

REFLECTIONS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND THE EMERGING WORLD ORDER

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Abstract: The article offers reflections on several issues relevant to the war in Ukraine and its consequences. It will examine the interplay of processes, both global and local, that led to the emergence of the Maidan movement and shaped its agenda. The failure of the Maidan to realize this agenda created political vacuum that was filled by Ukrainian nationalists. The ascension of Ukrainian nationalists to power and their attempts to Ukrainianize Ukraine was a development that played a critical role in the eruption of the war. The strategy pursued in the Ukrainian war by the partnership between the Ukrainian nationalist government and its Western sponsors is another important issue to be addressed. This strategy has been singularly unsuccessful. The article will try to explain the reasons for its failure. The war in Ukraine is part of the global turmoil that engulfs the world today. The outcome of this war will undoubtedly have global effects. The article will discuss some consequences that the war has already produced and that are currently shaping the emerging world order.

Key words: The war in Ukraine, Maidan, Ukrainian nationalism, NATO, American hegemony, the new world order, BRICS, the emerging economies, Russia.

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Introduction

The current global crisis sends shockwaves that transform the world. This crisis is not a result of some specific event. It is a product of several simultaneous major developments. The world order that has existed since the end of WWII is collapsing. Its breakdown poses a major threat of a global conflagration that may put the very survival of our civilization in peril. The war in Ukraine and in the Middle East are two most critical conflicts. Other powerful global trends also fuel the collapse of the current world order. They involve a major redistribution of global wealth and power, redrawing borders, and massive migrations of population. These developments are taking place under the conditions of progressive degradation of the environment and climate change that cause massive natural disasters that destroy human habitat.

The simultaneous occurrence of these developments cannot be an accident, an unfortunate quirk of fate. It is not a perfect storm. The fact that all these developments are unfolding at the same time indicates that they are merely symptoms of some underlying fundamental systemic problem. Only by addressing this problem we can avert the existential threat to the survival of humanity.

The crisis that our civilization experiences is paradoxical. It follows the period of an unprecedented progress of our civilization that included a massive economic expansion and dramatic technological advances. This progress has put into our hands powerful means of transforming the world. The alarming fact is, though, that these very same means can also destroy our civilization.

Due to its systemic and fundamental nature, the problem we face affects all aspects of the current crisis. All developments that are part of the crisis contain the traces of this main problem. Their multiple reflections and refractions make possible to glean the systemic source of these traces and understand the main problem that afflicts our civilization.

This article will focus on one development in this crisis: the war in Ukraine. It will use this war as a case study to gain insight into the systemic problem with our civilization. In examining the war, the article will take a two-pronged approach. It will focus on global processes that powerfully affected the course of events in Ukraine, but it will also discuss the way that the war influences the developments on the global scale, particularly the emergence of the new world order. The focus will be on the interrelationship between the two levels. This approach will help to gain an objective understanding of both the war and the crisis that is currently unfolding in the world. It will also help to outline the consequences that the war is likely to produce and the world order that is emerging as a result of the current turmoil.

One of the main focuses of the article will be on the Maidan movement. This movement played the key role in causing the chain of events that eventually led to the war. The article will look into the contradictions and inconsistencies of this movement that led to its failure. The impact of the failure of the Maidan movement was decisive in determining the subsequent tragic course of events. This failure created a political vacuum that offered an opportunity for resurgent Ukrainian nationalism to establish its domination over the country. The policies of the nationalist rulers, particularly their Ukrainianization agenda, in many ways precipitated the escalation of hostilities in 2022 and the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces.

The war is not going well for the Ukrainian government and its Western partners. The strategy they have pursued has been singularly unsuccessful. Its result fell far short of the expectations that the partners—the Ukrainian government and the West—had in the beginning of the war. This strategy has led to a dead end—a conundrum they cannot resolve. The partner face options that they did not anticipate. One and the most dangerous of these options is an escalation of this war into a much larger conflict that may possibly even involve nuclear weapons. The article will examine the motivations that have shaped this debacle.

The war in Ukraine is still in progress. There are no definite signs of when and how it will end. Predicting its consequences for both Ukraine and the world is difficult. However, some contours of these consequences are already emerging. The article will offer reflections on what they will bring to the world, particularly the kind of new order they are likely to produce.

Finally, the article will address one general problem—the problem of difference. This problem has played a critical role in conflicts that have occurred in the history of our civilization, both on the global scale and on the scale of individual regions and countries. The problem has certainly attracted a great deal of attention; it has been recognized and examined. There have been many efforts to solve the problem of difference, yet they have all failed. The eruption of the war in Ukraine and the current global crisis certainly reflect this failure. As part of its analysis, the article will specifically address the problem of difference and its source. It will also outline a possible solution.

Critical Remarks on the Current Interpretations of the War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine is a complex phenomenon. Contributions that try to explain this war reveal several problems. One problem is the tendency to view this conflict as a regional development—i.e., a traditional conflict between Ukraine and Russia, or as a conflict between eastern and western Ukraine. This approach ignores global processes that have contributed to the war. It excludes a significant aspect of reality that is very relevant in this case. The understanding of the war that results from this approach is limited.

Another major problem with explaining the war in Ukraine is epistemological. The war does not fit neatly into current theoretical perspectives in social sciences. For this reason, many current interpretations of the war try to avoid theoretical frameworks. They focus on specific events and conditions and try to eschew theoretical generalizations. This approach constructs specific cause-effect connections that avoid theoretical generalizations. The main shortcoming of explanations is that they do not easily, if at all, connect to other explanations; their idiosyncratic nature resists theoretical generalizations. They largely stand on their own. Theoretical frameworks and generalizations are important. They offer possibilities of deep theoretically informed insights generated by complementary and cumulative accretion of knowledge. Idiosyncratic explanations are not conducive to such cumulation.

There are theoretically informed interpretations of the war in Ukraine. However, these interpretations and their underlying theoretical frames have one fundamental flaw. They view reality through the prism of mental constructs created by humans. In other words, they represent human-centered, or anthropocentric, tradition that has dominated our civilization since its emergence. Perspectives that originate from the anthropocentric tradition are necessarily exclusionary; they exclude non-human perspectives. As such, they are limited, subjective, and arbitrary. Objectivity requires the inclusion of all possible perspectives. Only a universally inclusive approach makes a comprehensive and objective view of reality possible.¹

A detailed analysis of theoretically informed interpretations of the war in Ukraine is certainly beyond the scope of this article. The anthropocentric nature of such interpretations makes such analysis redundant for the purposes of this study. An example, however, may be useful to illustrate the point. One of the most influential approaches in social sciences is the Marxist approach. In explaining social evolution, Marxism emphasizes class relations. Marxian theory maintains that contradictions inherent in class relations are the driving force of the evolution of society. In accordance with this theory, class divisions originate in property relations that define the structure of society. The principal class division that forms the structure of society is the division between exploiters and the exploited, between property owners and the proletariat, the haves and have-nots. These two fundamental classes stand in opposition to each other. Their antagonisms are irreconcilable and inevitably lead to contradictions that can only be resolved by violent

¹ Gennady Shkliarevsky, "The Evolution of Civilization as a Process of Creation," SSRN, January 28, 2020), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3526961> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3526961>

suppression of one class by another. In other words, the resolution of class conflicts takes the form of the suppression of difference.

The insight that class conflicts play a significant role in social evolution is an important one. The existence of classes is an undeniable social fact. Their interactions are certainly an important aspect of social reality. Indeed, antagonistic contradictions between classes generate tensions, conflicts, and even violent confrontations. Although important, this approach, however, is insufficient to explain the range of factors that produce social change. There are many rival theories that advance their own interpretations. Alternative theories have cogently challenged the Marxist approach. They argue that there are other factors and processes that also play an equally or even more important role in social evolution. They also argue that privileging class relations against other factors has no justification. Such privileging diminishes the significance of these other factors. Alternative theoretical approaches contend that the exclusionary nature of the class approach represents its limitation and makes it subjective and arbitrary. As a result, Marxism fails to provide an objective and comprehensive interpretation of social reality. In sum, while the Marxist approach is valuable, it is woefully insufficient to explain the complexity of social change.

Vladymyr Ishchenko and his co-author Yulia Yurchenko represent one example of using the class approach to explain the war in Ukraine.² According to their interpretation, Ukraine “fell victim to the relentless spread of the empire of capital where Russian and Western capitalist geopolitical imperialisms collided.” Although the view of imperialism by the two authors is certainly nuanced, sophisticated, and undogmatic, the conclusion that follows from their analysis is unambiguous: despite the diversity of various “competing geopolitical and economic imperialisms . . . they remain capitalist to the core.”³

Indeed, their approach in explaining the developments that led to the Maidan and the war offers valuable insights. However, it represents Ukrainian people as mere pawns in the big game of capitalists. Thus, their approach denies autonomy and agency to those who played the key role in the Ukrainian revolution. The approach does not explain, for example, the mobilization of Ukrainian society that made the Maidan possible. It attributes little significance to the new sense of autonomy and agency that permeated Ukrainian society before, during, and after the Maidan. The simple fact is that the demand for freedom and inclusion was the main motivation of the protesters who expressed their political will and overthrew the regime of Victor Yanukovich. This demand had an important causal effect and cannot be reduced as a merely byproduct of imperialist rivalry.

The mobilization of society against political elites was not a unique Ukrainian phenomenon. In fact, there are many examples of such mobilization that occurred in other

² Volodymyr Ishchenko, *Towards the Abyss: From Maidan to War* (London: Verso, 2024); Volodymyr Ishchenko and Yulia Yurchenko, “Ukrainian Capitalism and Inter-Imperialist Rivalry,” in I. Ness, Z. Cope, eds., *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91206-6_104-1.

³ Volodymyr Ishchenko and Yulia Yurchenko, “Ukrainian Capitalism and Inter-Imperialist Rivalry,” p. 1.

parts of the world at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.⁴ Social mobilization against elites propelled the protest movement in China that culminated in the Tiananmen Square uprising, the Arab Spring, student protests in Hong Kong, the Occupy movement in the United States and elsewhere, demonstrations against globalization, and many other similar events. Many authors have pointed to the sense of empowerment, autonomy, and the demands for freedom and inclusion that inspired the participants in these events. One cannot interpret these mobilizing factors as manifestations of class contradictions. Many authors, for example, explained these developments as effects of advances in communication technology and the internet. These advances provided access to new sources of information, facilitated exchange of ideas, and expanded horizons of millions of people around the world, including in Ukraine. The enrichment of their lives was the main source of the new awareness of autonomy and agency that motivated people to act in support of their demands for freedom, democracy, and inclusion.⁵

Also, imperialist rivalry cannot explain the failure of the Maidan to produce an alternative to elite rule. Creating such alternative was a major inspiration for Maidan activists. The importance of this failure is hard to overestimate. It created the political vacuum in the country that was exploited by Ukrainian nationalists who played a critical role in unleashing the destructive tendencies that contributed to the eruption of the war. The nationalist pursuit of their radical agenda in many ways contributed to and precipitated the war.

The above observations certainly do not represent a comprehensive critique of the class approach. Their purpose is simply to illustrate its limitations. Indeed, as has been already indicated, the class approach is undoubtedly valuable, but it is insufficient to produce an objective understanding of the events in Ukraine.

One important condition for objectivity is the capacity to view an object or a phenomenon from all possible points of view. An objective representation must be universally inclusive. Therefore, an objective perspective must be universal. But where does one anchor such universal perspective?

We create mental constructs that make observing reality possible. These constructs are very different, yet they do have something important in common. They have all been created and, therefore, there is process involved in their creation. As has been explained elsewhere, the process of creation existed long before humans appeared. It propels the evolution that sustains our universe and has created everything that exists in it.⁶ The main property of the process of creation is the capacity to generate an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization of reality. Creation is what the

⁴ Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Rethinking Democracy: A Systems Perspective on the Global Unrest," *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, vol. 33, no. 3 (2016), pp. 452–70.

⁵ Paul Mason, *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions*, (London: Verso Books, 2012); Paul Mason P. 2013a. *Why It's Still Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions*, revised and updated edition (London: Verso, 2013).

