



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG POLICY BRIEF

Unquiet Flows the Dnieper: The Unfolding Dynamics of Global Disruption

Author

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An armoured convoy of pro-Russian troops moves along a road during Ukraine-Russia conflict in the southern port city of Mariupol, April 21, 2022. Source: EPA

Heads of State and Government of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) member countries meet for the Extraordinary NATO Summit at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, March 24, 2022. Source: NATO's Official Website.

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The Unfolding Dynamics of Global Disruption**

by
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Unquiet Flows the Dnieper: The Unfolding Dynamics of Global Disruption

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Introduction

The death and demolition being wrought on the vast expanses of the Eurasian steppes, stretching outward from both banks of the Dnieper, is eerily reminiscent of the upheavals witnessed a century ago in adjacent lands abutting its sister stream to the east, so evocatively sketched by Sholokhov in 'Quiet flows the Don'. There seems to be no end in sight to the fighting yet, and little scope for calming the turbulence around this historic river, wherein Marshal Zhukov famously halted the Nazi strategic offensive into Russia in the Battle of Kursk in 1943.

The conflict in the Ukraine has been unique in many aspects, one of which has been to underscore the propensity of commentators and analysts to be first-off-the-mark in beaming opinion into media and cyberspace, already groaning under the barrage of information warfare, leading to a 'perfect storm' of polarisation, confusion and deep scepticism. In an instantly interconnected and garrulous world, there is no escaping this phenomenon.

If Vietnam was the first 'television' war, Ukraine will go down as the first major 'cyberspace' war, being fought simultaneously along real lines of communication, as also on multiple virtual Info-bahns. Declarations of yet another 'new' world order are rife, with ferocious skirmishes being fought online to define its contours.

Some three months into the Russian invasion, it may now be pertinent to separate the grain of tangible outcomes from the chaff of dis-information and unqualified speculation. The dust has settled to some extent, but the military situation and national positions still remain remarkably fluid, and analyses based on extrapolations of the current situation remain a hazardous business.

Much of the earlier commentary was predicated on analysing Putin's 'compulsions and motives' in regard to his 'special operation'. Depending on their predilections, votaries blamed the imbroglio on either an expanding NATO, or on a revanchist Russia seeking to resurrect the imagined glories of the USSR. Away from the finger-pointing, there are some significant



ramifications and developments which are fairly incontestable, and it might be in order to highlight some of these.

Discernible Developments

Few will disagree that Moscow's military assault has created havoc, not only for Russia and the Ukraine, but also for the security and stability of the global commons, with significant impact on almost all nations. A worldwide economic crisis, marked by commodity shortages, disturbed supply chains and runaway inflation, is clearly discernible. The dynamics of global discord emanating from the Dnieper will doubtless also cause widespread and prolonged geopolitical disruption, by way of military and geo-strategic uncertainty, resulting in major re-alignments.

The collective suffering of its besieged population in the cauldron of war has seen the definitive emergence of the Ukraine as a nation, in a manner which could not have been forged by any political grouping within the country. Despite a shared history and common ethnicity, it is unlikely that the people of Ukraine will accept Russian dominance in the foreseeable future, except under duress. Any Russian occupation or puppet government, the possibility of which has receded, would invite resistance on a large-scale and would be short-lived, especially as the resultant insurgencies would have considerable external support.

Even those most supportive of Russia are beginning to accept that there is little likelihood of Moscow emerging 'victorious', in the sense of being able to stamp its writ on Ukraine as a whole, or effecting lasting regime change, or even preventing Kyiv from joining NATO/ the EU in the long term. The chasm between the peoples has widened beyond the possibility of a return to the status-quo. Moreover, the Ukrainian example may propel other states on Russia's periphery to seek EU/NATO shelter, despite warnings from the Kremlin.

The conflict will catalyse the emergence of a militarily stronger and more united Europe, as the hostilities make the EU respond to neglected conventional threats. This may also propel moves towards the holy grail of 'strategic autonomy'. The success of this venture will depend on the efficacy of Franco-German joint leadership, and the degree of political synthesis that can be overlaid on a basically economic community-- an undeniably difficult proposition. Should the Europeans not be able to find common ground, they will, perforce, embrace the transatlantic alliance with greater vigour.

