



World Order Disrupted: Power and Institutions in the Balance



UN General Assembly vote on March 24, credit Reuters.

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World Order Disrupted: Power and Institutions in the Balance

By: Ana Palacio

A discussion on the war in Ukraine and its implications for the international order

Today, any discussion about the expansive field of international relations has to begin by talking about Ukraine. Not just because it is in our hearts and minds (although this is also true). But rather because what we are witnessing in Ukraine represents a watershed moment, a before and after in the construction of our global architecture.

In Europe, we have experienced different crushing crises since the fall of the Berlin Wall, from the calamity of Brexit to migration, economy, and finance debacles. However, what is happening today is of existential nature. The world before Russia's aggression on February 24th was - as described by the title of Stefan Zweig's seminal 20th Century memoir - *The World of Yesterday*. The world of tomorrow is already taking shape.

Seen from the other side of the pond, this date represents a turning point in several key areas: transatlantic relations, NATO, the cohesion of the European Union, the protagonism of the security and energy arenas, and Europeans' connection with core values.

First, in transatlantic relations. Transatlantic ties have held together the fabric of our postwar reality, a reality sketched against the backdrop of the white

crosses that dot the landscape of Normandy. Our cooperation has been solidified by institutions, treaties, joint action, and common purpose under US leadership: the "Indispensable Nation", as the late Madeleine Albright so rotundly and accurately portrayed America. This was true, from an EU perspective, until the Trump administration. The 45th president's inward focus and nationalist rhetoric left European allies questioning the reliability and dependability of the US; the trust which had carefully been built over half a century evaporated. America had, once again, developed tunnel vision in foreign policy and was unable to look beyond the Indopacific - concretely, beyond its rivalry with China. Adding to the tension was a series of faux pas and missteps by the US: aside from Afghanistan, the lack of consideration of America's allies - specifically, of France - in the formation of AUKUS was not well received. This opinion has only been reassessed since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Second, in the vitality of NATO. Although French President Emmanuel Macron's assessment of the "braindeath" of NATO may have been harsh and divisive, it is true that the alliance was no longer fit for purpose; it lacked a clear sense of direction and meaning in a post-Cold War world. This was evidenced by the fact that drafts for the *Strategic Concept* (the organization's ten-year vision) circulating six months ago were centered around topics like NATO's "diversity policy" and climate change - areas that, notwithstanding their relevance, cannot constitute the backbone of projected action. The crisis in Ukraine has breathed new life

into the alliance. Traditionally neutral Sweden and Finland knocking on the door to request membership are symbolic of this newfound vigor.

Third, for the unity of the European Union, both at national and Brussels levels. The robustness and swiftness with which we have acted so far - and the unity we have shown in the process - has surprised both friends and foes. It is likely that Putin was expecting Europe to respond as it did in 2014, after the annexation of Crimea (in other words, not to respond). To be candid, we have surprised even ourselves.

Moving forward, our common endeavor within the European Union will be defined by two areas which have emerged as fundamental: security and energy. Security has understandably been brought to the forefront in light of the war in Ukraine. A main consideration has been the spike in commodity prices, led by gas (and therefore power) hikes; the resulting logistics disruptions increase the fragility of entire regions (as exemplified by the current grain shortages and rising costs, with their destabilizing potential in Africa). This compounding of elements and the accompanying risk of spiraling inflation is shaking the economic status quo - which, in turn, disrupts the security architecture.

But energy is the real protagonist of the present situation. Over the past few years, we saw energy - via its corollary of sustainability - take center stage in the EU, where the ideological nature of the climate change debate has been on full display. In 2007, the EU launched its *Energy Union*, a balancing act of three fundamental

objectives: security, affordability and sustainability. However, with the inauguration of President Ursula von der Leyen's Commission in 2019, the balance was thrown off. The focus shifted to the European Green Deal, the EU's all-encompassing growth strategy, designed to touch on all areas of policy - from understandably related subjects like agriculture (by way of the "Farm to Fork" strategy) to disparate topics such as cryptocurrency legislation. All this was framed within the EU's ambitious promise of an almost immediate transition to 100% renewable energy, promoted as a "no pain, all gain" transformation, in which security of the energy supply was taken for granted and affordability was no longer a consideration. The invasion of Ukraine has shattered this mirage.

