Metapolis

VOL.3_ N°2 JUL-DIC 2022
FREE DISTRIBUTION
www.metapolis.net

MULTIPOLAR DISPUTE: BETWEEN OLD MISTAKES AND NEW UNCERTAINTIES (PART II)

metapolis Editorial Office is located at:

Common Action Forum
Calle Claudio Coello 5
Madrid 28001 Spain

Tel: +34 910 175 850
Email: editors@metapolis.net

This work is licensed under a:
Creative Commons Atribution
4.0 international license

ISSN: 2695-902X

Design: **El Fantasma de Heredia** 2022

Metapolis
Vol.3_ N°2 2022

MULTIPOLAR DISPUTE: BETWEEN OLD MISTAKES AND NEW UNCERTAINTIES (PART II)

—

«**metapolis** is a pluralist space: it is a place to propose ideas that supersede the traditional borders of knowledge, mobilizing them to confront global challenges. **metapolis** is a territory of hyper-connection, liberated from past nostalgia, critical of the present and committed to a sustainable and just future. It does not wait for reform that maintains the status quo, nor does it aspire to do so, either. In fact, in **metapolis** everyone suspects that this future may never come, but still are not convinced to give it up for good. The latest political, economic, technological, environmental, sociological and health emergencies just reinforce the need for us to work harder.»

metapolis is an initiative by common action forum. A collective effort of caf's team, members, collaborators and participants. Our goal is to develop and support a progressive agenda as alternative to the current model that has led us to a world of increasing inequalities, environmental devastation and unaccomplished freedom for most of the global citizenry.

Editor-in-chief: **Rafael Heiber**
Managing editors: **Irene López & Guerrilla Translation**

SUMMARY

p09.

00. **MULTIPOLAR DISPUTE: BETWEEN OLD MISTAKES AND NEW UNCERTAINTIES (PART II)**

Marta Cazorla | Irene López

p17.

01. **MOVEMENT AND (IN) SECURITY: FROM THE POLITICS OF SURVEILLANCE TO THE POLITICS OF COMPASSION**

María Lois

p25.

02. **THE GEOPOLITICS OF MIGRATORY HORROR**

Jacques Ramírez

p35.

03. ABOLISHING GEOPOLITICS AND BUILDING A WORLD WITHOUT STATE VIOLENCE

Ray Acheson

p49.

04. A MORE MULTIPOLAR BUT NOT MORE DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO: THE GEOPOLITICAL (DIS)ORDER OF A WORLD IN RECONFIGURATION

Idoia Villanueva

p55.

05. A GEOPOLITICAL EUROPEAN UNION TO WHAT END?

Axel Ruppert

p63.

06. GEOPOLITICS AND THE GENERATIVE LIMITS OF THE UNGOVERNABLE

Rafael Heiber

Photo_ **UNICEF Ukraine**_ CC BY 2.0

00.

MULTIPOLAR DISPUTE: BETWEEN OLD MISTAKES AND NEW UNCERTAINTIES (PART II)

Irene López | Marta Cazorla

Jun, 2023

"Only the dead have seen the end of the war", said Plato in Menexenus. More than 20 centuries have passed since then and, undeniably, war seems to be an eternal, inextinguishable problem, threatening to rear its ugly head even in civilised Europe, in a post-heroic era we thought was strained by terrorism and so-called *hybrid wars* but free of the kind of conflicts so typical of the 20th century. The Russian-Ukrainian war, however, is more *classic* than *hybrid*, with widespread recruitment and troop mobilisation, and something we were even more unaccustomed to seeing: soldiers and victims with pale complexions and fair hair.

The reappearance of the old spectre of war in the heart of continental Europe brought astonishment but also—first and foremost—a surprising enthusiasm for war. A seeming "blood-craziness" [1], undisguised by rulers and analysts alike, who appeared to find something aesthetic (or at least epic) in war. A sort of sensationalism that could very well be described as necrophilia because, as Chris Hedges said, war in itself is necrophiliac [2].

However, this initial militaristic exaltation, which flooded the media and official discourse during the onset months of the conflict, was followed by another equally (if not more) worrying phenomenon: the trivialisation of war in general, but especially of a nuclear threat. This trivialisation was evident in a multitude of articles published in the mainstream media, entitled "What happens when a nuclear bomb explodes?" [3], "What would the consequences of a nuclear attack be?" [4] and "What would your chances of getting a place in a nuclear shelter be?" [5], etc.

Timelines reproducing "what the initial aftermath of a blast would be like", computer applications simulating the extent of the fireball that would engulf Europe if the bomb detonated over Kyiv or 3D reproductions of the radius of the "mushroom cloud", with which anyone could see on the map whether their home city would disappear entirely or whether they would be lucky and only feel the "collateral" damage of a nuclear war. We should ask ourselves whether these simulations, all of them more typical of virtual reality than of journalistic dissemination, have contributed towards creating a healthy awareness among the population about the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons; or whether, on the contrary, they have played down a grave issue, handling it like science fiction content, or like the special effects of a videogame. As war psychology already warned, the sensation of unreality causes a desensitisation of sympathy [6], or the neutralisation and annulment of all moral principles, which, based on respect for human dignity, protect people from barbaric treatment. Or indifference in the face of atrocities.

Whether by handling it as science fiction content, or through sensationalism, the media has contributed to the simultaneous normalization and trivialization of the nuclear threat.

In any case, what seems clear is that the normalisation of this type of headline in a leading newspaper speaks rather badly of our current situation. With global citizenry, on the one hand, reaccustomed to coverage of overrun cities and bombed civilian targets; and with a media that has progressively moved this type of news downwards, on the other, while readers stopped clicking on the news because they had accepted that there is a war in Europe and that this time, the refugees have pale skin and fair hair.

In their article **Abolishing Geopolitics and Building a World Without State Violence, Ray Acheson** states, "Mainstream media and political pundits speak of 'tactical' nuclear weapons or 'second strike capabilities' as abstract concepts that have nothing to do with wiping people out or the melting of their flesh" [7].

"Every single bomb is designed to melt flesh, burn cities, decimate plants and animals, and unleash radioactive poison that lasts for generations. Even the use of one of these weapons would be disastrous", they write in this issue to explain that the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons have nothing to do with the game of soldiers that the media insist on presenting to us, whitewashing war with technostrategic and patriarchal language and adding a dangerous "grain of sand to the long historical narrative of normalising war" [8].

Acheson also discusses the "natural death" of the US empire and the "zombification" of the Russian Federation, the worldwide nuclear famine and winter if only 1% of the global nuclear arsenal were activated, and the need to progress from the nation-state (an eminently colonial form) to "communities of care" that provide real answers for the survival of humanity.

Our times are times of unprecedented acceleration of war and warmongering, breaking all the geopolitical taboos and barriers we thought to be firmly in place. The US president seems to have forgotten the blunt words he uttered just ten months ago when he cautioned that sending offensive weapons—tanks, he said—was synonymous with World War III. "Don't be fooled," he told journalists from his lectern, with a clarity that sends shivers down the spine at this stage of what is not a movie, although not far from it.

Unfortunately, Europe's trajectory was no different. Germany, so reluctant to get into public debt in recent years, amended its constitution to allow it to spend 100 billion euros on rearmament, increasing its defence spending to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) target of 2 per cent, known as the "*Zeitenwende*" or "change of era". This represents the country's foreign and security policy shift, unprecedented since the Second World War. A break with one of the historical premises of European construction and the post-war Atlantic alliance («Americans in, Germans down, Soviets out»: this is how NATO's first Secretary General summed up its purpose) [9]. If, after the fall of the Wall thirty years ago, someone had told any passer-by on the streets of Berlin that German tanks would set foot on Ukrainian soil again, no one would have believed it.

This is the latest in a series of steps **Axel Ruppert** recounts in his article on the EU's controversial "geopolitical awakening", **A geopolitical European Union to what end?** Ruppert points to two crucial mechanisms within EU's increasing militarisation: on the one hand, Permanent Structured Cooperation, which seeks to integrate Europe into the lucrative business of the international military-industrial complex; and on the other, the establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF). This instrument, he argues, "turns the EU into a weapons dealer, as it funds the delivery of military equipment, including ammunition and lethal weapons, to states already facing tension or internal conflicts. Since deliveries of that kind cannot be funded via the EU budget, the EPF is an off-budget instrument financed directly by the member states. As such, it evades parliamentary scrutiny at national and European levels" [10].

The paradigm shift towards militarisation and hard power in the EU's geopolitical strategy, which began long before the war in Ukraine, did not achieve its goal of providing more security within and beyond its borders, nor guaranteeing more autonomy for the region in an increasingly multipolar world. Ruppert argues for a collective security approach that opposes current war-like security policies and structures based on a neo-colonial backyard policy.

Furthermore, it is one of the EU institutions, the European Parliament, from where **Idoia Villanueva** argues that "demilitarisation and denuclearisation are strategic interests for Europe and the world". In her article **A more multipolar but not more democratic international scenario: the geopolitical (dis)order of a world in reconfiguration**, the MEP also analyses the Russo-Ukrainian war as an unexpected (and undesirable) phenomenon for European partners. For the EU, which depends on Russia for energy but remains a military ally of the United States, the war in Ukraine has created a geopolitical turmoil that makes it, as the author criticises, "fodder for the superpowers".

The Russo-Ukrainian war is more classic in nature than it is hybrid, with widespread conscription and mobilization, and something we were even less accustomed to seeing: soldiers and victims with white skin and fair hair.

In her article, **María Lois** analyses the geopolitical treatment of movement and borders. In **Movement and (in)security: from the politics of surveillance to the politics of compassion**, Lois reflects on the narratives and public discourses around movement that inform public opinion and the public and institutional policies that regulate it. The author focuses on the EU's territorial strategies, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis and calls for thinking openly about the institutional and non-institutional rhetorics production circuits on mobility.

Following the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive in March 2022, which granted expedited protection for one year to people fleeing the war in Ukraine, Lois analyses the "spectacularisation of certain movements around signifiers and meanings of racialisation, gender, or criminalisable forms of migration as references feeding large-scale policies to identify and control migration" [11]. And she points to the vast discrepancy between the perception and policy narrative on movement and the data.

In his article, **The Geopolitics of Migratory Horror**, **Jacques Ramírez** reflects on migratory flows, which undoubtedly determine and cross current international relations. In this issue, the Ecuadorian researcher challenges the hegemonic view of migration, which "still places migrants in a passive position of victims tied to the structures ('subjected subjects'), even though reality shows that migrants have increasingly become actors capable of putting globalisation and statehood into question" [12]. From a decolonial perspective, the author gives numerous examples of this progressive mobilisation of the migrant community, such as «the migrant caravans of Central Americans and Mexicans that have decided to walk their way through, migrating in broad daylight and without coyotes, thanks to collective care and the protection of their own numbers». In other words, "repertoires of migratory action" that demonstrate that migrants are increasingly less afraid and more capable of self-organising and participating in their host societies.

Finally, in his article **Geopolitics and the generative limits of the ungovernable**, **Rafael Heiber** recalls that, after the fall of the Soviet Union, "the 'end of history' and the universal triumph of liberalism came hand in hand with the fear of admitting the recovery of a country with the geographic dimensions and nuclear power quite like Russia" [13]. This would have given rise to supposed "diplomatic devices" whose real purpose was to contain the Russian expansionary project beyond the borders laid down by the West, leading to the present situation in which the increasingly blurred barriers between war and peace generate "a feeling of permanent vulnerability" [14]. In today's turbulent times, we are learning to coexist with "exceptional is the new normal", which we discussed in the previous issue of this volume.

Heiber also addresses the influence of technology on both ongoing warfare and contemporary life in general, pointing out that, in the face of "a hypothetical murder

Photo_**Matthias Ripp**_ CC BY 2.0

If thirty years ago, after the fall of the Wall, someone had told any random bystander in the streets of Berlin that German tanks would ever again set foot on Ukrainian soil, no one would have believed it.

The outgoing world order leaves us on the brink of total war, with defense spending in Central and Western Europe already exceeding that of the last year of the Cold War.

with a firearm, the responsibility does not lie solely with the human individual, nor solely with the weapon" [15], but precisely with the complexity generated between the two (subject and object). In other words, technology is not "bad" *per se*, but neither is it, by any means, neutral nor devoid of consequences, be they spontaneous, programmed, undesired and/or irreversible.

While the paradox of *the invention of the ship makes the shipwreck possible* serves to explain Heiber's perspective, the Russian-Ukrainian war and the current geopolitical conjuncture remind us of another classic paradox: *War makes states and states make war*. As Charles Tilly pointed out, war activity has historically contributed to the emergence of the state as a political form (and the creation of new states on the map), but the state as a coercive apparatus has also generated a form of conflict leading to total war, as seen in the First and Second World Wars.

In the face of that threat, Central and Western Europe's defence spending has already exceeded that of the last year of the Cold War [16], and there is a seemingly outgoing world order with new uncertainties that seems to have learned little from old mistakes.

One of these is undoubtedly the underestimation of the war dividend. If war seems like an eternal, never-ending scourge—as we said at the beginning of this article—it is undoubtedly because some want it to be so. We must not lose sight of the fact that there are economic interests and perverse incentives behind any armed conflict and actors who behave like the ridiculous *Princess of Bormes* in Jean Cocteau's play. That character from *Thomas, the impostor* who watched with concern as the field hospitals emptied, as it meant it was beginning to lack "the wounded it needs to maintain its place in the war".

Thus, against those who want to profit from the wounded and sick by trading in their cure, against those who want the suffering of others to become chronic, against the "dogmatists of nuclear deterrence" who, as Acheson pointed out in their article, are leading us to the brink of catastrophe… this issue of Metapolis aims to offer ideas, alternatives and hopes that will help articulate the necessary political contestation to the current world order.

Examples of this are Jacques Ramírez's proposal to move towards universal citizenship that deterritorialises human rights or achieve a paradigm of global justice based on recognising the historical asymmetries and inequalities between countries; or the concept of "*Heimat*" that Rafael Heiber recovers in his article, understood not only as "soil" or "earth", but as interpreted first by German Romantic writers, and more recently by the sociologist Bruno Latour: "*Heimat* is about the landscape that left its mark on you, the culture that informed you and the people that inspired you when you were growing up" [17]. In other words, a new notion of home, common ground, and a feeling of belonging. A "mildest form of patriotism" that does not contradict the universal citizenship discussed above because it refers precisely to a "global homeland" where all people can feel at home.

[1] Glover, Jonathan, *Humanidad e inhumanidad, Una historia moral del siglo XX* [Humanity and Inhumanity, A Moral History of the 20th Century], Cátedra, Madrid, 2013.

[2] *Murder Is Not an Anomaly in War*, Chris Hedges. Truthdig, 19/3/2012. Available here: https://www.truthdig.com/articles/murder-is-not-an-anomaly-in-war/

[3] *Qué pasa cuando explota una bomba nuclear* [What happens when a nuclear bomb explodes], Antonio Nieto. El País, 7/11/2022. Available here: https://elpais.com/videos/2022-11-07/video-que-pasa-cuando-explota-una-bomba-nuclear.html

[4] *¿Cómo serían las consecuencias de un ataque nuclear? Te lo contamos con un 'timeline' de los primeros momentos tras el estallido* [What would the consequences of a nuclear attack be like? We tell you with a timeline of the first moments after the blast], 20 minutos. 24/10/2022. Available here: https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/5070287/0/como-seria-un-ataque-nuclear-un-timeline-de-los-primeros-momentos-del-estallido-nuclear/

[5] *"When you hear the four-minute warning"… Whatever happened to Britain's nuclear bunkers?*, Amelia Tatit, The Guardian, 24/11/2022. Available here: https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/24/when-you-hear-the-four-minute-warning-whatever-happened-to-britains-nuclear-bunkers

[6] Alexievich, Svetlana, *Zinky boys: Soviet voices from a forgotten war*, Chatto & Windus, 1992.

[7] Acheson, Ray. *Abolishing Geopolitics and Building a World Without State Violence*, Metapolis V3N2, September 2022.

[8] Idem.

[9] *La escalada: peligros de la guerra en Europa* [The escalation: dangers of war in Europe], Pablo Bustinduy. Diario Público, 01/03/2022. Available here: https://blogs.publico.es/dominiopublico/43694/la-escalada-peligros-de-la-guerra-en-europa/

[10] Ruppert, Axel, *A geopolitical European Union to what end?*, Metapolis V3N2, November 2022.

[11] Lois, María. *Movement and (in)security: from the politics of surveillance to the politics of compassion*, Metapolis V3N2, July 2022.

[12] Ramírez, Jacques. *The Geopolitics of Migratory Horror*, Metapolis V3N2, August 2022.

[13] Heiber, Rafael. *Geopolitics and the generative limits of the ungovernable*, Metapolis V3N2, December 2022.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] "World military expenditure reaches new record high as European spending surges", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 24/04/2023. Available here: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/MILEX%20Press%20Release%20ESP.pdf

[17] *Why the World Should Learn to Say "Heimat"* Jochen Bittner. The New York Times, 28 February 2018. Available here: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/28/opinion/america-heimat-germany-politics.html

Irene López

Irene López has a degree in International Relations and a Master's in Human Rights. She has worked as chief of staff, analyst and consultant for political parties in both Spain and Ecuador. She served as an international aid worker in refugee camps and headed political advocacy at various organizations.