From most perspectives of comprehensive national power, Russia is likely to emerge from this prolonged conflict as a lesser power, with its brand equity diluted. Besides damage to its reputation, the war is bound to severely affect the Russian economy even though it may have the resilience to withstand the unprecedented sanctions. The standard of living of its people, and their integration with the world economy, will likely suffer a prolonged downturn.

China's conundrum is plain for all to see. A lesser Russia, already perceived as the junior partner, would detract from the forging of a strong authoritarian front against the West. It would also serve to focus the spotlight on China as the primary threat to the existing world order. Moreover, the actions taken by the West in response to the Ukraine venture will compel Beijing to question the wisdom of any precipitate action in respect of Taiwan, given the military lessons being derived from contested urban warfare.

In sum, Russia's experience is likely to turn China cautious and less adventurous in the near future. China is also vulnerable to economic warfare, despite the fact that sanctioning China would be a difficult and risky gamble for the West. Beijing currently faces many crises, including the economic and social ramifications of the Covid lockdowns and declining soft power within the global South. The Sri Lanka debt crisis, the CPEC slowdown, the stain of Covid, to name a few, are poor advertisements for the Chinese way-- be it the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or the Global Security Initiative (GSI), announced a few days ago. It is not a happy situation for Xi Jinping leading up to the CCP Congress, and one not lending itself to an aggressive stance.

As of the moment, the United States has lost little and gained a fair deal from the tussle underway on the European flatlands. The response of both Ukraine and the EU to the Russian invasion is beneficial to larger US strategic objectives, as has been the Russian failure to quickly achieve its politico-military aims. Besides enhancing Kiev's capability to repel Russian advances, the supply of high-tech weapons to the beleaguered Ukrainians also provides a major fillip to the US defence industrial complex in terms of government orders, and for testing the efficacy of American munitions in real-war conditions.

The rather watchful Beijing reaction to the developments in Europe, despite the pre-invasion bonhomie between Putin and Xi, belies the rhetoric of the 'no limits/no forbidden areas' relationship, and should be giving Washington solace. The India-US strategic partnership remains on even keel through skilful diplomacy by both sides and a realist understanding of positions. With the strong stands being taken against Moscow by Brussels, Berlin, London, Tokyo

and Canberra, the United States has good reason to be pleased with developments so far.

It is apparent that sweeping economic sanctions can only have an impact in the long term, and most nations, and certainly Russia, have the capacity to withstand these for some time. The imposition of sanctions also has consequences for those who inflict them, as already witnessed by the of spiralling costs of commodities and energy supplies which will dent the global economy. Nevertheless, weaponised sanctions are here to stay, and will see frequent application to weaken or threaten adversaries.

Globalisation, already negatively impacted by recent waves of populism and nationalism across the planet, has also received a further setback, and many countries will be inclined to seek a measure of autarky to counter the national security risks of excessive interdependence, not least in technology, energy and armaments.

The conflict has been detrimental to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation. The increasing vulnerability of non-nuclear states to the ferocity of modern conventional weapons has been starkly highlighted by the Russian decision to attack the Ukraine in both 2014 and 2022, after the denuclearisation of the nation by way of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. The ramifications could not have been lost on middle powers across the globe, including Tokyo, Seoul and some Nordic capitals.

Information warfare has come of age, but the constant barrage of partisan postings is turning out to be a case of overkill, as the lay public is inclined to dismiss even the most plausible reporting as propaganda, and accept even the most outrageous claims as gospel. The psychological theory of 'confirmation bias' has been vindicated, as most people tend to read and view only that which conforms to their own worldview, leading to avoidable groupthink within like-minded organisations and communities.

The West appears to have a distinct advantage in the use of mainstream media to buttress its viewpoint, but the honours are divided in social media, which is seemingly as influential as the world's leading newspapers and media outlets. The successful capture of the discourse in various groups by zealous die-hards with slanted agendas underlines the complexity of influencing public opinion in the Internet Age.



French President Emmanuel Macron and EU leaders meet at the Palace of Versailles, March 11, 2022. Source: AFP

Military Observations

Full-scale twentieth century industrial-era wars are unlikely to succeed in current times, and conquest of significant territory may be impossible in increasingly transparent battle-spaces which are littered with rapid-reaction, precision-guided munitions, a multitude of cheap sensors, and swarms of uncrewed platforms. In a seeming contradiction, however, kinetic conventional conflicts can and will be fought for specific territorial gains, and for strategic humiliation and intimidation. This would hold true even for nuclear-armed adversaries, as illustrated by the Chinese gambit in Galwan.

