

“The Ukraine War & the Eurasian World Order”

Prospects for the second half of the 21st century

by Glenn Diesen,* Norway



Glenn Diesen.
(Picture ma)

The Ukraine War was a predictable consequence of an unsustainable world order and became a battleground for charting a future world order of either global hegemony or Westphalian multipolarity. The objectives to defeat Russia militarily, economically, or politically by isolating it in the world all failed.

The reaction by NATO has been continuous escalation and theatrics. As Ukraine has been devastated by untold suffering and its inability to achieve its military goals has become an acknowledged fact, the only possible solution to the conflict is for the West to recognise Russia’s legitimate security concerns and thus mitigate the security dilemma. Its difficulty in so doing is because this would entail the end the era of liberal hegemony.

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Global decoupling from the West

Russian security concerns could be ignored in the 1990s as Russia was weak and declining, and the Russians had to adjust to their increasingly unfavourable and difficult position as they did not have other partners. Three decades later, the strategic situation for Russia had become intolerable as NATO’s expansion to Ukraine is believed to be an existential threat. However, the international distribution of power has become vastly different.

New centres of power have emerged across the world that share Russia’s ambitions to construct a multipolar Westphalian world order. Unipolarity had already come to an end and the world

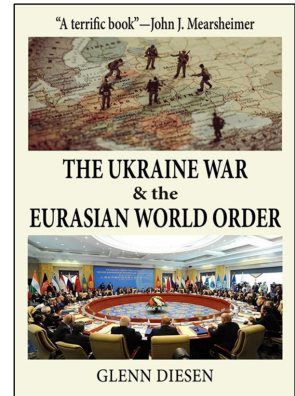
was amid a transition to multipolarity when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. The war intensified the global decoupling from the West, which openly presented the war as an all-or-nothing struggle for world order.

Irrespective of the outcome of the war, it has already led to the graveyard of liberal hegemony.

Security as defined by the West entails restoring military superiority, expanding military alliances, increasing joint military exercises, exercising freedom of navigation along the coastline of rival powers, and weaponizing economic interdependence. In service to that end, democracy, civil society and human rights have been instrumentalised and weaponised.

Hegemony did not mitigate great power rivalry; instead, it enabled the dominant power to act without regard for others, replacing diplomacy with the language of ultimatums. What was sold to the public as “pro-Ukrainian” policies and “helping Ukraine” entailed toppling their democratically elected government without majority support from Ukrainians; supporting an “anti-terror operation” against Ukrainian citizens in the East; purging its political opposition and dismantling its democracy; empowering far-right militant groups; sabotaging peace agreements supported by Kiev; and pressuring the Ukrainian armed forces to launch a devastating counter-offensive that had little to no chance of succeeding.

It is difficult to imagine a peaceful end to the Ukraine War. As NATO emptied its weapon storages and Ukraine has been exhausted by casualties, there will—predictably—be proposals for a ceasefire to freeze the conflict. A temporary ceasefire without a political settlement would be unacceptable for Russia, fearing that NATO would likely attempt to repeat what was done with the Minsk Agreement—to yet again use the peace agreement to buy time to rearm Ukraine



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and thus continue the fight another day. Ideally, the humanitarian tragedy should have been a motivation to put an end to the war that has taken so many Ukrainian and Russian lives.

A political solution to the war demands that NATO expansionism and the collapse of the pan-European security architecture be addressed as the underlying *casus belli* of the war. The Europeans should be most concerned about war on their continent and its further devastating economic repercussions. The Europeans should therefore push the hardest to revive diplomacy and possibly revisit Russia's demands for security guarantees made in late 2021—and even consider offering neutrality for Ukraine.

However, what the Europeans want is of less significance as the Euro-Atlantic decisions are primarily made in Washington. This was true before the war, and even more so after the war. Even though the US prefers to focus on China as its principal challenger, the defeat or weakening of Russia is seen as an important step to also defeat China.

Moscow may calculate that Russia can seize more territory when Ukraine finally collapses, which puts mounting pressure on Washington to make a deal before the strategic environment worsens. Even at this point in time, NATO must either accept a humiliating defeat or enter directly into what could escalate quickly to a nuclear war.

No fear of nuclear war

The Ukraine War that threatens to destroy the planet in a nuclear holocaust is a symptom of a wider crisis in the international system. After enjoying hegemony for five centuries and constructing and imposing global rules to serve Western interests, there is now a spectacular realignment of power in the world. The global majority seeks multipolarity in accordance with a Westphalian world order, while the West, under Washington's leadership, attempts to restore its dominant position in the world.

The US has accurately identified China and Russia as the main challengers that have created a gravitational pull to reorganise the world order towards multipolarity. Unable to bring down China and Russia by economic means, the conflicts for the future world order will continue to be militarized. The fear of nuclear war appears to be gone, and wars between the great powers are no longer unimaginable. As the

world is transitioning between unipolarity and multipolarity; common rules are largely absent.

Former Prime Minister of Australia, *Kevin Rudd*, cautioned in 2012 that the rise of China meant that the West would be confronted with a world that would no longer be under its control:

“Very soon we will find ourselves at a point in history when, for the first time since *George III*, a non-Western, non-democratic state will be the largest economy in the world. If this is the case, how will China exercise its power in the future international order? Will it accept the culture, norms and structure of the postwar order? Or will China seek to change it? I believe this is the single core question for the first half of the twenty-first century, not just for Asia, but for the world.”¹

“More than a test”

A traumatic experience is awaiting the West as it must adjust to a multipolar international distribution of power and rules that are seen to be set or influenced by foreign powers. However, it does not appear that the US will accept a peaceful transition to a Westphalian world order. The absence of political imagination in Washington has produced a world view in which chaos is the only alternative to US global dominance.

US Secretary of State *Anthony Blinken* delivered a eulogy for the world order of liberal hegemony in September 2023 as he recalled an era of remarkable progress through economic interdependence political liberalism and human rights at the centre. But then Blinken acknowledged the end of the order: “what we're experiencing now is more than a test of the post-Cold War order. It's the end of it”.

China and Russia are named as the main culprits for ending the era of liberal hegemony. Viewing the world as divided between good and evil, Blinken insisted that “Beijing and Moscow are working together to make the world safe for autocracy”. Rather than envisioning a transition to a balanced multipolar Westphalian world order, Blinken envisioned a struggle against both China and Russia under America's global leadership.

If this continues to be the view of the West, we will witness a great tragedy for humankind.

Source: Conclusion from the book “The Ukraine War & the Eurasian World Order” by Glenn Diesen. (Republished with the kind permission of the author.)

¹ Rudd, K., 'West is unprepared for China's rise', *The Australian*, 14 July 2012