Marta Cazorla

Marta Cazorla is an editor, translator and economist specialised in political economy. She has a Master's in International Economy and Development and is a worker owner at Guerrilla Media Collective, a translation and editorial services co-op with a strong focus in feminism and the commons which believes that translation is a powerful catalyst for social transformation.

Photo_ **Georgie Pauwels** _ CC BY 2.0

01.

MOVEMENT AND (IN)SECURITY: FROM THE POLITICS OF SURVEILLANCE TO THE POLITICS OF COMPASSION

María Lois

Jul, 2022

Migration, understood as displacement and the movement of people or groups on a temporary or permanent basis, would seem to be part and parcel of the history of humanity, or rather, of the global history of humanity. We are taught that human beings moved around, even in prehistoric times, and that they moved in search of a better life, whatever the meaning of "better" may have been. It could have meant greater access to food or more favourable living conditions, it could have been understood in terms of minerals, climate, socio-environmental conditions, emotions, or even all or none of the above. In this way, movement and migration are integral to our understanding of society and how we define communities composed of mobile people, regardless of their legal status. Rather than thinking of this mobility as an external element, or an externally constituent component of these communities, we can see that migration and the ways in which movement is practised influence the formation of society itself.

However, in recent decades, particularly in the last ten years, mobility and (in) security have come to be increasingly interconnected, with borders being reimagined as a means of territorial control over movement. Events such as 9/11, the "Kayak Crisis" of 2008, the Arab Spring, the "long summer of migration" (also known as the refugee crisis) and many others have become points of reference for understanding how the intersection of security and mobility has taken centre stage in the collective imagination of society, how it is performed via the constant demarcation of its limits, and how it is enacted by their delimitation in space and time.

Surveillance and compassion

It does not seem that obstacles to mobility manage to slow or prevent migration. Neither in terms of border security, nor in terms of mobility-controlling technology, does a causal relationship emerge between the two. Granted, these obstacles transform migration routes and timescales, but they do not prevent borders from being crossed; in fact, paradoxically, some of the most heavily policed borders are also those which are most frequently crossed. However, these measures do play a role in strengthening the perception of the threat posed by movement, as well as the territorial effectiveness of these containment measures. They are part of a performance in which the obstacles play a key role in portraying movement as unsafe and threatening, but this dynamic is caught between two things: self-referential and effective territorial political practices with insecurity looming on the horizon, and possible cartographies which reflect social movements whose aim is to go beyond the territorial. In the same way, a whole political economy of migration has been generated around these movements, and it is a topic that has generated a growing amount of research in a number of different areas. It is not only people or groups who are in motion, but also various organisations, institutions, resources, laws, and so on. We are not only referring here to physical journeys,

but also to elements of the projection, construction and reproduction of migratory situations and contexts, with little attention to the political condition of vulnerability engendered by mobility. Thus, migrants' situations are affected not only by obstacles and limitations, but also by the organisations, institutions, resources and rights involved in their movement. These can be at the origin of their journeys, at a temporary or permanent destination and, ultimately, in the very concept of mobility, which is rarely if ever perceived as a process with any degree of autonomy, more often being characterised by a welfare-focused approach.

In light of this, it can be helpful to see things from a different perspective, in this case one that highlights the strong contrast between the imaginary and real narratives surrounding the movement of people, which is a tremendously fertile area from which to deconstruct practices of control over mobility. The media summarises migration at the southern border of Spain, and therefore at the southern edge of Europe itself, with images of 150 sub-Saharan men clambering or jumping over a wire fence. This portrayal is in stark contrast with the acknowledgement in reports by the European Commission that the majority of what are termed "irregular migrants" initially access the Schengen area via regular, legal means by obtaining a non-permanent visa, but then fail to leave when their visas expire. [1] This fact was also referenced on maps of migratory patterns published by Frontex on their old website and in other publications on risk analysis, as well as in academic work that has been widely read and referenced; all this is to say that these issues are institutionally recognised and have been the topic of debate. The contrast between different narratives indicates a certain level of histrionics surrounding some aspects of movement, rooted in references to ideas of race, gender and criminalised forms of movement, from which large-scale policies are put into action to identify and control migration. The resulting vision boils down to the surveillance of foreign citizens who enter Europe with a likelihood of staying illegally, having crossed its borders in a violent and disorderly manner.

The contrast between different narratives indicates a certain level of histrionics surrounding some aspects of movement, rooted in references to ideas of race, gender and criminalised forms of movement, from which large-scale policies are put into action to identify and control migration.

On the other hand, institutionally confirmed figures point towards a need for new perspectives on how migration is viewed. Returning to the context of Spain, the figures from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE, I*nstituto Nacional de Estadísticas*) for the first half of 2022 established that migratory flows came from Morocco, Romania, Colombia, the United Kingdom, Italy and Venezuela, in that order. This essentially means that they come from a neighbouring country in North Africa, members or former members of the European Union, and Latin America. Once again, exploring the contrast between rhetoric and reality can prove a thought-provoking exercise; think of how British or Italian citizens factor into this collective imagining of migration, or property investors, or applicants for so-called "citizenship by investment" (in Spanish CIP, *Ciudadanía por Inversión*), or members of the armed forces, to name but a few. It would appear that there is a lucid and clear abstraction of what constitutes a migrant, what their problems might be, their possible agendas and their position in society in terms of assistance or intervention needed to avoid exclusion. [2]

From a politics of surveillance to one of compassion

Throughout this complex rhetorical landscape, public policy conception and management plays a fundamental role. Decisions about rights, controls, interventions and, ultimately, what constitutes the legitimate movement of people all form part of the institutional framework and of the decisions made by public bodies at every possible level. Here, again, we can see how society starts with the establishment of free movement as a human right, as stated in, for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Such a right undeniably exists to ensure diversity without threatening national unity, but it ultimately amounts to an explicit protection of the right to movement within society. In the context of the war in Ukraine, the capability of Europe to organise and guarantee a system of asylum became obvious. In March 2022 the European

Union activated the Temporary Protection Directive, which granted immediate protection for one year to those fleeing the war in Ukraine, including Ukrainian nationals, third country nationals, stateless people and legal residents in the country. This protection granted residency permits, the ability to work, access to medical care, and so on. This directive, though created in 2001, was not put into action in 2015 during the Syrian Civil War. Only in 2022 was it first implemented, when it showcased the efficient, effective and organised provision of asylum and protection based on certain universal rights. However, the impact on institutions and groups involved in previous movements has become evident, and thus decisions made by institutions at various levels—which have not been extended to others in similar circumstances—uphold inequalities, establish preferential treatment for legitimate or related migratory flows and, lastly, uphold the material and symbolic conditions which underpin this mindset, along with the hierarchies which differentiate and legitimise migratory flows. Knowing this, we *could* establish a sense of responsibility and commitment, especially towards migrants on other levels of the hierarchy who, even now, are differentiated or cast aside. However, the near invisibility of this structural issue—by which we mean the practices of differentiation which permeate asylum and refugee policies—presents an uncomfortable home truth, namely that the racialisation of migration according to origins and routes has become normalised.

Instead, we should be dealing with the rhetoric around migration by exploring how we can move forward—given that the movement of people forms (and has always formed) an integral part of society—under conditions that guarantee certain minimum rights to those who relocate from one place to another (though not, of course, in all cases).

Alternative spaces

In the year 2015, during the "long summer of migration", when people were moving through Europe on foot in search of a temporary or permanent home, there were many experiences which I believe can teach us about the everyday dynamics and spaces which reproduce and create inequality. However, we are going to focus on one of these experiences which is of particular interest to scholars of movement and borders. At Radboud University in Nijmegen, on the border between Germany and The Netherlands, a group of colleagues associated with the internationally renowned Nijmegen Centre for Border Research (NCBR) began an informal initiative which they named Asylum University. Under this title, they organised opportunities specifically for asylum seekers, which included guaranteed access to university education, organising talks, debates and language classes. [3] The spirit of the project was to provide a space for everyday events related to teaching and research, through which connections could be formed between spaces of knowledge exchange and temporary accommodation—i.e. shelters, refugee centres and the University—and in this way create safe places for collective action and reflection. Shortly after its inception, one of the Netherlands' emergency shelters was opened close to the campus, housing around 3000 people opposite the main university community offices. In spite of the difficulties experienced by the initiative it managed, at least temporarily, to shake up people's previously held notions around migration, migrant spaces, and socially expected or accepted forms of residence. Kolar Aparna (2020) lists some exchanges with academic experts in border studies and administrative personnel that reveal a fear of engaging with people who have some form of unregulated status, as well as an inability to engage with asylum seekers on a level beyond mere academic consideration. They are considered to be objects of study, always in some space of waiting for a status, but maybe never sharing that which is understood to be the same as our own.

Around that time several similar initiatives were proposed in universities in Spain, with varying degrees of acceptance. In addition to Spain's migrant intake numbers being undeniably lower than those of countries such as Germany or the Netherlands, the initiatives failed to make much of an impact in an administrative, bureaucratic

The border can therefore erase the very question of whether sick (or healthy) people exist, as it provides a simple line which divides sick people or carriers of disease from the healthy; in this particular case, it excluded anyone and everyone who did not come from inside the country.

and academic landscape which believed it had already pinned down the problems (and solutions) of such a group. In many instances, the opening up of public spaces such as classrooms and University facilities for in-person, non-hierarchical social interaction was dismissed on grounds of security, citing possible disagreements and conflicts. The discomfort caused by an unregulated gathering which occurred outside the confines of preconceived expectations around the vulnerability of those who migrate and the help they receive demonstrates yet again how complicated perspectives on (some types of) migration can be. At the same time, this also highlights the disruptive potential of opening up everyday social spaces, something that the hosts intended as a means, rather than an end in itself. Universities, as public spaces with a social function, are places for social change, and the ingenuousness of these proposals may well be a vital and powerful strategy if we are to continue thinking about the possibility of emancipating how we view migration.
It is precisely in the places where migration is studied and analysed, in public and in publicly acknowledged spaces of equal conditions, that the possibility of other kinds of encounters can be envisaged. If this does not prove true then, at least as Aparna implies, they can serve as places to reflect on the environment and sense of community of universities as a subject to be studied in itself, given that they do in fact create differences and inequalities. Despite the possible difficulties, I would also like to think that, in the immediacy and closeness of everyday life, the relationships we establish are complex, but also open and malleable, with the potential to free us from narrow, fixed perspectives on migration. Conflict is just as much a part of society as agreement, and it is much easier to resolve and explore it in relatively informal spaces that are free from regulation or interference. Therefore, it is by living among one another that we can finally find somewhere to explore both conflict and agreement, and we must ultimately remember that diversity is not exclusive to migrant populations.

The territorial trap

Looking beyond the ingenuousness of the previous paragraphs, another important point to be made about the link between migration and (in)security is its territorial manifestations, which made a brief appearance at the beginning of the text in our discussion of the systematic recourse to territorial solutions for dealing with possible threats, specifically the building of border walls. The idea of creating a physical barrier between nations is, of course, nothing new—on the contrary, it is ontologically tied to the construction of the modern nation-state. However, it is worth noting that interest in them has reached a fever pitch in recent years in spite of their questionable efficacy (though academic opinions differ on this). Elizabeth Vallet recounts how the existence of such walls has grown from 15 in 1989 to 74 in 2022, with at least 15 more at the planning stage. [4] Her research relates this to the end of the Cold War, and then later to 9/11, arguing that the COVID-19 pandemic consolidated the trend towards the development and installation of physical infrastructure as the central component of a hermetically sealed border.
In the context of the European Union, requests for financing to build border security infrastructure have been growing over time. At almost the same time as the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive for people coming from Ukraine, the militarisation and construction of a fence by Poland on its border with Belarus and the construction of another wall on its border with Russia in Kaliningrad clearly demonstrated the differentiated treatment for migrants depending on their supposed points of origin and subsequent political practices or beliefs. In public rhetoric on the matter, and in a letter to the European Commission which was signed by 12 countries, attention was drawn to the "need to adapt the existing legal framework to the new realities, enabling us to adequately address attempts of instrumentalisation of illegal migration for political purposes and other hybrid threats" [5]. The idea that certain types of migration can be saved by building walls to block other types of migration is paradoxical, to say the very least.

As Vallet notes, the COVID-19 pandemic brought certain trends in the relationship between migration and (in)security into focus. On the European stage, the decision was made for the first time to close external borders on 17 March 2020. In the weeks leading up to this closure, the connection between mobility, security and the pandemic had already been making its presence known on various parts of the global stage thanks to political figures such as Hungarian prime minister Victor Orban: "Because movement spreads the disease and makes the epidemic global, and migration is movement, therefore there is a logical link between the two […] Hungary has managed to defend against migration, so we are protected against the infections migrants may bring with them." [6] In other words, what can be found outside the border may not stay put, and if it gets in, problems will only increase. This gestures to disease as something tied to place, meaning the antidote to it is, consequently, a territorial matter. The border can therefore erase the very question of whether sick (or healthy) people exist, as it provides a simple line which divides sick people or carriers of disease from the healthy; in this particular case, it excluded anyone and everyone who did not come from inside the country.

With the borders closed, the only permitted movement was that of goods and journeys considered essential to the continued functioning of shared territory. The request for coordination in communications from the European Commission firmly establishes the link between borders and security by creating an area where "the EU's external border has to act as a security perimeter for all Schengen States" [7].

It is worth noting that internal EU borders close on a relatively continuous basis in the presence of so-called "exceptional circumstances". The Schengen Borders Code has always permitted the introduction of controls at its internal borders on the basis of such exceptional circumstances, as dictated by Chapter II of Regulation UE2016/399 which was reformed in 2016, in particular articles 25 and 30. In fact, "exceptional circumstances" have ranged from sporting events to Papal visits, G-7 meetings, NATO and climate summits, terrorist attacks, political protests and Hell's Angels gatherings. [8] In more recent times the pandemic has led at least 14 countries (Austria, Czechia, Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Estonia, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Belgium, Switzerland and Norway) to strengthen their internal EU borders as a way to control the movement of people, with those of Germany, Austria, Denmark, France, Norway and Sweden being maintained in more or less the same conditions since the refugee crisis of 2015.

The generalisation of restrictions on mobility in the context of COVID-19, on the other hand, can also allow for reflection on how immobility has come to be a strategy in the establishment of security. In a time of widespread restriction of movement, the irrelevance of spaces normally used to impose immobility and isolation were resoundingly revealed to be just another territorial tool for maintaining certain movement and security under "normal" circumstances. This was demonstrated as soon as these places where control of movement was exercised within the European Union became affected by the pandemic. For example, in Spain on 6 May 2020, the eight functioning Migrant Detention Centres (known in Spanish by the acronym CIE: *Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros*), were closed. [9] These centres, originally conceived in 1986 as non-penitentiary facilities in which to hold migrants for a maximum of 60 days while they were in the process of being deported, are a product of the first Spanish Immigration Law on the rights and liberties of foreign nationals (Spanish: *Ley Orgánica 7/1985 sobre Derechos y Libertades de los Extranjeros*). The suspension of administrative timeframes and processes, as well as flights (including repatriation flights), made it impossible to formalise deportation. It is interesting to note how the immobility of some becomes the mobility of others. Much like in other spaces which are intended to safeguard the movement of some by restricting that of others (CIEs, refugee camps, prisons), once movement was restricted in general, immobility and isolation ceased to be useful. Restrictions on mobility enable other forms of mobility which, in this case paradoxically became a strategy for survival. In short, the territorial trap, whereby different visions of spatial socialisation become entangled, is of utmost significance; it points towards a territorial imaginary in which

Narratives surrounding the politicisation of migration hold greater sway over people's opinion than data. In light of this, now may well be the time to think about other narratives which make it possible to put movement at the centre of how society is formed.

controlling mobility means that, by closing the borders, you limit danger, movement and exceptionality. Nevertheless, it was precisely this exceptionality that showed mobility to be a key element of how society is formed, how it is an integral part of the world economy, and that it is crucial to the maintenance of the labour activities needed to reproduce the system itself.

The Numbers Game: where next?

Little remains to be said about the role of movement and migration in society. Institutions, research institutes and academics have all expounded on its impact in various terms depending on the context in question: economic and consumerist terms in contexts of limited growth; demographic terms when discussing ageing societies; and in terms of care in contexts of growing dependent groups. The impact of migrant remittances on the local and regional economies from which they originate shows the stability of a complex and counter-cyclical system of exchange and circulation of people, goods and money; according to the World Bank, the total amount climbed to 626 billion USD in 2022.