A 'blitzkrieg' of the kind effected by the panzer columns in the Low Countries in World War II, or even by US armour in Kuwait, is not possible to replicate in network-centric battle-fields --not even by the most technologically advanced militaries, and certainly not when opposed by determined, well-equipped defenders in urban settings. Amongst other factors, the quagmire and setbacks experienced by Russian forces is a result of miscalculation in regard to the viability of industrial-age warfare on the part of the political leadership.

The glaring absence of a unified military command – even for the land campaign, let alone for joint operations— and the opening up of multiple fronts without adequate coordination, is always a recipe for disaster, as repeatedly

underscored by history. One can only conclude that Moscow believed it would simply overwhelm the Ukrainian military in a swift multi-pronged attack, and be welcomed by a grateful populace, which would obviate the need for the extensive and complicated logistics inherent to any such complex operation.

More than the quality and capabilities of Russian arms, there appears to be justifiable scepticism regarding the vital intangibles— leadership, morale, training, commitment and politico-military coherence. Again, there are many who are dismissive of these discernments, and attribute Russian reverses to self-imposed restraint and exaggerated propaganda. Nevertheless, whilst the number of casualties and destroyed mechanised vehicles can be disputed, there is no getting away from the significance of Moscow's complete withdrawal from all but Eastern Ukraine, nor of the calamitous loss of possibly two major warships, amongst other grimly visible setbacks.

The Ukraine conflict has also brought into focus the expanded ambit of 'intelligence sharing', which now plainly includes the provision of real-time targeting information by allies who may not be formally party to the fighting. This is a natural outcome of the ongoing revolution in military affairs and the 'senso- to-shooter kill chains', which allow weapons to be directed using target parameters obtained from any sensor worldwide, with nationality no bar. This may be far more useful than direct support by way of troops and materiel.

Going by the slaughter of armoured mechanised columns, and the sinking of major warships witnessed during the war, it would be only natural for the lay public to presume that the day of large platforms is over, and modern battle-arenas have no place for anyone with significant visual, radar, infrared or magnetic signatures, least of all aircraft carriers, helicopters and tanks. This would be an error. With every introduction of seemingly unbeatable technology, there is the emergence of counter-technology and counter-measures, which enables the continued clash of militaries on the battlefield.

To amplify this with an example, the ongoing operationalisation of 'directed energy weapons' (DEW), using laser beams travelling at the speed of light, may well turn the tide back in favour of large platforms again, as they would be able to neutralise simultaneous attacks from aero-space. Though technology will always be a force-multiplier, it will rarely be the final arbiter of victory, which is dependent on human ingenuity and other intangibles. Despite this, the debate on the 'over-arching' impact of 'overwhelming' technology will doubtless intensify.



An armoured convoy of pro-Russian troops moves along a road during Ukraine-Russia conflict in the southern port city of Mariupol, April 21, 2022. Source: EPA

Global Security Dynamics

The military clash in the Ukraine has accentuated the fissures in the security underpinnings of the global order. Red-lines have been drawn by both Russia and the West, forcing the rest of the world, including Beijing and New Delhi, to re-evaluate their relationships and assumptions underlying security strategies. Moscow's 'special operation' has also demonstrated the ever-present possibility of conventional kinetic conflict in the event of a break-down in deterrence, or a perceived weakness of target countries by potential aggressors.

Over-reliance on alignments and accords may invite peril, rather than assured security. This may lead to the revival of military blocs and alliances, and the re-establishment of a global bipolar schism, unless Russia and China become more inclined to integrating with, rather than challenging, the current order. This is unlikely, and there is every reason to believe that the world will get more militaristic, as nations scramble to build military capacity and capability. In a setback for non-proliferation, it is more than likely that many countries will succumb to the appeal of acquiring WMDs as an insurance against massive conventional attack. With renewed militarisation, the momentum for growth and development witnessed globally over the last two decades will likely be impacted, with rising defence budgets and trust deficits.