Lastly, in renewing European societies' connection with values and tradition. Both individual heroism and the collective, unwavering patriotism that Ukrainians are showing have an epic grandeur: it is the classic tale of David against Goliath. The courage displayed by Ukraine in facing a much bigger, better endowed and more trained army (at least theoretically) will be etched into European history. It has the breadth and depth that inspired the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, *la Chanson de Roland*, the *Cantar de Mio Cid*, *Casablanca* or *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. In our postnational, postmodern, poststructural European societies, where the economic dimension has come to supersede all others, we had lost sight of the power of patriotism, of fighting for your land and freedom, for your culture and agency. Faced with the bravery and valor of Ukrainians,

Europeans have reconnected with a forgotten sense of pride.

Although each of these subjects is deserving of deeper scrutiny, it is first necessary to undertake a broader, more comprehensive analysis of the current geopolitical landscape and how we got here, as well as of the five emerging groups of actors which will determine the remodeling of the world order. Throughout this analysis, we will use Ukraine as a prism. Because Ukrainians are fighting our fight. Our future - the future of the West and of the international liberal order in which it is rooted - is on the line.

Current geopolitical landscape

The conflict in Ukraine has been a catalyst to dynamics and tensions which had been building, even if we preferred to look the other way. Now, we find ourselves at a crucial inflection point. Although there have been dozens of wars in the nearly 80 years since World War II ended, the invasion of Ukraine has a differential transcendence: this aggression by the Kremlin seeks to redraw the security architecture of Europe. It is an example of long-standing Russian revisionism that we mistakenly thought was in the past; of an ambition to return to empires and areas of influence. It is an attack on the foundations that underpin our values and our place in the world.

This is not just about Ukraine: Putin wants to reverse the clock. The Russian leader has made known his admiration for the greatness of the Tsars, who identified security with territorial control (in the Russian Empire's

last 400 years, it grew, on average, by 50 square kilometers a day). We are well-acquainted, too, with his coercive diplomacy: warnings, signals and demands backed by a show of offensive capabilities and resolve. According to his delusional justification of aggression, it follows that a democratic, prosperous Ukraine, integrated in the West, would represent a (dangerous) counterpoint to Moscow's system of government.

Even if many pundits are echoing Putin's narrative that NATO enlargement was an immediate trigger of the war, this explanation is reductionistic. Beyond the fact that such thinking dismisses the principles of sovereignty and denies agency for countries who happen to border empires, it also fails to account for the determinism of Russia's self-proclaimed messianic and "civilizational" mission. The Kremlin's revanchism has come to the fore, yet again: his desire to recover territory which he believes to be rightfully (historically) Russia's, including to restore his country's sphere of influence to its historical precedents, has motivated his aggression in Ukraine. In this context, it is revealing that the Russian Orthodox church is weighing in by lending a spiritual basis and an almost metaphysical dimension of the war, with Orthodox Leader Patriarch Kirill framing the war as a struggle between good and evil.

But even before the invasion of Ukraine sought to disrupt the multilateral order, a shift in the global balance of rules and power (in favor of the latter) had been taking shape for a while. The past decade saw multiple failures of multilateralism and cooperation which exposed deep fractures within the

post-war order: from the financial crisis and the Covid pandemic, to armed conflicts in which geopolitical tensions play out on third-party soil (such as in Syria), to systemic challenges by non-traditional actors.

One of the clearest examples of such a challenge was executed by none other than Moscow with its annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in the Donbass in 2014. But beyond condemnation of Russia in international organizations and some token sanctions, the West's response was muted: we did not see - we did not want to see - the implications for the shifting global order.

In immediate terms, we are now entering a period of greater insecurity where NATO's eastern flank is the main - but not the only - theater of operations. We are at war with Putin's regime; this conflict will last far longer than the fighting in Ukraine, and it will not be contained by land borders. The Sahel, with its "low-cost" Wagner army of Russian mercenaries, and Venezuela, are but two examples.

Fundamentally, the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic theaters are now connected. We are confronted with open aggression from Russia with the tacit support of its key ally, a revisionist China that is determined to prevail over the U.S. The future is sure to hold more consequential and direct challenges, greater uncertainty, and systemic instability undermining the very foundations of the world order.

How we got here: the Post-Atlantic Charter World

This order, dominant since the mid-20th century, is the brainchild of the West - led by America - with the Atlantic Charter as its cornerstone. Signed in the throes of WWII by President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the Charter outlines their prescient vision to build peace in a post-war world. The ambition of these leaders shines through in their stated goals, which include the "enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished" of "economic prosperity", and that "all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want."

