"A World Without Great Powers": A Working Paper

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"Every day sees humanity more victorious in the struggle with space and time." Guglielmo Marconi

"The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast, the slow one now, will later be fast, as the present now, will later be past. The order is rapidly fadin', and the first one now, will later be last, for the times, they are a-changin'." Bob Dylan

War is a crime by any means. Sometimes, it is necessary. But when a war threatens, however, the extinction of our entire humanity, it cannot by any means be justified. It is ugly, violent, and unforgiving. It is evil. On the eighth day of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Lithuanian ambassador to NATO, Deividas Matulionis, said "We thought that peace was already a given. We were wrong. We all were wrong." Matulonis' words call for a serious kind of reflection, primarily among the society of states – our 'international community' – on the future scenario(s) for world politics. I think, however, that the time is ripe for a more radical shift in thought and action 'outside' of international society. New strategic and diplomatic considerations must emerge from a wider horizon that brings the international system of states into the light of new realities: an awakened 'Global South', a preponderant 'Asia', and an ailing Earth. But I fear that these realities do not make much sense unless we question the hand that 'we' have played in this conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. I see these two as 'fictions' that arise out of longer historical narratives regarding the peoples that sustain their territories, their armies, and their flags as nations. There is a war raging between Russia and Ukraine, but where are the 'Ukrainians' and 'Russians' to be found, as it were, in the fog of war?

To be certain, there are at least two ways in which we can understand the Ukrainian conflict. First, in the short term, it is simply to arm and prepare ourselves for war, in which case we wish to probe the vocabulary on how to avoid a full scale global war: recall, for example, the ideas of 'deterrence', 'containment', 'appeasement', and 'détente' during the Cold War. Second, in the long term, there exist alternative models of regionalisms, more concretely on the vocabulary on how to renounce war: behold the 'rules-based order' embodied by the European Union or ASEAN's "fifty-year peace" emerging from a "zone of peace, freedom and

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[1] I would like to kindly request my reader to respect the fact that this is a working paper: this essay, in form and substance is unfinished, and may not, therefore, be cited in part or in whole until it is of high publishable quality, and with due permission from the author.

neutrality".[2] Whether we wish to avoid war or renounce it altogether, in either case, making peace rests, I think, on a different set of principles. Invariably both categories make us contemplate on the causes of conflict as well as on the bases of cooperation. Peace is, and never will be, therefore, a given. We all were wrong. To be certain, if we are to bear testimony to the insight in the realization of Matulionis, the central dilemma I wish to pose is this: how do we adapt or renovate the international system to the world in which we live in the present?

My premise is that the central most fundamental question in world politics is this: how can we live together? Hence, a third way of understanding the testimony of Matulionis: an idea of the world itself in which we can make sense of war, peace, and harmony – a world of humanity in which we should ask: how do we come to each other's aid to preserve the peace and stability necessary in our daily lives? For if we do not face this question, there appears to be no point from which we can imagine and have hope in a greater humanity. The inquiry that I set to expand upon is political and moral. Political insofar as the vision it follows strives to make one out of many parts, but moral insofar as the world it depicts is permanently diverse, one of diverse and divided communities of peoples. We strive to live together everywhere all the time. What I propose is to examine the Ukrainian conflict and see how it can illuminate our enterprise: a humanist political vision of harmonious co-existence in the global realm, what I call the 'togetherness of peoples' which emerges from a paradigm of encounters.

The world order established in 1945 is dead. While the planet burns and humanity self-destructs, we are transfixed on a fratricide. It is a painful, senseless, and absurd drama. And it is disgraceful that we sit and watch as both Russians and Ukrainians are murdered and maimed. The peoples are trapped and helpless, while we debate the antiquated question: "What's it going to be from now on between America, Russia, and China?" For what is at stake is our failure to accept that the international system is bankrupt not in and of itself, but in the hands of the 'Great Powers'. The Great Powers are fictitious and transitory. It must be clear, henceforth, that the leitmotif in this essay is that there is a certain permanence about great powers. They rise and fall, and to hold power is not mere privilege; it is a heavy burden.[3] What are real and eternal in history are the peoples. It is humanity. But because international politics has been played out primarily on the wheels of empire, on the projection of military force and a large and strong economy, the peoples as subjects of change and spaces of political action are silenced beneath the market and the state. They cow in fear and darkness. It is my aim, therefore, as part of an experiment of political vision, to merely raise at this point a set of critical reflections for the peoples – that is, in whose interests this war ought to be fought.