Whilst many middle-powers, including India, have been vigorously pushing for a more equitable world order, with a more distributed power architecture,

the advent of a truly multipolar world may have been pushed back in time by the unfolding European disruption, which has served to divide the world, once again, into sharply defined camps. This division occurs along multiple fault-lines such as between the metaphorical North and South, the geographical East and West, and even between the Anglo-sphere and the 'rest' of the West, as exemplified by AUKUS.

In keeping with the millennial trend-line, the stock of the United Nations (UN) has been further diluted by its inability to have any serious bearing on this conflict. Hopefully, this will catalyse a renewed attempt to reform the UN and the UNSC, failing which the UN may well go the way of the League of Nations. This would be both a tragedy as well as a threat to global security, and it is incumbent on the leading powers to ensure the UN's continued credibility and effectiveness by the acceptance of emergent power equations. The veto power enjoyed by the five permanent members of the security council will need debate.

The Russia-China combine may now find it difficult to challenge the existing world order, though efforts will be made to reduce dependency on the US dollar, and the existing financial architecture of global trade and energy flows. Much will depend on the political climate in China after the CCP Congress, and the longevity of Putin at the helm of Russian affairs. Authoritarian states are intrinsically brittle and transfer of power sometimes sudden or violent. The possibility of more liberal regimes emerging in Russia and China remains, as it may no longer be possible for authoritarian governments to indefinitely suppress people in the Information Age.

In contrast, the fortunes of NATO could improve, with additional members, and increased defence expenditure by European nations. The transatlantic partnership, which had frayed since the turn of the millennium, is likely to coalesce and address differences, catalysed by the threat posed by Moscow in concert with Beijing. The UK gamble on Brexit may well pay off, as London is now placed in a sweet spot with regard to influencing the future of US-European relations, and has also got a strong foot in the Indo-Pacific door.

AUKUS has the potential to become an eastern extension of the western alliance system, in tandem with France and other EU powers—to the degree that they may be interested in contesting the Chinese military threat in distant longitudes. Though such a possibility exists, it is unlikely to materialise, as one of the lessons from NATO experience, and indeed from the EU grouping, is the unwieldy nature of large membership. It is more likely that AUKUS will remain a lean Anglo-spheric club, which would seek stronger military bonds with

Tokyo and Seoul, as an extrapolation of the US bilateral security arrangements. Much will depend on the nature and direction of the ongoing evolution of the Middle Kingdom in the coming decade.

For New Delhi, the Ukraine conflict has turned out to be a defining moment in regard to its foreign policy and worldview. Besides its inherent and latent strengths, India has been the recipient of considerable global attention because it has strong links to Russia, is a counterweight to China, and maintains robust inter-governmental, and people-to-people, relations with the West. In the vast expanse stretching from Suez to Malacca, and onwards to Oceania, India is the only entity with the geographic centrality, size, economy, population, nuclear capability and military, to be a uniquely important balancing in the geopolitics of both the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia. From the perspective of all great powers, and not least for its own aspirations, New Delhi's choices and actions in the immediate and near future, will weigh considerably on strategic outcomes in the Eastern hemisphere.



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in Moscow, Russia, February 7, 2022. Source: Reuters



Crystal Ball

Putin simply cannot afford to lose, as it would unravel the entire structure of the security state he has so assiduously built up over his decades in power. The best outcome for Russia would be to be able to hold on to territory gained in Donbas and the Crimea. In view of the many imponderables, even such an outcome is presently far from certain.

Similarly, Zelensky cannot afford to cede any land by way of a negotiated settlement, as it would undermine the entire spirit of the Ukrainian resistance, and be unacceptable to the majority of his countrymen. Despite holding the fort, as it were, Ukraine also cannot claim any sort of military success just yet. It has already paid a considerable price in terms of lives, destruction and a battered economy which will take years to return to pre-conflict levels. Unless the Russian forces are completely evicted from the country, any victory, real or proclaimed, will only be pyrrhic.

Currently, Europe seems to be determined to tighten belts, forge unity and rid itself of dependence on Russian energy. There is the question of how long can such unity and commitment can last when staring at a protracted conflict. The sustainability question also impinges on the continuity of widespread sanctions, and on uninterrupted arms supplies. War-fatigue and loss of interest on part of the lay public in both the United States and Europe is also likely. Moscow is aware of this, and extending the conflict indefinitely would be more in its interest than Kyiv's, as it has greater staying power in the medium term.