However, divergences between different narratives continue to provide insights that would be worth exploring in greater depth. A recently published article on immigration in Germany, France, the USA, Italy, the UK and Sweden, which draws on statistical data from a total sample of 24,000 non-immigrant people, suggests that a large part of the debate surrounding immigration is characterised by misinformation and stereotypes, often stemming from anti-immigration political parties and media outlets. [10] The research therefore focuses on the discrepancy between perception and fact: with the exception of Sweden, the people interviewed assumed that the proportion of immigrants in their country was at least double the actual amount. They also had incorrect perceptions of where immigrants had come from, believed that they depend more on state welfare than they really do, and that they are less educated and have a higher rate of unemployment than the corresponding figures show. The article concludes that narratives surrounding the politicisation of migration hold greater sway over people's opinion than data. In light of this, now may well be the time to think about other narratives which make it possible to put movement at the centre of how society is formed, without romanticising, chasing, victimising or coddling migrant experiences, but rather seeing them as a cornerstone of what creates society. Perhaps we can contribute to the production of new narratives by thinking with an open mind about the reproduction of institutional and non-institutional rhetoric that links immobility to security, about practices and processes that legitimise certain forms of migration, about the racialisation of insecurity and hierarchies of migration, about unconventional spaces in which to come together, and about the sidelining and hiding of migrant people. Perhaps these new narratives can see the good and the usefulness of irregular movement and come to see it as part of what we think of as "normal".

[1] See also, European Commission 2020. Recovered from: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/irregular-migration-return-policy_en o Krotký, J. y Kaniok, P., (2020). Who says what: members of the European parliament and irregular migration in the parliamentary debates. *European security*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2020.1842362

[2] See also (both sources in Spanish): Colectivo IOE (2010) *Discursos de la población migrante en torno a su instalación en España: exploración cualitativa* (Migrant perspectives on settling in Spain: A qualitative exploration). Madrid: CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas). Ribas-Mateos, N. (2018) *Las políticas de la compasión están construyendo a personas completamente asistenciales sin voz política* (The Politics of Compassion are producing completely welfarist people with no political voice). Available at: https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/guardiaurbana/es/noticia/las-politicas-de-la-compasion-estan-construyendo-personas-completamente-asistenciales-sin-voz-politica_664994

[3] This initiative is the focus of Kolar Aparna's doctoral thesis, submitted in 2020 under the title "Enacting Asylum University: Politics of Research Encounters and (Re)Producing Borders in Asylum Relations" at Radboud University in Nijmegen under the auspices of the NCBR.

[4] Vallet, E. (2022) The World Is Witnessing a Rapid Proliferation of Border Walls. *Migration Policy Institute*. Recovered from: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/rapid-proliferation-number-border-walls

[5] Recovered from: https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/07/Joint-letter_Adaptation-of-EU-legal-framework-20211007.pdf

[6] Dunai, M. (2020). «Hungary confirms first death from coronavirus» *Reuters*, 15 de marzo. Recovered from: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary- death/hungary-confirms-first-death-from-coronavirus-idUSKBN2120QD

[7] "Communication from the Commission: COVID-19: Temporary Restriction on Non-Essential Travel to the EU." COM/2020/115, 16 March 2020. Recovered from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0115&from=EN

[8] Lois, M. (2014), "*Apuntes sobre los márgenes: fronteras, fronterizaciones, órdenes socioterritoriales*" (English: "Notes on the margins: borders, frontiers, fronterisations, socio-territorial orders") In E. Cardin, and A. S. Colognese A. (Orgs.), *As Ciências Sociais nas fronteiras. Teorias e metodologias de pesquisa* (English: Social Sciences at the borders. Research theories and methodologies) (pp. 239-259). Cascavel: Editora JB.

[9] "Today is a historic day for Spain: the CIEs are empty." Europa Press (6 May 2020). (Original article in Spanish, published in *Público* under the title "*Hoy es un día histórico para España: los CIE se quedan vacíos*"). Recovered from (article in Spanish): https://www.publico.es/sociedad/hoy-dia-historico-espana-cie-quedan-vacios.html

[10] Alesina, A., Miano,A. y Stantcheva,S. (2022) Immigration and Redistribution, The *Review of Economic Studies*, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdac011

María Lois

María Lois holds a PhD in Political Science and Sociology from the Complutense University of Madrid, where she teaches Political Geography in the Department of Political Science and Sociology since 2001. She is the deputy director of the magazine Geopolítica(s) and coordinates the International Political Science Association's (IPSA) Research Committee on Political and Cultural Geography (RC15).

Photo_ **Irene López** _ CC BY 2.0

02. THE GEOPOLITICS OF MIGRATORY HORROR

Jacques Ramírez

Aug, 2022

To Roma

Being born is that small geographic accident over which the individual holds no power. However, determines the amenities or obstacles we face in moving around the world. Our lives are determined by different emotional topographies, as the current world is by a set of mobilities, which are radically different for the inhabitants of the global North and South.

It is not the same being born in Tamaulipas (Mexico) than it is to do so in Toulouse (France) and, nevertheless, many hegemonic theoretical frameworks addressing international migrations, are clearly Eurocentric and produced in the "First World". They have been exported to realities in which they do not fit (for example, the Andean or Mesoamerican ones), since they can't contribute to understanding their complexity. We were told for long that this is an "era of migrations" [1], due to the increase of South-North migrant flows, all while the American Continent was the destination of millions of forced and voluntary migrants centuries ago. As the Argentinean anthropologist Alejandro Grimson remarked "to consider that the increase of South-North migration implies that we live in a time of unprecedented migration in the history of humanity entails considering the novelty that this reception implies for the Europeans as something that should be assumed by the entire world" [2]. It means, once more, renouncing or forgetting the history of our continent.

Another example of how the global South assimilates foreign concepts and paradigms in relation to the migrant phenomenon is the narrative according to which the main problem with migration is people traffickers—the "coyotes" or "polleros", as they are called in different parts of Latin America. Multiple programs against people trafficking have been created to fight them. They aspire to procure flows that are "regular, ordered and safe". They, however, usually fail to consider the reasons why thousands of people resort to these networks in the first place. Likewise, causal analyses usually lose sight of migration policies demanding visas for all the "southerners" heading North, as well as of the historical inequalities between countries of origin and destination.

Part of the geopolitics of migration is determined by this: either the Global South wellcomes the narratives and theoretical frameworks of the North, already transformed into recipes of prefabricated migration policies; or the North imposes its perspective by forcing them to sign clauses of readmission clauses or of border control externalisation: All within the framework of bilateral or multilateral conventions of "cooperation for development".

The infamous return plans, whose main objective is that migrants (mainly undocumented ones), "voluntarily" leave the place where they live, is an example

of the above-mentioned. The case of remittances is even more obvious. When multilateral organisations discovered the juicy amounts of money coming from migrants, they started to toy with the idea that it must be used for the so-called "co-development". In other words, this meant that the State, with the support of those international organisations and their NGO networks, had a say in how migrants could use the money they sent to their families so that they did not waste it. The equation in their eyes became: "migration plus remittances equal development", and they intend to make us believe "we all win"—a so-called win-win situation.

In the case of my country, Ecuador, it's those money transfers from migrants that literally saved the dollarized economy at the peak of the neoliberal phase, between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century. Now that the neoliberal agenda is back almost 25 years later, thanks to the government of a banker, the money sent by migrant workers has once more become crucial for thousands of families in overcoming the economic crisis. And it was precisely those multilateral organisations mentioned above who had predicted that in the pandemic and post-pandemic world remittances would decrease [3]. It is clear that they do not understand the meaning of solidarity.

The global South is a recipient of foreign concepts or paradigms in relation to the migratory phenomenon.

It is for reasons like this, that one of the pending tasks for the Global South regarding migrations is the production of our own knowledge. The need to move from a standardised production process of sorts to the capacity of creating our own frameworks. To "break the mould", as the Peruvian Professor Jorge Durand [4] would put it.

To coin our own thought, we must start by debating, questioning and reinterpreting imported theoretical frameworks, understanding migrations and the issues they entail from a critical standpoint. That is, taking into account that these days, most of our communities are immersed in globalisation. This implies that, as they become deterritorialised and reterritorialised, they develop different types of settlements at local, national and international levels. This would allow us to frame the concept of community as a geographical space socially experienced by its members. Together they form a "moving archipelago", and this metaphor allows us to understand human mobility as a strategy and a way of life in itself.

After this necessary introduction, and given the lack of analytical tools produced from and for the Global South, let's reflect retrospectively on some of the migration-related facts that led us to the present situation. A world in which, on a daily basis, we witness the increase in migrants' rights violations (especially youngsters and unaccompanied minors travelling through different geographies, oftentimes clandestinely). In other words, let's set our eyes on the tightening of control, repression and neo-securitisation in the approach to migrations, which has led to the geopolitics of horror.

Background: Europe's "read sea", with no right to disembarking

Images of the migration horror are recurring all over the world, more and more intensely throughout the last decade. In 2015, while thousands of Syrians tried to reach the borders of Europe while escaping war, the sight of little Aylan, lying in the sand of a Turkish beach went around the world. At the same time, hundreds of refugees tried to reach the United Kingdom via the English Channel, through the 28 kilometres of fences that form the Eurotunnel. David Cameron, who was the British Prime Minister at the time, referred to migrants as a "swarm" [5], and both London and Paris immediately tightened border controls.

Nowadays, the situation has not changed much, as South-North flows remain predominant at a world level and the North Africa-Europe corridor is still one of the most crowded. Since the end of the so-called "Arab Spring" (especially since the European Union stopped supporting Gaddafi's Libya, which worked as a

plug-State), there has been a progressive increase in the arrivals of small boats and cayucos to the European shores. Thousand of migrants in transit began to shipwreck in the Mediterranean, which little by little has become metaphorically red, dyed with the blood of so many deaths. It is estimated that between 2013 and 2017, more than 17,000 people died in the Mediterranean, most of them coming from Somalia, Eritrea, Liberia, Sudan, Mali or The Gambia [6]. And it is worth mentioning that many of these countries are at war.

At the same time that the European Union (EU) reinforced surveillance on its coasts (mainly in Italy, Greece and Malta) and declared war against people traffickers, controls were tightened in transit hot spots for "border crossers". This happened in places like the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla in the Strait of Gibraltar; or at Kapitan Andreevo, the border crossing that separates Bulgaria from Turkey. It was here that the EU decided to kickstart the operations of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in 2016. This migration control system updated the pre-existing Frontex program and started with 1,500 operatives whose sole mission was to control the entry of migrants. All the while in Syria the massacre continued, pushing thousands to seek refuge in the EU. The Immigration Commissioner of the Union at that time, Dimitris Avramopoulos, pointed out at the inauguration of the agency that "from [then] on, the external border of a Member State of the European Union [was] the external border of all the Member States, both legally and operationally" [7].

While the images of boats full of migrants multiplied in the Mediterranean, another drama barged brutally, far away. This time, the setting was the Andaman Sea, and the protagonists were migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh; most from the Rohingya ethnic group, and trying to reach Indonesia in boats adrift, abandoned by their crew. Rohingyas are a Muslim minority not recognised as citizens by the predominantly Buddhist government of Myanmar. Not only did that government force them to leave, but it was Thailand and Malaysia that did not allow them to land on their coast, becoming accomplices in the horror: some of the survivors said that there were fights on board due to the lack of food and that they resulted in people being killed or thrown into the sea.

We must understand the concept of community as a geographical space experienced socially by its members. An active archipelago of sorts, that makes human mobility a strategy and a way of life in itself.

Denationalisation and securitization: two reminders

The American Continent has also recently the been setting of multiple stories of the death and violence shaping migratory horror. Mexico, as the main transit country in the biggest migratory corridor in the world, as well as the so-called North Triangle (an incorHonduras, El Salvador and Guatemala) are hot spots for the drama that millions of "border crossers" go through in their attempt to reach not the "American Dream", but family reunification.

Since 2014, thousands of unaccompanied migrant minors and youth have tried to reach the United States, going through a true nightmare on the way, oftentimes dying in the attempt. Only in 2016 (including the sea branch of the Gulf of Mexico), around 60,000 unaccompanied minors went through this route, most of them in need of international protection [8]. The United States faced that "humanitarian crisis" by having border patrols capture them and lock them up in detention centres, subsequently deporting the vast majority of them to their countries of origin.

It was a while ago that the world learned of the infamous freight train referred to as "The Beast". Thousands rode it while attempting to reach the US as stowaways, dangerously journeying on the machine's wagons. Ironically enough, Central American migrants recently had to face another "beast" upon arrival in the US: former President Donald Trump, who never hid his intentions to enlarge the wall separating the United States from Latin America (not only from Mexico), to deport 2-3 million migrants [9], limit the number of refugees that can access the country, and incarcerate those with a criminal record (including those that committed traffic violations or

that infringed immigration laws). Even worse, he too pledged to track the parents of unaccompanied migrant minors using the children to find them and accuse them of being criminally liable in contributing to human trafficking. That is, the Trump Administration went a step further in the implementation of migratory horror policies, not only criminally prosecuting migrants for entering the country illegally, but also considering the parents of unaccompanied minors as part of a "network of coyotes". Under this "zero tolerance" policy for immigration, we witnessed the detention of thousands of migrant minors, cruelly separated from their parents and held in the "iceboxes" (the name given to immigration detention centres).

Trump's immigration discourse was probably the most openly racist and xenophobic ever maintained by a president. He referred to migrants as "hordes of invaders", "criminals" or "rapists". He even stated, "America needs Norwegian migrants instead of those from shithole countries full of black people". However, the reaction to this level of verbal violence was the appearance of the so-called "migrant caravans", which challenged his power. The arrival of Covid-19 in 2020 allowed the Trump Administration to further reinforce its horror policies by tightening border controls in accordance with Title 42 of the Immigration Act, which allows for the expulsion of migrants on public health grounds.

Another blatant example of migratory horror during the last decade is the denationalisation of Dominicans of Haitian origin carried out in 2015 by a verdict of the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic. This resolution denied nationality to four generations of Haitian-origin Dominicans. All of a sudden, thousands of people, most of them sugar harvest labourers, became stateless and were forced to migrate, not only to the other side of the island but also to Brazil, Chile and other South American destinations [10]. That same year, at the end of August, hundreds of Colombian migrants that had lived in Venezuela since the 1990s (one of the countries in the region that has historically welcomed the highest numbers of migrants) were arbitrarily deported due to absurd law that equated them with smugglers and paramilitary fighters.

One year later, the "migratory landscape" of the region changed radically with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants who walked their way through the coastal countries of the South Pacific. Governments of countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile quickly went from a pro-humanitarian discourse to one in which migrants posed a meta-threat of social, economic, political and security dimensions.

To the South, Macri's Argentina and Bolsonaro's Brazil were paradigmatic examples of the policies of exacerbation of immigration control. They instated anti-immigration policies that linked the (in)security problems of the region to migration activities, securitising human mobility, tightening border controls, violating the rights of migrants and exacerbating xenophobia [11].

This brief review of some of the most atrocious records that led us to the geopolitics of migratory horror we are experiencing, speaks about a drift in the world-system, the role of the States and the ruling classes, and the supremacy of security and control approaches at a world level. All of those terrible images we have witnessed throughout the world compel us to articulate two essential reminders.

One, is that building walls, and fences, imposing visa systems, closing borders, militarising them or externalising their control are not solutions to the immigration drama. According to a study by the University of Quebec, more than 70 countries in the contemporary world have built walls or fences on their borders to prevent the entry of migrants, again, equating migration to national security threats, such as terrorism. The country that has built more walls is Israel, with a total of six on its borders with Egypt, Jordan, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Syria and Lebanon.

At this stage, it is worth remembering the words of the former president of Bolivia, Evo Morales Ayma: "The walls between peoples do not protect, but confront; the walls between peoples do not unite, but divide; the walls between peoples do not respect, but attack; the walls between the peoples do not free, but suffocate; the walls between the peoples do not equalise, but discriminate; the walls stimulate fear and promote confrontation and racism" [12].

The second essential reminder is that all these migrants or border-crossers, who are mainly young people, were forced to leave their country due to war, poverty, urban violence, family violence, religious or political prosecution and environmental disasters. If those who leave their country of origin for any of these reasons were correctly considered forced migrants, the cynical migration hierarchy (and its "economic migrants" or "refugees" raking), which became apparent with the migration crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, would be over.

These forced migrants, mainly those who come from the so-called peripheral or underdeveloped countries, constitute an industrial reserve army of sorts that, as Delgado Wise [13] remarks, is one of the new ways of asymmetrical exchange. As the Mexican thinker reminds us, we must maintain sight of the fact that the working class is increasingly compelled to move around in conditions of growing vulnerability, in face of lack of work and subsistence options in their places of origin. Notwithstanding this, considering the relevance that cognitive capital holds in the current capitalist framework, a very different standard applies when it comes to skilled migration. This configures a new dynamic in the international division of labour that is necessary to understand structurally to be able to deliberate on the rights of migrants.

Considering the relevance that cognitive capital holds in the current capitalist framework, a very different standard applies when it comes to skilled migration.

From "humane control" to the deterritorialisation of rights: universal citizens vs. global consumers

It has been proved that the treatment of migration in "First World" countries hides immense hypocrisy and the instrumentalisation of people. People that are deprived of their rights and not granted citizenship, but who are required great work efforts in ways that sometimes constitute new forms of slavery, in the 21st century. At this level, the security approach reinforces the perversity of the neoliberal model regarding the workforce: they indeed look for workers, not people.

The debate between the security and rights-based approaches is very complex since even the most relentless defenders of securitisation approaches talk about human rights. Argentinian sociologist Eduardo Domenech calls those "control approach with a human face" [14]. These visions, now widespread, camouflage behind a deceiving human rights narrative an approach which cares about migrants' rights the least.