⁶ Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Conservation, Creation, and Evolution: Revising the Darwinian Project," *Journal of Evolutionary Science*, vol. 1, no. 2 (September 25, 2019), pp. 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.14302/issn.2689-4602.jes-19-2990>.

evolution is all about. For what is the evolution if not a succession of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization?

The evolution plays the essential role in sustaining the universe and all that exists in it. Without the evolution, the universe cannot exist.⁷ Just as the evolution is universal, so is the process of creation. This process is not a human product. On the contrary, the process of creation has made the rise of humans and their civilization possible. As a product of the evolution, the human mind has inherited the main properties of this process, and most importantly, its infinite power of creation. By recognizing, embracing, and understanding the process of creation, we gain access to infinite power of our reason. A perspective that uses the universal process of creation as its main organizing principle is a universal perspective. It includes all other perspectives and makes an objective view of reality possible.

The process of creation and the way it operates have been discussed elsewhere,⁸ and there is no need to revisit this discussion in these pages. A few general points, however, may be in order. The source of the process of creation is the nature of our universe. Our universe is unique. It is all there is. Nothing can come into it from outside because there is no outside; nothing can disappear from the universe because there is nowhere to disappear. Consequently, everything must be conserved. Conservation requires resources, and resources are always limited. Since no new resources can come into the universe from outside, they must be created. Thus, there is a close link between conservation that is ubiquitous in our universe and the process of creation. Conservation requires creation; and creation works on conservation.⁹

All systems that exist in our universe, including the universe itself, have functional operations that sustain them. Interactions of functional operations play an important role in conserving them. By interacting, functional operations combine their properties and integrate with each other. Their integration enriches them and offers new possibilities and new resources that are essential for conservation. For this reason, the evolution selects the process of creation for fitness.

The integration of functional operations gives rise to new levels of organization. These emergent levels of organization are more powerful than each local functional operation or their sum total. Their greater power offers new possibilities that have not existed prior to their creation. It provides access to new resources.

⁷ Shkliarevsky, "Conservation, Creation, and Evolution."

⁸ Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Understanding the Process of Creation: A New Approach," *Management: Journal of Sustainable Business and Management Solutions in Emerging Economies*, vol. 22, no. 3 (October 31, 2017), pp. 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.7595/management.fon.2017.0021>

⁹ Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Revising the Cosmic Story," *SSRN*, Rochester, NY, December 22, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3753651>; Gennady Shkliarevsky, "The Universal Evolution and the Origin of Life," *SSRN*, Rochester, NY, April 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3824365>.

The conservation of the system also requires the integration of its local and global level of organization. Such integration enriches local functional operations and increases their power. Interactions of enriched functional operations begin a new cycle of creation that gives rise to new and even more powerful levels of organization. The structure of the process of creation is a recursive repetition of this cycle.

The new and more powerful levels of organization perform a global function. They coordinate and regulate interactions of functional operations from which they have emerged. The regulation they provide facilitates and fosters interactions of functional operations. It plays an important role in conserving and sustaining functional operations and the entire system.

Society is a product of the universal evolution. As a variety of the universal evolution, social evolution has inherited the properties of the universal evolution. Just as the process of creation drives the universal evolution, it also propels the evolution of society that follows the same cycles of creation as the universal evolution. The approach to social evolution that uses the process of creation as its central organizing principle includes all other possible perspectives. For this reason, this approach is universal and can provide an objective view of social reality.

Social evolution involves conservation of local functional operations. Social agents combine the properties of these operations and integrate them. The integration leads to the emergence of a new and more powerful level of organization. This global level of organization gives rise to institutions, norms, and principles that coordinate and regulate local interactions. It also gives rise to fundamental principles (a kind of self-evident truth, a shared belief, or what Kant called synthetic a priori judgement) that organize the entire social system.

Conservation of the global level of organization requires its integration with the level that sustains local functional interactions. Such integration enriches local functional operations; they become more powerful. As a result of this enrichment, existing institutions, norms, and principles can no longer coordinate and regulate their interactions. The disruption in regulation leads to tensions and conflicts between those who perform local functions and institutions and agencies that are supposed to regulate them. Social instability is an inevitable result of these tensions and conflicts. It can end only with the creation of new institutions and the formulation of new principles and norms that can adequately coordinate and regulate local interactions, so that the entire social system can enter a new cycle of its evolution.

Humans use the process of creation, but they have not created it. The approach that uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle is not human-centered. It is not exclusionary. Just like the process of creation, this approach works on universal inclusion that is the principal condition of objectivity. Applying this approach to the situation in Ukraine will make possible to gain an objective understanding of the developments in that country that led to the eruption of the war.

Maidan and the Making of the War

The collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union unleashed energies that were pent up in Ukrainian society. Oppressive communist institutions could

no longer perform their social function of regulating spontaneous processes that were unfolding in Ukraine. These processes created powerful networks of social agents that the relict regulatory institutions of communist rule could not control.

The process that liberated society from communism also led to the rise of new oligarchical elites that competed for power and resources. The elites faced one problem. To control society, they had to organize it. In the wake of the collapse of communism, the country needed to make transition to new forms of governance and new institutions, which required new and original approaches. The new elites were certainly not up to this task. They had no theoretical perspectives or ideas that would guide them through this transitional period. Attempts to apply Western perspectives were largely unsuccessful. Western institutions and practices are not universal. They are specific to Western society and experience. Applying them to conditions that emerged after the fall of communism was like putting new wine into old wineskins. It was totally unsuccessful.

The new oligarchical elites had to operate in a new social environment with powerful networks and vigorous civic activism. They responded to the challenges by improvising. They attempted to solve the problems they faced by using modified residual structures inherited from communist rule. In their quest for power and control, the new elites created their own version of oligarchical capitalism that represented a caricature version of the Western model combined with holdovers from the Soviet period. This eclectic approach did not succeed; it only created new problems. The new Ukrainian elites failed to build a system that could effectively regulate and coordinate networks and their interactions, thus harnessing their creative power for producing novel approaches and solutions; they failed to integrate networks with new rule. The result was a protracted stand-off between oligarchical rulers and society, which led to growing tensions in the country and its stagnation. Several Maidans that took place before 2014 reflected this growing tension.

The dramatic global transformations that took place in the late 20th and early 21st century contributed to the situation unfolding in Ukraine. The system of world order began to crumble. Attempts by globalists to use their universalist appeal to prop up the old order failed. The failure led to the rise of global protest movements that challenged elite rule. The re-assertion of the power of nation-states vis-à-vis the liberal world order and its institutions, as well as the rise of nationalism and tribalism, were also important consequences of this failure. In the wake of the demise of globalism, many emerging new global powers—China, Russia, India and others—began to rely increasingly on their national traditions as the foundation for their society.

Tensions, hostilities, and conflicts between elite hierarchies and society were common in human history. They were an important aspect in all major revolutions. Clashes between elite hierarchies and society occurred in many countries and in different parts of the world: the protest movement in China that culminated in the Tiananmen Square uprising, the Arab Spring, student protests in Hong Kong, the Occupy movement in the United States and elsewhere, mass demonstrations against globalization and climate change, and many others.

Many factors contributed to these revolts against elite rule. Perhaps the most important factor was the technological progress that occurred during several decades prior to these events. Technological advances in communication technologies, and particularly the development of the internet, provided access to wide range of information sources and

facilitated exchange of ideas. This important development broadened horizons of millions of people and expanded their vision. It created a new sense of empowerment that had a profound impact on the way people viewed the world and themselves. It enhanced their awareness of autonomy and agency and intensified their demands for inclusion and equality. The existing hierarchies were too weak to handle this new environment. Conflicts between hierarchies and networks broke into the open and precipitated social upheavals in the early part of the 21st century, as networks empowered by global changes challenged the domination of hierarchies and elite rule.¹⁰

These global developments had a profound impact on Ukraine. They helped to create powerful social bonds that strengthened and consolidated network interactions. These interactions resulted in the emergence of a new level of organization that was more powerful than the one from which it emerged. Ukrainian oligarchical elites were incapable of controlling this power.

The failure of elites to lead Ukrainian society out of its stagnation and their rampant corruption that crippled the country stimulated the search for new solutions. The search led to civic mobilization and the emergence of the Maidan movement. The inspiration for mobilization came from ideas of universal inclusion, equality, empowerment, and genuine democracy. It reflected the growing interest of social actors in egalitarian traditions. Since the organizing principle of networks was non-hierarchical, the Maidan movement tried to apply the same principle for re-organizing Ukrainian society.

The Maidan movement intensely discussed the ideas of horizontalism, participatory and deliberative forms of democracy, and other non-hierarchical models of social organization. Many believed that Ukrainians as a nation were particularly predisposed to such egalitarian governance. They pointed, rather uncritically, to the organization and ethos of Cossack society back in the 16th and 17th century that they considered to be the antecedent of their vision. Combined with growing tensions and conflicts between society and oligarchical rulers, these egalitarian ideas created a powerful movement that eventually brought hundreds of thousands of activists and ordinary Ukrainians to the Maidan. Their protests led to the revolution that overthrew the corrupt government of President Yanukovich and forced him into exile.

The revival of Ukrainian nationalism was one of the trends in the mobilization of Ukrainian society. The roots of Ukrainian nationalism sprung from the intellectual stirrings in the 19th century. Following the 1917 revolution in Russia, Ukrainian nationalists made several unsuccessful attempts to capture power in the country that were all thwarted by the Red Army. Ukrainian nationalists made another bid for power during the period from the 1930s to the 1950s when they attempted to realize their political ambitions by challenging Poland and then Soviet Russia. The movement was eventually defeated by the Soviet Army and remained largely dormant until 1991. The attainment of independence by Ukraine in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union brought Ukrainian nationalism back to life. The revived nationalism built on the traditions of the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the interwar period. It used the experience of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) that had been led back then by Stepan Bandera, a charismatic but

¹⁰ Mason, *Why is it Kicking off Everywhere?*; Shkliarevsky, "Rethinking Democracy: A Systems Approach toward the Global Unrest."

controversial figure, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and other nationalist organizations that had been active in western Ukraine before their defeat by the Soviets.

The revived Ukrainian nationalism used these organizations and their experience as a template for organizing its practice in post-Soviet Ukraine. Contemporary Ukrainian nationalism thrived on the mythologization of the country's past, particularly the militaristic culture and ethos of Ukrainian Cossacks. It also embraced the traditional ideology of Ukrainian nationalist and Russophobia as perhaps the most important feature of this ideology. Hatred of Russia and everything Russian became their all-consuming obsession that defined their politics. Ukrainian nationalism and its organizations did not attract as many followers and participants as the Maidan movement. Its influence was limited. In contrast to the Maidan, the nationalists had a shared preference for hierarchies and charismatic leaders. They were highly motivated and well organized. They also had some military training in various patriotic militarized youth camps where young people were exposed to nationalist ideology.

To promote their ideology and practice, Ukrainian nationalists set up social and cultural organizations devoted to the cultivation of Ukrainian nationalist identity, launched numerous publications and media outlets that disseminated nationalist views, organized militarized nationalist youth camps that targeted the new generation of Ukrainians, staged demonstrations and marches that used nationalist symbols. The main goal of their efforts was to build an unsurmountable wall between Ukraine and Russia.

Driven by their fixation, nationalists used virulent propaganda, to spread hatred of Russia among Ukrainians and eliminate all sign of Russian influences in the country. Their message was simple: "the only good Russian was a dead Russian." They pursued the introduction of compulsory changes with distinct nationalist biases in school curricula; initiated renaming streets, towns, and other Russian toponyms; removed monuments to Russian writers and cultural figures. The Russian language became a special object of intense hostility and wrath of Ukrainian nationalists. They demanded proscribing theaters that used the Russian language and theater performances in Russian, they put out of business television stations and programs in Russian, they banned Russian films and films in Russian. And the list goes on and on.

In building the wall between Ukraine and Russia, Ukrainian nationalists aggressively promoted the view that Ukraine and Russia had nothing in common. Their propaganda made claims that Ukraine was a European nation, while Russians were merely a barbaric eastern tribe. They argued that Ukrainians always shared European values, norms, and traditions—a claim that is totally at odds with facts from Ukrainian past. European values and norms originate in liberal theory and practice that has its roots in Western tradition, historical experience, and culture. The fact that Ukrainian historical experience was very different mattered little to Ukrainian nationalists. They were determined to erect their wall and use any means at their disposal to make it stand. The views that they disseminated and policies they pursued were certainly at odds with large segments of Ukrainian population, particularly those who resided in eastern parts of Ukraine.