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[2] Kevin Henry Villanueva, "How have we kept the peace in ASEAN and how can we secure its promise among all peoples in Southeast Asia?: preliminary reflections on a humanist paradigm," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 34, no. 1 (2022/01/02 2022).

[3] A distinction is in order in terms of the proper noun 'Great Power' as a 'status' and 'institution' in international society with 'special responsibilities' (the classic, here, being Hedley Bull's study, The Anarchical Society) and the common compound noun 'great power' who will comply with the major-power criteria, primarily economic and military power, who may or may not choose to exercise leadership roles in international society. The idea of Great Powers imputed with duties in pursuing the good life in the international system is clear in: Chris Brown, "Do Great Powers Have Great Responsibilities? Great Powers and Moral Agency", Global Society 18, no. 1 (2004). I follow the distinctions he makes and tread the same path, along with Thomas Franck and his initial reflections on the responsibility for peace of the international community, most of all upon the foundation of the United Nations Charter in 1945: Thomas M. Franck, "Who Killed Article 2(4)? or: Changing Norms Governing the Use of Force by States", The American Journal of International Law 64, no. 5 (1970).

1945: Where Have All the Great Powers Gone?

There are watershed moments to which I think we must bear testimony with respect to the Ukrainian Conflict. In the long arc of the twentieth century, we have seen the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Russia, and China become – in the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt – the "four policemen", leading and managing the international system and the world in successive stages and with relative success. If we are to look back at some of the transformative points of the last century, beginning from the First and Second World Wars, there was a general consensus on the priority of keeping the peace that was won by the Allied powers and maintaining international security, generally through disarmament and, more specifically, by controlling the proliferation of nuclear arms. The wartime conferences (in Newfoundland 1941, Casablanca 1943, Cairo 1943, Tehran 1943, Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods in 1944, and Yalta and finally Potsdam both in 1945) demonstrated a desire for some form of world organization achieved through no less than a contest for hegemony, as well as a vision of leadership for a world order that, until the end of the century, held hope, not least upon the creation of the United Nations (UN).

Therefore, the first watershed moment can be identified as 1945, the year of the UN Charter. The establishment of the UN was not only a response to "the scourge of war" (WW I/II); it was also an embodiment of "the structure of peace" which primarily arose from the tensions between the visions of Roosevelt and Churchill – "an uneasy compromise between the claim of universal competence to deal with all matters of peace and security (even with respect to non-members)… and the claim to collective self-defense that spawned regional alliances".[4]

The international legal norm that would protect the system of states from collapsing into chaos and anarchy, however, is made explicit in Chapter 1, Article 2(4), on the purposes and principles of the UN:

> All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

However, the international architecture that the UN was meant to establish came under stress with the onset of the Cold War, an antagonistic relationship in strategic, political, ideological, and economic terms between the US and the Soviet Union, which assigned to each of the two states 'spheres of influence' – the 'unspoken rules' as to who would manage the international system in their respective geographical areas ('West' and 'East'). As Friedrich Kratochwil illuminates, there was a change in the management device of the international system "from the more universal conception of a functionally defined general responsibility for peace and security to a more solidly defined territorial sphere of influence".[5] In any case, both devices result. or at least occur, based on power differentials among nations and substantive definitions of common (security) interests. These devices cannot be

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[4] Friedrich Kratochwil, "Of Systems, Boundaries, and Territoriality: An Inquiry into the Formation of the State System", *World Politics* 39, no. 1 (1986): 43-47; Franck, "Who Killed Article 2(4)? or: Changing Norms Governing the Use of Force by States."

