

On the Current Globalization and the Causes of the Russian-Ukrainian War

Ruslan Bortnik

Director of the Ukrainian Institute of Politics (Kyiv, Ukraine)

E-mail: rbrtnk@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5356-4972>

Bortnik, Ruslan (2022) On the Current Globalization and the Causes of the Russian-Ukrainian War. *Ukrainian Policymaker*, Volume 11, 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.29202/up/11/3>

The causes and consequences of the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine are clearly not sufficient to be viewed only through the temporary prism of Russian-Ukrainian relations, or even political relations between the US, NATO and Russia, because it will complicate the search for ways out of the dangerous situation and its prevention in the future. The conditions for the current crisis have been formed for a long time, not only regionally, but also globally. The accumulated developmental contradictions in the economy and technology, the COVID-19 pandemic, poor political governance, conservative competition of political elites in the era of modern accelerated globalisation, and balancing on the threshold of the new industrial revolution have laid the foundations of the crisis. Therefore, the paper attempts to take a broader look at the essence of the reasons for the aggravation of the military-political and economic confrontation between different groups of global elites, in particular between the US and its allies, on one side, and the Russian Federation and its allies, on the other, – one of the manifestations of it is the Russian-Ukrainian war; their goals and interests. Such an approach can contribute to the establishment of a more stable and balanced world order in the interests of democratic governance and citizens.

Keywords: Globalization, the Russian-Ukrainian war, COVID-19 pandemic, Ukraine

Received: 6 December 2022 / Accepted: 15 December 2022 / Published: 30 December 2022

Introduction

Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine was not only logical – that is, it stemmed from the course of crisis political and economic processes (although the world did not come to this edge for the first time, on the contrary, the threat of war is a fairly characteristic phenomenon of civilization development cycles) (Targowski, 2009), but also, for some national and global elites, which is also necessary, since it is one of the most effective (albeit expensive and dangerous) emergency

© Bortnik, Ruslan, 2022

crisis management tools that allows you to quickly and with the small number of participants resolve or mitigate a whole list of emerging problems that cannot be solved by conventional tools.

Indeed, in the run-up to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the world has approached a situation of critical accumulation of quantitative changes in economics, politics, information and technology and so on – on the verge of a new qualitative transition (Schwab, 2015), which often comes together with military and economic crises, a shift in social technology and a new industrial revolution, destabilisation on a global scale. Many old basic models of governance and social redistribution and development had to be destroyed so that new technologies, ideas and leaders could flow into the “holes” in the “walls” and “foundations.” At the same time, the current elites have practically exhausted traditional palliative tools of governance. But they continued to retain and protect the “conservative framework”, because they were the key beneficiaries of it.

The most likely point of development of such a crisis (and its transformation into a military crisis) has always been the European continent, characterised by an ever-balancing, uncovered “infinitely dynamic” political culture and economy and the presence of “exceptions” (Jaspers, 1991) – peaks of potential development. At the same time, “the West has reached the limit of its power as a consequence of its claim to be exceptionally true” (Jaspers, 1991). Once again, virtually the entire history of Europe, up to World War II and the Balkan wars, testify this.

Trends and causes

1. Firstly, the world in 2019-2022 was ripped for the final (in terms of our generation and political cycle) of globalisation (a process which could stretch over decades) – the creation of a single political-economic system, superimposed over a common global ethics and consumer culture.

After all, in the past, the difference in cultural patterns between civilisations meant that a military or political conquest of another state over a period of decades allowed only territories to be controlled, but not the civilisation itself. Since the ethics and culture of consumption of the invader and the victim remained subjective, integration and interpenetration were relatively slow. Complete absorption took centuries. Moreover, often the invader himself risked to “dissolve” in the broad masses of the local population, which gently imposed its more structured (comfortable) culture and civilization on him. This happened to the nomads and invaders in China, India, Europe, and to the Greeks and Romans in Asia and Africa.

Now the situation is different. Thanks to global media and social networks, international organisations and business, humanity lives in a single space-time dimension: by similar values and ideals – within a rapidly unifying ethos – cultural globalisation is nearing completion. The rational philosophy of Europe and the USA, science and technology, the “American dream”, British real estate, global consumer brands, European culture and “holidays in paradise islands” – the universal culture of consumption shaping ethics – are often equally attractive to elites and the middle class all over the world. Today, the “differences” between civilisations should not be crossed, but rather found literally under a magnifying glass, which is what various travel bloggers do in their videos. And there may be less in common between neighbours than between people from different continents who have never seen each other.

