

Back From the Future

The end of history, predicted by Francis Fukuyama right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1992, portrayed a rosy future where “the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” seemed irreversibly achieved. Advances of Saddam Hussein in Kuwait, the war in the Balkans, the war against terror, and all forms of local skirmishes were labeled as remaining aftershocks of previous global confrontation.

The West became excessively comfortable with the newly discovered “peaceful world.” It diverted previous fears, anxieties, and military budgets to more humane agendas like education, healthcare, climate change, etc. Even expeditionary warfare against all sorts of Islamic terrorist groups did not change the primary perception that large-scale conventional wars between massive land forces and countries were essentially over. All of the West’s adversaries after 1992 proved to be profoundly inferior vis-à-vis American or allied force military might.

Peace was assumed to be taken for granted; hence, so much re-focusing, re-orienting, and re-prioritizing led to an overwhelming negligence of policies focused on deterrence and solidifying peace through further strengthening security establishment and defense institutions, including military alliances. Only by inertia and by determined actions of what is referred to today as “old, cold warriors,” NATO was enlarged, providing a haven for tens of millions of inhabitants of central and eastern Europe, giving them a chance for a peaceful transition from the Soviet legacy to democracy and from a planned economy to prosperity.

Confident in its military, technological, economic, and moral superiority, mesmerized by the prospects of globalization, the West started to ignore warning signs of rising challenges. This was unsurprising, as the whole generation of diplomats, military leaders, development professionals, and business champions made their careers based on the abovementioned auspicious assumptions, ignoring the ancient Roman warning *si vis pacem, para bellum* (if you want peace, prepare for war).



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Neglect always entails consequences. A brief overview of current world affairs clearly indicates new trends that not only drastically alter previous perceptions but necessitate new strategies and practical toolboxes for handling newly discovered challenges. These could include diplomatic initiatives, economic policies, and security measures. The world seems to live in two parallel realities. The first group debates postmodernism, artificial intelligence, humanoid robots, universal pay, climate change, and gender identities. The second one is focused on overpopulation, wars, revisionist agendas, nationalism, and rising authoritarianism. A closer examination of these new trends can be instrumental in understanding them and determining what Western responses have been so far regarding this new reality and where Georgia stands in this turbulent process.

Brazen New World

Rise of the Global South

In recent decades, foreign policy pundits have actively discussed the so-called “North-South” division. The “South” stands for developing or underdeveloped nations, broadly referring to regions in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania historically marginalized in global economic and political systems. The ‘Global South’ is a term used to describe these regions, which are now witnessing a rise in influence, reshaping the dynamics of international relations, economics, and global governance.

One of the most notable aspects of this rise is the economic transformation occurring in many Global South countries. Nations like China, India, Brazil, and South Africa have emerged as major economic players on the global stage. China’s ascent to becoming the world’s second-largest economy is a prime example of this shift. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), for instance, highlights China’s growing influence in infrastructure development across the Global South, fostering new economic ties and dependencies.

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West-dominated economic institutions, such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are challenged by alternative institutions like the New Development Bank (NDB) and financially backed new global projects like the Sino-Centric Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, the Global South has become a critical battleground in the geopolitical competition between major powers. The United States, China, and Russia are all vying for influence in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, offering different models of development, security partnerships, and economic cooperation. This competition has provided Global South countries with more agency, allowing them to negotiate better terms in their engagements with these powers. The rise of the Global South represents a transformative shift in global dynamics, driven by economic growth and political and security realignment, and it is imperative that we adapt to these changes.

Rise of Nationalism

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Globalization seemingly increased interdependence among states and “erased” many state borders for businesses, goods, and services. In parallel, while globalization has brought prosperity to many, it has also led to significant inequalities and the erosion of traditional industries in Western countries, a fact that cannot be ignored. This has fueled a sense of disenfranchisement among segments of the population who feel left behind by the global economy. Huge waves of refugees escaping wars and economic hardship flooded the West, causing the resurrection of nationalistic movements justified by the need to preserve not only national economies but national identities as well. Nationalism has reemerged as a dominant force across various regions, reshaping the political landscape profoundly. This is evident in the success of nationalist parties in Europe, such as the National Rally in France and the Alternative for Germany (AfD), which have gained support by promoting anti-immigration and anti-EU rhetoric. The “America First” policy of Donald Trump may elevate him again to the presidential post while Great Britain struggles with the consequences of Brexit caused by nationalist sentiments, particularly concerns about sovereignty and immigration.