[5] Kratochwil, "Of Systems, Boundaries, and Territoriality: An Inquiry into the Formation of the State System", 45.

conceived and applied without taking into consideration the role of Great Powers and/or great powers. The US and the Soviet Union enjoyed not only the privileges of 'the status' of being a Great Power in the institution of the 'Permanent 5' (P5) members of the UN Security Council (alongside China, France, and the UK); but also, therefore, pursued their strategic interests outside the UN framework.

The postwar international order consolidated a series of innovations in at least three respects - a 'Roosevelt Revolution', in the words of John Ikenberry, involving the establishment of permanent multilateral governance institutions, the redefinition of the concept of security (i.e., "the twin goals of social and national security both at home and abroad"); and 'the template' of free societies and security partnerships with the US as "the great arsenal of democracy" – or more critically in the words of Robert Skidelsky, "an evangelist of democracy"[6] – that would be in alliance with like-minded big liberal democracies.[7] This liberal internationalist vision emerged from the belief that "interdependence generated new vulnerabilities": "violence, depravity and despotism" in the form of "financial crises, protectionism, arms races and war".[8] One fundamental dilemma in this vision is that it has been, and indeed ought to be, underwritten by an enlightened great power, a 'leader in the pack' to exercise moral agency. This situation reached is apex in 1989, when America became the sole Great Power following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the meantime, as American plans for its 'pivot to Asia' were drawn up and disseminated, China, awakening finally to its Great Power status, has slowly left its lair. Recall the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), including the roll out of infrastructure and development assistance funds to Africa and Latin America as part of an international network of Chinese loans. Its pretensions to the South China Sea within 'the nine-dash line' and the 'contest for Taiwan' are, in a manner of speaking, ways for China to punch in the league of great powers.

As much as it separated the world into two spheres, the Cold War originated in genuine desires and attempts to prevent war from ever happening again, not only between states but also among peoples.[9] The cost of human life and suffering was deemed far too much to bear. The two great powers of the era – the US and the Soviet Union – had a common cause as well as a common frame of contestation to begin with. The framework of rules within which international institutions were ultimately embedded enabled cooperation through a phenomenon of complex interdependence, even if successive administrations from both powers drew their own interpretations of settled international norms, including the expansion of the human rights regime and the cases of humanitarian interventions – the 'interregnum' of the 1990s.[10] That is to say, whatever suspicions, threats, and fears the great powers

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[6] Robert Skidelsky, "Democracies should not pose as beacons of world peace", *Taipei Times* 2022, 19 April, The False Promise of Democratic Peace by Robert Skidelsky - Project Syndicate (project-syndicate.org).
[7] G. John Ikenberry, "The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism, Not Less", *Foreign Affairs* 99 (2020): 133-42.
[8] Ikenberry, "The Next Liberal Order: The Age of Contagion Demands More Internationalism, Not Less."
[9] It is important to bear in mind that there are competing/contesting narratives on the Cold War. A good place to start is Gordon Martel, ed., *American foreign relations reconsidered, 1890-1993* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).
[10] Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Saving strangers humanitarian intervention in international society", (2004), http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/politicalscience/0199253102/toc.html.

perceived in each other, the set of rules over which they met and agreed provided an atmosphere of restraint and sense of moral responsibility as members of the international community. The cases of armed intervention in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, however, dealt a mortal blow to erstwhile humanitarian efforts.[11]

Where have the Great Powers gone? Amid the blatantly illegal invasion of the Ukraine, who comes to the rescue? It is not difficult to justify the cynicism that has arisen among [who], if not against the international system, then certainly against the institution of Great Powers and their collective moral agency. For, is it not understood, that before and after empires, even in our ordinary lives, that to whom much is given, much is expected? I do not intend for this to be a rhetorical question. Rather what does this mean for the status, first in and of itself, of a Great Power in the community of nations? Does the fact that a Great Power has limits in exercising moral agency point to a world outside the international society of states? Put another way, should we surrender to a morally bankrupt international system, or can we adapt or renovate it in ways that somehow embrace the contradictions between bounded political systems, global processes, and human transactions, which transcend the spheres of influence among great powers?

2008: How Do We Agree?