This universality was central to the creation of a lasting international order. The integration of foes and adversaries established during the famous Bretton Woods Conference or in the San Francisco Charter (and later exemplified by China's inclusion in the World Trade Organization in 2001) is characteristic of the system, built on the correlation between economic prosperity and peace which held true for decades.

Today, we find ourselves in a completely new context where peace and economic interdependence (globalization) are both decreasing and decoupling. In hindsight, this decoupling began much earlier. It is particularly relevant how, in the aftermath of 1989, much to the West's chagrin, Russia did not follow the path of post-war Germany, instead mirroring - if anything - the Weimar Republic in the interwar period. The economic chaos of the 90s left an indelible mark on the Russian psyche that is

conveniently attributed by the Kremlin to the West's determination to "bring Moscow to its knees." The collapse of the Russian system - and the ensuing collapse of its economy - was shocking, it surprised the world, but also the country's citizens. Moscow's historic ambition, on the other hand - which dates back to Peter the Great - held strong: the desire to fulfill its destiny as a great power.

Objectively, this is a realistic ambition. States become great powers through a combination of political, social, economic, military, and geographic assets. In addition to having the greatest geographical expansion on the planet, Russia has a nearly 100% literacy rate, is one of the richest countries in terms of natural resources, is backed by a long history of imperial prowess and, in spite of the disastrous performance we are witnessing, wields significant military might (bolstered by its nearly 6,000 nuclear heads). Conspicuously missing, though, is the political dimension.

Moscow's knowing what it could be or should be makes its continued downward spiral all the more painful - and fuels the fire of vengeance.



Diplomatic Walkout from the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council, credit Kristoffer Jonsson via Reuters

Geopolitical Mutation

Although international relations are constantly in flux, the geopolitical mutation of today is especially striking. For this reason, it is beneficial to conduct a "tour de table" of the five main groups of players which are emerging, their calculus, and trajectories: *the Standard Bearers*, *the Ambivalent Leader*, *the Strategist of Disruption*, *the Smooth Operator*, and *the System Renewers*.

Long the theater of bloody conflicts which have shaped the current international system, Europe is a logical place to start. A construction in law and by law, the European Union - the *Standard Bearers* - has been a champion of the post-1945 rules-based order. Our support for a system rooted in rules has informed our efforts to become a values-centric, regulatory superpower - a kind of "world referee"-cum-player.

The so-called "Brussels effect" is well-documented: when we regulate, many follow us. Our influence - Europe's soft power - transcends countries and industries; examples include the European regulation which has come to define the default privacy settings on the iPhone, and our General Data Protection Regulation, which has been the inspiration for similar regulation across diverse geographical regions.

However, in the realm of foreign affairs - until recently - Europe dithered. Our inclination to operate "by the book" has often led to an approach which could be described as "fence-sitting", striving for strategic equidistance when faced with conflicting

interests. Our path has rarely been linear, but rather usually entails a fair share of zigzagging and “muddling through”.

Without a robust strategic direction or vision, the EU has historically sought to trade away any differences. For a while, our foreign policy was driven by a mercantilist Germany which viewed economics as the road to our desired “strategic autonomy”; significantly, the term “mercantilism” was coined to describe the prioritization of Berlin’s geo-economic interests under Angela Merkel. This thinking dates back to Chancellor Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* and the longstanding policy of “*Wandel durch Handel*” - “change through trade”.

It was in line with this thinking that the EU, commandeered by the German Presidency, pushed through the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China in late 2020 (although it was later paralyzed). Eager to count the deal among the key achievements of its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Germany rushed to complete the deal with Beijing, in spite of objections from the Biden administration and other European countries.

With respect to Russia, our strategy was incongruent, with Europe’s eastern members repeatedly sounding the alarm while Berlin, Paris and London looked the other way. Germany (predictably) continued to bet on economic engagement.

Since the return of war to European soil, our outlook on security has changed drastically. The decision to provide - for the first time ever - arms and other lethal assistance, along

with our newfound resolve to meet NATO’s defense spending policy (2% of GDP), are steps in the right direction. But that will not be enough: aside from the immediate challenge of weaning the continent off Russian gas, important work remains to consolidate and strengthen the EU as a geopolitical actor.

In March of this year, EU Member States agreed on a strategic roadmap (our “Strategic Compass”) to outline the path towards becoming a stronger security and defense actor. Significantly, the document contains - for the first time - a shared threat assessment, indicating newfound consensus among members. Yet, the document seems to be overly focused on policy and fails to address the tough geopolitical questions of the future or key deficiencies which prevent swift and cohesive action in foreign policy.