Not only must we consider that many countries decorate their migration policies with the "human rights" label (as not doing so would be politically incorrect), but also that a real rights-based perspective is not the panacea in itself. The hegemonic perspective of human rights, which comes from the liberal Anglo-Saxon thought and is based on the natural rights to life, liberty and property, formulated by Locke in the 17th century (translated over time into guarantees of legal security and freedom for political participation) [15] is just not enough on its own to deal with the current problem of migration in a way that puts migrants at the centre.

In the first place, the liberal view commonly used in politics and academia that defines human rights as inherent to human beings on the grounds of their own reason and subsequent morals is timeless and lacks a sociocultural context. And secondly, as Mexican scholar Ariadna Estévez explains, it does not allow us to see the human rights of migrants from the perspective of those who demand them; that is, from the need of those who require to manage and demand their own rights.

This implies that the hegemonic understanding of migration, even when it gives itself the name of "human rights", lacks the necessary decolonised and socio-political view of actual human rights in a context marked by globalisation, inequalities and migration like, as pinted by philosopher Enrique Dussel [16]. In other words, the hegemonic view of migration still places migrants in a passive position of victims tied to the structures ("subjected subjects"), even though reality shows that migrants have increasingly become actors capable of putting globalisation and statehood into question, and which have "heretical behaviours", as the Algerian Abdelmalek Sayad [17] would say.

Thus, the sociological category of "migrant subjects", with the passivity it implies, has become obsolete. Whereas some academic literature still places the State and institutions as "actors" and migrants as "subjects", recent events show migrants are now *de facto* political actors, with increasing visibility and more recursive repertoires of action. They have begun to interpellate and interact with states of origin, transit and destination, even from the standpoint of their undocumented status.

Migrants are *de facto* political actors, with increasing visibility and more recursive repertoires of action. They have begun to interpellate and interact with states of origin, transit and destination, even from the standpoint of their undocumented status.

It is enough to remember the great marches of Latin migrants in the United States in 2005 or the protests of 2012 (also in the US), of the self-identified as "undocumented and fearless". In Spain, a protest led by Ecuadorian migrants in 2001, demanding "papers for all", bursted as precarious working conditions and neo-slavery conditions became public. This latest example could be considered a precedent for the recent march "Regularización Ya!", which managed to bring over 700.000 signatures to the Spanish Congress of Deputies for a massive regularisation of migrants. Another example of this qualitative jump in the mobilisation of the migrant community is the migrant caravans of Central Americans and Mexicans that have decided to walk their way through, migrating in broad daylight and without coyotes, thanks to collective care and the protection of their own numbers. [18]

All these practices and others have been nicknamed "migrant fights" in defence of their rights, constitute, as we previously stated, repertories of migratory actions that challenge national sovereignty, the international regime of border control and State Thought.

These fights demonstrate that the category of "subject" has become analytically outdated, just as its connotations of inferiority, otherness and non-citizenship. Plus, as the Ecuadorian anthropologist Andrés Guerrero once put it, the category of "subject" has been historically applied to justify subordination and exploitation, as it occurred in the 19th century with indigenous and black people. [19]

Thus, it has been the exploitative elites who wanted to see "migrant subjects", whereas, in truth, they are active and moving social actors who fight for their own future, demanding rights, guarantees, participation and treatment as fellow citizens born in another place.

In line with this determination and as a theoretical and political proposal born from the roots of the Global South, is the principle of universal citizenship. And one of its benchmarks was the South American citizenship project promoted by the UNASUR. [20]

Aligned with the Andean-origin paradigms of The Plentiful Life or *Good Living*, the universal citizenship constitutes a decolonised legal-political proposal that seeks to deterritorialise rights. That is, to overcome the classic vision that grants rights and obligations only to those individuals recognised as members of a certain *polis*; recognising, on the contrary, rights and obligations based on the principle of *ius domicile* in the place where any citizen of the world lives.

The principle of universal citizenship seeks to reach another principle: that of global justice, understood as the recognition of how historical asymmetries and inequalities between countries are factors that explain a significant part of global migration.

Thus, a principle that challenges the prevailing neoliberal model: whereas capitalism tries to create global consumers, this paradigm seeks to consider all of humanity, including migrants, as universal citizens.

The principle of universal citizenship, which would attribute the capacity to grant rights to migrant citizens to the States and supra-state instances, would displace the current geopolitics of migratory horror towards a paradigm of reception, protection, integration and *good living*, just as proposed in the World People's Conference for a World without Borders Toward Universal Citizenship.

The geopolitics of migration is inextricably tied with the fact that, in our globalised society, human mobility is placed within the world-system as a problem/consequence of the capitalist model we live under. It is essential to deproblematise migrations from a multidisciplinary, multidimensional and intersectional approach, understanding it from the perspective of different spaces of dialogue, and focusing on the migrants themselves. Only like that we will develop strategies to build our own concepts and paradigms.

Photo_ **Irene López** _ CC BY 2.0

[1] Castles, Stephen & Mark, Millar (2004). *La era de la migración. Movimientos internacionales de población en el mundo moderno* [The Age of Migration. International population movements in the modern world]. México: U. Zacatecas-Porrúa-INM.

[2] Grimson, Alejandro (2011). *Doce equívocos sobre las migraciones* [Twelve misconceptions about migration], Revista Nueva Sociedad, N.° 233, May - June. Available at: https://nuso.org/articulo/doce-equivocos-sobre-las-migraciones/
[3] "World Bank forecasts largest drop in remittances in recent history". 22/4/2020. Available at: https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history
[4] Durand, Jorge (2014). *Coordenadas metodológicas. De cómo armar el rompecabezas* [Methodological coordinates. How to put the puzzle together]. In *La etnografía y el trabajo de campo en las ciencias sociales* [Ethnography and fieldwork in social sciences]. UNAM: México.
[5] See: "Para Cameron, los migrantes son 'enjambre'" [For Cameron, migrants are "swarming"], Página 12, 31/7/2015. Available at: https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elmundo/4-278300-2015-07-31.html
[6] The number of dead people from 2014 to March of 2023 is of 26,191.
[7] See: "La UE pone en marcha un cuerpo unificado de vigilancia de fronteras" [EU launches unified border surveillance body], 6/10/2016, agencia EFE. Available at: https://www.elcomercio.es/internacional/union-europea/201610/06/pone-marcha-cuerpo-unificado-20161006125027-rc.html
[8] US Customs and Border Protection, 2016. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/es/themes/ninos-migrantes
[9] It is worth mentioning that during Obama's government, approximately 2.9 million people were deported.
[10] Desnacionalización y apatridia en República Dominicana, informe de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH) [Denationalisation and Statelessness in the Dominican Republic, report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights], 31/12/2015. Available at: http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/RepublicaDominicana-2015.pdf#page=222
[11] Ospina, María del Pilar y Ramírez, Jacques (2021). *Disputa política y decisiones gubernamentales sobre migración. El giro a la derecha en Argentina, Brasil y Ecuador*. [Political contestation and governmental decisions on migration. The shift to the right in Argentina, Brazil and Ecuador]. *Revista Izquierdas* N.° 50. Available at: https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8135311
[12] Discurso en la Conferencia Mundial de Pueblos en Tiquipaya (Cochabamba, Bolivia) [Speech at the World People's Conference in Tiquipaya]. 20/6/2017.
[13] Delgado Wise, R. (2022). *Intercambio desigual en la era de los monopolios generalizados* [Unequal exchange in the era of pervasive monopolies]. Revista de Estudios globales. Análisis histórico y cambio social, May-June, 1(2).
[14] Domenech, Eduardo, 2013. *Las migraciones son como el agua: Hacia la instauración de políticas de "control con rostro humano". La gobernabilidad migratoria en la Argentina* [Migrations are like water: Towards the establishment of policies of "control with a human face". Migration governance in Argentina]. Polis. Vol. 12 (35). Available at: https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0718-65682013000200006
[15] Some may say that the catalogue of rights is broader, as proposed by Rawls (which includes subsistence rights or some social rights) or Walzer's communitarian vision that tries to go beyond ontological individualism, or Kymlicka's multicultural vision. For an in-depth analysis of the issue, see: Estévez, Ariadna, 2008. *Migración, globalización y derechos humanos. Construyendo la ciudadanía universal*. [Migration, globalisation and human rights. Building universal citizenship]. Mexico City: UNAM-CISAN.
[16] Dussel, Enrique (2018). *El "giro descolonizador" desde el pueblo y hacia la segunda emancipación*, [The "decolonising turn" from the people and towards the second emancipation]. Buenos Aires, CLACSO. Available at: http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/ar/libros/mexico/xochimil/coloquio/Docs/Mesa4/Enrique%20Dussel%202.pdf
[17] Sayad, Abdemalek (1984). *Estado, nación e inmigración. El orden nacional ante el desafío de la migración* [State, nation and immigration. The national order in the face of the challenge of migration]. Available at: .https://www.perio.unlp.edu.ar/catedras/hdelconocimiento/wp-content/uploads/sites/152/2020/08/10-Sayad-Estado-nación-e-inmigración.pdf
[18] Torre Cantalapieda, Eduardo (2021). Caravanas. *Sus protagonistas ante las políticas migratorias* [Caravans. Its protagonists in the face of migration policies]. Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.
[19] Guerrero, Andrés (1991). *La semántica de la dominación: el concertaje de indios* [The semantics of domination: the concertage of Indians]. Quito: Ediciones Libri Mundi.
[20] Ramírez, Jacques (2016). *Hacia el Sur. La construcción de la ciudadanía suramericana y la movilidad intrarregional* [Towards the South. The construction of South American citizenship and intra-regional mobility]. Quito: CELAG.

Jacques Ramírez

Jacques Ramírez holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the Ibero-American University (Mexico). He was Undersecretary for Migration and Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, and advisor to UNASUR on migration and South American citizenship issues. He was also advisor on migration issues to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and, more recently, to the Andean Parliament. A member of the International Studies Association (ISA), he is the author of numerous books and a researcher at various academic institutions and universities.

Photo_**Andrew Kuznetsov**_ CC BY 2.0

03. ABOLISHING GEOPOLITICS AND BUILDING A WORLD WITHOUT STATE VIOLENCE

Ray Acheson

Sep, 2022

Thank you to Nela Porobić for reviewing this article.

As Russia's illegal and brutal war in Ukraine continues to rage, there is some sense of shift in international politics. Some see it as the bloody opening to a "multipolar" world order, in which several "great powers" are staking out spheres of influence and centres of power, to be distributed among the few instead of just the one. Others appear to see it as the logical "end" of the US empire, finally languishing after decades of illegal coups, invasions, and occupations marked by terror and torture. But underneath these dominant framings of geopolitics and empire, which rely upon entrenched binaries of good and bad, right and wrong, strong and weak, there is also another undercurrent, a seething frustration of those who have been deliberately silenced and marginalised—of those who say enough.

The question is, what can the governments of marginalised states—and ordinary people living around this volatile world—do to end the violence and upend the "world order" that generates it? What structures of state violence need to be overturned, and how can that be achieved? Do states offer a realistic path to peace, or do we need to think beyond the current nation-state formation to abolish violence and build the communities of care necessary for our collective survival?

From among the flames

Across various UN forums this year, the governments of countries facing rising sea levels, failing crops, unending fires and floods, poverty and famine, displacement and destruction from relentless centuries of colonial and capitalist exploitation and extraction, have been calling out the "great powers" for their world-destroying behaviour. "The jungle burns, gentlemen, while you make war and play with it," the President of Colombia proclaimed at this year's UN General Assembly high-level debate in September. "World power has become irrational."

Similarly, the President of Honduras said the "arbitrary world order, in which there are third and fourth category countries," is unacceptable, especially "while those that are believed to be civilized do not tire of making invasions, wars, financial speculations, and crucifying us with their inflation over and over again time." The Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines noted that the "global centres of imperialism" have each proclaimed the necessity of constructing a "New World Order," each with its own peculiar agenda. "But from the global periphery, which encompasses most of humanity, I ask the relevant and haunting questions: What's New? Which World? And Who Gives the Orders? The future of humanity depends on satisfactory answers to these queries."

But the answers to these questions thus far remain unanswered. An alternative has not yet crystallised, certainly not at the state level. This highlights, perhaps, the crux of the problem facing the survival of humankind at this moment in history: that states do not have the answers for survival of humanity because states, as currently organised, are about the survival of those in power. While societies suffer, states—the people that run states, the politicians and the profiteers, the machines and mechanisms of state violence and oppression—control their populations while fighting with or creating alliances with each other, disregarding for what any of it means for their citizens or residents, let alone populations elsewhere in the world.

"Geopolitical thinking devalues the lives and aspirations and voice of the people who don't live in 'great powers'," writes lawyer and activist Andrew Lichterman (2022, pp. 11–12). "Their lands and cities and futures are conceived as something to be bartered or fought over, valued only for their resources or cheap labor pools or as subaltern militaries or as 'buffer zones' […]"

The climate crisis is a key example, which many governments do recognise. Fiji's Prime Minister argued that humanity is waging a war against itself, along with ecosystems and the ocean. "This war isn't fought with bullets and bombs, but apathy, denial, and a lack of courage to do what we all know what must be done." In this context, the global economy "is now a house on fire," noted the President of Malawi. "Yet we continue to use evacuation methods that rush some nations out to safety while leaving the rest of us behind to fend for ourselves in the burning building."

These lamentations from the halls of the United Nations should mark a line in the sand for us all. While delivered by governments, they echo the discontent of the majority of the world's population and eloquently eviscerate the moral bankruptcy of great power politics. The geopolitical framing of power undermines attempts to build a truly global and equitable world order. This applies to any of the governments competing in the Thunderdome of death and destruction, but given the current context of Russia's war in Ukraine and the resurrection—or zombification—of the Russian Federation as The Big Bad in the Western imagination, a focus on the Russian-US nation-state contention is useful.

A history of violence

Both Russia and the United States are settler colonial states, forging their countries by expanding their "frontiers" through repression of those living on the land they sought to acquire and control. In this context, the state and colonialism are interchangeable, immutably tied together. One of the state's roles is as a "precondition to and enforcer of Indigenous genocide," making the state "a primary source of violence," as author and activist Harsha Walia explains (Barnard Center, 2022, 17:18, 19:42). This proclivity to violence has led successive governments of both countries to deal with domestic inequality, poverty, "non-normative" identity, and resistance through policing and punishment.

The violence of these states is not constrained by the borders they established on the backs of Indigenous people. Russia and the United States also both engage in imperialist actions abroad, interfering, through military and economic action, in countries they deem to be within their "spheres of influence". Both use militarism, aggression, and forced economic ties to guide their conduct in international relations.

The governments of both countries critique each other for the same type of behaviour. Russia's leaders criticise US imperialism, yet its government has intervened militarily and politically in Afghanistan, Georgia, Moldova, Abkhazia, Tajikistan, Nagorno-Karabakh, Kazakhstan, Chechnya, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Syria. Russia's war against Ukraine is the latest in a long line, motivated by the current Russian government's belief that the independence of Ukraine is unacceptable and its explicit argument, notes activist Achin Vanaik (2022), that Ukraine, "in part or preferably whole, it should cease to exist and be part of a Greater Russia and subordinate to the dictates from Moscow."

Meanwhile, the US political elite criticise Russia as an autocracy, yet facilitate the overthrow of democratically elected governments if they threaten US interests, build

military bases and engage in wars and military operations in hundreds of countries around the world, and spend billions of dollars a year on militarism while so many of its citizens live without health care, housing, or food security. Over the last two decades, the US government has waged more than a dozen "secret wars" in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (Ebright, 2022), in addition to the massive violence it has unleashed its known wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.

The hypocrisy of both the Russian and US governments reflects Edward Said (1978)'s observation that

> Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's own eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest mission civilizatrice.

Both the Russian and US states have built up their militaries, military alliances, and nuclear arsenals to challenge the other. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)'s expansion eastward is about constraining Russia, just like Russia's invasion of countries to the west are about constraining NATO. Ukraine, in this context of "geopolitics," is seen as a pawn being used by both "sides". But this approach to international politics victimises and marginalises Ukrainians themselves, just as it did so with Iraqis, Afghanis, Syrians, and countless others subjected to imperialist and neocolonial wars of aggression and occupations—and those who are treated as "villains" like Palestinians and Vietnamese.

"Geopolitical thinking devalues the lives and aspirations and voice of the people who don't live in 'great powers'," writes lawyer and activist Andrew Lichterman (2022, pp. 11–12). "Their lands and cities and futures are conceived as something to be bartered or fought over, valued only for their resources or cheap labor pools or as subaltern militaries or as 'buffer zones' against attack by some other great power."

Radioactive violence and the "power" of The Bomb

It is within the context of geopolitics and great power competition that nuclear weapons have been created and justified. The narrative of nuclearised power and prestige have guided certain countries to acquire them, to espouse their irreplaceability of tools of "deterrence" and self-preservation, of staving off "existential threats" of invasion and overthrow. But nuclear weapons themselves are an existential threat—not just to states, but to us all. Nuclear weapons are not abstract "tools" that maintain global peace and security. They are weapons of mass destruction. They create instability, enable horrific violence, and risk life on the planet.