The succeeding watershed moments are Budapest 1994 and Bucharest 2008.[12] On January 15, 2008, then-Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko, then-Prime Minister Yuliya Timoshenko, and then-Parliamentary Speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk sent a letter to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. The three requested a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to be incorporated into the NATO Summit that would take place in Bucharest that year in April. It turned out, however, that, Ukrainian public opinion in 2008 was divided on the issue. Polls showed that less than one-quarter of the population supported NATO membership. Split largely along regional lines, opposition to the country's NATO membership came from populations in southern and eastern Ukraine, while support came from those who lived from the more populous eastern Ukraine. Parliament was blocked by opposition parties after the January 2008 letter until March 6, when parliament resumed and passed a resolution that it would consider legislation to join NATO, but "only after a public referendum approved NATO membership".[13] In addition, key European allies, foremost Germany and France, expressed reservations regarding Ukrainian membership; they not only felt that NATO

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[11] Gideon Rose, "The Irony of Ukraine: We Have Met the Enemy, and It Is Us", *Foreign Affairs* (29 March 2022).
[12] The Minsk Accords is no less crucial in understanding the trajectory of Western diplomacy, even if it has intriguingly been sidelined in the global debate on the Ukrainian Conflict. Time and space and the more fundamental reflections do not allow me to examine their relevance. But the work of Anatol Lieven, the interviews he has given, and commentaries are incisive to our understanding and indeed, "soul-searching" in this "catastrophic blunder". See https://responsiblestatecraft.org/author/alieven/. I think it is crucial to counteract and balance the demonization of "Russia" and Vladimir Putin by listening the views expressed in an early forum - Carnegie Council for Ethics and International Relations, "Beyond a New Cold War? International Security and the Need for U.S.-Russia Cooperation", (2016).
[13] Gallis, Paul. The NATO Summit at Bucharest, 2008, report, May 5, 2008; Washington D.C.. (https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metacrs10731/: accessed April 19, 2022); Gallis, Paul; Belkin, Paul; Ek, Carl; Kim, Julie; Nichol, Jim & Woehrel, Steven J. Enlargement Issues at NATO's Bucharest Summit, report, March 12, 2008; Washington D.C. (https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc807905/: accessed April 19, 2022).

criteria would not be met, but also because they stressed the need to maintain good relations with Russia. Finally, President Vladimir Putin made it clear when he delivered his outgoing address on February 14, that NATO membership for Ukraine would signify a threat to Russia's national security.[14] It has become fashionable to call Putin a 'madman', but it seems to gloss over the fact that he has been quite forthcoming; indeed, has he not only made good on the rebuke he offered to the US and its allies in the West, not least at the 2007 Security Munich Security Conference?

When Bucharest 2008 finally came, a last-minute initiative by President George W. Bush "to persuade the allies to admit Georgia and Ukraine to the MAP failed".[15] Indeed, despite early signals against the enlargement into Ukraine, the NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration, issued at the end of the meeting of the North Atlantic Council on April 3, was forceful and clear – even if, as Paul Gallis reported, the allies agreed in the communique upon the following "unusual formulation":

> NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP..." (Article 23).

The point to be made here is not to find fault for the war, but to call attention to the ethical dimensions of consensus, a social and political process between parties. Why did we not listen to the Europeans, and specifically to the Germans, who not only share a long history with both Ukraine and Russia, but who, in the context of NATO, occupy the territory that is the "shield for the nuclear sword" (i.e., the "first and most important area of land operations" in the event of "Soviet coercion")? Was NATO not, in the memorable phrase of Lord Ismay, the first Secretary General of the Alliance, created "to keep the Soviets out, the Americans in and the Germans down"?[16] Despite the avowed mechanism of consensual decision-making in NATO and the fact that there was significant opposition among Europeans on the matter of

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[14] DW Staff, "Outgoing President Putin Talks Tough to the End", *DW* (14 February 2008).

[15] Gallis, The NATO Summit at Bucharest, and Gallis, Enlargement Issues at NATO's Bucharest Summit.