Another important global development that had important consequences for Ukraine was the changing role of the United States and NATO in world affairs. The failure of neoliberalism and globalism to regulate world order prompted the search for new ways and mechanisms of preventing global chaos and instability. In the wake of the demise of globalism, the United States, as the only remaining superpower with global reach that could

enforce world order, embarked on a quest for global hegemony as its way of making the world secure.

American political elites began discussing plans for establishing hegemony shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union.¹¹ The globalist agenda was only the first stage in pursuing this goal. In its efforts to realize its hegemonic agenda the United States sought the expansion of NATO beyond European borders and into non-European parts of the world. The inclusion of the countries of the former Soviet bloc was a very important step in NATO's global expansion.¹² Ukraine was to play an important role in these plans.

There was one serious obstacle that stood in the way of the implementation of American plans. It was Russia. To realize its plans, the United States had to do something about Russia. In pursuit of the solution of the Russian problem American planners first tried to use a carrot approach. Their idea was to make Russia part of NATO and thus ensure its compliance with American plans. When this idea fell through, the American policy makers began to seek ways of isolating Russia and weakening its influence as a regional power. One approach in achieving this goal was to promote local revolutions in the republics that had been formerly part of the Soviet Union and had common borders with Russia. The purpose of these revolutions was to establish regimes friendly to the U.S. and the West in the region. These so-called color revolutions took place in several republics (Georgia, Belarus, Kirgizia, and others). If successful, they would isolate Russia in the region. As part of the same plan, the United States also instigated and supported secessionist movements inside Russia, most importantly in Siberia and the Far East. The idea was to break up Russia into smaller units that would be dependent on and friendly to the United States. The break-up of Russia would have certainly weakened it and made it more vulnerable to American pressures.

American intentions vis-à-vis Russia are a subject of heated exchanges. There was, for example, a notorious case of a statement attributed to Secretary of State Madelein Albright that supposedly suggested a dismemberment of Russia—an allegation that Albright vehemently denied. The truth of the statement has not been verified and has been rightly disputed. However, there were other bona fide statements coming from Albright that reflect at least ambiguity in the attitudes of the United States toward Russia. For example, in her 1998 address to the U.S.-Russian Business Council in Chicago, Albright said:

Today's democratic reformers cannot afford to leave their work half finished, because Russia cannot afford to be half free. But to beat the odds, they must still beat the legacy they inherited from the last failed effort to transform Russia. And to understand their task, we need to understand just how hard overcoming the legacy of communism has been and will be.¹³

¹¹ Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History*.

¹² Jens Stoltenberg, "What NATO Means to the World," *Foreign Affairs*, July 3, 2024. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/europe/what-nato-means-world>.

¹³ Madelein Albright, "Address to the U.S.-Russian Business Council,"

The year 1998 was one of the hardest periods of Russian post-communist history. Russia was ripped apart by internal conflicts. Its economy was in shambles after the notorious “shock therapy” and privatization that were aggressively promoted by Washington advisors and that left the country’s economy in ruins. Russia experienced a default crisis that could have possibly led to the country’s bankruptcy.

In her address, Madelein Albright referred to the situation in Russia as an unfinished “work of democracy.” One could only wonder what a finished “work of democracy” would look like in Albright’s view. She was certainly aware of all these facts. Her insistence on the need to finish the “work of democracy” projected a bleak future for the country. The fact that Albright was a triumphalist proponent of American hegemony adds force to the interpretation of her words as ill-intentioned toward Russia. Albright was far from the only America’s influential voices that saw Russia’s doom as a favorable outcome for the United States. Francis Fukuyama, the celebrated author of the handbook on American hegemony *The End of History and the Last Man*,¹⁴ is another notable example. From triumphant benevolence that he expressed in the 1990s when he arrogated to Russia the role of a junior partner in world affairs, Fukuyama easily shifted his position without as much as even switching gears to angry appeals for bombing Russia to force the Kremlin into submission.¹⁵ One commentator has noted that Fukuyama’s views on Russia “are identical to the NATO discourse over the Ukraine war.”¹⁶

Although Ukraine’s conflict with Russia was a local affair, the country was to play a very important role in global plans of American political elites. Ukraine has a large territory, extensive population, and vast natural resources. But most importantly, the inclusion of Ukraine into the American sphere of influence would be a significant step in the realization of America’s plans to undermine Russia’s regional standing. The ascension of Ukrainian nationalists was another important factor that attracted American policy makers to Ukraine. Russia baiting cultivated by Ukrainian nationalists fitted well with the general orientation of the American political establishment. The United States had

Chicago, Illinois, October 2, 1998,
<https://19972001.state.gov/statements/1998/981002.html>;
<https://vbulahtin.livejournal.com/1509801.html>.

¹⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹⁵ “Философ Фукуяма призвал США разрешить Украине бить вглубь России,” *ИА Ореанда-Новости*, September 17, 2024,
https://www.oreanda-news.com/v_mire/filosof-fukuyama-prizval-zapad-razreshit-ukraine-bit-vglub-rossii/article1529043/; Francis Fukuyama; Сергій Сидоренко, “Фукуяма: Росіяни ще не відчули достатньо болю та страждань. Це треба змінити перед перемир’ям,” *Європейська правда*, September 25, 2024,
<https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/interview/2024/09/25/7194811/>.

¹⁶ Phil Hearse, “Ukraine: the return of Francis Fukuyama,” *International Viewpoint*, June 1, 2022, <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article768>.

considerable stakes in providing political support and significant resources to Ukrainian nationalists during the Maidan. The consolidation of the nationalist regime in Ukraine would certainly help enhance the U. S. supremacy in the region and globally.

The expansionist plans of the United States and the West certainly contributed to the revolution of 2014; they also had a role in shaping the course of events that led to the overthrow of President Yanukovich. Although undoubtedly important, these influences, however, were certainly not the main reason for these developments. The foremost motivation of the participants of the Maidan was their demands for inclusion, equality, and empowerment. Their vision for Ukraine was one of a country free from elite domination, exclusion, and inequality. These hopes and expectations moved thousands of ordinary Ukrainians to take part in the revolution that turned out to be the single most important event in recent Ukrainian history. The Maidan movement stood for united Ukraine, not a nation in which one part of the population sought to suppress another.

While the Maidan movement succeeded in ending the system of oligarchical capitalism, it failed to replace the defunct regime of Yanukovich with a form of government that reflected its vision and ideals. Again, this failure was not unique to Ukraine. Other popular upheavals against hierarchical domination that occurred at that time also failed at this task. The problem that these protest movements faced and could not solve was a systemic one. They pursued egalitarian goals of universal inclusion and equality. Their main organizing principle was non-hierarchical interactions. Suspicion, extreme distrust, fear, and even hate of hierarchical modes of organization and interactions were distinct features of these movements. However, as these movements evolved, their participants encountered one unexpected problem. The hierarchical principle that they rejected proved to be ineluctable. No matter how hard the participants tried to eschew hierarchies and preserve their egalitarian approach, they could not succeed. Hierarchies and hierarchical interactions kept popping up in places where they least expected them—within the very networks that embodied the principle of non-hierarchical organization. It was as if some fundamental and unknow force was at work supporting hierarchies. The problem of the relationship between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions appeared to be intractable. The egalitarian movements did not solve this problem, which led to their failure.¹⁷

The Maidan movement was in many ways millenarian and utopian. The millenarian spirit profoundly influenced those involved in the movement. In their imagination hierarchies were an absolute evil that must be resisted at all costs. They viewed hierarchies with a mix of fear and hate.

The Maidan did not exist in an isolated bubble. It was an integral part of the political environment in which the Maidan emerged. Egalitarian dreamers and idealists were not the only ones attracted to the Maidan. Politicians, political functionaries, agents of the government—they all understood the enormous power that the Maidan represented. They sought ways to access and use this power for their political gains. The reaction among the participants of the Maidan toward these attempts was one of disdain and loathing. It reflected their deep suspicions of politicians who, for them, personified the very hierarchical principle detested by Maidan activists.

¹⁷ Shkliarevsky, “Rethinking Democracy.”

There was something pathological in this attitude toward hierarchies. One could sense in these reactions deep-seated fear and anxiety. The words and actions of Maidan activists often expressed their apprehension that the hated hierarchical principle would infect the movement and pervert its egalitarian vision. There was an obvious paradox associated with this fear. Participants experienced it precisely at the time when the power of the movement was at its peak. The Maidan demonstrated this power by overthrowing the regime of President Yanukovich. There was nothing at the time that could challenge the power of the Maidan. Yet the fear was real. The presence of fear when there was nothing to fear indicated that its source was not some external danger, but that the source was internal and originated within the movement.

The Maidan was about liberation. The participants of the movement believed that they could achieve liberation by establishing an egalitarian form of government. They emphasized the principle of non-hierarchical interactions in their practice. Networks were the principal source of power of the movement. The Maidan movement did not have a single center that would coordinate and direct its activities and formulate its goals. The movement embodied an egalitarian approach to power. Visions of universal inclusion and empowerment was the most important inspiration for Maidan activists. Self-organization and egalitarian governance were the most popular topics discussed during the Maidan. Maidan activists had profound distrust toward government hierarchies and elites. An aversion to hierarchies was in their genes. They rejected the very principle of hierarchical organization. Yet, just like in other egalitarian movements, hierarchical tendencies kept popping as if propelled by some hidden force.

The problem that the Maidan and similar movements faced was a systemic one. As has been pointed out elsewhere, both hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions play an essential role in social systems.¹⁸ Non-hierarchical interactions among equals combine functional operations and integrate their properties. Such integration creates new and more powerful levels of organization that offer new possibilities that make new resources available for conservation. The very fact that the two levels of organization—the one that emerged and the one from which it has emerged—are unequal in power indicates the presence of a hierarchy. In other words, it shows that non-hierarchical interactions create a hierarchy. But since the interactions are non-hierarchical, they cannot conserve and optimize the hierarchy that they have created. Only a hierarchy can conserve their creation. Thus, the role of hierarchical interactions is to conserve and optimize what has been created by non-hierarchical interactions. Non-hierarchical interactions can create but are incapable of conserving and optimizing what they have created. Hierarchical interactions cannot create, but they can conserve and optimize the creation. The two types of interactions complement each other. The balance between them is essential for systems' conservation and evolution. Domination of one type of interactions over the other disrupts systems. As a result, systems cannot evolve and conserve themselves.

The balance between the two types of interactions plays an essential role in the process of creation. Only the process of creation can maintain the balance between hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions. Only perspectives that rely on the process of creation as their main organizing principle make possible to recognize the importance of

¹⁸ Shkliarevsky, "Rethinking Democracy."

this balance. When viewed separately from the process of creation, the two types of interactions appear independent from and opposed to each other. Without understanding the process of creation, without understanding the need for a balance between the two types of interactions, without observing this balance, hierarchical and non-hierarchical interactions will inevitably come into conflict.

This source of fear experienced by the participants of the Maidan movement was their failure to resolve their conundrum—the conflict they faced between their idealistic goal of establishing egalitarian rule and the constant resurgence of hierarchies within their own midst. The source was in the very nature of the systemic processes that operated in the Maidan community--the very fact that non-hierarchical interactions of Maidan networks created hierarchies. It was a paradox that required resolution. The very thought that they might be the source of the evil they despised and rejected was unbearable. It threatened their dream of a democracy based on universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment. Their very vision of liberation was at stake. The participants of the Maidan movement did not recognize the true source of their fear and, as a result, they left it unexamined.

The persistence of fear and anxiety was perturbing. The emotional stress they caused called for a resolution. But the failure to pinpoint the source of the predicament precluded this resolution. In the absence of a solution, the leaders and activists of the Maidan resorted to palliatives. Rather than explore and confront the source of the problem that caused their anguish, they engaged in scapegoating. They projected the symptoms caused by their predicament on a figment of their imagination that they identified as the source of these symptoms. It was scapegoating pure and simple. It could not solve the problem. All it provided was merely a temporary relief. It also intensified their hatred of and distrust toward hierarchies. It strengthened their belief that only the elimination of this “enemy” would end their anguish. The image of the “enemy” varied. The “enemy” could be Yanukovych and representatives of his regime; it could be vile politicians and political functionaries who tried to rein in and exploit the Maidan’s power; or it could be Russia as a proxy that personified the eternal evil. As all other forms of demonization, the projection of fears and anxieties was an irrational act. It was irrational because it did not address the real source of the problem—the failure of the Maidan to transcend its own limited vision.

