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Rafael Poch De Feliu
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NATO's New War and the Great Secession: Fragility of All Sides Increases Danger of Greater War

The conflict will not end with a Russian military "victory" in Ukraine. Whatever the outcome, the crisis is going for a long time and the fragility of all the parties involved in the conflict adds uncertainty.



Meeting between the NATO Council and Russia in Brussels at the end of January 2022, a month before the war broke out. NATO/NATO

That the conflict in Ukraine is going to be a geopolitical turning point is part of the general consensus, but how and for whom? The first piece of information he gave us was the isolation of Russia. When the UN General Assembly voted on the resolution condemning

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Russia for the invasion, only five countries, including Russia, voted against it, 35 abstained, and 135 supported the reprobation. But turning that condemnation into action seems to be quite a different matter: no South American and African country and no Asian country, with the exception of Japan and South Korea, joined Western sanctions against Russia. Not even countries over which the United States exerts great influence, such as Israel, Colombia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. That the economic war against Russia is a strictly NATO issue, joined by Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan, also reports the isolation of what was usually presented as the "international community".

The Ukrainian War



Since its new "strategic concept" approved at the June summit in Madrid, NATO defines Russia as "the greatest direct threat to security, peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area" (and China as "threat to interests, security and values"), but the call finds a discreet echo. In the same month, the BRIC summits in Beijing or the St. Petersburg Economic Forum demonstrated considerable vitality, dealing with trade channels, alternative banking and payment systems independent of Western financial control, economic alliances and energy supply. The analogies and preventions raised throughout the non-Western world by the [theft of the reserves of the Bank of Russia in the United States \(300,000 million\)](#), and the police use of international payment systems, encourage a stampede of the dollar and the creation of an International Monetary Fund for the BRICs.

With the present war, the symptoms of a secession of the Great Strategic South from the enlarged West increase significantly, represented by a G-7 less and less able to dictate its

rules to the rest of the world. The conditions for this process emerge from two fundamental aspects.

First, the factor of rising Chinese power, whose economy, creditworthiness and commercial importance has already become large enough to present alternatives to many relationships and supplies, including high technology, which were previously Western monopolies. That specific weight of China makes its position in the conflict, underlining respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and at the same time identifying a security against Russia and at Russia's expense in Europe as the root of the problem, have the capacity to drag. Suffering the same kind of U.S. military encirclement and the same risk of war along its borders and aware of the importance of its "boundless alliance" established with Russia in February, China has strongly rejected pressure from the United States and the European Union to join the sanctions. Chinese TV presenter Liu Xin summed up that request in April: "They tell us, help me fight your Russian partner so that I can then concentrate better against you." A month later, President Xi Jinping told German Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz in a telematic conversation that "European security must be in the hands of Europeans." An urge from the European Union's first trading partner to emancipate itself at once.

The second aspect has to do with the unforeseen consequences against its authors of the sanctions against Russia. The historical experience of Western sanctions and blockades against adversary countries, in Cuba, Iran or North Korea (the Soviet Union was always the object of them) is that, although they do a lot of damage and harden them greatly, they do not manage to subdue the punished governments. With today's Russia, medicine is also counterproductive for those who impose it.

Russia has relatively few foreign supply lines, a great capacity for self-sufficiency and an enormous amount of raw materials of which it is the main supplier of Western economies, for which they and particularly the European ones, have shot themselves in the leg. It is not just gas and oil, for which Moscow is finding alternative markets to western ones, but nickel, aluminum, silver, neon (used to produce microchips), wood, etc.

The sum of a large Chinese economic, financial and technological pole, and the Russian large warehouse, guarded by the largest nuclear arsenal in the world, creates the conditions for the aforementioned secession. The attitude of India, which at least at the beginning of the crisis is proving open to advantageous cooperation with the two (allowing it to re-

export Russian hydrocarbons to the European Union!), and unreceptive to Western invitations of hostility, configures a powerful land geographical conglomerate between the NATO border and the Indo-Pacific. That reality can make policies of past eras such as the "containment" practiced against the USSR during the cold war impractical. In any case, the observation of this process is fundamental for the future in the medium and long term. Meanwhile, the evolution of the campaign on the battlefield will be decisive.