In other parts of the world, nationalism has led to the rise of strongman leaders who emphasize national pride and assertiveness on the global stage. Leaders like Vladimir Putin in Russia, Narendra Modi in India, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey have all employed nationalist rhetoric to consolidate power and promote their agendas, often at the expense of democratic norms and international cooperation.

Crisis of International Law and International Institutions

International law, which has long served as the foundation for global peace, security, and cooperation, is facing a profound crisis. This crisis is characterized by increasing violations, selective enforcement, and growing skepticism about the effectiveness and fairness of the international legal system. As geopolitical tensions rise and powerful states flout established norms, the principles underpinning international law are being called into question.

The blatant disregard for international law by some of the world’s most powerful nations, like Russia and China, and manifold autocratic but wealthy regimes deepens the crisis. Reluctance by the most potent nations to enforce international law further enables and emboldens violators. Russia’s actions in and towards Ukraine contravene the fundamental principle of territorial integrity. Yet, international responses have been limited to sanctions and diplomatic condemnations, highlighting the challenges of enforcing international law against powerful states or at least against those who are supposed to be enforcers themselves due to their status in international institutions like the UN Security Council. Similarly, China’s activities in the South China Sea have been condemned as violations of international maritime law. Despite wide condemnation, China has continued its activities with little consequence, demonstrating the limitations of international legal mechanisms in the face of state defiance.

The perception that powerful countries can act with impunity erodes the rule of law at the global level. It weakens the ability of international institutions to maintain order and prevent conflict. Therefore, institutions like the UN, the ICC, and the OSCE, designed to safeguard the endurance of international law and order, are considered inadequate.

quate structures for new realities.

As global power dynamics shift and populism rises in many countries, there is growing resistance to existing international institutions and agreements. Nationalist leaders often prioritize sovereignty and unilateral action over multilateral cooperation, undermining the very foundations of international law.

Erosion of Human Rights and Sanctity of Human Life

Every year, on 10 December, the world is supposed to celebrate International Human Rights Day, commemorating the adaptation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer reasons to celebrate. Atrocities, be they in Ukraine, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, or Africa, challenge one of the most fundamental rights—the right to life.

One can argue that this problem persisted even before. Still, the actions of Russia in Ukraine and Hamas in Israel added a new dimension to this problem – disregarding not only the opponents' lives but the lives of your people as well! In both cases, political leaders do not differentiate adversary militant combatants from civilians and put little effort (if any at all) to avoid civilian casualties. On the contrary – schools, kindergartens, hospitals, and other civic institutions are deliberately targeted. At the same time, the same political leaders treat their population as cannon fodder.

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori – is a phrase attributed to the Roman lyric Horace and translates as “It is sweet and proper to die for one's country.” The phrase intended to exhort Roman citizens to develop martial prowess of such magnitude that Rome's enemies would be too terrified to resist them. Even though just after World War I, this attitude has been heavily criticized and disre-

garded, current Russian or Hamas leaders are very actively employing the same notion in their political ambitions.

In both cases, Russia or Hamas, Russians or Gaza residents are dying not for the “homeland” but rather for the cynical, delusional, and dangerous ambitions of their leaders. Energy and resources allocated for their population's well-being are diverted to neighboring populations' misery. In contrast, the lives of their population are considered disposable for “greater goals.”

These actions violate international humanitarian law and demonstrate a strategic calculus that places military objectives above the basic principles of humanity and the protection of civilian life. Russian commanders are notoriously known for their profound disregard for soldiers' lives, sending them basically on a suicide mission to “jam” and exhaust Ukrainian defenses. Similar tactics were practiced by Soviet military commanders during the Second World War, resulting in exuberant and unnecessary casualties on the battlefield on the Soviet side.

Hamas has been accused of using civilians as human shields by embedding military assets within densely populated civilian areas. This tactic not only endangers the lives of Gazan civilians but also complicates Israel's military response, leading to increased civilian casualties. Russian and Hamas's actions reflect a deliberate strategy that prioritizes its political and military goals over the safety and well-being of the people it claims to represent.

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The disregard for human life by Russia in Ukraine and Hamas in the Israel-Palestine conflict exemplifies the devastating human cost of modern warfare when fundamental principles of humanity are ignored. The actions of both actors have led to immense suffering and loss of life, underscoring the urgent need for the international community to address these violations and work towards a more just and humane global order.

