

The EU on the Road to Damascus: The War in Ukraine and the World Order in Transition

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Abstract: *The Russian invasion of Ukraine marks the point of no return of the transition of order in world politics. The first three sections of this article address the implication at the heart of this topic, that is, the reconfiguration of world coalitions at the initial stage of the transition phase. The next three sections analyse the impact of the Western coalition reconfiguration on the EU. Based on the analysis of CFSP texts published before the war in Ukraine and after the start of the war, the article assesses the consistency of the actions of EU countries with the position expressed by the EU texts. The objectives and interests of the EU institutions and member states' governments are rarely perfectly homogeneous and normally not fully consistent with each other in the face of a serious external challenge. Sharing how to respond to the Russian invasion proves difficult because the implications of the invasion are broader than violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a non-EU European country. Many praise the level of unity achieved by the EU, but the conclusion of the present analysis shows that sharing strong Western coalition ties might represent a temporary undertaking of EU countries.*

Keywords: *World order, Russian-Ukrainian war, EU foreign and security policy.*

Introduction

The Russian war against Ukraine is the turning point of many international relations and processes. As far as politics is concerned, the disruptive effect on the world order is of paramount importance. A change is expected in the institutions and policies governing the world economy, trade, and finance, as well as in the policies of environment protection, food production, and energy sources. The organisation and activities of the United Nations will be influenced in a way that is not yet easy to predict. The theory of the long cycles of global politics (Modelski, 1983) argues that such a situation is not an accidental event, but the expected terminal phase of a global cycle, which is usually a conflict to change the contested, hopelessly de-legitimised, and ineffective world order. According to this theory, the current world politics is entering the last phase of the cycle that began at the end of World War II, the cycle of American hegemony. Almost a century ago, Antonio Gramsci called this phase *interregnum*². Later, political scientists researching hegemonic orders gathered evidence of recurring conflicts and wars on a global scale (Goldstein, 1988), thus showing that, over the past five centuries, such wars arose between coalitions of states that had opposing projects of changing the world order.

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² In *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci (1996) wrote "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear".

The EU foreign policy scholars tend to underestimate the importance of studying the European response to the process of changing the world order. From the moment member countries began to build a common foreign policy at the level of the EU, researchers have in fact addressed the study of institutional harmonisation of national foreign policies in areas of interest such as the Middle East, development aid, and relations with individual countries or groups of countries and with international organisations (Bremberg et al, 2022). Subsequently, the European foreign policy research community dealt with the development of the common defence policy, while nowadays the focus is on defining the EU strategic autonomy.

The EU foreign policy makers, on the other hand, are increasingly concerned with the instability of the world political order. The strategic documents elaborated under the auspices of the High Representatives during the past twenty years show that the EU must face global challenges stemming from the current state of the world order, acting as a responsible global actor. These documents, which aspired to be the foundational texts of the EU's strategy in global affairs, were nevertheless overwhelmed by multidimensional implications of the events that they investigated rather superficially.

This article addresses how EU leaders deal with the current transition of the world order. This question revolves around the war in Ukraine, since this event made it clear that world politics has entered the transition phase of order, for a series of reasons explained below. The first three sections deal with the general definition of political order and summarise the existing knowledge about the order and change of the world political system. However, such knowledge is limited because the theoretical framework of world politics research is much more actor-oriented than system-oriented. Many international relations (IR) scholars are inclined to study the global governance rather than the world political authority and order (Weiss and Wilkinson, 2022), thus expecting change to be dependent on contextual conditions favouring governance practices and the role of actors, especially non-state actors, overlooking the significance that systemic conditions and long-range processes have on the decisions of state political leaders. The present article counters this view through the knowledge and evidence provided by long range systemic analysis that signals the evolution of the world political system towards the emergence of a world polity based on a network of multilateral policymaking institutions. The last three sections of this article analyse the perceptions of the EU foreign policy makers of the world order and its change, as outlined in official EU texts, and the impact of Russia's attack against Ukraine, which laid the ground for the changing of the world order. Nevertheless, the theme of European autonomy in world politics and the implications of the potential decoupling of the interests and goals of the EU and the United States. Today, the leaders of important EU states recognise the imperative to remain within a global coalition during the order transition and to move towards a world polity generated by the multilateral institutions, while the discourse on European strategic autonomy has not yet been put aside.