For years, Europe has assured onlookers (and itself) that it would learn the language of hard power. But we haven’t so far. Beyond our focus on rules and a rules-based order, the EU must develop hard power capabilities which would enable a bolder joint foreign policy and which could extend past the immediate response to this crisis. While the Compass is a definite step in the right direction, it remains to be seen whether it will denote, as High Representative Josep Borrell has promised, “the birth of geopolitical Europe.”

Aligned with the EU (although not always) is *the Ambivalent Leader*: the United States. The US has a long-standing history of indecision about its global leadership. Washington has alternated between idiosyncratic magnanimity and the harsh

selfishness of *realpolitik*. This internal struggle dates back to the country's refusal to enter the League of Nations - even though it was instrumental in the ideation and formation of the organization.

The US led the creation of the current international order, and has been at the helm as its defining actor for decades. But it has also frequently fallen into the cyclical trap of isolationism. Starting in the Obama years, there were signs that the US was entering such a cycle: under his leadership, the US began a period of drawing back, of "leading from behind".

That is, of course, not to downplay the damage induced by the following administration. The 45th Commander in Chief discredited the Presidency of the United States, the bedrock of the international system. At his prompting, the country entered a period of seclusion: "America First" became "America Alone". Trump's rejection of multilateralism and his undermining of international institutions weakened the US's image and eroded its credibility.

Since the shake-up of February 24, America has renewed its global investment. Even though transatlantic collaboration has been exemplary in the war in Ukraine, however, America is now seen as less reliable by the rest of the world, including Europeans. In spite of the "America is Back" messaging coming from the White House, the US is no longer the leader it once was: its agency has been structurally damaged by the shifting sands of a fractured society that hardly matches the "We the people" referenced in

the preamble of its much-admired Constitution. And this is a concern that transcends America, for the US, whether it wants to be or not, is the "Indispensable Nation" - and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Russia has been instrumental in the fracturing of US politics, in line with its role as a *Strategist of Disruption*. The crisis in Ukraine has dispelled any doubts about Moscow's intentions - although, quite frankly, Putin has been forthright about his ambitions for years.

Indisputably, Putin's metamorphosis over the course of his tenure has been drastic (unless we assume he was biding his time and seeking to fool the rest of the world). In 2001 (a year after he was first elected president), in a speech before the German Bundestag, he painted Russia as "a friendly European nation", explaining that "stable peace on the continent is a paramount goal for our nation." He went on to claim that "the key goal of Russia's domestic policy is first and foremost to ensure democratic rights and freedoms", later speaking of "large-scale and equal pan-European cooperation". Read today, these declarations would be laughable, were it not for the lives lost and the brutality shown.

Even more outlandish - in light of current events - were his comments on an NPR special program in the same year, with the catchy title "Putin speaks to America." When asked about the possibility of the Baltics entering NATO, he replied: "We of course are not in a position to tell people what to do. We cannot forbid people to make certain choices if they want to increase the security of their nations in a particular way."

As his presidency progressed, Putin's spirit of cooperation progressively dulled. His strategy began to rely increasingly on aggression, both domestically (with his crackdown on oligarchs) and in terms of foreign policy. His rhetoric became more combative. His desire to highlight commonalities with Europe vanished; in its place, he constructed a staunchly anti-Western narrative, fundamental to the country's *raison d'être*. His litany of grievances, instances of Russia being deliberately wronged, were squarely attributed to the transatlantic alliance, starting with the dissolution of the Soviet Union - which, in 2005, he called the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century. He spun a tale of humiliation that conveniently allowed for domestic failures to be overlooked, as he styled himself as the nation's savior.

Putin's contempt for the West and disparagement of the international liberal order has increasingly sought to exploit what he views as American and European strategic disarray (both internally and in relation to each other). His now infamous speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 was paradigmatic. He decried the "unipolar world" as "anti-democratic", as well as the "disdain for the basic principles of international law" which, in his view, the US exhibited. He criticized what he considered to be the build up of NATO troops on Russian borders and the expansion of the alliance as a "serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust". And he reminded listeners that "ensuring one's own security is the right of any sovereign state." No one in the audience believed his intervention was any more than

a show of bravado; we willingly dismissed it for years as an outburst of rhetoric. We chose not to understand his words for what they were: a naked manifestation of ambition to remake the security order.