Changing Warfare

Ukraine singlehandedly showed that modern warfare, even if human soldiers are irreplaceable, can be fought with drones, intelligence, and moral upswing. Kyiv demonstrated that having allies, albeit not with enough deep pockets and not always the swiftest, is instrumental in warding off enemy attacks. Defense of Kyiv, restoration of control over Kherson, and digging in Kharkiv and parts of Donetsk showed that the second largest army is not invincible, with all the deriving consequences.

More importantly, Ukraine started hitting Russia, a move that would have been incomprehensible just three years ago but is now a reality. Zelenskyy's calculated invasion of Kursk turned the tables, albeit temporarily, and erased further red lines. Now, for the Western leaders, it is less unacceptable if Ukraine, while defending itself, reaches against legitimate military targets. How far this red line can stretch is anyone's guess. Meanwhile, Ukrainian drones have hit Moscow. What was incredible and unadvisable three years ago seems to be the norm of the day today.

Is It All Doom and Gloom?

All of the above-listed tendencies severely challenged the world order and the role of the West in preserving global peace, stability, democracy, and human rights. It looks like manifold challenges are becoming increasingly hard to ignore, and one can

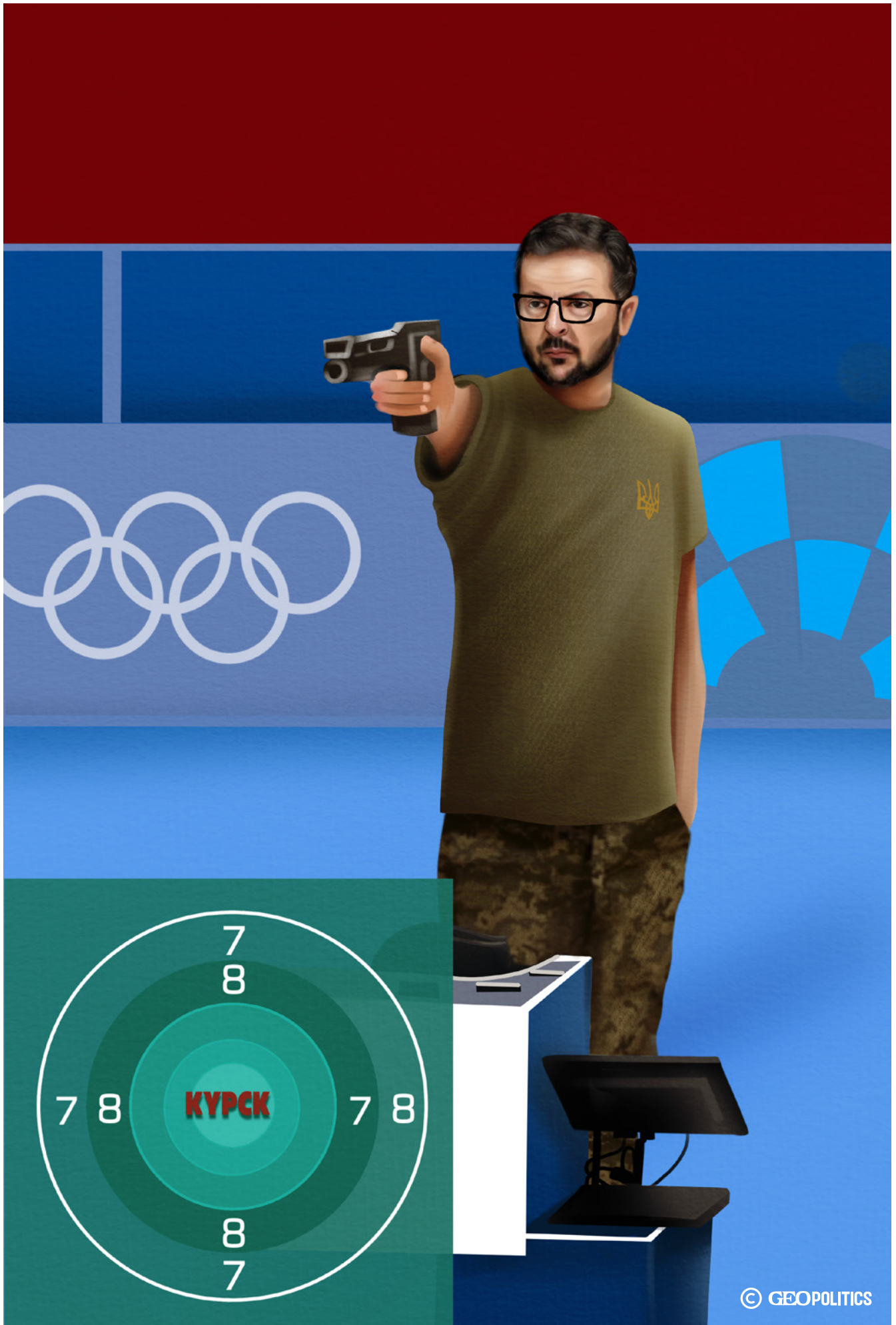
already notice not only wake-up calls but initial mobilization attempts as well.