What is the political order?

All societies are concerned with the problem of order, referring to the situation in which collective issues are faced in a collective way, and through political responses agreed by all members, rather than through the response of individuals and small groups.

Society is formed by individuals responding to problems in their own way, based on their values, interests and resources, which is beneficial only for solving problems affecting a limited number of individuals and not all the members of the society. Such collective issues are better managed on condition that all members of society provide the same response or responses based on compatible standards, otherwise individual responses collide with each other and do not solve the issues. Therefore, addressing collective problems in a society is a matter of politics, through the definition and choice of collective responses to which individuals will conform for reasons of convenience, legitimacy and fear of sanctions. In short, the political order is the social order created through politics and the political system institutions.

In principle, the political order's reputation is based on the provision of public goods resulting from appropriate responses to collective problems, but, in the common view, depends on the political system within which is formed. Usually, the order of democratic states is perceived as good, because is considered to be created by all citizens, while the order of the international system is generally perceived as bad, being conceived as imposed by one or a few states on the other sovereign states. However, in all political systems, order is possible due to hierarchy, meaning the supraordinate position claimed and given to some actors to exercise the political authority necessary to form the laws and policies that provide order to society. Moreover, that political authority is institutionalised and legitimised through effectiveness and stability in responding to political demands or inputs, complying with procedures, and providing public goods or outputs.

All political orders function through the authoritative responses to collective problems, decision-making tools, coalitions of the actors and hierarchy. Authoritative responses are the laws and policies issued by the political authority that bind all members of society. Decision-making tools are institutionalised ways of producing and executing authoritative responses, i.e., tools of legislative, political, and implementing institutions. They are formed, reformed, and replaced according to the circumstances and, to a good extent, are path dependent and evolutionary. Coalitions are groups of actors (e.g., political parties within the state or formal alliances and informal coalitions of states in the international system) having similar characteristics and positions in society, and therefore compatible views on collective problems and policies. Such groups support and legitimise the political authority of institutions and selected actors in charge of defining the laws and policies, or, on the contrary, disobey and delegitimise the authority because they aim to replace it. Hierarchy is the structure resulting from the attribution of political authority to selected members of society to make laws and form policies. The performance and duration of the hierarchy depend on the legitimacy attributed by the members of society and their compliance with laws and policies for reasons of convenience and fear of sanctions.

In democracies, major political parties gain access to political authority through elections and in such an institutional position they make laws and policies against the minor parties, but their policies are aimed at attracting other voters at the next general election. The advantage of democracy is that change of authority occurs through regular elections, avoiding violent change. At this moment, it should be recalled that the principles of democracy, regular elections and universal voting rights are the result of a long process beginning in Athens where democracy was the business of a few, not everyone.

When referring to political authority within the world political system, researchers explain that, in past centuries, the winning coalitions of world wars gained political authority and formed world political leadership, hegemony or orders (Braumoeller, 2019; Gilpin, 1988; Goldstein, 1988; Levy, 1985; Modelski, 1983; Thompson, 1988). Despite labelling these evolutions differently based on the nature of the influence or its global perceptions, the authors of the long cycles of global politics noted that the orders usually lasted about a century and had gone through four phases capturing a specific level of the leader's influence over global events (Flint, 2022; Modelski, 1983; Thompson, 1988). Drawing from the literature on the long cycles, in the present article, three phases of a cycle of world order are distinguished – implementation, delegitimation and transition. During the implementation phase, the coalition that won the world war creates the main institutions and produces policies for the new world order. In the delegitimation phase, the world institutions and policies do not respond effectively to collective problems, and dissatisfied states oppose them. During the transitional phase, new collective problems and political projects are put forward by the revisionist powerful states pushing for the formation of an opposing coalition challenging the status-quo coalition defending the existing order. The two coalitions come into conflict, even escalating to war, in order to gain the necessary political authority to form the institutions and policies of the next world order cycle. The evil of the world political order, therefore, is that the change of political authority occurs through conflict and violence. At least, this was the case in the past.