[16] Graham Newnham Jeffrey Evans, *The Penguin dictionary of international relations* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 350-54. The debate on NATO enlargement has taken centerstage since 24 February 2022. See the survey by Foreign Affairs: Foreign Affairs Asks (61) Experts, "Was NATO Enlargement a Mistake?", *Foreign Affairs* (19 April 2022 2022). But one of the earliest warning on NATO expansion was from the realist school; see John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin", (September/October 2014 2014). and more recently John J. Mearsheimer, "On the why the West is principally responsible for the Ukrainian crisis", *The Economist* (11 March 2022). From a historical perspective and sensitive to the dynamics of Russian domestic politics, aside from the work of Anatol Lieven, the work of Stephen Cohen challenges the dominant discourse in US politics, for example, Stephen F. Cohen, *War with Russia?: from Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate* (2022). From the perspective of one the principal architects of the post-Cold War order the interviews granted by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev offer the profound insight of an insider: see Mikhail Gorbachev, "A Conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev", interview by Steve Paikin, *The Agenda*, 2005; Mikhail Gorbachev, "Ukraine: Gorbachev warns of escalating conflict", *SWI- swissinfo.ch*, 2014; Mikhail Gorbachev, "Gorbachev: The Interview", interview by Steve Rosenberg, *BBC News*, 2019. From the perspective of the just war tradition and relatedly a critique of the realist position see Michael Walzer, "The Just War of the Ukrainians", *The Washington Post* (The Washington Post), 25 March 2022.

NATO's enlargement to Georgia and Ukraine, why did the alliance claim a policy of expansion against their better judgement of all its members?

Of equally great salience is the Bucharest Memorandum of 1994. Following lengthy negotiations between the then-presidents of Russia (Boris Yeltsin), Ukraine (Leonid Kuchma), and the US (Bill Clinton) and then-UK Prime Minister John Major (UK), the signatory states were committed to a series of political-security assurances, upon the accession of Ukraine to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to "respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine" (Article 1) and reaffirmed "their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, and that none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine except in self-defense or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations" (Article 2). Russia, however, annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea in 2014. All taken together, does this not, in the end, manifest aggressive behavior on the side of NATO members no more than on the side of Russia? The great perplexity is that if there were such clear agreements in place, what mechanisms and processes did we fail to see and act on? Seen from the dominant tradition and narrative of the Westphalian System, we must ask: did diplomacy simply fail, and at such an early stage, or does Western diplomacy need a re-think?

2022: Whose War?

This brings us to the present moment of death and suffering between Ukrainians and Russians. To be sure, the Ukrainian Conflict is an internal struggle, but to understand the dynamics of their strife here will not do justice to its complexity. There are dates for their struggles as peoples, however, and 2022 will be transformational, primarily because it has drawn global actors far and wide. The Ukrainian Conflict is not merely a symbol of the struggle for self-determination, but more importantly, I think, a a point of resistance for humanity, in which the Russians and the Ukrainians as peoples are subjects in a global realm, challenging the hegemony of any one system or any one sovereign nation above all others. To call 'the game' that we now face between, essentially, the US (and Europe), Russia, and China, the 'New Cold War' or, more ominously, an 'Armageddon', is not only to betray the premises on which the resulting Western liberal framework for world order took shape in the twentieth century – one of freedom and equality – but also to endanger the new model(s) of international cooperation which are taking shape at the beginning the twenty-first century.

Those who have taken up arms against aggression are the Ukrainians – it is not the Europeans, not the Americans, not the Chinese. The Ukrainians are being given aid, but they are fending for themselves – they are effectively alone. It is with their blood that the war is being fought. The society of states is watching idly as arms and munitions are loaded and sent, while the bodies that are strewn on the streets of Bucha are Russians and Ukrainians. This war is being fought (and won or lost) by peoples, not by states. People – the men and women – who stand against tanks: EDSA-Philippines 1986, Tiananmen-China 1989, and now Ukraine 2022. I think, therefore, that the final set of reflections should be set in motion without further delay. Who do the Ukrainians and Russians consider themselves to be? The name of their land is 'Ukraine': but what does it mean to be Ukrainian? The Ukrainian philosopher Volodymyr Yermolenko expounds:

