insignia by the end of summer 2014.

While Russia has the right to have its views heard, the techniques it employs to ensure their validity cast doubt on their logic. Imagine the wrath in Washington if China was creating a robust military alliance and aiming to incorporate both Canada and Mexico. Westerners conscious of "Realpolitik" correctly point out Russia's natural reflexes in response to NATO and EU expansion and the Westernization of neighbours (Mearsheimer, 2014). As a result, we came to the conclusion that, in order to settle the current issue, Ukraine must be transformed into a second Finland, incorporating not only military but also economic and social components of forced neutrality.

The notion is not without merit, and it may resonate in Ukraine if not for a few qualifiers. Nobody in Ukraine really considered NATO membership before the Russian crisis, and even during the early phases of it. The country's non-aligned status had been established by law. According to the current sentiments in Ukrainian society and among the elite, NATO rejected Ukraine's Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2008 (Izhak, 2016). Only a small number of people were in favour of membership (about 15 percent). Russia's reaction to the EU's Association Agreements with Ukraine neared hysteria, and economic restrictions were imposed in the summer of 2013, well before the agreements were signed, in a repeat of the 2008 reaction to

the potential of a MAP. Then, if Ukraine was refused NATO membership, Russia informed Ukraine that it would be able to create an economic alliance with the EU while also collaborating with Russia.

When the issue came down to practical implementation, however, Russia saw the EU as “Sodom and Gomorrah,” planning to devour Ukraine merely to spite Russia. While many people think this is an exaggeration, even a simple examination of the Russian information landscape indicates that it is more than likely an understatement of how Russian interests are rationalised within the country. Ukraine has learned that no number of concessions to Russia is ever adequate, and no secure status quo exists that does not deprive the country of its identity. This is the fundamental issue in forming strong, friendly bonds. The first instances of Russian “saber-rattling” with regard to Ukraine occurred in the early 2000s, when President Leonid Kuchma’s administration was still a long way from any meaningful reconciliation with NATO and the EU (Izhak, 2016).

It’s worth recalling that Russia built a dam connecting it to a Ukrainian island in the Kerch Strait, where a Ukrainian border post was located, without warning, and later explained the incident as local authorities’ initiative and an unexpected dislocation of troops to a Crimean military compound, as well as exercises and technical difficulties, all without informing Ukraine. Ukraine used to turn a blind eye and ignore similar tragedies back then. Later, the gas wars began against the “orange” government, which had made bold statements about joining NATO and the EU but had taken no tangible actions. When Viktor Yanukovich took office in 2010, Ukraine saw a brief revival as a result of unilateral concessions on humanitarian, political, and military matters, such as the declaration of non-alignment and the renewal of leases for the Black Sea Fleet (Izhak, 2016).

However, a cooling-off period began in 2011, well before the EU Association Agreement talks were completed, when Russia discovered Ukraine’s unwillingness to engage in real integration, which was seen as the construction of a unified state. The trade war in 2013 was the culmination of this decline. This demonstrates that, despite any political hints and messages it may provide through the media or diplomatic channels, Russia is not content with turning Ukraine into a second Finland. Russia will tolerate Ukraine as an independent country only if it has the same status as Belarus. The Russian leadership regards Ukraine’s existence as geopolitical aggression by the West. Meir (2021) is of the view that “We want to live,” referring not only to Israel but also to Ukraine today. Our neighbours want us to perish. This leaves little room for compromise.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the study showed that there was an existing global system that was bipolar due to the presence of two opposing alliances, the Warsaw Pact and NATO, led by two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States. Furthermore, it was discovered that after the collapse of the Soviet Union there was one superpower that was in charge of the global system, which was the United States. This was shown in the resources of the US, where the Gross National Product (GNP) in 2011 was 15,290 billion dollars, while China’s GNP was 7,298 billion dollars, and Russia’s GNP was 1,581 billion dollars. In other words, Russia and China’s economic resources represented less than half of the US wealth. However, US military expenditures in 2012 were 711 billion dollars, or 4.6 percent of the US GNP. China’s military budget was 143 billion dollars, nearly 2% of its GDP, and about a quarter of US military spending. The economic and military data demonstrate that, twenty years after the conclusion of the Cold War, the interstate system remains unipolar in terms of power distribution.

The findings of the study also revealed that the internal balancing of the military budgets reveals that, while all powers now devote less resources to military expenditures than they did during the cold war, the US is the one power whose military resources have been significantly less downsized as a percentage of national

wealth: in other words, the US military advantage is higher in relative terms than it was some twenty years ago. The findings of the study also revealed that external balancing, secondary states have formed neither a formal alliance nor an informal coalition to offset America's dominance, but the presence of secondary powers, as well as the rise of organisations like the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), is insufficient to make the existing structure change to any other structure outside unipolar.

The findings of the study revealed that the Ukraine war has repercussions on the eastern front in places like Transcaucasia, Central Asia, and the Far East. Continuing, the Russian Caucasus has been drawn into the Ukraine conflict because the bulk of Russia's forces in Ukraine were made up of so-called national battalions in Russian military units under the Southern Operational Command, and in the early phases of Russian military intervention in Eastern Ukraine, this group bore the brunt of Russian casualties. The study also discovered that the Eurasian Economic Community's situation has worsened as a result of the Ukrainian crisis, which has impacted relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China's neutrality in the Ukraine crisis is vital to Russia, since it is more important than direct support. The consequence of Shanghai Cooperation Organization operations in Central Asia, on the other hand, is to increase Chinese influence while decreasing Russian influence.

The findings also revealed that China has provided covert support in order to further its own objectives. The Ukraine war has weakened Russia and the West, giving China more leeway to maneuver. North Korea has allied with Russia, but Russia is unlikely to gain anything from this other than the potential to exert more negative influence on the situation by increasing the dispute over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

The study also revealed that the Ukraine war is one of the expressions of the pains in which a really polycentric world is created. Continuing, Russia's notion of a polycentric world stems from the belief that, because of its decentralised nature, it will be easier for Russia to realise its ambitions as a pole, expanding both power and influence, even if this expansion is accompanied by bloodshed, human suffering, and economic losses, like what is happening in Ukraine.

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that before the Russia-Ukraine war there was a global system that was in existence which is bipolarity when the world had two opposing alliances during the cold war, and it was controlled by United States and Soviet Union. Continuing, the study concluded that after the fall of the Soviet Union, the global system changed to a unipolar system and the United States was in charge of the global system. This is seen in its resources, where the GNP in 2011 was 15,290 billion dollars as compared to the 7.298 billion dollars of China and Russia, which is 1,581 billion dollars. The study also concluded that the US is the one power whose military resources have been significantly less downsized as a percentage of national wealth, this goes to show that US military advantage is higher in relative terms than it was some thirty years ago. The study concluded that the Ukraine war has repercussions on the eastern front in places like Transcaucasia, Central Asia, and the Far East. Finally, it was concluded that Russia's notion of a polycentric world stems from the belief that, because of its decentralised nature, it will be easier for Russia to realise its ambitions as a pole, thereby expanding its power.

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