In general, both at the state and world levels, the reputation and duration of the political order depend on the satisfaction with political responses to collective problems of the subjects, specifically the citizens of the state and the governments of the world political system. Dissatisfaction, on the other hand, generates delegitimation, revisionism and a change of order.

The post-WWII policy-based order

In the aftermath of World War II, Western countries marginalised the Soviet Union, a member of the victorious coalition, but with different ideological views and formed a new world order. Labelling the post-World War II order, a liberal one is misleading. Liberalism has been valued by Western countries along with other values, interests and goals. As mentioned above, the political order is based on the political authority that is claimed by, and recognised to, selected members of society to make laws and form policies that address the collective problems in accordance with the values, interests and goals they consider relevant to themselves and the society. Moreover, they support the new order with their own resources more than other states do. Thus, the post-World War II order is the American order or the Western coalition order.

The Western coalition created world institutions in charge of policymaking (e.g., UN, IMF, GATT-WTO) to address the four collective problems they considered of primary importance: restoration of order, namely policies towards preserving state sovereignty, financial stabilisation and movement of investment capital, avoidance of trade wars, and replacement of colonialism through state-building around the world.

The post-World War II order marks a notable discontinuity with the past world orders: while orders in general have been based only on rules, mainly legal obligations

under international law, the new world order incorporated policies as well. In addition to the obligations of international law, in particular the respect of state sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, the current world order is also based on three fundamental elements, namely the institutions charged with producing policies in response to world problems, the world policies that state governments must implement through coherent domestic policies, and the exercise of political authority by world powers according to the decision-making rules of institutions, such as the IMF and the UN Security Council. In the following paragraphs, we clarify this statement by referring to three cases of policies towards finance, state security, and climate change.

The Bretton Woods world financial policy worked for a short time. It faced increasing problems in the 1960s and was hit by the inconsistency of the United States financial policy with key Bretton Woods rules. During the early 1970s, the American-led reform of the world financial policy substantially changed the initial elements of that policy. However, the IMF and the World Bank continue to support the world policy of rescuing state from financial deficit and debts through structural adjustment programmes.

The world policy towards the security of the states against lethal military aggression, which is the object of the Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, has been implemented through the peacekeeping mechanism. Since the end of World War II, no military aggression to eliminate a state has achieved the purpose (Attinà, 2011: 115-119)³. Even such a world policy implies that states respect it through their defence and foreign policy, refraining from preparing for military aggression to eliminate another state.

The Paris Agreement on the world climate policy addresses effectively the world-scale global warming problem only if the domestic climate policy of the states is consistent with the international targets. It is worth pointing out that this policy places emphasis on national implementation, recognising that every world policy is a framework-policy. Accordingly, each state participates in the formation of the world policy and accepts that the world institution monitors the implementation of the policy by states. In addition, states in need of assistance are entitled to receive the aid necessary to build their implementation capabilities (Attinà, 2021).

In short, the post-World War II world order was based on the recognition of a small number of world problems – namely, stabilizing world finance and currency exchange, avoiding tariff trade conflict, securing the states against lethal military aggression, and building nation-states out of colonies – and the formation of related policies by post-World War II multilateral conferences and, since then, entrusting world policymaking institutions with the task of updating the policies.

Such policies worked quite well for nearly 20 years, the implementation phase of the order, and were opposed and delegitimised in the next phase by an increasing number of countries. The Russian invasion of Ukraine signals that the cycle of order has now entered the transitional phase.

³ The exceptions are Vietnam, Timor-Leste and Western Sahara, but these post-colonial states had not yet been recognised as subjects of the international system at the time of the aggression. Vietnam was a special case in which a colonial war became a war of reunification and one where intervention by the United States had not been legitimised by the UN. Timor-Leste was (re)instated as an independent state in 2000. Western Sahara has not yet gained formal recognition as a state.

Order transition as a situation

The war in Ukraine marks the turning point towards the transition of order because it is provoking the formation of opposing coalitions determined to confront each other over future political authority, the priority collective problems, and the world institutions and policies.