He is attempting to realize this ambition with his war on Ukraine. In July of last year, Putin laid out the justifications for his action plan in an incendiary and visceral article, in which he asserts the historical unity of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples based on the shared inheritance of Ancient Rus, thereby denying the existence, history, identity and, therefore, sovereignty of Ukraine. He challenges the expansion of NATO, and the alleged Western attempts to wear down Russia and instigate regime change. Putin's address to his nation on February 24, announcing the beginning of the "special military operation", underlines these same arguments and objectives, which are gaining greater momentum in the isolated echo chamber of Russian society. Indeed, a March 2022 poll by the Levada Center indicates that 83% of Russians approve of Putin's actions in Ukraine, compared to 69% in January - a relevant statistic, notwithstanding the complex realities in Russia. Putin has exploited his country's relatively few strengths in foreign policy with great adeptness, while seeking to discredit the system in which he was operating - the liberal international order - claiming it has worked against Russia.

Beijing, on the other hand, has been a great beneficiary of this order. Today, it has morphed into the *Smooth Operator* par excellence, a skillful utilizer of rules and institutions with a vocation for manipulation. Its entry in 2001 into the World Trade

Organization marked a turning point in the international dynamics of globalization - an entry which, notably, was made possible by the political will of the US, using the same logic as the German *Ostpolitik* of approximation via economic relations.

Yet, rather than opening up, the Chinese government has asserted deeper control over society, of which trampling democratic rights in Hong Kong and oppressing minorities in Xinjiang are but two examples. China has deftly used the internet and artificial intelligence as a means to maintain an iron grip domestically, while harnessing innovation to build novel defensive and offensive capacities.

President Xi Jinping, with the support of the almost 100 million citizens who - along with the technological apparatus - constitute the Chinese Communist Party, aspires to reshape the global system according to proclaimed principles of “efficiency, community, and economic security”. Countering the “chaos” of democracy, Xi proposes a model rooted in the order provided by hierarchy. And, in spite of his loud objections to hegemony, his goal is clearly to play a leading role in the shifting international system.

Xi’s vision for the future of his country is clear: in stark opposition to liberalism and its tenets, he portrays the path of the Party and the State as inextricably linked. He defends the inalienable nature of the CCP’s right to rule, explaining that the health of China depends on the survival and success of the Party.

While Russia has never shied away from challenging the international legal order,

Beijing’s strategy has been more subtle and nuanced: it has worked to gradually gain power from within the existing structure and then to shape it in its image. For too long, we looked the other way - as we did with Russia - as Beijing sought to overtake the multilateral system. While rarely openly hostile, Xi has used the public podium to wrap himself in the fold of false multilateralism, claiming democratic traditions based on “unique cultural characteristics” and imbuing terms such as “democracy” with meaning that reflects China’s worldview.

We see this approach on full display in the present crisis. China is leading the debate on Russia's aggression against Ukraine, albeit passively: it has proclaimed neutrality (although with an undeniable pro-Kremlin bias - the two countries’ joint declaration from February that attests to a friendship that has “no limits” deserves special mention). This “Switzerland status” has opened the way for those who try to describe the war as one that is not of their concern; one in which they do not want to be involved.

A wave of relativism has swept up citizens and leaders, as the non-aligned seek to justify their indecisiveness - and make clear this is not their war. The latest perpetrators of this snowballing of regrettable declarations include the Pope (who mused that “NATO barking at Russia’s gate” may have “provoked” Putin’s rage, while striving to avoid naming the Russian leader in his criticisms) and Brazil’s Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (who claimed Zelensky is equally “as responsible as Putin for the war”). Although it was rejected, the UN resolution presented

by South Africa - which would have supported Kyiv without condemning Moscow - was revealing in the support it gained. Also significant is the evolution of countries' stances in the various UN votes surrounding the Ukraine crisis, as well as the extended wrangling on the question of sanctions.

Beijing has presented an alternative to the West's uncompromising condemnation of Russia, and to its approach to international relations. Rather than focusing on the individual and freedom, the Chinese model is centered around the collective and security - a model which, admittedly, is gaining traction among those amenable to authoritarianism.

One of the biggest challenges we face, then, is the impact and allure of Beijing's vision on the *System Renewers*, the fifth group of actors: nations that demand an updated world order and denounce the alliances/coalitions/competitions that are forming as evidence of a "non order" that is emerging. Faced with the ideological struggle between the West and China, they refuse to choose sides. They call for a seat at the table that reflects their relevance; for a system that takes into account the realities they represent.