A nuclear explosion releases vast amounts of energy in the form of blast, heat and radiation. It takes around 10 seconds for the fireball from a nuclear explosion to reach its maximum size. An enormous shockwave reaches speeds of many hundreds of kilometres an hour. The blast kills people close to ground zero, and causes lung injuries, ear damage, and internal bleeding further away. People sustain injuries from collapsing buildings and flying objects. Thermal radiation is so intense that almost everything close to ground zero is vaporized. The extreme heat causes severe burns and ignites fires over a large area, which coalesce into a giant firestorm. Physicians and first responders would be unable to work in devastated, radioactively contaminated areas. Even a single nuclear detonation in a modern city would strain existing disaster relief resources to the breaking point; a nuclear war would overwhelm any relief system that could be built in advance.

The use of less than one percent of the nuclear weapons in the world could disrupt the global climate and threaten as many as two billion people with starvation in a nuclear famine in the long-term. The climate crisis will be exponentially exacerbated. The thousands of nuclear weapons possessed by the United States and Russia could bring about a nuclear winter, destroying the essential ecosystems on which all life depends.

Nuclear weapons produce ionizing radiation, which kills or sickens those exposed, contaminates the environment, and has long-term health consequences, including cancer and genetic damage. Their widespread use in atmospheric testing has caused grave long-term consequences. Physicians project that some 2.4 million people worldwide will eventually die from cancers due to atmospheric nuclear tests conducted between 1945 and 1980.

Despite all this, the idea that nuclear weapons are essential to "keep the peace" or deter the aggression of other states persists as the dominant theory in international relations and security studies. The theory is that nuclear weapons are so heinous that they are "sufficient, by themselves, to confirm the futility of armed conflict" (Renic, 2022, p. 4). Nuclear deterrence dogmatists posit that nuclear weapons are the reason why the world has not yet descended into World War III—despite the fact that the threatened use of nuclear weapons, as well as countless misunderstandings and near-accidents—have brought world leaders to the brink of nuclear Armageddon several times.

The leaders of Russia and the United States, along with France, United Kingdom, and China, together recently agreed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, echoing a statement from Gorbachev and Reagan in 1985. Yet each of these governments has been investing billions in the "modernisation" and expansion of their nuclear arsenals, preparing not for nuclear disarmament but for nuclear war.

Nuclear deterrence theory is espoused by nuclear-armed state political leaders, nuclear weapon manufacturers, and academics profiting from the continued maintenance and modernisation of nuclear weapons. The possession of nuclear weapons, and proliferation of deterrence theory, necessitates the preparation and willingness to use nuclear weapons. This means policies and practices that envision and maintain the capacity for using nuclear weapons. It means implicitly threatening use of nuclear weapons, at all times. This threat of their use, most recently made most explicit by Russian President Vladimir Putin and other officials in the Russian political scene, puts us all in even more peril.

At the outset of Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Putin declared that other countries "will face consequences greater than any you have faced in history" if they intervened. A few days later, he ordered Russian nuclear forces to be put on a heightened alert status. Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev later outlined possible scenarios for the use of nuclear weapons and Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said that maintaining "readiness of strategic nuclear forces" remains a priority. A Russian government spokesperson then said that Russia would only consider the use of nuclear weapons if there was an "existential threat" to Russia.

More recently, when announcing a partial mobilisation of Russian military forces on 21 September 2022, Putin made new and more explicit threats to use nuclear weapons "in the event of a threat to the territorial integrity of our country and to defend Russia and our people." Given Russia's illegal annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions, this could mean that any attempt by Ukraine to take back these regions could constitute an attack on Russia's "territorial integrity".

So far, the other nuclear-armed states have not explicitly said they would respond to a use of nuclear weapons by the Russian state with nuclear weapons. However, the US government has said it would "respond decisively" to any Russian use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine and that it has privately conveyed to the Russian government the "catastrophic consequences" it would face. In addition, the Secretary-General of NATO has said that any use of nuclear weapons by Russia would have "severe consequences".

Photo_**Rebecca Dongallo**_ CC BY 2.0

This gamesmanship runs the serious risk of mass destruction. Between them, Russia and the United States possess more than 11,850 nuclear weapons. NATO members France and the United Kingdom have a few hundred each. The US military also stations about 100 nuclear weapons in NATO members Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Türkiye. These weapons are not remnants of a past Cold War, they are actively deployed right now, ready to be used. The stockpile numbers, alarming as they are, don't convey the sheer horror each weapon packs within it. As described above, every single bomb is designed to melt flesh, burn cities, decimate plants and animals, and unleash radioactive poison that lasts for generations. Even the use of one of these weapons would be disastrous. A nuclear exchange would be catastrophic.

The leaders of Russia and the United States, along with France, United Kingdom, and China, together recently agreed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, echoing a statement from Gorbachev and Reagan in 1985. Yet each of these governments has been investing billions in the "modernisation" and expansion of their nuclear arsenals, preparing not for nuclear disarmament but for nuclear war. Each maintains doctrines and policies for the use of nuclear weapons. This is an incredibly dangerous landscape, but one that benefits the military-industrial complex.

There are other corporate interests behind the growing tensions among nuclear-armed states and the current war in Ukraine, including in relation to weapons production and sale, pipelines and "energy security," and access to "natural resources," with profits to be made at the expense of human lives as well as the protection of the planet. In the midst of a climate emergency, in which capitalist extraction and exploitation has decimated biodiversity, ecosystems, and land, water, and air, the governments of NATO members and Russia continue to use fossil fuels and refuse to embrace a degrowth economy that would drawdown the use of energy, especially in the global north, and prioritise the creation of systems of care and equality for people and planet.

These alleged great powers have together, deliberately, built a militarised, capitalist world order that exclusively serves the interests of the war profiteers and the political and economic elite. This is a world order that sees war as a legitimate means to an end. It celebrates militarised masculinities, empowering the culture of militarism and violence as brave and noble pursuits, while rendering invisible the gendered and racialised harms of militarism. It is a world order that uses a technostrategic language to sanitise the image of war, and even the potential use of nuclear weapons.

Mainstream media and political pundits speak of "tactical" nuclear weapons or "second strike capabilities" as abstract concepts that won't melt the skin of people's bodies or turn people into shadows. They write about "small" nuclear weapons, "lesser nuclear arms" that are "less destructive by nature," "much less destructive," and have "variable explosive yields that could be dialed up or down depending on the military situation." Even while acknowledging that one of these weapons, if detonated in Midtown Manhattan, would kill or injure half a million people, the New York Times suggested that the use of these weapons is "perhaps less frightening and more thinkable." It says the billions of dollars that the Obama administration spent on nuclear weapons went towards "improving" US tactical nuclear weapons and turning them into "smart bombs" that "gave war planners the freedom to lower the weapons' variable explosive force," would have a "high degree of precision," and would lower "the risk of collateral damage and civilian casualties" (Broad, 2022).

The possession of and threat to use nuclear weapons is also profoundly gendered, with rhetoric of the nuclear-armed states consistently focused on the size of their arsenals, the vitality of their bombs, their worry of impotence if disarmed.

The theory that the threat of nuclear retaliation is "the most effective check against ruinous great power war" is not possibly moral, argues academic Neil Renic (2022, p. 12):

> In the event of an actual nuclear first-strike, the moral duty of the target state is to renounce a reciprocal descent into barbarism and wear the blow. At a minimum, the retaliatory response cannot be one that condemns tens or hundreds of millions of additional innocents to death. There are some acts that can never be countenanced, no matter how vile the adversary or how severe the provocation.

Yet, nuclear weapons continue to dominate great power strategy. And the current attempts to normalise their potential use is part of the larger, historical project of normalising war.

Explosive violence and weapons testing

In his book *The Doomsday Machine*, whistleblower and former military analyst Daniel Ellsberg explains that nuclear weapon policies grew out of the justifications for bombing cities and civilians during World War II. The willingness, and even desire, to incinerate civilians and destroy civilian infrastructure as part of the war resulted in the practices of firebombing and blanketing wide areas with explosive violence. This approach characterised the latter part of the war, with major civilian centres being deliberately targeted by allied forces long before the US detonated nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This history provides a disturbing story of how practices previously held abhorrent become normalised during conflict. How what was once held as anathema to "civilised behaviour" becomes entrenched in doctrine and strategy. The bombing of towns and cities, which was stigmatised and ostensibly outlawed through international humanitarian law after World War II, has become standard practice yet again, with the relentless destruction of hospitals, homes, schools, and other critical civilian infrastructure in Viet Nam, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, among many others, and now in Ukraine.

As the Russian government's war in Ukraine is showing once again, the effects of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas are indiscriminate, with a staggering proportion of death and injuries inflicted on civilians. The explosive blast and

fragmentation kill and injure people in the area where they detonate, and damage objects, buildings, and infrastructure. Victims and survivors of explosive weapons can face long-term challenges of disability, psychological harm, and social and economic exclusion. Destruction of infrastructure vital to the civilian population, including water and sanitation, housing, schools, and hospitals, deprives civilians of access to basic necessities and results in a pattern of wider, long-term suffering.

Despite the daily death and destruction caused by the ongoing war, think tanks and politicians, media, and war gamers act as if countries are chess pieces and people are numbers on a page. Instead of seeing these people as individuals, whose lives have value and meaning, who are part of families and communities, the number crunchers calculate "acceptable loss" and risks of "collateral damage," and look the other way as the bodies pile up. Also unaccounted for is the disruption to daily life—the interruption of education, of food production, of supply chains; the destruction of hospitals, homes, markets, water and sanitation facilitations, and all of the other critical infrastructure that people rely on to survive. These numbers don't take into account the psychological terror of living in conflict, of hearing bombs dropped or drones hovering overhead or sirens warning of imminent strikes, of being afraid to leave your house, of watching loved ones die. These figures also don't take into account the environmental impacts of war, the toxic or explosive remnants of weapons, the damage to land and water and animals.

These humanitarian and environmental impacts should be at the forefront of all policy making decisions. Yet they are completely ignored by those talking in board rooms in capital cities far from where the harm will be felt, deciding what choices to make for the sake of "geopolitical strategy" or "balance of power". Instead, as even The New York Times noted, Ukraine is being used as a testing ground for new high-tech weapons. Western political officials and military commanders predict that these tests "could shape warfare for generations to come" (Jakes, 2022).

These "tests" reveal part of the driving force behind the war in Ukraine and the failure of all sides to pursue, let alone achieve, a negotiated end to the conflict. The cavalier attitude of weapon manufacturers, military strategists, and Western political leaders toward Ukrainian lives is not just implied, it is overt. "We're learning in Ukraine how to fight, and we're learning how to use our NATO equipment," said Lithuania's President in an interview. She reportedly paused, then added: "It is shameful for me because Ukrainians are paying with their lives for these exercises for us" (Jakes, 2022).

The perversity of patriarchy

This mindset—that civilians and soldiers are expendable, that wars provide the best testing ground for new weapons, that scores can be settled by bombing homes and hospitals, or that power can be asserted by threatening to wipe out the entire planet—is deeply patriarchal. It is based on an understanding of dominance and violence as the best ways to control and coerce others into bending to your will.

Patriarchy is reflected in every aspect of the war in Ukraine, from the conscription of men and the celebration of the warrior, to the horrific sexual- and gender-based violence being inflicted upon women, LGBTQ+ people, and children, and even to the targeting of civilians and civilian objects. The bombardment of civilian centres is a "deeply gendered strategy with no 'military advantage' other than to demonstrate the failure on the part of the Ukrainian state to protect and thereby to emasculate its leadership," argue feminist international legal experts Louise Arimatsu and Christine Chinkin (2022).

The possession of and threat to use nuclear weapons is also profoundly gendered, with rhetoric of the nuclear-armed states consistently focused on the size of their arsenals, the vitality of their bombs, their worry of impotence if disarmed, and their

dismissal of "emotions" of those concerned with the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons. The patriarchy employs technostrategic language to talk about nuclear bombs, as described above, and sanitised language to talk about war—"surgical strikes," "collateral damage," "smart bombs".

This patriarchal approach, which discounts and refuses to engage in discussions about the physical, legal, moral, and emotional consequences of weapons and war, has for decades effectively precluded the development of "credible" alternative narratives promoting peace and non-violence.

Instead, the nuclear-armed states and their supporters have tied themselves in knots, proclaiming that it is impossible to eliminate nuclear weapons in the current international security environment while creating that environment themselves by engaging in wars and arms races. Their own doctrines promote nuclear weapons as the be-all, end-all for security, thus incentivizing others to acquire these weapons to protect against invasion and occupation, in turn exacerbating the fraught international security environment that allegedly precludes nuclear disarmament. Thus, the patriarchal politics of power and violence have generated a catch-22 of apocalyptic proportions.

Untying the knots of war

In a letter to US President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, Soviet Premier eloquently described the "knot of war" that their two countries had created, and warned of the risk that they might pull the knot so tight "that even he who tied it will not have the strength to untie it." Sixty years later, that knot has been pulled tighter than ever.

These non-nuclear-armed actors, together with non-state organizers and international humanitarian groups, conceived of a role for themselves in this history, of helping to "untie the knot" by working to change the legal, political, economic, and social landscape in which nuclear weapons exist.

Recognising the failure of the leaders of nuclear-armed states to "untie the knot"—that they cannot or will not take the necessary steps to eliminate or even reduce the risks generated by their nuclear arsenals—the vast majority of countries have revolted. They joined forces with activists in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to revitalise a narrative about nuclear weapons in which the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use of these weapons is front and centre. Governments primarily of the global south together with ICAN developed a new international agreement banning nuclear weapons.

On 7 July 2017, 122 governments voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). After receiving the necessary fifty national ratifications, it entered into force on 22 January 2021. This development presents a very significant challenge to nuclear weapons and to the nuclear war machines of the allegedly most "powerful" countries in the world.

The TPNW shows what the world can do in the face of grave injustice and incredible risk. The countries and the activists leading the way in this initiative understood the urgency of dismantling the system of massive nuclear violence that their neighbours and allies have built up. These non-nuclear-armed actors, together with non-state organizers and international humanitarian groups, conceived of a role for themselves in this history, of helping to "untie the knot" by working to change the legal, political, economic, and social landscape in which nuclear weapons exist.

It remains to be seen how those most responsible for tying the knot will respond. So far the leaders of the nuclear-armed states have categorically rejected the TPNW. But through active initiatives to stigmatize and defund nuclear weapons, they may be compelled over time to change their approach. The prohibition of nuclear weapons opens an opportunity for leaders of nuclear-armed and nuclear-supportive states to step back from the brink, loosen the knot, and engage in the process of disarmament and demilitarisation.

But the knot is not just nuclear. Nuclear weapons are just the tip of vast systems of militarised violence that have been built through more than a century of war. It all must be undone.

This must include ending the practice of using cities as battlefields. It is a violation of international humanitarian law, yet multiple perpetrators continue to bomb and shell civilians. The Irish government recently led a diplomatic process for a political declaration that commits its signatory states to restrict or refrain from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Ending the bombing of towns and cities would alleviate much of the immediate and long-term human suffering in armed conflict.

This effort to end explosive violence is part of a larger project of humanitarian disarmament, which has included the prohibitions of landmines, cluster munitions, and nuclear weapons, and reflects ongoing work to prevent the development and deployment of autonomous weapons and to control the international arms trade, among others. Collectively, these efforts help lay the groundwork for dialing back weapons production and war profiteering. The reduction of military budgets, the redirection of funds to meeting social and planetary needs, and a turn in international relations from war to diplomacy, solidarity, and care is imperative for our survival.

Imagining and building a new world order

As countless governments not counted among the "major powers" have said at the UN General Assembly emergency special session on Ukraine held throughout 2022, the protection and preservation of international law—including the UN Charter—is crucial to this end. "What the international community must fear most is power with impunity," said Costa Rica's UN Ambassador at the October meeting of the emergency session:

> But we must not only fear it—we must valiantly overcome it. Impunity to not comply with international law. Impunity to rely on military might. Impunity to send thousands of civilians into a war that does not serve them, that has nothing to do with them, that turns its own people into pawns in a cruel and self-defeating charade. Costa Rica stands in solidarity with Ukraine and with the Russian people who do not benefit from this neo-imperial transgression but are sent to die in its trenches anyway (Chan, 2022).

This call to end impunity is important for the broader disruption and dismantlement of great power politics. Governments, no matter the size of their economies or militaries, must no longer determine right through might. On this path to undoing the vast inequalities among states, disarmament, denuclearisation, and demilitarisation are key.

All governments should join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and work urgently for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. The process of nuclear weapon abolition could provide a foundational path to broader changes in the world order. All governments should also join the other various disarmament treaties and declarations that purposefully constrain the state's ability to wield violence and to profit from war. This would help establish a new cooperative paradigm in international relations and free up resources to help address the climate crisis and meet human and planetary needs.

But those working for a "new world order" should also look beyond states, and not get caught up in promoting alternative modes of international relations that continue to harm people and the planet.

Some governments—including Russia—offer the idea of a "multipolar" world order as an alternative to great power politics. But this concept, argues Lichterman (2022, pp. 14–15), "projects a world divided among a few de facto empires with

recognized spheres of influence encompassing countries outside their borders, hermetically sovereign and free to rule and dominate in their domains free of any internationally recognized norms other than their expansive view of 'sovereignty' itself, unconstrained by 'Western' norms and values."