The failure had a profound effect on the politics of the Maidan. The consequences were tragic. The inability to solve the paradox condemned the Maidan to paralyzing inaction. Its own pent-up energies smothered the Maidan and left it to die by slow self-inflicted death. The canvas tents and pavilions of the Maidan encampment were still in place during that cold winter of 2014, its fires were still burning, the barricades still stood, yet the Maidan was in a deadly stupor, having no idea where to go, what to do, or how to give vent to its colossal, suppressed energies.

The Maidan refused to take over the reins of governance. Such move would be an anathema for Maidan activists—an act of betrayal, a surrender to hierarchical principle. They desperately tried to come up with a compromise solution. One proposal was to turn Maidan into a permanent encampment that would remain in place for an indefinite time. Its role would be to intercede on behalf of Ukrainian citizens in cases of violations of their rights and freedoms by the government. Another proposal was that Maidan activists should form a permanent armed force—a kind of Pretorian guards—that would be ready to

act against the government or any of its officials in cases of violation of constitutional provisions. These proposals were totally unworkable. Their unpracticality only underscored the frustration and despair that slowly robbed the Maidan of its signs of life.

The coup that finally overthrew Yanukovych and his hated regime was the last gasp of the dying movement--a paroxysm that released its remaining energies. The Maidan exploded and then died, leaving behind a political vacuum. The gaping hole left after the Maidan did not remain empty for long. Ukrainian nationalists moved in to fill the vacuum.

In comparison with the Maidan movement, the Ukrainian nationalists did not have a mass appeal. The followers of Ukrainian nationalism constituted only 2% of the total Ukrainian population. But they were well organized, highly motivated, and fanatically committed to their cause. They did not have any qualms about using force or violence to achieve their objectives. They were the only group in the Maidan that did not have aversion to hierarchies. They used hierarchical principle in their organizations. Many Ukrainian nationalists had exposure to military training and used military structure as their organizational template. Ukrainian nationalists became the backbone of the elite national guard units such as Azov, Khartia, Aidar, and others.

The Ukrainian nationalists were the only contingent that survived the death of Maidan unscathed and even strengthened. They exploited the Maidan's appeal and adapted it to their purposes. They used their strengths for establishing their political dominance. The success of the nationalists should not be particularly surprising. History knows many examples when a small, determined group could effectively exploit the conditions of political vacuum and establish its rule. The nationalists did not have to conquer power, they picked it up; it simply fell into their hands. Unlike the Maidan, the nationalists acted when the opportunity came; and they did not shy away from power.

Taking reins of government was only the beginning. The nationalists had to consolidate their rule. The only way to achieve this goal was to act and implement their agenda. The driving force of their agenda was their indomitable hatred of Russia and everything Russian. The agenda was simple: Ukraine was to be Ukrainianized. The nationalists wanted to eradicate anything that had any association with Russia--any reminders of connections between the two countries. They moved aggressively. The implementation of their agenda antagonized many Ukrainian citizens who lived in the east of Ukraine. Many of them had Russian roots; they cherished their heritage, ancestry, and culture, particularly their use of the Russian language. They refused to surrender to nationalist demands. They were determined to protect their freedom and dignity. The aggressive Ukrainianization provoked the war in Ukraine.

The Partnership that Failed

1. Strategic Failures

The collapse of the Maidan, the ascension of the nationalists to power, and the emergence of the conflict in east Ukraine were giant steps toward the war between Russia and Ukraine—the war that was to take hundreds of thousands of lives and cause enormous devastation. As hostilities erupted and evolved in the east of Ukraine, they made increasingly clear that nationalist zealots could not win the confrontation in east Ukraine

alone. They needed weapons, resources, and political support that they found in the West. The two sides—the Ukrainian government and the West--had common interests that led them to their partnership. The contributions that each side brought into this partnership complemented each other. The collaboration promised a success. However, the turbulent waters of Ukraine had underwater rocks that could sink the project that the partnership pursued.

The Ukrainian nationalists inherited the country beset by numerous problems. Ukraine needed solutions that would stabilize and normalize life and end chaos in the conflict-ridden society. The country needed an efficient government with functional bureaucracy and effective institutions that would follow regularized and routinized rules and procedures. Ending the continued economic decline and rehabilitating the country's productive capacities was another important task that required attention. However, Ukraine's new rulers had neither an inclination nor skills to solve these problems. The Ukrainian nationalists had no realistic and constructive vision of Ukraine's future. All they had in mind was their obsessive desire to radically change the country in accordance with their agenda. Their only assets were their indomitable hatred of Russia and Russians and their fanatical determination to achieve their goals at any cost. They relied on discipline, suppression of differences, intimidation of opposition, political manipulation, and tireless propaganda efforts.

As has already been mentioned, the main thrust of nationalist policies was to Ukrainianize Ukraine, i.e., to eliminate any signs of Russia in Ukrainian society. They pushed, for example, for the removal of books in Russian and by Russian authors from library shelves and for the closure of theaters that staged Russian plays or performed in Russian. They banned the screening of Russian films and forced out of business Russian TV programs and programs in Russian. They removed monuments to prominent literary and cultural figures that they excluded from the pantheon of nationalist heroes; and, conversely, they campaigned to establish monuments to prominent nationalists, such as Stepan Bandera. They purged courses dealing with Russian history and culture from curricula in grade schools and higher educational institutions; they renamed streets and towns with Russian toponymic references; and they sought to suppress the use of the Russian language.

These policies had nothing to do with the most urgent problems faced by Ukraine, particularly with the dire need to bring the people of Ukraine together and to unify the country. They did not solve the old problems, and they created plenty new ones, as the proved to be extremely controversial and divisive. The nationalists antagonized the population in the east. When Ukrainians in the east revolted, the government in Kiev sent armed nationalist units to suppress the insurgency, which nationalist zealots were only too eager to do. By adopting this decision, the government killed two birds with one stone: it removed the irksome and unruly bunch from the capital, which gave vent to their destructive energies away from the center, and it opened a broad military campaign in the east trying to suppress the insurgency.

Ukrainianization was not the only item on the nationalist agenda. Nationalists also wanted to play a bigger role in global politics. Driven by their intense hate of Russia, they created in their imagination the idea of Russia as an absolute evil. They argued that the very proximity of Russia to Ukraine would always pose a mortal threat to their country. In their mind, Ukraine could have a secure future only if Russia were destroyed. The

emphasis on Western roots of Ukrainian culture created another trajectory in the nationalist propaganda. They increasingly began to portray Ukraine as a protector of the West and Western values against Russian aggression.

The representation of Russia as a mortal enemy of both Ukraine and the West played well in the West. It fitted into the general plans of the West to marginalize Russia as a regional power. As has been mentioned, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States and its Western allies had pursued the plans of playing the dominant role in the region that Russia considered its own security zone. As their initial effort to bring Russia into NATO as a junior partner had failed, they had embarked on a course designed to weaken Russia and expand NATO in eastward direction. The inclusion of East Central European countries that had been formerly part of the Soviet Bloc into NATO was part of this course, as were also color revolutions in several countries that had formerly been part of the Soviet Union.

The role of Ukraine in these plans was crucial. Its vast territory, large population, and an abundance of natural resources could turn the country into an important bridgehead for expanding NATO's power to the east. The confluence of interests brought the two sides—the West and the Ukrainian nationalist government-- together and sealed their partnership.

The partnership appeared to be an ideal match. The Ukrainian side brought into this partnership a highly motivated and effective fighting force, known for its bravery and tenacity in combat. The Western contribution included vast economic resources. The Western partners were also to use their political influence for garnering worldwide political and moral support for Ukraine. Finally, the partnership provided the Ukrainian military with huge supplies of cutting-edge military technology, expertise, and training. The partnership appeared to be a winning combination that promised a fail-proof success.

Indeed, during the early stages of the Russian incursion in 2022, Ukrainian army with Western support had scored some significant successes. However, as the war dragged on, the initial momentum began to sag. The Ukrainian counter-offensives in the summer of 2023 did not achieve its objectives. As the war became the war of attrition and endurance, Russia's superiority became increasingly visible and losses on the Ukrainian side began to mount. There were numerous signs that the war was not going according to strategic planners on the Ukrainian side.

In the initial scenario that was outlined in the strategic plans of the partnership and the pro-Ukraine media commentariat, the war in Ukraine was supposed to seriously destabilize Russia. Severe economic sanctions applied by the West were expected to cripple Russian economy. They should have caused widespread shortages, a severe economic downturn, and a significant decline in the standard of living. As was also expected, under the conditions of a protracted war, the economic underperformance would deplete Russia's stockpiles in war materiel, which would eventually lead to its demilitarization. As a result, Russia would no longer pose a serious threat either to countries in the region or globally.

These adverse developments in combination with heavy human losses in the war were to provoke discontent both among Russia's political elites and in the general population; they were to the emergence of wide-scale protests that would undermine or even topple Putin's government. The growing instability would create favorable conditions for overthrowing Putin and his administration and establishing a new government that

would be friendly to the West and more receptive to Western policies. This new government was to include members of the opposition who had left Russia at the beginning of the war and were now groomed in the West for their future political roles. The plans also envisioned a possibility that the collapse of Putin's regime would provoke secessionist movements that would fragment Russia into smaller units. Russia, as a result, would no longer pose a threat to its neighbors and to Western interests. For all practical purposes, Russia would simply cease to exist as a major factor in regional and global politics.

However, these plans and predictions proved did not come to pass; they proved to be totally vain and unrealistic. The Western sanctions failed to cripple the Russian economy. Instead of declining, Russian economy grew. It expanded its production capacities, prevented significant shortages; and maintained stability in the standard of living. Rather than demilitarize Russia, the strategy produced the opposite effect. Russia's economy militarized. By the second year of the war, Russia was able to vastly outproduce the combined West in producing arms and munitions. Contrary to expectations, Russian military technology proved to be equal and, in some cases, even superior to Western arms. The Russian armed forces had supplies that were sufficient to ensure their successful operations. As another example of the militarization of Russian society, the Russian government has recently announced plans to significantly upgrade its military budget and to increase the size of its armed forces from the current 1.5 million to 2.5 million servicemen.¹⁹

At the same time, the West has found itself in a precarious position. The war has considerably depleted its own military stockpiles that fell below levels required to protect NATO countries. This development exposed the West to serious lapses in its own security.²⁰ The recent report by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, a non-profit economic research institute and one of the world's most influential think tanks, reads as nothing short of condemnation of the strategy that had an expressed purpose to demilitarize Russia. One of its conclusions, for example, states that German military supplies are so low that the country can only reach the level of its military production in 2001 in a hundred years.²¹ The multiple failures of the strategy pursued by the partnership

¹⁹ "Путин увеличил численность Вооруженных сил до 2 млн 389 тыс. человек," *Коммерсантъ*, October 16, 2024, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7158697>.

²⁰ Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Wrestles with Aiding Allies and Maintaining Its Own Weapons Supply," *The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/17/us/politics/us-weapons-israel-ukraine.html>

²¹ Guntram Wolff, Alexander Burilkov, Katelyn Bushnell, and Ivan Kharitonov, "Fit for War in Decades: Europe's and Germany's Slow Rearmament Vis-a-Vis Russia," *Kiel Report 1* (September 1, 2024). <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/publications/fit-for-war-in-decades-europes-and-germanys-slow-rearmament-vis-a-vis-russia-33234/>.

have led to growing calls in the West for its rethinking and seeking diplomatic, rather than military, solutions.²²

The much-anticipated internal troubles for the Putin government did not materialize. Protests and demonstrations that took place in Russia during the early stage of the war fell far short of the expectations. They quickly subsided and eventually died down. Russia's political elites showed no signs of rebelliousness against the government. In fact, the elites almost to a man became very patriotic. Expecting them to form an opposition and move against Putin has proven to be a pipedream. General Russian population today is also very supportive of the government and its policies. Putin's poll ratings remain consistently high at 70 to 80 percentage points. The number of Russians who volunteer to serve in Ukraine is growing.