At first glance, the war in Ukraine is a war of aggression with two peculiarities. First, aggression is the game-change event of the eight years-long confrontation between Russia and Ukraine since the Russian annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the conflict in Donbass. Second, the aggressor is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and can veto resolutions applying world policy against lethal military aggression towards a state (Chapter 7 UN Charter). As a result, the Russian leaders put the UN security policy on stand-by.

Contrary to the opinion of many, the war in Ukraine is not a proxy war. In this type of wars, such as the war in Libya, the parties in conflict receive large war aid from big and medium powers that want to gain prominent position in the local theatre. Ukraine receives aid from large and small countries, but they do it for other purposes than gaining position in the theatre. This is a coalition war pertaining to the transitional phase of the order, perhaps one of many wars in such a phase. Meeting in Beijing before the war, on 4 February 2022, the leaders of China, Xi Jinping, and Russia, Vladimir Putin, claimed to be the leaders of the countries that want to change the post-World War II order. They did not form a coalition but did issue a public call. On the other hand, in addition to calling NATO members to rally in supporting Ukraine, the United States prepared to form a broader coalition of countries to support Ukraine and defend the world order. On 26 April, the United States and 42 allies met at the Ramstein Air Base⁴, and on 14 May the G7 ministers of foreign affairs met to discuss the same agenda. Coalitions are not fully formed today, being a work in progress.

According to the theory of the world order cycles, history teaches us that the fight in Ukraine may end at some point, while the coalition confrontation over the next world order may still be ongoing. In fact, scholars use to call the world war (or systemic or global war) the entire period of the transition of the order because it involves countries around the world, even if the war is not fought all the time.

Labelling the war in Ukraine as “world war” is not well received, because it has a high risk of turning into a nuclear war since the conflicting coalitions are led by nuclear states. While Russia has consistently threatened with such a risk, the United States has been more prone to a low-intensity and long-lasting war to ward off the nuclear risk while weakening Russia. On the other hand, the escalation of economic sanctions by Western countries and the counter-reaction of Russia through the cutting of energy supply to European countries and the sale of Ukrainian grain, indicate that Russia also uses economic war to prevent nuclear escalation.

At the moment, the following positions matter in the process of building coalitions. Russia's choice is to continue the war effort to change the world order and assume the leadership of the revisionist coalition or a co-leadership with China as promised at the

⁴ 43 countries, including non-NATO states, were invited. Among them were Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Tunisia, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Qatar and Jordan, Sweden, and Finland. The gathering is set to become a monthly contact group on Ukraine's self-defence.

February meeting in Beijing. However, China, India, and the other countries against the Western-led coalition aim to change the world order to improve their interests and strategies, without recognizing political authority or leadership in world institutions to other states. The first choice of the United States is to reconfigure the Western coalition, to isolate Russia through a low-intensity and long-lasting war and preserve the existing order, perhaps with some revisions and changes. At the same time, the United States do not dismiss the case of military escalation in Europe and military confrontation in other areas. In this regard, the visit of Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the US House of Representatives, to Taiwan in early August reminded everyone that the United States is ready to respond to serious crises everywhere and even to conduct two major wars at a time. At the moment, the EU governments agree on the American strategy of low-intensity and long-lasting war in Ukraine to preserve the existing order and are reluctant to take a common position towards the Taiwanese crisis. However, the efforts of the American presidency in Ukraine have not altered the anti-Western sentiments of many leaders of the world, while the response to the Taiwan issue raised the concern of all governments in Asia.

Coalitions matter in the process of reshaping the world order, because the agreement of many countries is essential to realise the two main chapters of the agenda of the next world order – the selection of the priority collective problems and the forming of the policymaking institutions and policies. Nowadays, the number of world-scale problems is greater than in the past but like-minded governments must agree on the most urgent and addressable ones. In other words, they must share an understanding of the nature of priority problems and the feasible policies to respond to them. Building political institutions to address collective problems and form the policy response is a very difficult issue because it concerns the recognition of political authority and the legitimacy of the world policies. Like-minded governments must share both the guiding principles of the statutes and the decision-making rules of such institutions because the legitimacy of institutions and policies depends heavily on giving decision making power to the greatest number of states.