It should be noted that new tendencies embody inherent deficiencies. The Global South faces significant challenges, including persistent poverty, inequality, political instability, and environmental degradation. For example, an increasing number of countries are less enthusiastic about welcoming Chinese investment or influence. China faces serious economic challenges and increasing resistance from the West, manifesting in trade wars and widespread countermeasures to Chinese influence.

Nationalistic movements can rise but have not scored enough to become a leading force in Europe. India, Turkey, and Brazil face their internal discontent and fragility. Nationalistic agendas cause severe population fragmentation; hence, every wannabe leader (including previous ones) started to adopt more conciliatory rhetoric and policies.

Enforcement of any law presumes superiority in the enforcer's power (military or economic or both). While international law and order were in crisis, Western countries started to seriously focus on renewing their military might, positioning power, and developing new technologies. Since the war in Ukraine, military expenditures have drastically risen, including revamping military production with high-end new technologies where the West still has an advantage. This new "arms race" has all the chances of resulting in another victory for the West in current confrontations and, consequently, redesigning international institutions and focusing on enforcing global order.

The actions of Russia and Hamas brought forth their further isolation. The ICC indicted Russian President Putin while economic sanctions made Russia heavily dependent on China, India, Iran, and North Korea. A capable and economically active



population is fleeing the country, and rising Islamic extremism has penetrated Russia's prison, adding to many other domestic troubles. Hamas brought misery and destruction to Gaza and its population. Its leadership is targeted by Israel and wanted by many Western countries. They cannot roam freely anymore, even within friendly countries like Iran. Iran itself is facing a challenge of humiliation and, more importantly, the perspective of dismantling the so costly and carefully crafted "Shia Crescent." Pro-Iranian forces, like Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis in Yemen, and pro-Iranian militia in Iraq, are actively targeted and ostracized.

Georgia's Political Dissociative Identity Disorder

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Small states are disproportionately prone to international turmoil; hence, they always seek a safe harbor or an alliance where their sovereignty can be preserved. Given the current turbulence in the international arena, Georgia is in close geographic proximity to Russia, Ukraine, Iran, and the Middle East, so political choices are decisive in shaping the country's future.

In its current form, the Georgian political leadership contradicts its goals and actions. On the one hand, Georgia aspires to closer cooperation with the West and eventual integration into the EU and

NATO. In practice, rhetoric and, more importantly – actions drift Georgia further away from the West and Western institutions. The demonization of the West as a "global war party." became an essential part of the government's message box. Attempts to flirt with the Global South have not yet materialized any tangible benefits for the population of Georgia. Policies increasingly mimic the behavior of autocratic regimes with a corresponding erosion of Georgian democracy. The Georgian leadership offers instead a weird form of "patriotism" – not adherence to defending the motherland but rather a crusade against the "global war party" (a.k.a. the West) and its influence through "foreign agent" NGOs and "LGBTQ+ cabal, targeting Georgian identity."

Erosion of the state and democratic institutions results in a profound increase in human rights violations. International rules and norms are selectively adhered to, ditching unwanted ones as "attempts to infringe sovereignty."

There are no excellent scenarios for Georgia's current global confrontation. If the West prevails, it has little interest in working with the present Georgian leadership. If the Global South somehow retains its influence, Georgia, ostracized by the West, will become a weak state with a high chance of being a vassal state of one of the Southern power centers.

This "unanchored" position may be comfortable and beneficial for one particular individual (a.k.a. Bidzina Ivanishvili) but highly volatile to the Georgian state with the prospect of being dragged into the geopolitical vortex with severe consequences ■