So concealed or explicit control of states, territories and societies may therefore be less painful and more rapidly established. After all, new forms and sources of control often change

only the superstructure of governance (concerning elites), rather than the ethical and cultural attitudes of society (bringing no significant changes for the general population). For a general unification, it is enough to tweak the upbringing of only the children of the target society, not the grandchildren or even great-grandchildren as it was before. Moreover, under such conditions, the new architecture of control is much more resilient than in previous centuries, as it is less noticeable and not principled by society. And the digital forms of human existence, the increasing depersonalisation of communication between the individual, society and the state, and the universal “numerical language” (Deleuze, 1992) make the transitions between political matrices even easier.

Today the world is already de facto culturally, ethically and socio-economically globalised (at least its regional centres of political and socio-economic governance), but does not yet have a single legitimate and responsible power architecture.

There are several reasons for this. But the main one is that some regional groups of elites continue to compete with each other for the right to build and lead the new world architecture. The “liberal” model of globalisation, with its references to the legal and cultural tradition of Europe and North America, the particular concept of human rights, environmental issues and financial and technological primacy (Stiglitz: 2002; 2006; Fotopoulos, 2001), is competing with the Chinese “Community with a shared future for mankind,” which is built on global harmonisation, the search for mutual economic benefit and respect for the differences and particularities of countries and cultures (Zhang, 2018). These models are actively complemented by synchronisation processes on the African continent and in Latin America, regional concepts in the Islamic world, “Panturkism” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009; Landau, 1995) and the conservative anti-Western “Russian World” (Laruelle, 2015).

After all, with the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation did not just aim to occupy the country or overthrow the government but to destroy the “unipolar world” (Lavrov, 2022). The US and its allies are not just trying to save Ukraine as a state and society, but are also trying to preserve and strengthen the global architecture of the “Rules-Based Order” (Remarks, 2022).

In addition, the current situation is influenced by a profound international imbalance in the economic, socio-political and military resources of the elites, which they assess (as well as the ability to manage it). Meanwhile, the main weapon of the elites in this war is fear – the exploitation of fear of environmental catastrophe, a deadly pandemic, poverty, nuclear war, and so on. And it is a war that is the concentrated representation of all fears, because it universally operates with their inner essence – death and life. Also, war, to the considerable pleasure of the ruling elites, allows them to “throw off” the legal and ethical constraints of governance, greatly weaken social control and simplify social demands in society.

The factor of nuclear weapons and the fear of assured mutual annihilation also plays an important role. On the one hand, it raises the status of the elites of nuclear states and imposes additional international responsibilities on them, on the other hand it has made the fear of destruction global for mankind. Any conflict involving a nuclear state now threatens even the remotest parts of the globe. And this kind of war, if it takes place even in a local dimension (for example, the Russian-Ukrainian one), causes close attention and anxiety all over the world. And given the fact that most major conflicts of our time, to one degree or another, almost always involve nuclear states, modern wars are in fact no longer local and carry a global danger to the world. This is especially true in situations where an existential crisis of existence also arises for a nuclear state embroiled in a war.

2. Secondly, we are on the threshold of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. (On the concept of stages/waves of the industrial revolution see: Horn et al., 2010; Rigley, 2018; Jull, 1999; Williams, 2017; Lucas, 2003). Its hallmarks are artificial intelligence, autonomous robots, digital twins, big data analytics, maximum automation, digitalisation, and virtualisation (Bai et al., 2020; Philbeck & Davis, 2018; Schwab, 2015; Schwab, 2016). By and large, the world has already developed technologies to move into the fourth industrial revolution, but in order to implement them – to cross this threshold – it requires political unification, the maximum concentration of resources, societies, and states. This requires breaking down political, cultural, administrative, financial, and technological barriers between countries and concentrating resources, will and efforts, “mobilising” the most outstanding people. And the best tool for this is the global crisis (universal threat) – pandemics and wars.

Moreover, wars (especially large and complex ones) have usually led to a technological development for the states and economies involved. Through maximally accelerated, concentrated military technologies, civil and scientific sectors also developed, where these military technologies were later applied in a broader context.

Nowadays, the things and objects of the fourth industrial revolution often surround us, but they have not yet become a complete system, which would allow us to speak about this revolution as a *fait accompli*. The world and humanity, as has often been the case in the past, are once again on the brink of changes.