Should Beijing distance itself from Russia, there is always the possibility of some renewed Sino-US engagement, though mutual suspicion will remain high. Convergent economic compulsions may catalyse a rapprochement. This would have major ramifications for Asia and the Indo-Pacific in general, and India in particular.

There are some who advocate an India-China reset, despite the recent troubled history and repeated Chinese perfidy. They visualise a pan-Asian combine leveraging the large populations and economic dynamism of both countries. This is a highly unlikely proposition given the almost total breakdown of trust between the two, and their incompatible world-views and systems of government. However, if Beijing were to seriously negotiate and resolve the land-border issue, it may be possible for these Asian giants to do business and compete in a more peaceful fashion-- a tall order, given the aggressive, expansionist and rapacious nature of the CCP regime.

Nuclear sabre-rattling by Putin does not appear to have unduly alarmed his opponents, though there is concern that a cornered Russian leadership may resort to a tactical nuclear demonstration, bringing a new dimension to the conflict, which could then conceivably mushroom into a global catastrophe. Again, the possibility of such an outcome is remote.

With neither side being able to affect a decisive outcome, nor being able to find a face-saving way of claiming victory, it does seem likely that the Ukrainian conflict is going to be prolonged and protracted. There are, however, indeterminable factors still at play, including possible Black Swan occurrences, such as the departure of either or both leaders.

Implications and Imperatives for India

In a rapidly changing global geo-strategic environment, New Delhi has done well to stay clear of 'entangling alliances', as George Washington famously advised his countrymen, and pitched instead for strategic partnerships with like-minded nations on specific threats and opportunities. However, India's quest for strategic autonomy, despite the absence of a robust indigenous armament industry which can deliver advanced weaponry, and the paucity of indigenous energy reserves, remains fraught with many challenges. The Ukraine conflict has served to bring to the forefront of India's collective national consciousness the reality of the over-dependence on Russia for military hardware, and the fragility of energy security in an unstable world.

The pressing requirement for the rapid development of a vibrant defence industrial base, and for diversification of arms imports in the interim, can only be ignored at severe future cost, and would be indicative of a cavalier disregard for national security. The inadvisability, and attendant vulnerability, of banking on one source for vital military hardware can no longer be disputed, despite some unique advantages of the long-standing arrangements with Moscow. Moreover, Russia may no longer be able to guarantee sustained supplies and services, as its own replacement needs would take priority; and actual transportation of equipment will be difficult on account of sanctions, which are likely to stay in place for some length of time.

Whilst the focus on 'atmanirbharta' or self-reliance is more than welcome and long overdue, there is an urgent need to dispel the confusion in regard to the degree of autarky that the concept envisages. The world's most potent and cutting-edge weapons and platforms are produced by a handful of mostly western private companies, who are principally 'prime contractors' who integrate sub-assemblies and components manufactured and obtained

through a host of international supply chains. Their strength lies in conceptualisation, design and development, synthesising the fruits of research and innovation progressed in competitive laboratories in industry and in universities.

India has its share of prime contractors such as HAL, Bharat Dynamics and a slew of defence public-sector shipyards, and has done well to create indigenous supply chains, populated by private sector SMEs and MSMEs, to provide these government-owned behemoths with components and parts. However, as has been apparent for some time to all who wish to see, India's defence industrial base is unlikely to reach its full potential until the emergence of major prime contractors in the private sector, driven by competition, innovation and quick decision-making, and with an existential necessity of avoiding time and cost over-runs which are so rampant and acceptable in the public sector.

The 'strategic partnership' model is unlikely to bear fruit, unless the issue of repeated re-tendering of successful equipment and platforms is resolved. No private entity can afford, and will therefore not subscribe to, setting up manufacturing infrastructure at considerable expense without the assurance of repeat orders; nor can quality equipment emerge from an acquisition system predicated on the lowest bidder model.

Since intellectual property rights lie at the heart of a free-enterprise system, whose greatest advantage lies in creative destruction and renewed growth through competitive edge and calculated risk, it is unrealistic to expect complete 'transfer of technology' in regard to cutting-edge weaponry, despite geopolitical affinity and strategic convergence. India must focus on catalysing, imaginatively funding and rewarding research in the country's private industry and academic institutions, rather than expecting largesse from abroad in this area.