Meeting between the NATO Council and Russia in Brussels at the end of January 2022, a month before the war broke out. NATO/NATO

The war in Ukraine has returned us to a classic military conflict between armies with comparable potential. Two large armies, with clear Ukrainian numerical superiority and an intense flow of Information and Western weapons to compensate for Russian artillery, air and missile superiority, is something that does not have much to do with the wars carried out by the West in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan or Libya, where the United States and its allies were dedicated to suppressing the obsolete air defense systems of the enemy, from an overwhelming technical and numerical superiority. The West was no longer familiar with such a thing. On the Russian side, the script is also very different from that recorded in the conflict with Georgia in 2008 or the intervention in Syria since 2015, estimates Russian expert Vasili Kashin. But since this war is a conflict between NATO and Russia over interposed country, we must ask ourselves about the determination and will of each side.

"The war of Russia and China against Western hegemony is equated by their peoples with an existential war," observes former British diplomat Alastair Crooke, who predicts a difficult undertaking. "For them it's not just about taking fewer hot showers, as it is for

Europeans, but it's about their own survival, and therefore their pain threshold is much higher than that of the West." The Russian regime, which is playing a bankruptcy if it loses the game, will put "more political will, take more risks and suffer greater consequences to achieve the final result because for us Ukraine is periphery while for them it is central," says Brendan Dougherty, another Anglo-Saxon observer. This diagnosis has changed throughout the war.

In the first months, when the scenario contemplated by the Kremlin of a collapse of the regular Ukrainian army with flight from the government in the face of the proximity of Russian airborne troops failed (Putin's appeal to the Ukrainian military, on the first day of the invasion, to take power and understand directly with him, gave a hint of such an expectation), the forecast of a Russian catastrophe was making its way. NATO's military reaction, disciplining what little remained of autonomous aspiration in the European Union, adopting unprecedented sanctions and providing military aid to Ukraine, only reinforced it. Now, when the Russian artillery offensive is beating the Ukrainians in the Donbas and slowly advancing positions, while in the West it becomes aware of the serious disruption that its own sanctions cause in world trade creating seemingly insoluble problems, the accents change. Russia can win, it is said. Of course, the situation is open to new blows that completely invalidate the current one, but what does a military victory for Russia mean?

[Ukraine : Russia advances in Donbas and near the Azot chemical plant in Luhansk:](#) The powerful fire of the Russian artillery crushes day and night the positions of the Ukrainian army. Copyright Oleksandr Ratusnyak/Copyright 2022 The Associated Press. All rights reserved

In the event that his army succeeds in imposing itself throughout southeastern Ukraine, the situation will not be stable in the occupied areas. Either with a military presence, or with philo-Russian administrations, it is most likely that, however small the active resistance to the new order (resistance that will of course be supported by what remains of the Kiev government and its Western sponsors), the state of affairs can only be repressive, with "terrorist" attacks, disappearances, torture and repression. The conflict will not end with a Russian military "victory" in Ukraine. Whatever the military outcome, the crisis is going on for a long time and the fact of the fragility of all the parties involved in it adds uncertainty.

Russia's fragility is known, but what about the European Union, which is devastated as a result of its own sanctions? Will its character as a NATO subaltern remain stable when its national societies and economies pay the price for that subordination in the form of a recession?

The situation on the other side of the Atlantic may be even worse. In January 2021 there was something like a coup attempt in Washington. The social gap between ordinary citizens and the elite, so often evoked in the case of Russia, is becoming abysmal in the United States. There the representative system is broken, the republic hijacked by the lobbies and the military-industrial complex, and financial capitalism oriented towards the short-term and speculative profit of a rentier class is unable to invest in social development. In that country with the President discredited, high inflation and a forecast of deterioration of purchasing power, the return to the White House of Donald Trump or someone similar and the scenario of serious internal conflicts seems quite plausible. What will the "reinvigorated Western alliance" be left in that case?

In any case, with all the actors fragile, the temptation to resolve Gramsci's old maxim about the crisis as a situation in which "the old is dying and the new cannot be born" is gaining even greater strength. That is why the great danger of the Ukrainian war remains an even greater war between nuclear powers.

Rafael Poche de Feliu

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

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