3. In addition, a regional war – controlled, without crossing red lines – helps to release the huge pressure that has formed in the global financial and economic system and reformat the economy. Indeed, in 2022, the amount of money issued was on average 3.5 times the GDP of all countries combined (the level of global GDP in 2021 was \$ 94 trillion (Global GDP, 2021). In particular, this process intensified in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when governments around the world (especially in the dollar and the Eurozone) launched a policy – “quantitative easing” – printing additional money to smooth out the negative economic consequences of the epidemic (UN DESA Policy Brief, 2022). A huge “financial bubble” was inflated (Lynch, 2020), a one-time burst of which would lead to the collapse of the global financial system (The Covid crisis, 2021).

Moreover, the duration of the pandemic, the asynchrony of government actions and national selfishness, in turn, provoked the threat of global stagflation (inflation plus lack of economic growth), which we are facing, and which may mean the beginning of a long global economic crisis, following the example of the 30s of the last century.

The war in Ukraine has given rise to processes of blowing bubbles in the stock, technology and raw materials markets, the transfer of financial resources into the real sector of the economy and the military-industrial complex, which is gradually “letting off steam” (excessive pressure) from the resulting global “financial bubble”. At the same time, not allowing it to crack at the same time or in advance. In addition, the war “warms up” the real sector of the economy through the growth of military costs for governments and societies, and, as a result, orders for industrial production, technological scientific sectors, and an increase in the overall demand for the economical use of resources (innovations in the field of energy efficiency, manufacturing, transport and leisure).

For example, five key IT giants of the US Silicon Valley: Google, Meta (Facebook), Microsoft, Amazon, and Apple, have lost 37% of their exchange capitalization on 3.7 trillion US dollars during 2022 (Shawan, 2022).

But there is also a serious risk. For the elites, the main thing now is that this regional conflict in Europe (the war in Ukraine) does not become global and does not affect the key pathways for the flow of capital, resources, and technologies; did not destroy consumer markets. After all, a global war (hot or even cold) can lead to alienation between civilizations and cultures, the collapse of the world financial system and de-globalization.

4. Also, now there is a very interesting process of returning (concentration) of power to the classical political and industrial elites (their manifestation as in the old process of printing photographs) and forms of government. The direct availability of resources or unimpeded access to them (raw materials, technologies, people, and so on), strong armed forces and the ability to pursue a power policy, a mobilized society is again becoming decisive tools for states and their elites.

Indeed, in recent decades, the world slowly diversified in terms of “power.” Often, anarchic liberalization led to the fact that real power and influence on public minds flowed into the hands of non-systemic political players (public organizations, counter-systemic media and parties), and a whole list of people who existed mainly in the digital dimension – bloggers, influencers, stand-uppers artists and so on others – “information nomads” (Schlagwein, 2018). Now, in political systems, power is returning to more clear and understandable concentrated forms – in the hands of elites who own the basic resources and technologies that are critically necessary for the functioning of states and societies. At the same time, one can observe how human rights and freedoms are limited around the world, the role of “digital influencers” is organically and logically reduced. Moreover, “to general applause,” since the main priority of a person today is security, which radically shifts the focus of public attention and deforms the system of goals and values of a person.

Conclusions

The war in Ukraine has been going on since 2014, although the global community, in fact, pays attention to it after February 24, 2022. The war of 2014-2021 brought Ukraine at least 45 thousand casualties, 1.5 million refugees and more than \$33 billion in losses (The cost of war, 2021). At the same time, through the mediation of Germany, France and the United States (informal), an attempt was already made to reach a peaceful settlement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation in 2014 and 2015 through the implementation of the so-called “Minsk agreements.” But this settlement model was not successful. And this happened to a large extent because other dimensions of this confrontation were not taken into account – global and regional, economic and technological; transformation processes that have been going on all over the world in recent decades. It was impossible to unleash the crisis only at the level of Ukrainian-Russian relations, since it went far beyond their borders and concerned a whole range of international issues, was the result of the complex processes of globalization and the struggle for leadership in it, overcoming economic crises and transforming management models, the peak of technological progress. All these reasons and processes must be taken into account in the future when developing stable and functional models of a peaceful settlement not only for Ukraine, but also for a whole list of potential, smouldering and frozen conflicts around the world.

The world, once again, has come to the threshold of transformation, which can turn out to be both the edge of the abyss and the threshold beyond which a more harmonious, stable and prosperous future awaits us all.