Not all potential members of a coalition are equally important. The coalition leader looks primarily for countries that have key resources to achieve the coalition's goals. Therefore, in the coalition, there are members of the inner circle and the outer circle. The fate of the coalition is based primarily on the power and determination of members of the inner circle. However, the lesson of past and recent multilateral policymaking is that the world order depends on the number of national governments that recognise the legitimacy of the world framework-policies and, consequently, are willing to implement them with coherent domestic policies. As mentioned earlier in this article, the coherence of national policies with world framework policies can be achieved under three conditions: the national ownership of the world policies, the monitoring of the national implementation by the policy-making institutions, and the assistance to the states in need of capacity-building for policy implementation.

These conditions are difficult to put in place because states with different political regimes have different dispositions towards them. In short, democratic countries are more inclined to form internal policies consistent with the world framework-policies than autocratic countries because the ruling autocratic class does not want to be conditioned by internal and external actors and initiatives. In such a perspective, the present transition is configured as a confrontation between two coalitions of states having different internal regimes.

The world order as seen by the EU

The European leaders do not fully assert that policies as much as the rules of international law are the cornerstone of the world political order that was built at the end of World War II. To assess their view of the world order, we reviewed the official EU foreign policy texts published before and after the Russian military invasion of Ukraine and integrate this knowledge with the analysis of the actions of the EU institutions and governments after the invasion. The review of the pre-invasion texts refers to the 2003 *A secure Europe in a better world. European security strategy*, the 2016 *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. The EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy*, and the 2021 *EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism*. The review of the EU's texts of the period after the Russian invasion of Ukraine refers to the *Versailles Declaration of the European Council*, and the recent *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*.

In the EU foreign policy documents, the world order is qualified as an order based on rules of international law, in accordance with the Westphalian concept of sovereignty and the values and interests of each sovereign state. At the heart of such a concept is the right to constitutional independence, self-government, and territorial integrity. This right is the property of every state and, if respected by all, it is conducive to order even in a world such as today's, characterised by high asymmetric interdependence between unequal states, largely different from the Westphalia world where interdependence was much smaller.

The authors of the EU texts acknowledge that the vision of the rules-based order clashes with the difficulties of an increasingly multipolar world. Therefore, they say that the EU can defend its values and interests only by choosing strategies appropriate to the multipolar context. At the same time, they call for multilateralism as the appropriate way to deal with any conflict of interest that arises in the multipolar world. However, in the 2021 text on the *EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism*, they recognise that multilateralism is in critical condition and call for effective multilateralism, a concept never concretely defined in the EU documents. Nowhere do they consider the lessons of multilateral policymaking from post-World War II to the global climate policymaking experience. If the post-World War II institutions were largely ill-equipped to produce policies legitimised by equal decision-making rights of participating countries, the policymaking towards the problem of global warming achieved the goal of legitimate decision-making by giving equal rights to all participating countries and also put in place mechanisms to help governments comply with world policy objectives. This experience is overlooked by the 2021 document on the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism.

In brief, the EU foreign policy texts state that today's world politics revolves around poles and multipolarity, which means that a small number of powerful countries, the poles, fragment the world, create their own circle of friendly and client states, and consequently make it difficult to achieve effective responses to collective problems through multilateral policies. Still, the EU foreign policy makers rely on the role of international organisations to form international law treaties to address collective problems assuming that through such treaties non-compliant states will be isolated and sanctioned.

The rules-based order as seen by EU leaders owes much to the conviction of the EU's regulatory power in a world of equals. They received from academics such a perspective that is based on the social constructivist paradigm that recognises the sharing

of norms as the basic principle of international relations (Manners, 2002; 2008; Michalski and Nilsson, 2019). This view underlies the vision of the international order as a rules-based one, but it is in no way adherent to the practice of multilateralism that developed from the post-war period to the policy-making process that led to the Paris Agreement on climate policy.