Governments, no matter the size of their economies or militaries, must no longer determine right through might. On this path to undoing the vast inequalities among states, disarmament, denuclearisation, and demilitarisation are key.

Such an arrangement will still mean that most states are subjugated to the interests of power of a minority of powerful governments, while the people within these states suffer for it. Instead of a "superpower" like the United States, the world will be ruled by a small number of great powers including Russia and China. While this may seem preferable to some, it does nothing to move us beyond the path to nuclear or climate destruction upon which we are collectively spiralling. "A civilization at its ecological limits cannot survive a global economic and state system dominated by endless competition among nuclear-armed neo-imperial capitalist governments for much longer" (Lichterman, 2022, p. 15). An entirely new way of working is imperative.

Abolishing state violence

The whole frame of geopolitics, which seeks to manage tensions and power struggles among those who rule, while the vast majority of people—as well as plants, animals, land, and water—are controlled, confined, or killed to serve those interests. Thus, instead of working to shift the world from a "super-imperialism" to "multipolar imperialism," argues Vanaik (2022), we should be working to end all imperialist and capitalist states. "Our strategic allies in this much longer term domestic and global struggle are not governments but progressive and anti-capitalist forces and organisations everywhere."

The old ways of doing things have proven over and over again that they do no work. We need a new vision of global peace, grounded in the intersectional experiences of people and the needs of the entire planet. Creating and achieving that vision requires changing who is at the table and who is setting the agenda for action, and determining what is possible. Uut with the ruling elites, who are bound to personal interests and gains, and in with everyone who stands to lose from conflict. Land and water protectors, feminists, antinuclear and antiwar activists, prison and police abolitions, those organising against borders and for demilitarisation, equality, and care—these are the voices that must lead the work for peace, not the people who profit from conflict.

Unlearning the necessity of violence is essential to exploring what could be built in its place. This means turning on its head so much of what we are taught about what's necessary for safety and security in our world. It means learning to reject violence as a solution to all problems, interrogating and challenging systems of power that assert they exist to protect while instead they persecute and oppress.

An abolitionist framing is useful for cultivating such transformation. Instead of investing in weapons and preparing for war, we must be investing instead in care for people and planet. Abolition is a tool to build a world that works for all, instead of just a few. The abolition of war, globally, requires disarmament and arms control, systems for demilitarisation and reduction of military spending. But it also requires building structures for peace, solidarity, cooperation, and nonviolence to flourish. It means replacing weapons with renewable energy, war with diplomacy, capitalism with a redistributive feminist political economy that is centered on equality, social justice, degrowth and ecological sustainability.

Photo_**Bruce Berrien**_ CC BY 2.0

Our opposition to war or great power politics cannot be limited to the circumstance of Ukraine. Solidarity in the midst of harm and violence caused by war means acknowledging that this harm and violence is not limited to one place or one situation, but is systemic and structural. War is the manifestation of a global, violent political economy that treats some human life as meaningful and most as not, that treats profits as more important than people or planet.
War, capitalism, racism, colonialism, border imperialism, the carceral system, the climate crisis—these are all intimately connected and have been built by many governments over many years. And so while we oppose the war in Ukraine, true solidarity means opposing war everywhere, and confronting the aspects of our world that lead to, facilitate, and perpetuate war and harm.

We can find hope in those governments that reject militarism, that see the answer lies not in more weapons but in collective and cooperative approaches to the problems that the capitalist, extractivist, militarised world order has created. But we also need to look beyond the nation-state structure for alternative models of care and well-being. In so many cases, states are the primary source of violence in so many people's lives. What other structures need to be built to provide for what people and the planet really need? What alternatives can we construct within our communities—and within a truly globalised sense of international solidarity and collaboration? What are people already organising for, locally and globally?

Understanding and responding to the "bigger picture" or taking a holistic approach to state violence doesn't mean we each as individuals need to solve every piece of it. But it does mean we need to recognise and support each other's efforts and reflect in our own work the analysis and organising of various movements and projects for peace. The sum of our whole is greater than our parts, and going up against the machine of capitalist violence can feel immense—unless we break it down and rebuild something else, together.

References

Barnard Center for Research on Women. (2022, November 15). *No borders! No prisons! No cops! No war! No state?* [Video]. YouTube.

Broad, W. J. (2022, March 21). The Smaller Bombs That Could Turn Ukraine Into a Nuclear War Zone. *The New York Times*.

Chan, M. (2022, October 10). Statement to the Eleventh Emergency Special Session of the UN General Assembly.

Chinkin, C. y Arimatsu, L. (2022, April 5). War, law and patriarchy. *London School of Economics Women, Peace and Security Blog*.

Ebright, K. Y. (2022). Secret War: How the U.S. Uses Partnerships and Proxy Forces to Wage War Under the Radar. Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law,

Jakes, L. (2022, November 15). For Western Weapons, the Ukraine War Is a Beta Test. *The New York Times*.

Lichterman, A. (2022). *A Divided Opposition: The Ukraine War and the Critique of Geopolitical Reason*. Western States Legal Foundation.

Renic, N. C. (2022). Superweapons and the myth of technological peace. *European Journal of International Relations* 28(4), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661221136764.

Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Random House, Inc.

Vanaik, A. (2022, October 30). Ukraine: Divisions Among The Left. *Radical Socialist*.

Ray Acheson

Ray Acheson is the Director of Reaching Critical Will, the disarmament programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, for which they provide analysis and advocacy at the United Nations and other international forums on matters of disarmament. Ray also serves on the steering groups of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, which won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, as well as Stop Killer Robots and the International Network on Explosive Weapons. They have written *Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021) and Abolishing State Violence: *A World Beyond Bombs, Borders, and Cages* (Haymarket Books, 2022).

Photo_**Alpha Penguin**_ CC BY 2.0

04. A MORE MULTIPOLAR BUT NOT MORE DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO: THE GEOPOLITICAL (DIS)ORDER OF A WORLD IN RECONFIGURATION

Idoia Villanueva

Oct, 2022

When we talk about geopolitical reordering, we refer to the collapse of the international order that emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although the international institutional structure dates back to the end of WWII—think of the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF—it was the end of the Cold War that brought the unipolar hegemony of the United States and its neoliberal economic model. This hegemony has been supported for decades by a combination of what Joseph Nye called hard and soft power: i.e., through military interventions and economic relationships of dependence and domination over the nations of the so-called Global South. Likewise, the extension of the liberal paradigm and its concept of democracy have been necessary tools to boost different accumulation processes of capital and resources in these nations and create a bloc of alliances that could legitimate and reproduce this hegemony, particularly the transatlantic Alliance.

This order was reflected in the distribution of power within multilateral governance institutions and in the selective application of international law, generally favouring the interests of the so-called Global North. An example is the scarce accountability initiatives from the countries that form the so-called Western Bloc for their actions against international law and human rights. And a key element behind the collapse of this system is precisely the lack of ideological concessions to a segment of the world population. While the western discourse sees the establishment of this system as the triumph of democracy, the political ideas and ways of life of millions remain silenced. After all, the construction of peace after the Cold War never considered the need to incorporate the basic principles demanded by the Non-Aligned Movement, such as non-interference, especially in their capacity to build their own democratic and economic, organisational systems beyond the idea of liberal capitalist democracy.

Although it is still in force, this order has been strongly questioned by the emergence in the last years of new actors with the capacity to influence or compete for part of the hegemony in an increasingly—and not precisely more democratic—multipolar international scenario. The result is a geopolitical system-world disorder in which various architectures of the previous unipolar order coexist with the emergence of new world powers and regional power centres in dispute in many parts of the world.

The clearest case is the ascent of China, which is on its way to becoming the world's first economy in the next few years and on the same path to reducing the gap in technological and military power. This development has caused a confrontation between the United States and China, which is structuring the international order. However, the ascent of China as a power is expressed far beyond these fields. Thus, to large-scale and mainly economic projects, such as the Belt and Road initiative, diplomatic and cultural objectives are added, with a growing relevant leadership in successful peace negotiations, such as the one between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, or the proposal of other necessary forms of mediation, such as in the war in Ukraine. Today, we can see how the United States pressures on all the elements

delay this growth, mainly through the technological and commercial war and the destabilisation of territories.

One of the keys behind the collapse of the liberal capitalist system is the lack of ideological concessions to a segment of the global population. One that saw its lifestyles and political ideas silenced in the pursuit of a single concept of democracy and wellbeing.

On the other hand, the institutional system of multilateral governance led by the United Nations, paralysed and under question for years due to conflict, has been left aside by a growing state hyper-bi-lateralization created by the rivalry between the United States and China and by the displacement of international law and human rights. The result is an even less democratic multilateral governance system that affects fundamental issues, such as negotiating conflicts or providing global public goods. Furthermore, this significantly impacts the possibilities of development and reduction of poverty and inequality between countries.

In addition, the international system has also been struck by a succession of global crises. Not only did those break the promise of eternal welfare at the core of the social contract of liberal democracies, but also destroyed all the certainties they operated upon, reopening fractures and generating new tensions. The financial crisis of 2008 brought with it the crisis of the neoliberal model itself, the crisis of a system that since the 1980s has only really been beneficial to enrich the economic elites further and to destroy any hint of social and ecological justice. Subsequently, the Covid-19 pandemic evidenced our dependence on the import of strategic resources and the fragility of our systems to respond, which in turn showed the need to develop new instruments and care systems. After that, the war in Ukraine has shaken the geopolitical board, bringing the threat of nuclear weapons to the centre of international relations, promoting rearming and militarisation to the detriment of diplomacy, and consolidating two differentiated geopolitical blocks that take us back to a bipolar order.

All this occurs in the context of climate emergency and limited essential resources that endanger our survival. Environmental disasters are already significantly impacting the degradation of natural habitats worldwide, the expulsion of entire populations and the increase of inequality. This impact is added to the compounding of conflicts over resources like water, lithium or rare materials and their impact on the militarisation of territories and the increase of human rights violations. Besides, the need to undertake the energy transition urges us not only to accelerate the decarbonisation of our economies—and do it in a socially fair way—: policies must be global and must question the interests behind the current development model, recovering the sovereignty of peoples over the resources. It is evident that only a few will be able to survive under the current growth model of extractive and neoliberal economies.

In this new map of actors, it is important to highlight the role of big corporations or even individuals that accumulate more capital and resources than many States but who are not subject to the same rules and accountability systems that, despite the limitations, exist for the States. Many of these corporations buy and sell new products showing their importance in the global economy, such as the personal data of social media users. Others trade in well-known goods and services, such as housing (for example, Blackrock and other investment funds), weapons (Lockheed, Airbus, Dassault or Rheinmetall) or even mercenaries (Wagner Group). And others do it directly with products illegally extracted or plundered from occupied territories like the Western Sahara or Palestine. All this turns them into actors significantly influencing international relations and global geopolitics.

The corporate concentration of capital and markets makes them accumulate so much power that in some countries, they put democracy at risk, whereas in other countries, they prevent millions of people from having any chance of a decent life. That is why it is urgent to set binding regulations for large companies and capitals and put an end to one of their most valuable tools: tax havens.

The European Union in the New Geopolitical Era

In this scenario of decomposition US hegemony and of the idea of global democracy, the European Union (EU) is in a crucial moment. It must decide its own role in the new world order: whether to establish itself as a global actor and for a global and sovereign democracy, or to remain as a subordinate one, reduced to fodder for the superpowers.

This dilemma is not new, however. For years, the European Union has been undergoing a profound identity crisis and a pressing lack of a geopolitical vision. The financial crisis and austerity policies favouring the authoritarian reaction, the Brexit crisis or the latest multidimensional crises knocked down the idea of a community project and European foundational values. During those years, the Visegrad group of countries was progressively reinforced, as well as the axis of far-right parties and reactionary and far-right governments. After the victory of Giorgia Meloni in Italy, we already have a post-fascist government leading one of the EU's founding countries. It will be a normalised government as long as it is willing to accept the liberal doctrine and reinforce the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) without questioning its position.

The war in Ukraine has exposed the European compliance and dependency to interests that have nothing to do with the European peoples.

Around 2019, it seemed that the EU was waking up: we still remember how Josep Borrell, the Spanish High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy that took office in 2019, stated the need for more awareness of the global challenges and a "more geopolitical" European Union. Or the French president, Emmanuel Macron, referred that same year to NATO's "brain dead" status in what seemed to be an attempt to bury the transatlantic organisation in favour of its roadmap to build a strategic European autonomy.

Many changes have accelerated since then. Only a decade after the 2008 crisis, the coronavirus pandemic's economic, social and health consequences caused a new multidimensional crisis in the EU. It seems the EU has already set aside the most orthodox neoliberalism with the funds Next Generation EU, launched during the pandemic and sustained in time by the Ukraine war. The agreements reached in response to the crisis derived from Covid-19 were undoubtedly historical and have posed a significant volume of funding for energy transition and digitalisation. Even so, these funds work under a neoliberal logic: the State receives the money and transfers it to a series of corporations without clear guidelines or economic planning, which gives up the opportunity to develop autonomy through energy, food or technological sovereignty that can be rooted in the territories, and making them into a new accumulation-based business.

On the other hand, we have the EU's answer to the war in Ukraine. After Putin invaded Ukraine in February 2022, we are facing a European war that the EU never wanted or foresaw and for which it is a military ally of the United States at the same time as it is energetically dependent on Russia. After Ukraine's population, the Europeans have been the most affected by the impact of the war, with inflation and energy and food prices increasing. Moreover, it suffers the nuclear threat from the first line. In the face of this, the EU has withdrawn and renounced being an actor with a voice to defend its citizens' interests and the order to be built. It pretends to be more united but not more integrated than before, and it is more dependent on the US than it used to, both in terms of security and energy dependence: NATO is as alive as ever, and Europe now depends on American gas imports and American investment priorities.

The war in Ukraine has exposed the European compliance and dependency to interests that have nothing to do with the European peoples. In a tremendously irresponsible display, the EU has adopted a strategic concept of European security

that puts China in the bullseye, just as several member governments liberalise sectors and sell strategic resources to foreign companies, including Chinese companies. An example is the sale of the management of the main Spanish train stations and strategic ports by the last government of Spain's Popular Party (PP) to the Chinese company COSCO.

However, it has also evidenced how the EU, which has always described itself as an agent for the promotion and protection of human rights, makes an opportunist use of them, further eroding the legitimacy of the EU.

Social movements like those built around feminism, anti-racism and ecology have enough transformative potential to already be considered actors that ought to be respected and listened.

The war has also exposed how this dependence on energy resources can impact our societies. Therefore, to advance in the real strategic autonomy of Europe has become inescapable: not only in terms of security and defence—which requires a redefinition of our own interests and strategic concepts of security, not linked to the interests of other actors—but also in terms of sovereignty over all the strategic sectors, such as energy, technology or food.

Furthermore, to do it, it is necessary to reflect on the need to re-industrialise Europe, end resource dependence, relocate the strategic sectors, and increase our productive and material processing capacity. The United States has already approved its Green Deal and is planning its economy to improve its infrastructure and re-industrialise the country (in consumer goods and High-Tech) while investing in the production, storage and distribution of green energy. The Biden Administration has recently announced the approval of the Inflation Reduction Act, a package of protectionist measures offering billions of dollars in subsidies for top technological development in strategic sectors like green energy and battery production (only for companies that produce in US territory). Europe sees this as a call for company offshoring because they will be more competitive if they move production to the United States. In the face of this, the EU can only double down on its economic autonomy using European funds with clear economic planning guidelines, just like the US has done.

Conclusions

We find ourselves in a critical moment for the redefinition of the international order. Global challenges ahead make cooperation and regulations an inescapable path to avoid a world configuration in which the law of the strongest prevails. We must strive towards a truly multilateral governance system, capable of reinforcing international law and human rights, and of building new mechanisms to respond to crises. This entails supporting the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and doubling down on a fair energy transition. One that is not conceived as a new big business to the detriment of entire populations and their survival.

Faced with this global reordering, other actors are fighting for a position outside imperialistic models that also seek to guarantee their strategic sovereignty and autonomy. We are talking about the potential of Latin America and Africa as global actors with strengths that strive to consolidate democracy, international law and human rights.

For its part, the European Union must wake up and set itself to become an independent actor with its own voice. It must be capable of breaking the old schemes of alliances that put our interests and values at risk and act in favour of true strategic autonomy, one that defines and defends the interests of our people.

Promoting multilateralism and compliance with international law; defending human rights; achieving peace, demilitarisation and denuclearisation; those are the strategic interests to be pursued by Europe and the world. This compliance is the value that the EU can contribute to as a geopolitical actor: the committed defence of a just and democratic international order.

Finally, we need to continue articulating progressive movements in a transnational way. The movements that integrate the international far-right are now being reinforced, and it is necessary to create bottom-up forms of resistance and a response to the model of society they propose. Historically, international relations have settled on the Westphalian power model, but ensuring the configuration, representation and organisation of the people's interests is crucial. In this sense, Social movements like those built around feminism, anti-racism and ecology have enough transformative potential to already be considered actors that ought to be respected and listened. The principles of intersectionality, horizontality and equality that drive them and the diverse proposals and experiences that articulate them are but vital.