 **References**

- Bai, Chunguang, Dallasega, Patrick, Orzes, Guido, and Sarkis, Joseph (2020) Industry 4.0 technologies assessment: A sustainability perspective. *International Journal of Production Economics*. 1 November 2020, 229: 107776.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1992) *Postscript on the Societies of Control*. Available online: <https://libcom.org/library/postscript-on-the-societies-of-control-gilles-deleuze>
- Encyclopædia Britannica Online. *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2009) Political movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which had as its goal the political union of all Turkish-speaking peoples in the Ottoman Empire, Russia, China, Iran, and Afghanistan. Available online: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pan-Turkism>
- Fotopoulos, Takis (2001) Globalization, the reformist Left and the Anti-Globalization 'Movement'. *Democracy & Nature: The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*, 7 (2).
- Global GDP (2021) Available online: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Global-Economy-GDP-by-Country-2021.html>
- Horn, Jeff; Rosenband, Leonard; and Smith, Merritt (2010) *Reconceptualizing the Industrial Revolution*. Cambridge MA, London: MIT Press.
- Jaspers, Karl (1991) *The meaning and purpose of history*. Moscow: Politizdat: 56. Available online: https://royallib.com/book/yaspers_karl/smisl_i_naznachenie_istorii_sbornik.html
- Jull, James (1999) The Second Industrial Revolution: The History of a Concept. *Rivista internazionale di storia della storiografia*, 36: 81-90.
- Landau, Jacob (1995) *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*. Indiana University Press: 13-28.
- Laruelle, Marlene (May 2015) *The 'Russian World': Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination*. Washington, DC: Center on Global Interests: 3.
- Lavrov said that the operation will force the West to abandon unipolarity* (2022) Available online: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/11/05/2022/627b83e69a7947879b1e8b4e>
- Lucas, Robert (2003) *The Industrial Revolution Past and Future*. Available online: <https://web.archive.org/web/20071127032512/http://minneapolisfed.org/pubs/region/04-05/essay.cfm>
- Lynch, David J. (2020) Fears of corporate debt bomb grow as coronavirus outbreak worsens. *The Washington Post*. 10 March 2020. Available online: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/10/coronavirus-markets-economy-corporate-debt/>
- Philbeck, Thomas and Davis, Nicholas (2018) The Fourth Industrial Revolution. *Journal of International Affairs*. 72 (1): 17-22.
- Remarks by President Biden on the United Efforts of the Free World to Support the People of Ukraine* (2022) Available online: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/26/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-united-efforts-of-the-free-world-to-support-the-people-of-ukraine/>
- Rigley, E. Anthony (2018) Reconsidering the Industrial Revolution: England and Wales. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. 49.01: 9-42. https://doi.org/10.1162/jinh_a_01230
- Schlagwein, Daniel (2018) *The History of Digital Nomadism. International Workshop on the Changing Nature of Work (CNOW)*. Available online: https://www.academia.edu/37849519/The_History_of_Digital_Nomadism

- Schwab, Klaus (2015) *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*. *Foreign Affairs*. 12 December 2015. Available online: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/fourth-industrial-revolution>
- Schwab, Klaus (2016) *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: what it means, how to respond*. *World Economic Forum*.
- Shawan, Tully (2022) *As Amazon's value drops below \$1 trillion, this chart shows how dramatically the biggest tech heavyweights have fallen*. Available online: <https://fortune.com/2022/11/02/amazon-meta-apple-alphabet-microsoft-tesla-valuations/>
- Stiglitz, Joseph (2002) *Globalization and its Discontents*. London.
- Stiglitz, Joseph (2006) *Making Globalization Work*. London.
- Targowski, Andrew (2009) *Civilization Life Cycle: Introduction*. Haworth College of Business, USA. Available online: [https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/civilization-life-cycle/23586#:~:text=Quigley%20\(1961\)%2C%20in%20The,empire%2C%20decay%2C%20and%20invasion](https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/civilization-life-cycle/23586#:~:text=Quigley%20(1961)%2C%20in%20The,empire%2C%20decay%2C%20and%20invasion)
- The cost of war: the cost and consequences of the war in the east of Ukraine and the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea* (2021) Available online: <https://uiamp.org/en/isled/cost-war>
- The Covid crisis: a double financial and technological bubble is forming* (2021) Available online: <https://www.intotheminds.com/blog/en/covid-crisis-financial-technological-bubble>
- UN DESA Policy Brief No. 129 (2022) *The monetary policy response to COVID-19: the role of asset purchase programmes*. Available online: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-no-129-the-monetary-policy-response-to-covid-19-the-role-of-asset-purchase-programmes/>
- Williams, J.B. (2017) *The Electronics Revolution: Inventing the Future*. Springer.
- Zhang, Denghua (2018) *The Concept of 'Community of Common Destiny' in China's Diplomacy: Meaning, Motives and Implications*. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*. 5 (2): 196–207. Available online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/app5.231>