As it imports almost eighty percent of its oil consumption, the dependence of India on external sources for energy is a reality that will hopefully propel both government and industry to seek alternatives by way of technology, policies and infrastructure. It may also revitalise the civilian nuclear power sector. Even so, India will be dependent for decades on the flow of oil and gas through the maritime commons. The security of sea lines of communication, and stability on the waters of the Indo-Pacific, is therefore a vital necessity. New Delhi can turn this to its advantage by remaining focussed on the imperative of building a strong dissuasive Navy, a blue-water force that can facilitate and further many interests in the global commons.

Nations cannot afford to be emotional or sentimental about international relationships, nor hypocritical or naïve about the duplicity and subterfuge inherent in the small and great games played on the international canvas. India's polity must internalise --without cynicism, or in any manner eschewing idealism-- the realities of power and equality in the fundamentally anarchic Westphalian world order, wherein might still remains right, and the rules are ever-flexible for the great powers. In the words of Thucydides, the ultimate realist, "Right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must."

The 'new 'India must take heed of this truism, and devote its considerable energies and genius on conceiving and adopting the internal reforms, re-organisation and policies necessary to compete, and to translate its potential into power. Squandering effort on perpetually seeking to be 'treated 'equally, sans the requisite economic, military and technological power, is an exercise in futility. Despite the undoubted advantage of its youthful and relatively inexpensive workforce, and its humongous consumption, India would be foolhardy to predicate and its security and development matrix on its demographic draw alone.

Independent India, a young nation and an ancient civilisation, has been fortunate not to have suffered the ravages of total war, or loss of societal freedom, in its formative years, unlike many other nations, both developed and developing. This must not lead to a disparaging and cynical attitude towards the importance of universalist and humanist values, which India has in ample measure. Disinterest is considering the merits of competing socio-political systems, and viewing all developments solely through a geopolitical prism, may not be in keeping with its civilisational ethos, nor beneficial in the long run.



Heads of State and Government of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) member countries meet for the Extraordinary NATO Summit at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, March 24, 2022. Source: NATO's Official Website.



Conclusion

In human affairs, conventional kinetic conflict is unlikely to ever be passé, and the only time-tested way to avoid war is through deterrence and balance of power arrangements. In addition to well-led and well-trained militaries, this requires sustained funding and realist diplomacy, both of which tend to be ignored in times of prolonged peace with only minor and intermittent skirmishes. Defence expenditure is seen as wasteful, rather than being viewed as insurance for stability in a Westphalian system. Nations often tend to underestimate or play-down threats, often swayed by the mirage of bonhomie and accords, such as the Minsk treaty. This is usually compounded by a misplaced sense of invincibility induced by possession of some seemingly decisive advantage, such as nuclear weapons, or impassable terrain. These age-old human susceptibilities, which have been witnessed across all histories and geographies, invite aggression and conflict.

It can be argued that the likelihood of Ukraine obtaining NATO and European Union membership, in due course, has increased. In western-style democracies, ruling elites-- even the most powerful-- eventually have to take cognisance of the public groundswell. If the majority of people are inclined to steer a particular course, governments of the day usually find ways to do so, or else face the prospect of losing power. In manner similar to Brexit, the accession or otherwise of European nations to various political, economic and military combines will be propelled by the silent voting majority, and not by the loud debates within strategic communities, nor by the force of arms. It would be delusional to assume that NATO's expansion eastward is simply on account of its machinations, and bereft of majority public support in prospective member countries. The case of Finland and Sweden, now on the cusp of NATO membership, after decades of neutrality, and despite dire warnings from Moscow, is a case in point. The people are willing it, and the political leadership is responding.

The Ukrainian conflict has the potential to fundamentally alter the trajectory of the 'globalised, growth-oriented' world order that has been prevalent over the last two decades, despite the scourges of terrorism and pandemic. More than merely a geopolitical contest of wills and power between Russia and China on one hand, and the West on the other, it is apparent that the Ukraine imbroglio heralds the renewal of the struggle for dominance between two vastly different and incompatible ideologies, a contest which has been simmering ever since the fall of the USSR.



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