Idoia Villanueva

Idoia Villanueva is an MEP in the Left group in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL) since 2019, and current Vice-President of the European Parliament delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Assembly between the EU and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). International Affairs Secretary of the Spanish political party Podemos, in 2015 she was appointed senator on behalf of the Parliament of Navarre. She holds aith a degree in computer engineering from the University of the Basque Country and a MBA from the Autonomous University of Madrid, and she has managed and developed various tech-related projects for a decade.

Photo_**R naumov**_ CC BY 4.0

05. A GEOPOLITICAL EUROPEAN UNION TO WHAT END?

Axel Ruppert

Nov, 2022

"We have now arguably gone further down that path in the past weeks than we did in the previous decade" said Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy one month after Russia started its unprovoked and unjustifiable war in Ukraine [1]. Borrell was pointing to the progress that, in his eyes, the EU and its member states made in acting in unity and advancing their capabilities to act more decisively on the world stage. The leap forward that Borrell was alluding to has since then been widely debated and referred to as the EU's geopolitical awakening. While there has been a lot of discussion on what a (more) geopolitical EU should look like and whether the Union's arms build-up is bold enough to meet its geopolitical ambitions, there has been less focus on the question whether the proclaimed geopolitical awakening is eventually leading to a more secure future. This article argues that the EU's geopolitical ambitions focus on expanding military power to the detriment of the security of the majority of people in- and outside of the EU.

EU militarisation to equip the EU with hard power for the great power competition

The concept of a geopolitical EU is disputed as much as the term geopolitics is. Since EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen unveiled the "Geopolitical Commission" in 2019, there have been doubts and questions over the EU's geopolitical goals and leverage.

Arguably, the EU's proclaimed geopolitical awakening is not about Russia or the war in Ukraine, but continues the long ongoing attempt to make the EU a stronger actor in the great power competition. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is rather a catalyst of existing processes than triggering substantial change. The 2016 "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" already insisted on the need for member states to increase defence spending and to say farewell to prioritising soft power if the EU wanted to become a stronger global actor [2]. Especially since Brexit, the EU has focused on expanding military power, while other factors of exerting geopolitical influence have remained stagnant or lost in importance. There has not been notable progress in the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policies, EU development cooperation remains without major initiatives and the 'Global Gateway' project (the EU's response to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative) is not capable to keep China at bay over influence in the global south. The concluding of comprehensive trade deals is a thing of the recent past, EU foreign direct investment outflows have decreased and the transatlantic bond has been shaken. At the same time, the EU (the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize winner) took unprecedented steps to shift resources and attention away from civilian to military priorities.

At the heart of the EU's steadily increasing militarisation is the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) that entered into force in 2017. PESCO is designed to

Europeanise armament and military policies via driving forward cooperation in crucial armament projects and obliging participating member states to provide troops for EU combat units and ensure their readiness. The joint armament projects range from the development of a new attack helicopter and drone to the defence of space assets and military mobility. To identify such relevant projects and to oblige member states to harmonise their military arsenals, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) has been established. PESCO forces the participating member states to continuously increase their defence budgets to finance the means of future warfare. As PESCO is a binding process and member states can be excluded if they do not fulfil the participation criteria, governments are pressured into an accelerating armament spiral. Member states will not be keen to lose their influence within PESCO and opportunities for their national arms industries.

The 2016 "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" already insisted on the need for member states to increase defence spending and to say farewell to prioritising soft power if the EU wanted to become a stronger global actor. Especially since Brexit, the EU has focused on expanding military power, while other factors of exerting geopolitical influence have remained stagnant or lost in importance.

Another alarming milestone in the EU's paradigm shift from soft to hard power is the 8 billion euros European Defence Fund (EDF) that was launched in 2021. Its creation marked a turning point for the EU, as this was the first time the EU community budget could be directed to military-related activities. Its main objectives are to strengthen the European arms industry and boost its competitiveness on the global stage, which includes increasing European arms exports. The establishment of the EDF marks a major victory for the industry that has been lobbying persistently for its creation (as is the case for PESCO and CARD). Research by the European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAAT) shows that the 'big four' (France, Italy, Spain, Germany) received together almost two-thirds (65.1%) of the total funding of the EDF's two predecessor programmes [3]. While 427 different single entities have been receiving funding, the top 15 beneficiaries received 51% of the total funding. These figures indicate the push to strengthen the sectors' big corporations' competitiveness to provide the EU with the military-industrial complex to enable its geopolitical ambitions.

Next to the direct funding of arms corporations, the EU broke another taboo with the establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF) in 2021. This instrument turns the EU into a weapons dealer, as it funds the delivery of military equipment, including ammunition and lethal weapons to states already facing tension or internal conflicts. Since deliveries of that kind cannot be funded via the EU budget, the EPF is an off-budget instrument financed directly by the member states. As such, it evades parliamentary scrutiny at national and European levels. So far, the EU has dedicated 3.1 billion euros of the total 5 billion euros budget for 2021-2027 to its support for Ukraine. This is the first time that the EU organises the delivery of weapons directly to a country in war.

The latest building block of the EU's growing militarisation is the Strategic Compass. Adopted at the EU summit on 25 March 2022, it is intended to set the direction of future European military policy and bring together the 2016 Global Strategy with the since then created mechanisms PESCO, CARD, EDF and EPF. The strategic assessment of the Compass draft describes an EU surrounded by instability and conflict within a conflictual multipolar world. Power politics have returned to the global stage, and access to space, sea routes and critical resources are increasingly contested. In this "highly confrontational system, the EU and its Member States must invest more in their security and defence to be a stronger political and security actor. […] a lot remains to be done for the EU to raise its geopolitical posture. This is why we need a quantum leap forward to develop a stronger and more capable European Union that acts as a security provider […]." [4]

The centrepiece of the Strategic Compass is the concept of strategic autonomy that the EU is supposed to achieve to realise such a quantum leap forward. Championed by French President Emmanuel Macron, strategic autonomy, though a common definition is lacking, is supposed to enable the EU to autonomously decide and conduct wars and military operations with weapons and capabilities developed and produced in the EU.

In an analysis for the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brussels Office, Jürgen Wagner concludes on the Strategic Compass: "The really problematic issue in all of this is the full commitment to the expansion of the military apparatus as the only proven means of responding to the increasing conflicts between great powers. Other aspects are reduced to add-ons within these power conflicts—confidence-building measures, disarmament initiatives or arms control, which would be suitable for reducing the ever-increasing tensions, but unfortunately only lead a shadowy existence in the Compass." [5]

The Strategic Compass leaves no doubt that the current EU leadership regards achieving strategic autonomy through expanding military power as the key to strengthen the EU's geopolitical influence. If one wants to understand the dangers that come along with this approach, a closer look at the Sahel region is telling.

Insecurity in the Sahel: the consequences of a militarised geopolitical EU

The Sahel region and particularly Mali have become synonymous with the failure of the EU and its member states' attempt to act as a security provider. The region has been dubbed the EU's "laboratory" for border externalisation and train-and-equip approaches to strengthen military and security forces in unstable partner countries. Furthermore, it served as testing ground of operational and decision-making procedures for future missions under the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy [6].

The situation—particularly in Mali, but also in the other Sahel states (Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad)—has worsened since first France and later other member states and the EU intervened. Following the French military intervention in Mali in 2013, the EU has set up a military Training Mission (EUTM Mali). The mission has been supposed to (re)build and train the Malian army to help it to control the territory of the Malian state and to fight terrorist groups. Since 2013, trainers from 22 EU member states have trained 15.000 Malian soldiers—some of whom are accused of committing abuses and human-rights violations against civilians [7]. In March 2022, the EU suspended the mission after France announced the withdrawal of its troops from Mali. By this time, the troops of the former colonial power were not regarded as a security provider any longer, but broad resentment had formed in the population against their presence in light of the deteriorating security situation in the country. Three months before EUTM Mali was suspended, the EU had still foreseen 24 million euros from the European Peace Facility for it.

In February 2022, the Malian government that came to power through a coup d'état in 2021, suspended the planned election and has since then increased the pressure on foreign troops in the country. At the same time, troops from the Russian mercenary group "Wagner" were following the Malian government's invitation and arriving in the country. The EU stated that EUTM Mali could only be resumed if there would be a clear separation from the Wagner group to avoid that EU-trained soldiers would end up under Russian command. The Malian population now finds itself not only confronted with the threat of terrorism that increased despite the yearlong presence of international troops, but also caught up in the geopolitical confrontation between the EU and Russia.

The EU's security-first approach in the Sahel with its focus on counter-terrorism efforts, training of security and military personnel and border management has failed to provide security for the people living in the Sahel. The NGO Saferworld finds that "member states and the current European Commission leadership believe that tools that use the «language of power» offer them more control over security threats. However, evidence shows that these types of responses have allowed violence to escalate while also permitting repressive governments and authoritarian regimes to operate with impunity." [8]

This first-of-its-kind agreement between an EUCAP mission and FRONTEX highlights the EU's interest in the Sahel. From the beginning, the control of migration flows, fighting terrorism that would pose a threat to European states and economic interests (such as Niger's uranium potential) dominated the EU's agenda. Humanitarian goals that overshadowed these interests are now even further jeopardised as the notion shifts to maintaining presence against Russia to secure the EU's influence in the region.

Despite the failures in Mali, the EU and its member states maintain their presence and continue to fund and expand the security and military apparatuses in the other four of the G5 Sahel states (Mauretania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad). The civilian capacity-building Mission EUCAP Sahel Niger, established in 2012 to train and reform the Nigerien police, signed a working agreement in July 2022 with FRONTEX, the EU's border management agency. This first-of-its-kind agreement between an EUCAP mission and FRONTEX highlights the EU's interest in the Sahel. From the beginning, the control of migration flows, fighting terrorism that would pose a threat to European states and economic interests (such as Niger's uranium potential) dominated the EU's agenda. Humanitarian goals that overshadowed these interests are now even further jeopardised as the notion shifts to maintaining presence against Russia to secure the EU's influence in the region.

The latest example of the EU seeking military solutions to instability in a former colony is Mozambique. In 2021, the EU established the EUTM Mozambique with the goal to provide training and support to the Mozambican armed forces in order to protect civilian populations and fight an insurgent group with links to the Islamic State in the Cabo Delgado Province. The EU also earmarked 89 million euros from the EPF in assistance for the Mozambican armed forces. It is in the gas-rich Cabo Delgado Province where the French energy giant Total had to suspend a 20 billion US-Dollars LNG project in 2021 due to the insurgency.

The EU's military built-up does not only divert much-needed funds from addressing climate, social and health emergencies to the arms industry, but also poses a real threat to those caught up in the EU's security-first approaches in the global south. The EU is now set to continuing this paradigm shift towards hard power, which began well before the war in Ukraine, with even more ambition.

One has to keep these examples in mind when the Strategic Compass demands the EU to become a stronger security provider to bolster its geopolitical position. In October 2022, Josep Borrell made a statement that shows how the most vocal proponent of the Strategic Compass sees the EU in the world. Addressing future diplomats, Borrell said "Europe is a garden, we have built a garden. Everything works," citing the continent's political freedom, economic prosperity and social cohesion. He then continued: "Most of the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden." [9] Racist statements like this and neocolonial backyard policies to countries in the global south that cater first and foremost for the EU's economic and migration-related interests to the detriment of local populations are eventually tools to let the EU lose geopolitical influence vis-à-vis Russia and China.

Rethinking security

The EU's military built-up does not only divert much-needed funds from addressing climate, social and health emergencies to the arms industry, but also poses a real threat to those caught up in the EU's security-first approaches in the global south. The EU is now set to continuing this paradigm shift towards hard power, which began well before the war in Ukraine, with even more ambition.

The Union's reactions to Russia's invasion of Ukraine did include novelties, but these built on the path the EU took since Brexit. The war has led to unprecedented reactions in the form of lethal weapon deliveries via the European Peace Facility into a war zone, a military training mission for 15.000 Ukrainian soldiers, a far-reaching sanctions package against Russia and offering Ukraine the EU member candidate status. In addition, EU member states undertook significant measures such as Germany with its 100 billion euros re-armament special debt—changing the constitution to this end—and the increase of its defence spending to the 2% NATO goal, referred to as the "Zeitenwende". This, however, will not affect the course of the war in Ukraine. It will take years until the money will be spent and weapon systems have arrived. While EU member states need the capacities for self-defence, already in 2021 the military expenditures of the NATO states exceeded Russia's almost twenty times over. European NATO states already have the superiority when it comes to troop sizes, combat aircraft, artillery, battle tanks, and armored vehicles. Leaving numbers aside, the war in Ukraine has brought the limited operational and strategic capabilities of the Russian army to broad daylight.

It is the arms deliveries, the sanctions and Ukraine's member candidate status that Josep Borrell might have in mind when speaking about the EU's geopolitical awakening. However, the prospects for the EU's envisioned strategic autonomy that should enable a stronger geopolitical EU are greatly weakened since the war has begun. The failure of the Normandy Format under which France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia were negotiating before the war also constitutes a failure for the Europeans to take security on the continent in their own hands. While French President Emmanuel Macron declared NATO braindead in 2017, the alliance has, with Sweden and Finland, gained two new European members and is now even more of an uncontested cornerstone of European defence. When it comes to energy imports, the EU is now more dependent on fracking gas from the US. The reliance on NATO and US energy imports are the most effective leverages to demand the EU's allegiance to the United States' geopolitical ambitions.

Instead of reacting with a deepening of its militarisation path, the EU should focus its global ambitions on addressing the three biggest threats that humanity is facing: destruction through nuclear war, the loss of biodiversity and the climate crisis. None of these security risks will be solved with more weapons. An even more militarised EU will not strengthen its role as a diplomatic power to build a new European security order based on shared rules, diplomacy and cooperation. The EU will have a hard time being a military actor in the global arms race and a trusted negotiator at the same time. De-escalation, civil conflict-prevention measures and multilateral disarmament efforts, as opposed to ever-growing defence budgets, are more needed than ever.

The EU should focus its global ambitions on addressing the three biggest threats that humanity is facing: destruction through nuclear war, the loss of biodiversity and the climate crisis. None of these security risks will be solved with more weapons.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has delivered an unambiguous speech during the opening of COP 27 in Egypt. He warned the global community that "we are in the fight of our lives. And we are losing. […] We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator." [10] In short, we cannot afford to shift resources and attention away from addressing the climate crisis to fuelling a global arms race and a new block confrontation. The consequences of climate breakdown already affect and will affect the very material security of the majority of people on this planet. Providing this security means ensuring access to quality food, water, housing, healthcare, education and energy and enabling prospects for a common liveable future.

It is high time to rethink our understanding of security. We cannot afford to maintain a system of security that safeguards the privileged few at the cost of the marginalised many, pushing the latter into a state of constant insecurity and the planet further down the spiral of collapse. A convincing and holistic approach to security derives from social struggles and serves the need for safety of all, by linking questions of class, climate, migration, militarism, peace, state repression, sexism and racism. To secure a liveable future, we require collective security approaches to oppose the current antagonistic security policies and structures. While antagonistic security policies seek to provide security from the other, collective security seeks to generate security with the other. Collective security means arguing for a form of security that makes us safe, because the others are safe. Demanding safety in all aspects of life for all is not utopian, but rather a realistic response that takes the material interdependence of the world seriously. Nobody is safe until everybody is safe.

Photo_**Kyrre Gjerstad**_ CC BY 2.0

[1] Josep Borrell (2022): *Europe in the Interregnum: our geopolitical awakening after Ukraine*. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/europe-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine_en (last updated 14.11.2022).

[2] European External Action Service (2016): *A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy*. Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf (last updated 14.11.2022).

[3] European Network Against the Arms Trade (2022): *Factsheet: How the EU is Funding Arms Dealers and Corrupt Corporations*.

[4] Council of the European Union (2022): *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*. Available at: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf (last updated 14.11.2022).

[5] Jürgen Wagner (2022): *A Strategic Compass for Europe's Return to Power Politics*. Available at: https://www.rosalux.eu/en/article/2137.a-strategic-compass-for-europe-s-return-to-power-politics.html (last updated 14.11.2022).

[6] Christoph Marischka (2022): *Mission Creep Mali. EU Europe's failed backyard policy*. Available at: https://left.eu/content/uploads/2022/11/Sahel-V1f-RGB-Web_compressed-1.pdf (last updated 14.11.2022).

[7] Laure Brillaud, Ingeborg Eliassen and Leïla Miñano (2022): *EU-trained troops committed abuses in Mali*. Available at: https://www.investigate-europe.eu/en/2022/eu-trained-troops-committed-abuses-in-mali/ (last updated 14.11.2022).

[8] Lucia Montanaro (2022): *Insecurity in the Sahel: rethinking Europe's response*. Available at: https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1387-insecurity-in-the-sahel-rethinking-europes-response (last updated 14.11.2022).

[9] Wilhelmine Preussen (2022): *UAE furious over EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's 'jungle' remarks*. Available at: https://www.politico.eu/article/uae-eu-josep-borrell-jungle-remark-foreign-policy/ (last updated 14.11.2022).