Finally, in the years leading up to the Russian invasion, the EU foreign policy makers said that the Westphalian concept of sovereignty underpins the EU's strategic autonomy as well. The concept of strategic autonomy has been much discussed in the EU foreign policy community, including professionals and academics. The strategic autonomy concept is by no means new. It is inherent in the construction of European foreign, security and defence policy. The first official text in this regard is the 1973 *Declaration on European Identity* in which the EU heads of states and governments claim the will to differentiate the EU's world policy from the foreign policy of the United States, which at that time was sucked by events in the Middle East and Vietnam. In 2016, the *EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy* was the most prominent recent text repeatedly using the sentence and concept. An official EU text was supposed to follow the debates, but such project is on stand-by due to the war in Ukraine. The strategic autonomy sentence appears only once in *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, the document endorsed by the EU heads of states and governments on 24 March 2022. On page 13, it states that “*this Strategic Compass will enhance the EU's strategic autonomy and its ability to work with partners to safeguard its values and interests*”.

The EU's half-conversion

The Russian war against Ukraine took political leaders around the world by surprise. They were thrown into a situation they did not expect even though for many years they had faced the economic difficulties and political uncertainties of the contested world order. As a result, they had to tune in to the unexpected situation and try to make sense of it. The EU leaders had to revise their own foreign policy towards Russia, formulate a new policy, and quickly draft the EU common response. Not surprisingly, the habit of coordination facilitated the realisation of the common response though, not surprisingly, by respecting dissonant positions. The history of the EU teaches that the construction of the common position is a slow and tortuous process that often ends in a downward compromise. Reduction of gas and oil supply and payment in rouble currency are striking cases of such a practice.

Two official documents, the *Versailles Declaration* of the 10-11 March 2022 Informal meeting of the Heads of State or Government, and March 2022 document, titled *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence – For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*, show the impact of the Ukrainian war on the position of the EU in relation to world politics and the order transition process. In both texts, the EU policy makers recognise that the EU's defence in all areas of interest is guaranteed by strategic autonomy on condition of maintaining good relations with partners, especially with the US and NATO members. In other words, any decoupling between the EU's global strategy and the American one is side-lined by EU foreign policy makers who are as inspired as St. Paul was on the road to Damascus.

At Versailles, the Heads of State or Government pledged to “*resolutely invest more and better in defence capabilities and innovative technologies*”. The Declaration also underlined the EU’s commitment to two world policies in climate and trade. It remarked that “*the European Union has set ambitious targets to reach the objective of climate neutrality by 2050*”. Consequently, the Heads of State or Government discussed the EU’s dependency on Russian energy sources and agreed to phase out Russian gas, oil, and coal imports as soon as possible. They pointed to the need of “*taking into account national circumstances and Member States’ choices of their energy mix*”, and the necessary time for “*diversifying our supplies and routes including through the use of LNG and the development of biogas*”. The Declaration also underlined the EU’s commitment to sustain multilateral world policies and mentioned the continuous support to “*an ambitious and robust trade policy, multilaterally as well as through trade agreements, and promote our standards, market access, sustainable value chains and connectivity*”.

The Strategic Compass acknowledged the return of power politics in a “*contested multipolar world*” and blamed the Russian and Chinese governments, the first for “*aiming to establish so-called spheres of influence*”, the second for being “*increasingly both involved and engaged in regional tensions*”. Therefore, it set out “*a common strategic vision for EU security and defence policy over the next 5-10 year*” and pledges to both “*enhance the EU’s strategic autonomy and its ability to work with partners to safeguard its values and interests*”. The explicit goal is to “*contribute positively to global and transatlantic security*” since NATO “*remains the foundation of collective defence for*” the EU members, and “*partnerships are an essential instrument to support the EU’s ambition to be global strategic player*”.

In accordance with the foreign policy objectives expressed in documents after the Russian invasion, the European Commission organised the joint response that included military, political, economic and humanitarian support for Ukraine and economic sanctions on Russia. Efforts to create a common energy policy towards Moscow have met with resistance from governments. The same happened for Ukraine’s candidacy as a member country of the EU, which was eventually accepted.

At the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine in February, the EU shared with the United States and a small group of Western countries the opinion that international sanctions were essential to repel the invasion, but doubts that economic sanctions could have a roll-back effect on the invasion existed at that time. Much depends on the EU’s dependence on Russian gas and oil and on the increase in purchases of Russian energy by non-European countries, which continue to remain on friendly terms with Russia.