In practically all respects, those in the West who developed the strategy for this war proved to be wrong. The way the war unfolded reveals serious mistakes and miscalculations. The string of these failures is so long, and they are so consistent that one cannot explain them as mere accidents. They point to serious systemic flaws in strategic thinking. Both the Ukrainian nationalist government and its Western partners clearly failed to make a realistic assessment of the situation and rationally calculate their capacities and resources against those available to the Russian government. These failures reflect dysfunctionality due to irrational thinking. They inevitably raise questions as to the source of this irrational turn.

2. The Irrational Turn

From the early stages of the conflict and even before, both the West and Ukrainian nationalists engaged in portraying Russia as an evil country that was driven by its relentless preoccupation with wars and expansion. The propaganda that came from Ukrainian and Western mainstream commentariat bordered on obsession. It explained Russia's drive for conquest by its perpetual internal insecurity. In this depiction, Russia emerged as absolute evil with no redeeming qualities. This view of Russia was nothing short of demonization. In light of this view of Russia, the war in Ukraine emerged as an apocalyptic event with strong, almost mystical connotations. Neither the Ukrainian government, nor its Western partners could think of ending this war in any way other than a complete defeat of Russia. Defeating Russia became a compulsive obsession, a wishful thinking, repeated in thousands of variations to convince the world of the need to support Ukraine. The effects of the propaganda efforts on the world were mixed. However, the demonization of Russia powerfully influenced the strategic thinking of both the Ukrainian government and its Western sponsors. It shaped the way they viewed and assessed reality.

Demonization is not a rational act. It deprives its object of any ambivalence and ambiguity representing it as quintessential evil. Humans view reality through the prism of their mental constructs that define their perceptions. Since our mind never stops evolving,

²² Federico Fubini, "Zelensky in Rome," *Corriere della Sera*, October 9, 2024, https://www.corriere.it/esteri/24_ottobre_09/zelensky-roma-meloni-guerra-da2c18e7-937e-41d5-ac18-91045b3b7x1k.shtml.

its constructs also constantly change. These changes alter our perceptions and interpretations of reality. The result is that we perceive reality as complex and multisided. Such perceptions of reality give rise to the awareness of reality as ambivalent and ambiguous. This awareness reflects essential properties of the human mind, especially its infinite capacity to evolve. These properties are inherent in the very nature of the human mind. The denial of ambivalence and ambiguity is effectively the denial of these properties; it goes against the very nature of our mind. It cannot possibly lead to a rational and realistic assessment of reality. As an irrational act, demonization distorts reality; it affects our ability to think rationally. Demonization usually involves fear as an irrational response to an imaginary threat.

The anti-Russian propaganda that came from the Ukrainian government and its Western partners represented Russia as a mortal threat to the existence of Ukraine, Europe, and the world. A close examination of this claim reveals its irrational nature. The basis for this claim is the view of Russia as an absolute evil. Both the Ukrainian nationalist government and its Western partners justified this view by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and atrocities that its forces allegedly committed in this invasion. This justification is unconvincing for two reasons. For one thing, the claim totally ignores the fact the Russia is not the only perpetrator of atrocities in this war. Even before the Russian invasion, the Ukrainian military forces committed multiple atrocities against the population in east Ukraine. But even more importantly, the demonization of Russia had started long before the invasion. Russia has traditionally been an object of fear and hate in the imagination of Ukrainian nationalists. In many ways, the hatred of Russia is the very *raison d'être* of Ukrainian nationalism. It is the self-evident truth that Ukrainian nationalists accept a priori as the main organizing principle of their ideology and practice. They viewed this hatred as their most important virtue. Without this hatred Ukrainian nationalism would lose much of its meaning and appeal. One example illustrates this point. In a characteristic display of their hate, Ukrainian nationalists often led the chant for killing "evil Muscovites" during the Maidan. They expressed this hate long before Russians invaded Ukraine, when Russia was not an immediate and direct threat to Ukraine. The source of this hatred was totally irrational.

The experience of fear and anxiety by Ukrainian nationalists was real; and real experience must have a real cause. Indeed, there was plenty that could cause Ukrainian nationalists to feel fear and anxiety, particularly after the Maidan when they became the dominant force in the country. That source was certainly not Russia.

The goal of Ukrainian nationalists was Ukrainian statehood, or "derzhava" as they call it. They had a vision of what this statehood should look like. Following the Ukrainian nationalist organizations from the WWII period,²³ they wanted to transform Ukraine based on their vision.

Ukraine has a complex past that is intimately entangled with Russia. Ukrainian population before the 1917 revolution was mixed and included both ethnicities. Ethnic

²³ Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, "The 'Ukrainian National Revolution' of 1941: Discourse and Practice of a Fascist Movement," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 12. No 1 (2011), pp. 83-115.

Ukrainians tended to live in the countryside, while ethnic Russians populated urban areas. Ukraine was a bilingual country where both Russian and Ukrainian were spoken.

The urbanization of Ukraine during the Soviet period changed the country's demographics. More Ukrainians moved from rural areas to cities. They became workers and employees in urban economic sectors. Although they continued to speak Ukrainian, they also learned and used Russian as a means of communication. For political reasons, the Soviet authorities in Ukraine made efforts to support Ukrainian culture and language. The Soviet establishment honored writers who wrote in Ukrainian. Curricular offerings in grade schools and higher educational institutions included courses on Ukrainian history, literature, and language. These policies were certainly not unproblematic, but they did bring some results. By the time Ukraine became independent, its unified population was multi-ethnic and included different groups: Ukrainians, Russians, Tatars, as well as representatives of other ethnicities that lived in the Soviet Union. Ukraine was a bilingual country. Ukrainian citizens used both Russian and Ukrainian in their daily practice.

From the moment of its re-emergence on the political scene, the Ukrainian nationalist movement was set on changing this situation. Ukrainian nationalists advocated a complete and total Ukrainianization of Ukraine. Disregarding the realities of recent Ukrainian history, they promoted their own vision of what Ukraine should be like. The main thrust of Ukrainianization was to eliminate all signs related to Russia, including the use of the Russian language. The approach was unabashedly radical. It could not but antagonize many Ukrainian citizens, particularly those of Russian descent, who were in favor of their country being multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. These objectors to the Ukrainianization became the main target of Ukrainian nationalists who wanted to remake them in their own image.

The first decade of the 21st century and the Maidan movement marked a unique period in recent Ukrainian history. The ideal of liberation inspired many Ukrainians and brought them together in quest for universal inclusion, empowerment, and democracy. They believed that the pursuit of these goals would help them solve the problems that the country faced and would lead Ukraine to a better future. The Maidan did not realize these hopes and brought disappointments. Perhaps the biggest disappointment was frictions and divisions that emerged in Ukraine in the wake of the Maidan. The unity of Ukrainian people was essential for solving numerous problems that the country faced. The lack of unity made the solution of these problems impossible.

Instead of unifying the country, the Ukrainian nationalists focused on their agenda of Ukrainianization. It was their solution to all other problems. The implementation of this agenda did not solve the old problems but created many new ones. Ukrainianization of the country was no solution to the problem of difference that divided it. After the Maidan, this problem became the source of the most serious threat to Ukraine's survival. Solving this problem required going to its source. Not only did the nationalists fail to identify this source, but the aggressive implementation of Ukrainianization seriously aggravated the overall situation in the country. Instead of being part of the solution, their policies became the main source of the country's problems. Yet despite rapidly deteriorating conditions, the nationalist refused to change their course. They never recognized and examined the source of the problem. They simply tried to suppress it.

The rising intensity of fear and anxiety called for action. The nationalists responded by projecting fear and anxiety—the symptoms generated by the unsolved problem of

difference—on a mental construct, a figment of their imagination created by the act of projection. The phantom they created and identified as the cause of fear and anxiety that they experienced was Russia. Ukrainian nationalists convinced themselves and tried to convince others that if they destroyed Russia, the problems and fears they caused would disappear. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This scapegoat approach did not end fears and anxieties. It only gave vent to anger, hate, and frustration, which provided only a momentary relief. As soon as the psychological effect of the demonization passed, the symptoms came back with vengeance. The demonization of Russia became a monster that demanded endless sacrifices. It precluded the nationalist government of Ukraine from using an approach that could provide a rational and objective view of reality. The grandiose purgatory psychodrama that nationalists enacted before the entire nation traumatized Ukrainian society. Irrational thinking affected the strategy of the government in the war. It led to unrealistic assumptions and flawed decisions that ended in failures. The tide of the war turned against Ukrainian forces that began to retreat before Russian attacks. The toll for Ukraine and its population as a result of this flawed strategy was heavy.

Western thinking about Russia also revealed irrational strains. The causes of Western attitudes were different than those of the Ukrainian nationalists, but the results were similar. The demonization of Russia had a powerful effect on Western strategy in the Ukrainian war. It was the cause of unrealistic goals, flawed assessments, and erroneous decisions.

As has been mentioned earlier, Western thinking about Russia had not always been irrational. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when Russia was weak and vulnerable, the attitude of the United States and its allies toward Russia was generally benevolent. Although still cautious, the West no longer perceived Russia as an enemy. It even entertained, albeit briefly, the idea that Russia might join the Western alliance and become a member of NATO.

By the beginning of the new millennium the relationship between Russia and the West began to deteriorate. Their alliance did not materialize due to Russia's insistence on having a status equal to other NATO members. NATO humiliated Russia by offering only a junior partnership. In the wake of disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia experienced a period of dramatic decline characterized by uncertainty, instability, fragmentation, and economic contraction. Deep malaise engulfed Russian society. The morale in the country was extremely low—so low, in fact, that many Russians felt that their country would not survive into the future. In these dangerously deteriorating conditions, Russia also faced NATO's expansion to the east. Russia's choices were limited: either to pursue a course toward revival and reconstruction, or the country would be doomed to extinction. From the turn of the new millennium Russia's new leadership embarked on the path of resurgence. It re-asserted the country's territorial integrity by settling internal secessionist wars and conflicts, took steps to reinvigorate its economy, and began to rebuild and modernize its military. In a relatively short time, Russia achieved a remarkable success and dramatically improved its standing as a regional power.

As Russia advanced on its path toward resurgence, the attitude of the United States and the collective West began to change. The United States and its NATO allies returned to the Cold War perception of Russia as an expansionist power that posed a security threat to Europe and world order. Their attitude toward Russia was no longer one of benevolence; it

became downright unfriendly; it grew particularly hostile when the West embarked in eastward expansion—a development to which Russia vehemently objected. The relations between the two sides began to resemble increasingly those that existed during the Cold War.

There was a widespread perception in the West that Russia's growing strength was posing a threat to the West. Hostility toward Russia became particularly pronounced as tensions between Russia and Ukraine grew. It reached the level of hysteria and became increasingly warlike during and particularly after the Maidan events. The West adopted the view that Ukraine was only the first piece in Russia's domino game against the West. Western commentariat engaged in fearmongering by arguing that if Russia were not stopped in Ukraine, it would eventually invade Europe and establish its dominance over the continent—a view that was fully endorsed and supported by Ukrainian propaganda.

Facts, however, belie these claims. A close and rational analysis of policies pursued by the Russian government tells a different story. The Russian government has repeatedly emphasized a fundamental change in the country's orientation. Rather than focusing on Europe, the government enunciated its plans for re-orienting the country toward the countries of emerging economies in the Global South and East, Africa, and Latin America. As part of this reorientation, Russia, for example, has recently signed a deal with Iran to build a pipeline across the Caspian Sea.²⁴ Russia's plans also include building pipelines to transport gas and oil to China.²⁵ Russia is also developing the shipping trade route in the Arctic.²⁶ As part of new plans, Russia also intends to develop its northern and Arctic regions, Siberia, and Russia's Far East.

The plans indicate that Russia no longer directs its interests primarily toward Europe. Its new interests are in building relations with emerging economies. The Russian government stated its intentions to provide energy that would fuel the economic development in the countries of Global South and East. The creation of BRICS, as an alternative to Western global political and economic institutions, also confirms the change

²⁴ "Russia and Iran Plan to Build Gas Pipeline Across the Caspian Sea," *Civilnet*, July 29, 2024, <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/790363/russia-and-iran-plan-to-build-gas-pipeline-across-the-caspian-sea/>; <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/790363/russia-and-iran-plan-to-build-gas-pipeline-across-the-caspian-sea/>.