India would be the natural leader of this group. However, New Delhi's inability to translate its demographic advantage into geopolitical terms or to match the economic success of its neighbor to the north has held it back. India's limited projection questions the - until now uncontested - superiority of liberal democracy over all other forms of

government and bolsters the arguments of autocracy; the appeal of Western-style democracy no longer holds unconditional sway in New Delhi. The country's vision of itself and of its relations to others is far more complex and nuanced.

India has grown closer to the United States in recent decades - more so in light of the ascension of China, an ally of New Delhi's bitter rival, Pakistan. This strengthening of ties is exemplified by the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the QUAD), which puts India at a table with Australia, the US, and Japan. But the country walks a fine line in cozying up to both the US and Russia. It has sought at all costs to avoid having to make a choice between the two.

Its ties to Moscow go back to Soviet assistance in 1971 during the war for the liberation of Bangladesh. This relationship is multifaceted and spans the energy and defense industries: the two countries have a history of extensive cooperation in nuclear power, oil purchases, and arms trade. Today, 60% of India's defense hardware, 85% of its spare parts, and practically all of its transfer of technology hardware come from Russia. This all helps to explain hashtags such as "#IStandWithPutin" which have been trending on Indian social media.

There is no question that the first four groups of actors will be decisive in the remodeling of the world order. But the key to the new design, significantly, will lie with the *Renewers*.

IV. CONCLUSION

Overwhelmed by the horror of the scenes from Ukraine, we find it is difficult to think beyond the immediacy of the conflict. But we cannot afford to stay trapped in this loop of outrage and gloom. This war marks a change of era; we are already seeing the world of tomorrow take shape. It is time to determine what role we will play moving forward.

First, we need to be clear-eyed about what is possible. We cannot turn the clock back. The world has changed in many ways. The traditional values and principles that underpinned the international order we so painstakingly sculpted have been eroded. We have made mistakes which our adversaries claim prove a lack of commitment to the laws we cherish and defend. Furthermore, neither the US nor the EU holds the global sway we once did; we no longer make the rules.

That being said, we need to avoid the very real danger of apathy or disengagement. We are still significant actors, joined by shared values and ambitions which resonate universally, and by a vision for the future based on liberal democracy. It is critical that we capitalize on the current cohesion and momentum in transatlantic cooperation; that we present ourselves as a united front as we face the increasingly existential challenges of tomorrow – concretely, the alternative being pushed by Russia and by China.

Importantly, the Euro-American alliance will not be able to counter these actors alone; the system cannot be modified without broad participation. In addition to negotiating with China and working towards a realistic understanding with our complex Russian neighbor – because, although these are currently controversial ideas, they will be necessary – we must attract the Renewers. It is imperative that we forge an honest dialogue to chart a course that goes beyond trying to glue the fraying strands of the fragmented liberal system. Rather, we must envision meaningful and thoughtful reform, adapted to the realities of today.

The urgency of this moment and its implications for the future of the world order call for a serious, robust, and unified response. We need to recover the basic concept of citizenry and the rights it entails. This is the core of democracy; it is at the frontline of our fight against authoritarianism and populisms. We need clear ideas, firm convictions, openness to compromise, and the will – both political and popular – to survive. This sounds like hyperbolization. Those fighting in Ukraine are proof that it is not.

We run the risk of losing our voice and our ability to shape the remodeling of the global system. Entrenching ourselves in outdated or obsolete positions would mean the end of our relevance. Inaction is simply not an option.

Ana Palacio, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain



Ana Palacio, a lawyer specializing in European and International law, was the first female Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain. Ms. Palacio has been a member of both the Spanish and European Parliaments, a member of Spain's Consejo de Estado (Council of State), and Senior VP and General Counsel of the World Bank Group, as well as Secretary General of the ICSID - International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes. In the private sector, Ms. Palacio was a member of the Executive Committee and Senior VP for International Affairs of the nuclear energy leader AREVA.

She is a visiting professor at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and at the UM6P University, and she is a member of the governing bodies of several public and academic institutions. Ms. Palacio is a regular speaker at international conferences and a contributor to different publications, including a monthly column for Project Syndicate, and a weekly column for El Mundo (Spain).

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– Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.)

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NOTES

This paper is based on Ana Palacio's May 2022 lecture entitled "World Order Disrupted: Power and Institutions in the Balance" at Texas A&M University. It may be viewed at <https://bush.tamu.edu/scowcroft/recordings/>.