Military assistance to Ukraine through the EU Peace Facility is a financial aid mechanism and is supplemented by military materials provided by many, not all, EU countries. Especially France has been targeted by Ukraine prime minister for the small supply of military equipment. In August, the Ukrainian government complained that it had received a small part of the military equipment promised by the European governments.

After the Russian military attack, the EU documents recognised the urgency of reviewing external security threats and increasing state military budgets in constant connection with the United States and within the framework of NATO coordination and enlargement. The admission of Finland and Sweden to NATO shows that the mutual

assistance clause of Article 42 (7) TEU is not considered as effective as the mutual defense clause of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty.

In conclusion, the Russian invasion of Ukraine forced the EU foreign policy makers to revise their policy towards Russia and return to the basics of power politics. However, the differences between national foreign policies did not disappear at all. Apart from the opportunistic position of the Hungarian government, the position of the French government has been reported as the most inclined to keep channels open with Russian leaders and prevent strained relations in the post-war European security architecture. However, the French position is not far from the position of other EU governments and political parties, not to say of the economic actors and civil society groups of Western European countries. The economic actors adhered to the concept of strategic autonomy and the concept of normative power Europe. Among civil society groups were also developed anti-American attitudes. In short, the Russian invasion caught the EU like Saint Paul on the road to Damascus. The European leaders have understood that the EU, like any state, cannot remain alone in world politics but must associate itself with a coalition of states that share interests and problems. But, unlike St. Paul's, theirs is still a half-conversion. The official statements of European foreign policy makers do not completely drop the aspiration for the EU's autonomous role in world politics. In truth, not all EU governments agree to pay the toll the transition of the world order imposes on all states.

The EU, order coalitions and the world agenda

Before the invasion of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin and XI Jinping agreed to defy the world order. The Joint Statement of 4 February states that the world *“is going through momentous change, and humanity is entering a new era of rapid development and profound transformation”* including the *“transformation of the global governance architecture and world order”*⁵. We do not know whether Putin and Xi agreed to rush to such a change within a short period of time. The fact is that, after the meeting, Putin, heedless of the repeated warning of the American president, began the invasion that set-in motion the change of the world order and the process of coalition-reconfiguration. China, reiterating the Joint Statement, never denied agreeing with Russia to transform the world order. The United States took the lead of countries willing to support Ukraine, in truth to form the coalition of countries concerned with the order transition process.

The war in Ukraine opened the transitional phase of the order which consists in building coalitions in conflict with each other to have the political authority and right to change the world order. Since the contested world order was built by the Western countries, scholars have read the Russian and Chinese position, which is also held by other Non-Western leaders, as evidence of the West-Rest divide and have predicted that it gives rise to two opposing coalitions and the change of the world order. However, the vote on the UN General Assembly resolution on the Russian invasion on 1 March, and that of October 12 on the referendum on the annexation of four Ukrainian regions do not correspond to the image of the West and the Rest. If the votes against and abstentions are from Russia, China, and countries of the Rest, the pros are not only Western countries.

⁵ See Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development (February 4, 2022). <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>.

This can be explained in analogy with what happens with social cleavages and party politics in democratic countries, where cleavage lines matter as much as the party platforms matter to win the next election. In other words, the projects of the next world order determine the construction of today's coalitions. Therefore, the ball is in the court of countries that, claiming political authority, design the project of the next world order. The project must be such that many countries and, above all, the countries that matter most in power resources, will join the project and the coalition. President Biden's visit to the Middle East in mid-July to talk to many non-democratic leaders is a case in point. President Putin also visited countries in Central Asia and the Middle East for the same purpose.

As was mentioned earlier in this article, designing the feasible and meaningful project of the next world order means forming the agenda that contains both the collective problems that many states consider priorities, and the political institutions that, through legitimate decision-making mechanisms, form the world framework-policies that states must implement through their own internal policies. In short, setting the agenda and reconfiguring coalitions are at the heart of today's transition phase of the world order.

At first, the war in Ukraine was a violation of the territorial and border integrity of a sovereign state. The world security policy and compliance with UN Chapter 7 were at stake. Subsequently, financial and trade sanctions, payment in roubles of Russian oil and gas, humanitarian and refuge issues, and food supply entered the list of priority world problems to be put on the agenda of the next world order.