²⁵ "Russia and China to sign Power of Siberia-2 gas pipeline contract 'in near future', says Novak," *Reuters*, May 17, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russia-china-sign-power-siberia-2-gas-pipeline-contract-in-near-future-says-2024-05-17/>;
"Putin says oil pipeline could run alongside planned new gas link to China," *Reuters*, May 17, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/putin-says-oil-pipeline-could-run-alongside-planned-new-gas-link-china-2024-05-17/>.

²⁶ "Russia Opens 2024 Arctic Route for Shipping Urals Crude to Asia," *MarineLink*, July 30, 2024, <https://www.marinelink.com/news/russia-opens-arctic-route-shipping-urals-515558>.

in Russia's orientation.²⁷ These are just some examples that prove that Russian global priorities no longer lie in Europe. Signals to this effect were coming loud and clear at the time of the Maidan and after. Yet the West appeared to be deaf and blind to them. Its anti-Russian propaganda continued unabated, with persistent signs of obsession. Despite the war in Ukraine, Russia was no more dangerous to the West than other major global players. The war did not pose any direct and immediate threat to the West, contrary to hysterical claims made by the nationalist government of Ukraine just to extract more money from the West. There was much about Western obsession with Russian threat that did not make any rational sense.

This is not to say that Western fears were illusory. They were real, and real fears must have a real source. However, as the above shows, Russia could not be this source. There were dangers that posed more direct, immediate, and serious threats to the West. The edifice that the West erected during the post-WWII years was falling apart. The cause was not Russia, China, Iran, or any other country. The disintegration was entirely self-induced; its cause was indigenous--a result of the accumulation of numerous unsolved problems. The lack of solutions was not accidental. It was not a result of errors, miscalculations, or some unfortunate circumstances, but rather a symptom of a deep systemic breakdown.

The evolution that has occurred over last several decades has changed the world beyond recognition. It has given rise to new and more powerful levels of organization. The West has not kept up with these changes and has been stagnating. Its economic development has slowed down to a crawl. Internal social and political tensions have depleted the cohesion of Western society. The West has been losing its global standing and prestige. These signs are very alarming. But there is an even more important reason for alarm. The obvious fact is that the West does not know how to change this situation. The old and tried approaches no longer work. The liberal theory and practice, values, norms, and institutions can no longer exercise an effective control over the evolutionary processes. They are obviously not powerful enough to meet the challenges of the emerging world. The West cannot provide global leadership. The West cannot even maintain order and stability its own society, to say nothing about the rest of the world.

There is an obvious urgency for the West to change its ways and transcend liberalism. Yet the West stubbornly refuses to undertake such transition. It rejects the path of fundamental rethinking and renewal. As a result, the accumulation of problems continues; and there are no new ideas or approaches in addressing these problems. There are no indications that the West sees any way out of its predicament. The helplessness before these challenges is the most serious threat faced by the West. There is one very important conclusion that follows from these observations. The greatest danger to the West comes from its failure to transcend liberalism—the failure that is due to the fear of going beyond liberalism for which the West sees no alternatives. The fact that Western liberals refuse to take the path of transcendence shows that they do not understand and, as a result, fear the power of human reason.

²⁷ "Financial cooperation and BRICS expansion are on the table as Putin hosts Global South leaders," *Associated Press*, October 23, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-brics-summit-china-india-d672be9b1ec2ffd0fba608e8a6aca790>.

Despite mounting criticisms, the West persists in its self-delusion that liberal theory and practice have universal applicability. Western leaders believe that the world must change in accordance with liberal norms and values. Many non-Western countries remain unconvinced. They do not welcome the prospects of continued global leadership of the West. Numerous failures have ruined Western prestige and eroded its political and moral capital. The world is moving increasingly away from liberal universalism. Many countries are turning toward their indigenous ways. They increasingly view their traditions, values, norms, and religions that have sustained them through centuries of their history as offering a much better foundation on which they want to build their own future.

Rather than recognize and examine the true source of its fear, the West has resorted to scapegoating. It has chosen to project its fears and anxieties, that are mere symptoms of its predicament, on a phantom created by the very act of projecting. As in the case of Ukrainian nationalists, Russia has become a scapegoat for Western fears. The West has convinced itself that if Russia is reined in, its problems and fears will disappear. The irrational nature of this belief is all too obvious. The source of the Western quandary is in the West itself, not in Russia.

The irrational belief to which the West has succumbed has shaped its thinking. It has affected the ability of those who lead the West to make rational assessments and formulate realistic strategies. They live in the bubble of wishful thinking that they themselves have created—an echo chamber where they hear only their own voices. The course of the war in Ukraine shows how detached Western leaders are from reality.

By comparison, Russia's approach toward the war in Ukraine is much sounder. Russia's objectives in this war are realistic. The Russian government has repeatedly stated that its territorial claims in Ukraine do not extend beyond the four regions that have voted to become part of Russia. President Putin has confirmed many times that a complete departure of Ukrainian forces from these four regions is a non-negotiable condition for ending the war. This limited approach is the reason why Russia calls its actions "special military operations," rather than a war. Another non-negotiable condition is that Ukraine should be neutral. It should not join military alliances, and no stationing of foreign troops should be allowed on its territory. One may agree or disagree with these conditions, but they are certainly limited and attainable, as opposed to the completely unrealizable goal of returning to the borders of 1991. Russia's successes in the battlefield clearly show that its strategy in this war is a result of a rational understanding of realities. This is certainly not to approve Russia's actions. It is merely to state that the goals they set are realistic and that they have rationally assessed their own resources and those of their opponents. The partnership has clearly failed at this task.

3. Summation

The Ukrainian nationalist government and its Western partners have not been successful in their prosecution of the war against Russia. Despite enormous efforts, despite huge losses of life and destruction, despite exorbitant contributions that the West has made to this war effort, the events of the war have not unfolded according to plans of the coalition. The partnership's strategy has not achieved its goals.

This section has argued that specific mistakes, miscalculations, erroneous assessments, unfortunate circumstances and coincidences are insufficient to explain this grand fiasco. The steady flow of failures points to consistent and major flaws that result from irrational thinking. As has been made clear, the demonization of Russia has fatally shaped the way that the Ukrainian government and its Western partners approached this war. They were certainly not blind to the problems they faced. They were aware of the difference between the real world and the theoretical and ideological constructs that they used for understanding and interpreting reality. Yet, instead of recognizing the inadequacy of their mental tools, the partners engaged in projecting their fears and anxieties and demonizing Russia. Both the Ukrainian nationalist government and its Western partners have convinced themselves that, Russia is the absolute evil and the source of all their problems. They believed, and continue to believe, that if they made Russia weak, their problems and fears would disappear. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Finally, this section also shows that the cause of the irrational strategy pursued by the Ukrainian nationalist government and its Western sponsors has been their failure to transcend the perspectives and approaches that have proved to be inadequate for addressing the new realities. Their fear of transcendence prevailed over reason. The fear and distrust of their own reason is the real source of their conundrum.

The War in Ukraine and the Emerging World Order

As has been pointed out earlier, the close interrelationship between local and global levels of organization is an important aspect of world order. Global processes shape local developments, and events on the local level may produce strong reverberations on the global scale. The war in Ukraine is undoubtedly one of the most important regional developments in today's world. Global processes that have unfolded over the past several decades have made a powerful impact on Ukrainian society. In many ways, they have shaped the chain of events that have led to the eruption of the war. Conversely, the war is producing a major impact on global affairs and will undoubtedly bring significant changes in the world order.

The war is still in progress. The killing fields of Ukraine are still demanding human sacrifices. There are no clear indications at this point when and how the war will end. The situation in Ukraine remains fluid. Making predictions about the outcomes is still largely a guessing game. However, the war has already produced results that will have lasting effects. These results make possible to glean the consequences that they are likely to produce.

Discussions of the new world order have been underway for some time, as global players have jockeyed for the leading role in this process. Many countries called for changes, including the United States, Russia, China, and others.²⁸ The war in Ukraine has become a major catalyst for creating a whole new architecture of global security; it has

²⁸ Gennady Shkliarevsky, "The Post-hegemonic World Order: the Case for Perpetual Peace (August 22, 2024), *SSRN*, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4934136> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4934136>.

made the rise of a new world order inevitable. Leaders around the world view the settlement process in Ukraine as an opportunity to recalibrate the post-WWII world order to modern realities. They argue that any settlement in Ukraine should be undergirded by new principles and approaches to global security.

Following the outbreak of the war in 2022, the subject of new world order has frequently come up in statements of Western leaders. President Biden, for example, have repeatedly tied up the war in Ukraine to the need for new world order. As he has argued on one occasion, the world order that has been in place over the last 50 years, has “sort of run out of steam” and a new one is needed.²⁹ Speaking about the current global conditions at the Business Roundtables quarterly meeting on March 21, 2023, Biden argued in favor of changing the world order. “Now is a time,” Biden stressed, “when things are shifting . . . There’s going to be a new world order out there, and we’ve got to lead it. And we’ve got to unite the rest of the free world in doing it.” Biden also insisted that the new world order must be liberal, that is, it should be based on liberal values and norms because they are “what holds the world together” and “what keep us, America, safe. American values are what make us a partner that other nations want to work with.”³⁰ Jens Stoltenberg, the former secretary general of the NATO alliance, expressed very similar views. In his article “What NATO Means to the World” published by *Foreign Affairs* on the eve of the NATO summit in Washington in July of 2024 Stoltenberg outlined NATO’s vision. He maintained that NATO’s security concerns would no longer be confined to the defense of the transatlantic community or Europe. A renewed and stronger NATO, he argued, would have a vastly expanded role well beyond Europe.³¹

The leading BRICS countries emphasize that the realities of the world today are very different than they were 50 years ago. The new world order must be recalibrated to reflect these realities. In his comments to *Newsweek*, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, for example, has made the following point:

What we have in mind is that the world order needs be adjusted to the current realities. Today the world is living through the “multipolar moment.” Shifting towards the multi-polar world order is a natural part of power rebalancing, which reflects objective changes in the world economy, finance

²⁹ “Kremlin Says U.S. Can’t Build ‘new World Order’ That Biden Spoke Of,” *Reuters*, October 23, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/kremlin-says-us-cant-build-new-world-order-that-biden-spoke-2023-10-23/>.

³⁰ McKenzie Sadeghi, “Fact check: Biden's 'new world order' reference tied to Ukraine, not conspiracy theory,” *USA Today*, April 1, 2022, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2022/03/25/fact-check-biden-did-not-admit-new-world-order-conspiracy/7156937001/>.

³¹ Jens Stoltenberg, “What NATO Means to the World,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 3, 2024. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/europe/what-nato-means-world>.

and geopolitics. The West waited longer than the others, yet it has also started to realize that this process is irreversible.³²

The war in Ukraine has certainly undermined Western ambitions. There is no chance that the West will be the sole architect of the new world order. The war also has effectively ended American quest for global hegemony that seemed within reach after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the United States emerged as the sole superpower with global reach and the unquestioned leader of the Western alliance. The war has been an absolute fiasco for the West. It has completely buried American plans. The neo-conservative vision of the world dominated by the United States and its allies has proven to be nothing but a pipe dream. Although the West may still find the way to soften the blow, it cannot turn this fiasco into a victory. The way the war is unfolding, no matter how the Western commentariat may spin it, makes the defeat of Ukraine inevitable. There is no way that the Ukrainian military will achieve the goals formulated and reasserted on numerous occasions by the Ukrainian nationalist government. The Russian military is picking up the momentum on the battlefield where its advances are now unstoppable.

As has been mentioned, Russian territorial goals are limited and easier to achieve. Contrary to apocalyptic screams coming from the Ukrainian government and its propaganda sources to the effect that Russia wants to annihilate Ukraine, Russian territorial ambitions do not reach beyond the borders of the four regions that Russia now claims to be its territory. The Russian legislature, the Duma, has already ratified this decision. Russian goals in this war are well within reach. Russian operations in the east of Ukraine have practically guaranteed their attainment.