[10] António Guterres (2022): *Secretary-General's remarks to High-Level opening of COP27*. Available at: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-11-07/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-opening-of-cop27-delivered-scroll-down-for-all-english-version (last updated 14.11.2022).

Axel Ruppert

Axel Ruppert is Project Manager at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brussels Office where he works on the topics of peace, security and disarmament as well as European Union militarisation and the European arms industry. He holds a Master's degree in European Studies and has previously worked in the field of anti-racism and equality advocacy.

Foto_ **Alexander Svensson**_ CC BY 2.0

06. GEOPOLITICS AND THE GENERATIVE LIMITS OF THE UNGOVERNABLE

Rafael Heiber

Dec, 2022

On decadent realism

In a text published shortly before his death [1], Bruno Latour questioned Europe's role in the transition towards a new idea of nation, and thus, of the world. Marked by an armed conflict bringing back fears of a nuclear disaster and by the struggle against extractive regime dragging the planet to an ecollogical point of no return, the continental peace of recent decades appears to be nothing more than the residual benefit of colonialism and post-World War II reordering. So, today's opportunity would be to design a new notion of "soil", or *Heimat*, based on the challenges posed by these two parallel wars.

Affected by a sense of geopolitical "realism" as opposed to a more usual "constructivist" stance, perhaps this proposal for a new "soil" ignores Donna Haraway's Chthulucene. Etymologically, this concept evokes a cosmic organicity that inhabits the earth, and encourages a shift towards ecological and social justice, recognising the entanglements of life and calling for new narratives of sustainable coexistence between people and the world beyond purely human frameworks. By not exploring this field, which he mastered so well, Latour used realism to make a critique from its diagnosis. He saw the post-Westphalian scenario as a field where nation-states were predominant players, sovereign competitors pursuing their own interests in an international system characterised by anarchy and the lack of a global regulatory authority; resulting in cycles of conflict brought in the name of security and freedom.

In their sovereign pursuit of security, states take actions that inadvertently threaten others and choose amoral approaches to international politics that ultimately contribute towards existential risks that overlook modern territorial boundaries. In this sense, Latour argued that the world was experiencing an "interregnum" and needed new, forward-looking authorities capable of formulating solid action plans as opposed to being anchored in the past.

Several theorists backed the contemporary paradigm shift in political discourse, which underlies the transition from the modern to the postmodern era. Here, the affinity with the "intermezzo" advocated by Toni Negri and Michael Hardt stands out as a transition period between two global order systems. According to traditional realist theory, the former is the old and still existing system of nation-states and blocs, characterised by sovereign territorial compartments interacting in an international system of national entities; and the latter, which they call "empire", is based on a new form of de-territorialised sovereignty distributed in global supranational power networks.

In this context, "Intermezzo" is the phase in which the principles of realism—state centralism, power politics, self-interest, security dilemmas and amorality—gradually

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict illustrates that the European continental peace of the last decades has been nothing more than the residual bonus of colonialism and post-World War II reordering.

give way to a new form of global politics beyond individual nation-states. In this transition, power regimes determine the validity of modern borders (e.g. the control of migration flows) or overcome them (e.g. the fluidity of financial capital) with a more diffuse exercise among disparate players: multinational corporations, international organisations and even non-state actors, from terrorist groups to peaceful social movements.

"Z", the last letter of the Western alphabet

While the neoliberal triumph was to promote this historical transition by seizing the spheres of political representation and prioritising the accumulative and supranational private capital speculative interests, the disastrous Russian invasion of Ukraine at the end of February 2022 created a historical accident that brought contradictions in the current world order into light.

US hegemony has prevailed in Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, preventing Russia from integrating in the continent. The "end of history" and the universal triumph of liberalism came hand in hand with the fear of admitting the recovery of a country with the geographic dimensions and nuclear power quite like Russia. While the Warsaw Pact was being extinguished, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) began to expand into the former Iron Curtain countries—contrary to what was agreed with Mikhail Gorbachev at the time—albeit preventing Russia from joining.

The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC), created in 1997 during the Clinton administration, which later became the NATO-Russia Council in 2022, was ultimately intended to regulate this expansive project under the guise of a diplomatic mechanism for cooperation, consultation and dialogue. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic formalised their first accessions to NATO, as early as 1999, in a period decidedly characterised by what Habermas coined back in the 1970s as the "legitimation crisis". This is when a political system can no longer generate and uphold the belief that it is fair and capable of meeting the expectations and needs of its people. Thus, the systemic corruption of the transition from communism to capitalism in the former Soviet territories served to support the US-promoted democratic indoctrination project throughout the region, which even led to a series of political events known as the "colour revolutions". The most notable of these revolutions were Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003 and Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004. In these cases, the insightfulness of the strategy lay in a broad defence of democracy as the political model to be established and the promotion of democratic leaders systematically aligned with Western interests.

Even if the near future proves that there will be no Russian victory, the letter Z may also symbolize the end of the Western rhetoric by triggering a number of controversial developments in Central Europe. For example, the usual double standards of the West, especially with regard to human rights and democracy.

In his famous speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, President Vladimir Putin fiercely criticized the current unipolar global structure, marked by US hegemony, and vehemently opposed NATO's expansion into Eastern countries, suggesting a multilateral international system anchored in mutual respect for national sovereignties instead. Several secret documents revealed by Wikileaks in 2010 exposed the risks consciously built along the new frontier of Western influence. In one of these cables, dated February 2008 [2], US Ambassador William J. Burns explained the likely war-like consequences of Georgian and Ukrainian accessions to NATO. He said crossing this red line would threaten Russia's security and trigger a conflict between local separatists that could lead to a much deeper international military conflict. In August of the same year, Russian attacks hit several regions of Georgia, and South Ossetia was declared an independent republic.

In another of these secret documents [3], after the outbreak of the conflict in Georgia, NATO informed the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that Russia posed a threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity. According to the cable, during the 2008 Bucharest Summit, Vladimir Putin had claimed that 90 per cent of Crimea's population was Russian and that a significant part of Ukrainian territory—the eastern and southern portions—had been separated from Russia without proper procedure

during the Soviet breakup. The diplomatic communiqué also criticised Germany for its lack of antagonism towards the Russian position.

In 2014, following the overthrow of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, Russian military forces moved into the Ukrainian region of Crimea, which prompting a referendum under military presence that led to its formal annexation by Russia, an action that provoked international condemnation and fuelled a major separatist movement in the Donbas region. Ongoing mutual tensions and NATO's continued expansionism ultimately led to the failure of the Minsk Agreements to mitigate the conflict.

Finally, in February 2022, Russia launched an offensive against Ukraine to dismember the eastern and southern territories and held elections for Moscow-aligned governments to regain control of the Black Sea region. As immoral as it was miscalculated, the Vladimir Putin-led operation saw resistance from the no less controversial Ukrainian actor and president Volodymyr Zelensky, more inclined to the seduction of the limelight reserved for him by his new role as Washington's puppet than to protecting the lives of the Ukrainian population by seeking long-term engagement with the international community to avoid direct conflict.

The letter Z painted on invading tanks and battalions, whose exact meaning is unknown but is speculated to stand for "zapad" (West) or "za pobedu" (victory), became the leading topic of news stories invariably reporting deadly Russian aggression along with economic sanctions adopted by North Atlantic countries against Moscow. Even if there is no Russian victory in the near future, the letter Z may also symbolise the end of the Western repertoire by triggering several controversial elements in Central Europe: the West's usual double standards, especially regarding human rights and democracy; cynical narratives that ignore the geopolitical history of the last thirty years in favour of a fallacious account of Russian imperial expansionism as a danger to Western European countries; the arrogance of the technocratic elite of the "first world", unable to generate responses that live up to the original promises of the continental project; the same elite's lack of analytical criteria for a comparative calculation of socio-political resilience between Russia and Western countries (which will ultimately undermine the integrity of local democracies and not guarantee a regime change in the Kremlin); the opportunities for close cooperation between Russia and China, and an acceleration of Chinese influence among the countries of the Global South and its increasingly predominant role in a new multilateralism.

Obviously, the opposite cannot be ruled out either: an all-out nuclear war. Leaving this scenario aside, the United States must continue to insist on a discourse of fighting external enemies to avoid internal confrontation with its own collective deterioration and the outbreak of a civil war.

In addition to national armies, war scenarios now involve armed mercenary groups, espionage systems operated by multinational companies, space races led by private corporations, punitive economic measures and controversial media narratives. Also new forms of multi-level sabotage, such as the explosion of the Nord Stream gas pipeline connecting Germany and Russia.

A hybrid control regime

The nature of recent wars provides sufficient grounds to evidence the transition of the two worlds above. National armies, armed mercenary groups, espionage systems operated by multinational corporations, space races led by private corporations, manipulation of judicial systems, punitive economic measures, controversial media narratives and sabotage at various levels, such as the explosion of the Nord Stream pipeline connecting Germany and Russia, all come into play in war scenarios. In short, the transnationalisation processes stemming from technological advances and the transfer of public resources to private corporations in coexistence with previous institutional models have given rise to what we call hybrid wars. They combine conventional and cybernetic styles of military warfare, along with disinformation, diplomacy, economic intervention and the use of *proxies*.

The versatility of this strategy lies in breaking down the barriers between war and peace and creating a feeling of permanent enemy vulnerability. Indeed, the goal

of hybrid warfare is not always classical victory, but to sow chaos, undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the adversary, permanently destabilising it from the inside out.

This context is explained in broader political terms: a world without a tangible "outside", a society with a fragile base identity and unstable trade principles and relations between isolated subjects. Meanwhile, Foucault's concept of biopower gains ground as a paradigmatic shift in our understanding of how power has ceased to be merely repressive and disciplinary to mobilise a whole series of techniques and knowledge that affect subjects from within, defining patterns of control adapted to the latest hegemonic demands of appropriation, production and accumulation.

The all-new *cosmotechnologies* [4] replace traditional cosmologies and enhance the exercise of biopower in both symbolic and material terms, although in the first case, through biopolitics, whose purpose is the management of the population based on the maximum data collection; and in the second, through psycho-anatomo-politics [5] aimed at capturing individual vitality and forging processes of self-exploitation.

Along the route in which power, labour and globalisation were configured as pillars of life possibilities in this "inner world of capital" [6], technology was ideologically positioned as a merely impartial element. In the real world, however, contingencies act differently. As one of Melvin Kranzberg's elementary laws proposes, a technology is neither good nor bad but far from neutral. From a constructivist perspective, one can reasonably demonstrate that, in increasingly common socio-technical environments, the technology-creating process is often not the determinant of its consequences, intentional or otherwise, but rather the hybrid roles that emerge from both programmed and spontaneous combinations between objects and subjects. It is, therefore, a matter of seeing the irreversibilities in technical mediations when composing repertoires of action, agencing subjectivities and managing society. In other words, in a hypothetical murder with a firearm, the responsibility lies not only with the individual human, nor solely with the weapon, but with the complexity involving the new hybrid entity called the "shooter", properly understood as the place he or she occupies within a network that influences and is influenced by their motivations and behaviours. Therefore, there is no purely technical or psychosocial determinism, but a condition that Paul Virilio's dromological rhetoric never tires of confirming: the invention of the boat makes shipwreck possible.

What is at stake in this historic moment is the simultaneous struggle for the twoultimate frontiers: that of the body and that of the planet.

Biopolitical reterritorialisation between the generative and the degenerative

The simultaneous contest for the two ultimate frontiers, that of the body and of the planet, is what is really at stake, regardless of how much war and its anachronistic leaderships on Europe's doorstep challenge the peace of an order thought to be well-established. Negotiation in these latter battlegrounds requires accepting an unknown level of ungovernability alongside the sophistication of the contemporary apartheid phenomenon.

With the advent of the "big data" era, which turns users into commodities amidst a sea of endless offers, services and data monetisation, the very notion of History loses

Photo_ **Oleg Afonin**_ CC BY 2.0

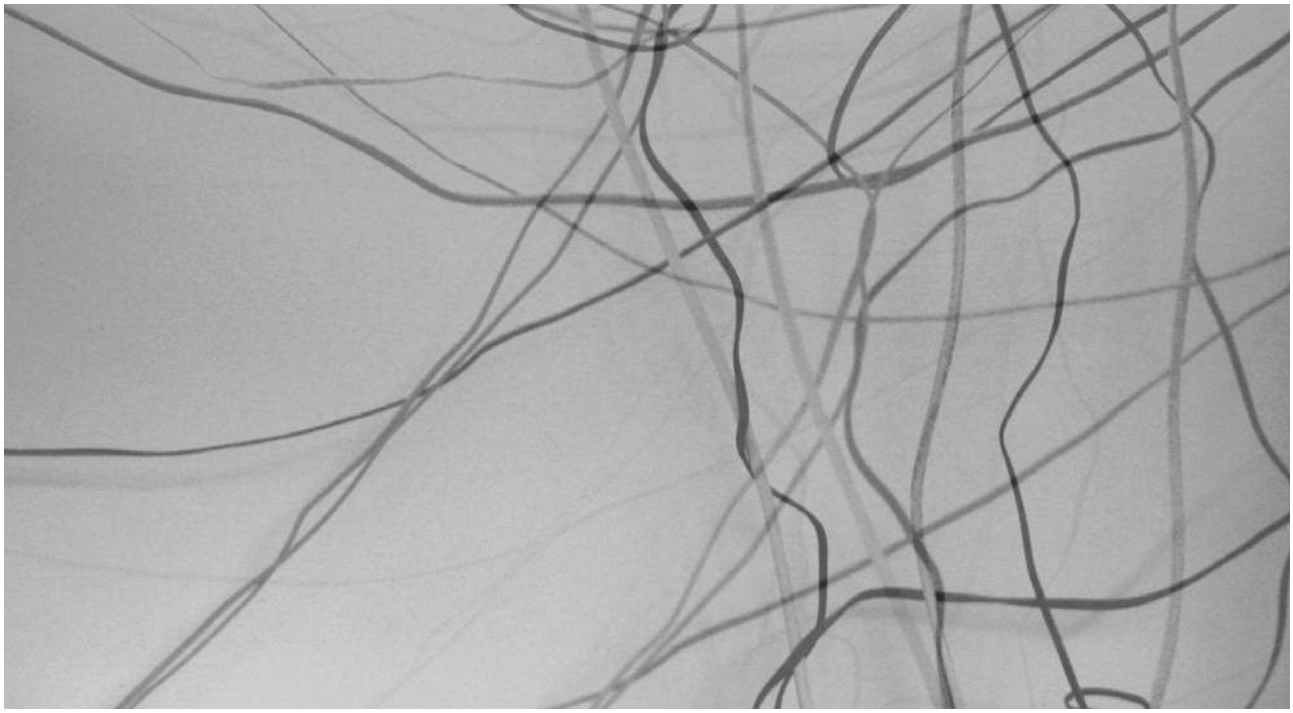

Photo_ **Matias Jaramillo**_ CC BY 2.0

its ontological depth to give way to an omnipresent Geography of networks and algorithms that feed on accumulated collective knowledge and function as regulators of social interactions.

The popularisation of artificial intelligence, understood as a "generative" technology capable of producing linguistic understanding, creating new data and extending logical models from pre-existing repositories—such as the recently launched ChatGPT—increases the deterministic traps of technological solutionism and self-sufficiency. But as the portfolio of actions expands, it displaces and re-defines the whole range of human activities, and it would not be surprising to see the emergence of modern versions of the 19th-century English Luddites in the coming years. The civilising mission of the socio-technical changes of the 21st century will be to weigh up what we can gain (or lose) with these technological drifts and judge them from a posthumanist perspective devoid of nostalgic connotations. Another aspect is involving politics to guarantee reflexivity as presented by Giddens (i.e. as an aspect arising from the growing consciousness and self-awareness generated by the globalisation, industrialisation and social change processes) under a "generative" pedagogy designed to overcome the precariousness, loneliness and excesses that characterise the economy of attention.

In this sense, the degenerative processes that capitalism often leaves in the shadows are of value. If the bridge across the failure of geopolitical realism holds, a legitimate sphere of global authority involving an organic sense of planetary responsibility beyond national borders and corporate transnationalism remains to be constituted. It is a long and windy path, but the speed of current events warrants immediate action.

[1] Bruno Latour, *Is Europe's soil changing beneath our feet?* Sep 2022, 92-97. Available here: https://geopolitique.eu/en/articles/is-europes-soil-changing-beneath-our-feet/

[2] https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08MOSCOW265_a.html

[3] https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08USNATO290_a.html

[4] Augé, M. (2011). *Où est passé l'avenir?* París: Ed. Points

[5] Michel Foucault only used the term *anatomo-politics*, but recently Byung-Chul Han updated it to *psychopolitics*. Our twist, considering the materialist aspect, is *psycho-anatomo-politics*.

[6] Reference to Peter Sloterdijk and his work of the same name.

Rafael Heiber

Rafael Heiber es cofundador y vicepresidente de Common Action Forum. Geógrafo, MSc. en Planificación Espacial y Doctor en Sociología, su área de especialidad incluye movilidades, climatología, política y los vínculos entre el territorio, la tecnología y la ciudadanía. Es también asesor, comentarista y columnista en diferentes medios de comunicación internacionales.

www.metapolis.net