Reconfiguring coalitions means countries must share goals toward energy supply and energy transition policies, address the world financial framework and the currency of international payments, provide food and growth to the Global South, not to mention defending everyone against communicable diseases and health threats, and controlling weapons of mass destruction.

Coalition building depends on this kind of problems and the sense of responsibility towards those problems that countries aspiring to be coalition leaders must have to propose the relevant and feasible project of world order addressing the problems. In short, potential coalition leaders should have appropriate ideational skills and material resources. Ideational skills are important to propose the draft order that meets the values, interests, and expectations of many countries within and outside the existing coalitions. Responding to the expectations of many countries is the condition to effectively claim political authority endowed with legitimacy. However, a key aspect of reconfiguring coalitions is, today as in the past, that members of the coalition inner circle share ideational skills and material resources with the coalition leader.

Based on these premises, one can say that the coalition-building process of the current transition phase is not entirely clear. At the moment, China shows no interest in taking the lead of a coalition, but cares about building a large group of countries that share the goal of a multipolar world. The willingness of Russia and the United States to lead opposing coalitions is visible, but unequal in terms of ideational capabilities and material resources.

Russia counts on the dissatisfaction of many countries with the current world order and highlights the poor performance of financial and trade policy to address the economic problems of many countries of the Global South and non-Western emerging

economies. The war in Ukraine has also shown that Russia can play the card of being a key supplier of grain, fertilisers, oil, and natural gas to such countries. Additionally, Russia is at the forefront of countries complaining about the Western attempt to curb the strict respect of the Westphalian sovereignty principle, a goal shared by China and very popular in the Rest of the world, because human rights and humanitarian protection clauses are seen as Western interference in domestic policy.

The United States relies on close relations with Western, mostly European, countries that are the richest and most advanced technological countries in the world. In addition, the US cares a lot about all of Asia, now renamed the Indo-Pacific, but only Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan have joined sanctions against Russia. The rest of the Indo-Pacific countries take a careful stance towards the competition between the United States and China and the conflict between the United States and Russia. They perceive the risks of aligning with the West, since Russia and China are such close neighbours. India refused to condemn Russia, and together with China sees the war in Ukraine as a way to reduce the role of Western countries in the world order and move towards a multipolar world.

On the European side of the Western coalition, the EU habit of coordination has achieved positive results, including oil and gas sanctions, aid to Ukrainian army, assistance to refugees, and reconstruction aid, but divisions are visible. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, apart from Hungary and Slovakia, have strong positions in favour of the opposition and even the defeat of Russia. The big EU members, Germany, France and Italy, on the other hand, are anxious to be trapped in a long war and the damage it causes to their economies. They do not like to see the future conditioned by conflictual relations with Russia. Finally, the Western coalition faces Turkey's strategy of partial coordination with the coalition, although Erdogan's opposition to NATO enlargement to Finland and Sweden has been removed so far.

Conclusion

Getting all EU and Western governments to share a single political response to Russia is difficult. Agreement on the strategy to effectively contain Russia militarily, today in Ukraine, and bring the world to the new world order are the different side of the same coin. Western governments, including EU members, are divided both on the goals of the war – supporting Ukraine to military victory or pushing it to sign a truce and negotiate – and even more on the goals of the coalition – convincing Putin to soften his nationalist goals and resume normal relations, or following Biden to reshuffle world politics. Do they perceive the current situation as a turning point as Putin and Xi Jinping declared in the February 2022 meeting? The present analysis has drawn attention to the Western governments' lack of agreement about responding to Russia's aggression as well as whether the world order needs to be reshaped by building effective world policymaking institutions capable of responding multilaterally to global issues, such as defending the political and territorial integrity of states, creating fair international trade and stable world finance, governing nuclear and mass destruction weapons arsenals, realizing the energy transition, mitigating climate change, and managing health and disease control as world problems. The official EU documents argue that EU must adapt to the multipolar world rather than building a world polity of multilateral policymaking institutions. In

truth, a multipolar world cannot effectively deal with problems on a global scale, because some of the countries that want to be the poles of world politics are unlikely to agree to form policies through the multilateral policymaking based only on the EU values.

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