By contrast, the goals formulated and enunciated by the Ukrainian nationalist government—taking back all territories currently under Russian control—are unreachable. Every setback of Ukrainian forces only makes this fact more certain. There is nothing at this point that the Ukrainian army can do to force Russia out of Ukraine. A failure to achieve this goal will inadvertently be perceived as a defeat, no matter how Ukrainian and Western propaganda will try to spin this result.

Western objectives in entering the war on the side of Ukraine were not only regional, but also global. The West wanted to unite the world against the aggressor. This plan envisioned that the defeat of Russia would inadvertently reassert the role of the West as peacemaker and guarantor of global security, which could certainly put the West in a favorable position for shaping the new world order. The way the war has unfolded totally undermined Western strategy. Rather than unite the global community, the war has accelerated the processes that have created a new division in the emerging world order. The world today appears to be back to the times when the West faced the competition from the Soviet Union and its allies in the Cold War.

The emergence of the two opposing camps is now a new global reality. Both camps are now actively engaged in the competition that will undoubtedly continue after the war

³² Tom O'Connor, "Exclusive: Russia's Lavrov Warns of 'Dangerous Consequences' for US in Ukraine," *Newsweek*, October 07, 2024
<https://www.newsweek.com/exclusive-russias-lavrov-warns-dangerous-consequences-us-ukraine-1964468>

ends. One camp is a group of states that define themselves as the “community of world democracies.” They include the United States and other NATO countries, as well as their allies and partners. The other camp represents the “world’s emerging economies” in the Global South and East. BRICS is the main organization that now speaks for this camp in the international arena. Its founding members are Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, but it now attracts other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that have either applied for membership or have interest in joining the organization. The recent BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, has shown a total failure of the efforts to isolate Russia. The organization is rapidly growing fueled by shared grievances against Western policies in countries of the Global South and East.³³

The West and the Ukrainian nationalist government have staked much of their success on isolating Russia in the world. They wanted to discredit the Russian government and make it a moral outcast in the international community. The effect is just the opposite. Many nations have chosen either to stay neutral in this conflict or side with Russia. This reaction has helped Russia to withstand Western pressures. Russia’s economy did not break down under “sanctions made in hell.” The country has even been able to achieve a substantial economic growth.

The conceit of the United States and its allies about the special role of the West in providing global leadership has lost much of its luster. This conceit has always pivoted on promises of liberation, freedom, equality, and democracy. The universalist claims of liberalism are rapidly losing their credibility. The skeptical attitude toward Western “truths” is on the rise. There is a widespread perception of Western policies as egotistic, self-serving, domineering, and destructive. This perception has helped, for example, in mobilizing mass demonstrations against neo-liberal globalization.

Despite the insistence of the West that its values and norms are universal, many non-Western nations today remain unconvinced. They refuse to abandon their own heritage and adopt Western universalism. Instead, they emphasize the need to rely on their own traditions, values, and norms that sustained them through centuries of history. The growing number of nations from around the world no longer view the Western experience in modernization and economic progress as the model to be emulated. Today, countries of emerging economies criticize the Western model of modernization. They accuse the West of trying to constrain their economic progress for the sake of its own gains.

Efforts to discredit Russia and make it an international pariah have also failed. As a result of their misguided strategy and flawed policies, the United States and its allies have wasted much of their own moral and political capital. Many nations are questioning today the ability of the West to bring security and order to the world. Western promises to this effect ring hollow, as the world observes the failures of Western countries to solve their own domestic problems and bring stability to their troubled society.

The recent BRICS summit in Kazan is a convincing proof of Russia’s growing prestige. The optics of the summit sends a clear message that an epochal change is underway, and Russia is in the center of this change. The summit opened on the

³³ Mark John and Libby George, “BRICS gathers pace as shared grievances with West fuel alliance,” *Reuters*, October 24, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/spurred-by-shared-grievances-brics-gathers-pace-2024-10-24/>.

anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was in attendance and met with Vladimir Putin.³⁴ Leaders of BRICS member countries and thirteen BRICS partner countries took part in the proceedings of the summit. The sheer number of participating countries was a powerful demonstration of the failure of the efforts to isolate Russia. As a country that stands up to America and the collective West, Russia has gained considerable respect among countries that are critical of America's hegemonic pretensions. The BRICS summit in Kazan was an opportunity for several peace initiatives. Leaders of rival nations (for example, China and India, Armenia and Azerbaijan) had a chance to discuss their differences and search for peaceful solutions. These initiatives were a powerful demonstration of the capacity of BRICS to make advances toward peace in cases where the West proved unable to achieve progress.

The war in Ukraine has eroded the global moral and political standing of the West. In view of this decline, the reliance on military strength is one of the few remaining options that the United States and its allies have for projecting their influence. The global expansion of NATO is one indication of the growing tendency of the West to rely on military strength in maintaining global security. The combined military strength of the West undoubtedly remains significant, but it is no longer unrivaled. The military potential of countries like China, Russia, India, Iran, and others is rapidly growing. The war in Ukraine is a rude awakening that puts the superiority of American and Western military in question. Russia's military technology, its preparedness and planning for the war, its strategic and operational capabilities should give a pause to American and Western military planners.

The Western strategy also envisioned a demilitarization of Russia. They expected that the war would deplete the country's military stockpiles. As a result, Russia would simply find impossible to sustain its operations in Ukraine. Contrary to these expectations, the war has led to militarization of Russian economy. The country has been able to expand its military production and even outpace the collective West in manufacturing key weapon systems and munitions. For example, Russia has more 155-mm artillery shells—one of the critical items on the military supply list—than the total number of these shells that the West can provide for the Ukrainian army. The West, on the other hand, has experienced shortages of critical weapon systems and munitions that are so severe that they pose a serious threat to the security of the countries in the Western alliance. Russia has also been able to achieve significant advances in its military technology and produce weapons that are equal or even better than those in the West. Many military experts, for example, consider the equipment the Russian army uses for electronic warfare to be superior to the systems produced in the West. Experts also note that the war turned Russia into one of the world's most efficient and well-equipped military force that is uniquely experienced in modern warfare.

The war in Ukraine has effectively put to rest American plans for achieving global hegemony. In the global conditions that have emerged as a result of the war, the United States and its allies cannot be the sole architects of the emerging world order. They may not even be the main players. The new world order will be a result of the competition

³⁴ "Meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres," Office of the President of Russian Federation, October 24, 2024, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75391>.

between the two camps: one that represents the “community of global democracies” and the other that unites the “emerging economies” of the Global South and East.

Although the emerging world order may in some ways resemble the one that existed during the Cold War, there are significant differences that belie superficial similarities. The competition in the new format promises to be more extensive. Today, the West faces a competitor that is very different from the Soviet bloc. The moment in history when this competition will be unfolding will also be unlike the period after WWII.

The full extent of the impact of the new global division is yet to be seen. The new competition will in some ways be more difficult for the West than its competition with the Soviet Union. The global appeal of the new competitor is more attractive than that of communism. The strategy in this competition will also differ from the one during the Cold War rivalry. The way in which the competition is likely to unfold will be a slow constrictor-like envelopment and strangulation of the opponent; it will be largely about endurance and survival. The advantages in the new competition will primarily be in the size of the population, access to resources and markets, and most importantly in strategic development projects that will fuel global economic and political changes. These advantages do not necessarily favor the United States and its allies.

Based on the realities that will matter in the new competition, BRICS may be in a better position than the West to define the emerging world order. The combined population of the Global South and East is much larger than that of the United States and its allies and partners. The size of the population of the BRICS countries stands at 3.5 billion people, or 40% of the global population.³⁵ BRICS and other organizations that represent the Global South and East are creating extensive networks of regional political and economic cooperation that rivals those controlled by the United States and its allies. BRICS, for example, now has ten members and more countries express interest in applying for membership, including even some members of the European Union and NATO. The countries of emerging economies possess enormous deposits of natural resources. The traditional view of emerging economies as inferior to Western economies no longer reflects the realities of the modern world. The rates of economic growth in the Global South and East are impressive and well ahead of the Western economic performance. Today, the combined GDP of the BRICS countries is around 30% of the world’s GDP and is equal to that of the G7.³⁶ Their technological progress, particularly in countries like China, challenges the supremacy of the West in several fields. The technological gap between the emerging economies and the West is closing.

The emerging economies offer vast opportunities for economic expansion and market growth. They concentrate on large projects designed to turn their countries into

³⁵ Kishore Mahbubani, “Measuring the power of the Global South,” *The World Today*, Chatham House, March 21, 2024, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2024-02/measuring-power-global-south>; Aaron O’Neill, “Total population of the BRICS countries from 2000 to 2029,” *Statista*, Jul 4, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/254205/total-population-of-the-bric-countries/>.

³⁶ Mahbubani, “Measuring the power of the Global South”; O’Neill, “Total population of the BRICS countries from 2000 to 2029.”

advanced economies. Their extensive plans envision the developments of new regions. Russia, for example, has launched several projects to develop the Arctic, Siberia, Russian Far East. Both China and Russia undertake projects that build the infrastructure, most importantly in transportation and the energy sector, to fuel industrial and agricultural growth of the countries of the Global South and East. Russia, for example, is building the pipeline to provide natural gas and oil to fuel economic expansion and development of India, Pakistan, and other countries of the South-East Asia.³⁷

As the organization that represents emerging economies, BRICS puts forward a new approach in shaping the emerging world order. The key concepts of this approach are multipolarity, polycentrism, and regionalism. It emphasizes inclusion and equality.³⁸ Countries of the Global East and South find this emphasis very appealing in comparison to the pursuit of hegemony and domination that they see in Western practices. As Kishore Mahbubani observes, many countries of emerging economies “are shaking off old allegiances to the West” to take advantage of new prospects for their development.³⁹

The domestic stability in the leading countries of the camp of emerging economies—Russia, China, India—is another BRICS advantage. The United States and its major European allies are experiencing internal turmoil that will certainly affect their competitiveness and constrain their capacity to maneuver in global affairs. Western political elites are locked up in divisive conflicts. By contrast, the leadership in China and Russia enjoys extensive popular support; their political elites show few signs of fracturing.

The above advantages will certainly benefit the camp that represents the emerging economies of the Global South and East. Many forecasts make credible predictions that the center of the global economic production will shift to the East. The global economy will rely on BRICS countries to a larger extent than on the countries of the G7. These are important signs indicating that the BRICS camp will be a major influence in defining the new world order.

The predicted changes, however, tell little about the capacity of the emerging world order to ensure global security and enduring peace. As has been argued elsewhere,⁴⁰ the cause of instability, tensions, and conflicts is clashes of differences, or the problem of difference. This problem is not new. It has plagued our civilization from its emergence and

³⁷ “Russia and Iran Plan to Build Gas Pipeline Across the Caspian Sea,” *Civilnet*, July 29, 2024, <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/790363/russia-and-iran-plan-to-build-gas-pipeline-across-the-caspian-sea/>; <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/790363/russia-and-iran-plan-to-build-gas-pipeline-across-the-caspian-sea/>.

³⁸ Vladimir Putin, “Пленарное заседание XVI саммита БРИКС в формате «аутрич» / «БРИКС плюс».” Президент России, October 24, 2024, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75384>.

³⁹ Mahbubani, “Measuring the power of the Global South.”

⁴⁰ Gennady Shkliarevsky, “In Quest for Justice: Solving the Problem of Inclusion and Equality,” *SSRN*, June 8, 2021), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3862630> or .

led to numerous wars, revolutions, and other calamities. There have been many attempts to solve this problem, yet they have all failed.

The problem of differences has been a major preoccupation in liberal theory and practice. Despite all their efforts, liberals have not found a positive solution of this problem. Moreover, many of them think that this problem is inherent in human nature and is, for this reason, unsolvable. In the absence of a solution, liberals resort to palliatives. They insist that our political and social practice must rely on pluralism, civility, and tolerance. Liberals have no illusions. They understand that their practice does not solve the problem of difference, that it merely moderates and ameliorates dangers that result from clashes of differences.⁴¹

The problem of difference requires a positive solution, that is, a solution that emphasizes a positive use of differences, that is, viewing differences as a resource, not a threat. Such positive solution would conserve differences, rather than suppress them. It requires an objective understanding of differences and their function. The persistence of differences indicates that the evolution favors them and that, consequently, they have some important and positive functional role in the evolution. An understanding the reason why differences are selected for fitness will help develop a positive approach in the solution of the problem of difference.

The importance of differences has been explained elsewhere, and there is no need to revisit the subject in these pages.⁴² A brief explanation, however, may be in order. Differences play an important functional role in sustaining our universe. Our universe is unique. It is all there is. There is nothing outside the universe. Nothing can come into our universe from outside, since there is no outside; nothing can disappear from our universe, since there is nowhere to disappear. Consequently, everything must be conserved. Conservation is ubiquitous throughout our universe.

Conservation requires resources, and resources are always limited. No new resources can come into our universe from outside. Consequently, new resources must be created within our universe. The creation of new resources is the most important functional role of differences.

Interactions of differences connect them with each other and make their conservation possible. Differences have properties that represent possibilities they offer. By combining their properties, differences create new entities that have not existed prior to their emergence. These new entities offer new possibilities; and these possibilities are new resources that make conservation of differences possible. The integration of differences and the possibilities they offer gives rise to new levels of organization that are more powerful than the level from which they have emerged. These new levels of organization offer access to new resources that make conservation and evolution possible. This process is the source of evolutionary advances since the evolution is a succession of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. Thus, differences play a vital functional

⁴¹ Gennady Shkliarevsky, *Resolving the Crisis: From Turmoil to New Practice*, SSRN, May 9, 2024, p. 7 and p. 55, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4822677> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4822677>.

⁴² Shkliarevsky, *Resolving the Crisis: From Turmoil to New Practice*.

role in the process of creation that makes the evolution possible—the evolution that sustains our universe and all that exists in it. Humans are products of the evolution and the process of creation that propels it. As a result of their evolutionary origin, humans have inherited the properties of this process. These properties play a vital role in sustaining human society and civilization.

Since the process of creation operates on the scale of the entire universe, this process and all its properties are universal. One important property of this process is inclusiveness. Just like the process of creation, this inclusiveness is also universal. In other words, the process of creation works on universal inclusion.

The above shows the singularly important and positive role of differences. They are an important resource, perhaps the most important resource in the entire universe. Only the process of creation makes possible to grasp and understand this fact. In this process differences do not clash; they interact. They combine and integrate their properties, which gives rise to new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization that offer new possibilities as a resource. The emergence of new levels of organization makes possible the evolution that sustains our universe and all that exists in it. In the process of creation, differences do not clash. There is no problem of difference in this process of creation; it simply does not exist.

The process of creation makes obvious the positive and constructive role of differences. Consequently, to use differences in a positive and constructive way, we must recognize and embrace the process of creation. We must make it the central organizing principle of our practice. The conclusion that follows is that the solution of the problem of difference requires a new practice that relies on the process of creation as its central organizing principle. Just like the process of creation, this practice can only work on universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment. It will use differences in a positive way as a resource that makes possible the survival and evolution of our civilization.

The new approach is not about tolerating or respecting differences. Toleration of and respect for differences is the essence of the pluralist practice that does not make positive use of properties that differences possess.⁴³ The new approach has nothing to do with consensus. Consensuses emphasize commonalities. Such emphasis ignores or even suppresses differences. Consensus does not see differences as an important resource. Finally, the new approach is not about selective inclusion because selective inclusion is merely a form of exclusion; it does not utilize creative possibilities of differences.⁴⁴ The new approach is about creating new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. This process works on universal inclusion. It integrates and conserves differences, creates new possibilities that offer access to new resources. The positive solution of the problem of difference is in the full utilization of the creative capacity of differences. Only the new practice based on the principles of universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment can create new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization.

⁴³ Shkliarevsky, *Resolving the Crisis: From Turmoil to New Practice*.

⁴⁴ Gennady Shkliarevsky, "In the Name of Inclusion: Why Repealing Affirmative Action is a Right Thing to Do, SSRN, August 4, 2023, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4531689> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4531689>.

So far, our civilization has failed to systematically utilize the creative potential of differences. We have not recognized the importance of the process of creation in our relationship with reality; we still do not understand how this process works.⁴⁵ The reason is not negligence or lack of ability. The reason goes much deeper than mere human flaws or limitations.

We view reality through the prism of mental constructs that we create. This view of reality is human-centered, or anthropocentric. The anthropocentric perspective is exclusionary since it excludes all non-human perspectives on reality. Due to its exclusionary nature, this perspective cannot in principle understand the process of creation. As a result, it does not offer a comprehensive, universal, and objective view of reality. This approach also disempowers our reason. Our mind represents the most powerful level of organization in our universe. As a product of the evolution, it has inherited the infinite power of the process of creation: the capacity to create an infinite number of new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. There is nothing in our universe, except for the process of creation, that comes close to having such enormous power. Our failure to recognize, embrace, and utilize the process of creation precludes us from accessing the enormous potential of our reason. The numerous problems that we cannot solve, including the problem of difference, is a result of this failure.

To solve the problem of difference we must transcend anthropocentrism. Transcending anthropocentrism requires more than a mere recognition of the process of creation. We must embrace this process. We must understand the way it works and creates different levels of organization of reality: from galaxies, stars and planets to the emergence of life forms, the rise of human consciousness, society, and civilization.⁴⁶ By accomplishing this task, by transcending anthropocentrism, we will unlock the infinite power of our reason.

The cataclysms that our civilization has experienced in the past have always inspired a hope that one day we would make our world secure, make wars obsolete, and achieve an enduring peace. Despite many failures, the hope persists. It provides inspiration for new attempts to achieve this goal. The current global turmoil is not different. It also gives rise to such hopes. We can hear messages of hope in words of politicians, public figures, and ordinary people. The recent BRICS summit was an occasion where participants from many countries also expressed the hope for a secure world. They spoke about a new world order that would be based on inclusion and equality. They emphasized the recognition and mutual respect for different traditions, religions, and ways

⁴⁵ Shkliarevsky, "Understanding the Process of Creation: A New Approach."

⁴⁶ See, for example, Shkliarevsky, "Revising the Cosmic Story"; Shkliarevsky, "Conservation, Creation, and Evolution: Revising the Darwinian Project"; Shkliarevsky, "The Universal Evolution and the Origin of Life"; Gennady Shkliarevsky, "The Mind's Eye: De-Mystifying Consciousness," *SSRN*, May 10, 2022, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4105608> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4105608>.

of life; about the need to rely on universal values.⁴⁷ Such statements are undoubtedly very important, but they alone are insufficient. They are only a step in the right direction that must be followed by practical steps. The calls for peace and security should materialize in new approaches and practices that will solve the problem of difference.

The summit in Kazan has discussed many important initiatives, including global security. However, except for general pronouncements, there were no specific discussions of ways and approaches that should guide the world in realizing these lofty pronouncements. No doubt there will be other global meetings. Will they discuss the specifics of the new practice? Only time will show whether those who are shaping the new world order will have courage and wisdom to transcend their habitual ways and embark on the path that will lead to global security and an enduring peace.

Conclusion

The war in Ukraine that began almost ten years ago continues to rage. The killing fields of Ukraine are still exacting the terrible toll in human lives and destruction. The settlement that should eventually end this war remains elusive, as both sides continue to formulate new conditions and demands. Russia insists on keeping the four regions of Ukraine—Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson—that it has declared to be part of Russia. As a result of recent successful operations, Russian forces have advanced in the direction of the western borders of these regions and are close to securing their control over them.⁴⁸ Ukraine vows to stay in war until the last Russian soldier leaves all Ukrainian territories, including Crimea. To dislodge Russian forces from these regions will take a massive escalation of the war. It remains to be seen whether Ukraine and its partners have stomach or resources for such escalation that will surely cause even more damages and loss of human life, and possibly not just in Ukraine and Russia. The war keeps the world on edge by posing new dangers and creating new and unimaginable threats.

The world now lives in anticipation of the end of this war. The mental and physical fatigue caused by this war is growing. There is no doubt that the end of the war will create a powerful momentum to have a solution that will spare humanity from such ordeals in the future. The realization of this aspiration depends very much on lessons that we can learn from the experience of this war. Learning such lessons has been one of the inspirations for

⁴⁷ Vladimir Putin, “Пленарное заседание XVI саммита БРИКС в формате «аутрич» / «БРИКС плюс».” Президент России, October 24, 2024, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75384>.

⁴⁸ Максим Иванов, Елена Мухаметшина, Михаил Кузнецов, “О принятии в состав России Донецкой Народной Республики (ДНР), Луганской Народной Республики (ЛНР), Запорожской и Херсонской областей,” *Ведомости*, 2 октября 2022, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2022/10/03/943530-novie-regioni-prisoedinyatsya-v-granitsah-oblastei>; Александр Полегенько, “История вхождения новых регионов в состав России,” ТАСС, 29 сентября 2023, <https://tass.ru/info/18875697>.

this article that will certainly be incomplete without a brief discussion of the lessons that follow from these reflections.

The article has argued that the problem of difference plays a central role in tensions, conflicts, and wars that plague our civilization. The most important lesson that follows from this argument is that only by solving the problem of difference we can make the world a secure place and attain an enduring peace. Pluralism, tolerance, civility and other normative palliatives do not solve this problem. They do not prevent clashes of differences. They also require enforcement and suppression of violators, which may precipitate, rather than prevent, confrontations.

Another lesson that follows from the reflections offered in this article is that there is only one way to solve the problem of difference. It involves universal inclusion and equality. By combining and integrating differences and the possibilities they offer, the practice that uses universal inclusion and equality gives rise to new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. Such practice views differences as an important resource, not a threat. It does not seek to suppress differences but uses them in a way that is positive and constructive, which is the only way to solve the problem of difference.

The creative and constructive role of differences is a distinct feature of the process of creation. As this article has argued, this process has roots in the very nature of our universe. Its source is conservation that makes the existence of our universe possible. The process of creation can only work on the basis of universal inclusion and equality of all differences. Only the process of creation makes clear the importance of such universal inclusion and equality. There is no way to recognize this importance without embracing and understanding the process of creation.

The perspective on reality that currently dominates our civilization views reality through the prism of constructs created by humans. This perspective is human-centered, or anthropocentric. The anthropocentric view of reality is exclusionary. It excludes all other possible perspectives. Anthropocentrism is incompatible with the practice of universal inclusion and equality; it makes impossible to recognize the importance of such practice and, consequently, to solve the problem of difference. Therefore, the solution of the problem of difference requires the transcendence of the anthropocentric tradition.

As this article has argued, the only way to transcend anthropocentrism is by embracing the universal process of creation. This process is not a human creation. An approach toward reality that uses the process of creation as its central organizing principle is not human-centered. It is inclusive, universal, and objective. The embracing of the process of creation involves more than just a mental shift. It requires the adoption of a new practice that uses the process of creation as its main organizing principle. The principles of universal inclusion, equality, and empowerment are essential for the success of this new practice.

This war in Ukraine is yet another reminder of the need to transcend the old and tired approaches. The events of the war prove once again the dangers the result from the fear of transcendence. This fear disempowers our reason, which makes finding solutions for the problems we face impossible. “The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters,” a powerful engraving by famous Spanish artist Francisco Goya, is a poignant reminder about the dangers of disempowering reason.

The article shows that the fear of transcendence has played an important role in shaping the strategy pursued by the Ukrainian government and its Western partners in this war. The fear transcendence is not justified. Transcendence creates new and increasingly more powerful levels of organization. It empowers our reason and unlocks its infinite potential. The fear of transcendence is the fear of this empowerment—the fear of the power of reason. It is totally irrational.

The fear of transcendence on the part of the Ukrainian nationalist government and its Western partners has led to irrational strategic thinking and unrealistic assessments and expectations. The results have been tragic. They brought much death and destruction. The haunting thought that all these deaths and destruction were unnecessary and totally avoidable is the most tragic lesson that follows from the events of this war.

Decades ago, Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his inaugural address of 1933 talked about the fear of the power of reason. At a critical moment in American history, Roosevelt directed these powerful words of courage and wisdom to all Americans:

This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.⁴⁹

Roosevelt did not use the words “reason” and “transcendence” in his address, but it leaves no doubt that what Roosevelt had in mind was the fear of human reason. As the war in Ukraine shows, Roosevelt’s prophetic words are as true today as they were many decades ago.

⁴⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp.

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