"Ukraine is also a political nation. It is not centered exclusively on any single ethnic, linguistic or religious identity. It is pluralistic. You can be a Ukrainian speaker, Russian speaker or a speaker of Crimean Tatar and be ready to defend Ukraine. You can be Ukrainian Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim or Jewish and stand shoulder to shoulder for this country".[17]

Vladimir Putin may have started the war; but to whom does the war really belong? The questions posited here are primarily for the Ukrainians and Russians – who stand as brothers and neighbors in a greater family of Slavic peoples whose histories are ultimately intertwined, as well as for us, the so-called 'international community'.[18] It is us – "we, the peoples" – who are not to be subsumed in 'the West', in the General Assembly of nations in the UN, or in the alliances of states, where our more ancient struggle to act in freedom and solidarity as subjects of a greater humanity is without a voice. For is this not what the Ukrainians and President Zelensky who speaks for them are really crying out for – a voice? What if wars are to be waged only between and among members who belong to the same family of peoples, not to be used to legitimize armed intervention by other peoples unless otherwise called for by a member of the family of peoples? Arising from what I call 'the imperative of togetherness', armed intervention that takes place when not called for by a member of the family of peoples, is an act of aggression. Who are the sanctions hurting? Whose scores are being settled?

It is the 'togetherness of peoples',[19] and it must now be transformed into action: a written charter, declaration, manifesto, or constitution in a territory. Between a warring Ukrainian speaker, a Russian speaker, an Orthodox Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim, and a Jew, the miracle of a new tribe, nation, or peoples is born. It is a symbol of freedom. For did not 'Great Russians' first begin as 'Little Russians' in the Principality of Kiev – a mixture of peoples from Europe and Asia?[20] It would then be our duty as insiders and outsiders to recognize the people's name and to protect the community as it grows. We shall honor their accords and welcome them 'back in' when they choose to enter. The only criterion is that they come in peace.

What comes to light is a humiliating truth: are we really facing a war, or a vanishing world of kindness and a sense of desperation because humanity is either at its end or could not simply begin? We are the peoples of humanity.

To be able to appraise the present crisis, the preceding discussion was necessary because we have, like it or not, been beneficiaries of 'the long peace' between the US and Russia. Inadvertently, the present scenario is once again making us choose between these two great powers, but also a third: China. The role of all three in the world must be questioned, however, because their ideals of the global life – their conceptions of the good – are centered on the transcendence of their own sovereignty as Great Powers/great powers, and more

[17] Volodomyr Yermolenko, "Volodymyr Yermolenko, a Ukrainian philosopher, considers his national identity", *The Economist*, 11 March (5 March 2022).

[18] The history of Russia is contested, and the most recent book by Orlando Figes, *The Story of Russia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), is to be consulted for a present and wide perspective.

[19] Villanueva, "How have we kept the peace in ASEAN and how can we secure its promise among all peoples in Southeast Asia?: preliminary reflections on a humanist paradigm."

[20] Fernand Braudel, *History of Civilizations* (London: Penguin, 1993), 527-73.

stubbornly, the preponderance of their national interests. The West and Great Power Rivalry is just one side of history.

A brief reckoning is called for in terms of the vantage point of these three sets of reflections, that is to whom they are addressed: the first is to the members of the UN, 'beneficiaries' of the liberal international order; the second is to the members of NATO and to Russia who are expected to honor their commitments in the international society of states; and in the last, it is to us peoples - insiders and outsiders - for those who bear directly the scourge of war, their women and ours, their children and ours, their soldiers and ours, in which this Manichean contest between 'good and evil', 'East and West', 'center and periphery', and 'North and South' is being played out in a realm under hegemons. The point of these three reflections is to question fundamentally the moral bases for war, and, more broadly, to experiment with an alternative worldview, a kind of thinking and doing beyond the Western paradigm of international relations rooted in original encounters. To this, we finally turn.

"We, The Peoples, Feel Betrayed": Coming Together in Humanity?

What will a world of original encounters look like? It will be radically different but hopefully not too distant from the one we know today. The world of international relations, at least as defined by the discipline of international relations, in turn taking shape within the framework of the questions raised by the Anglo-American academy, is worth recalling:[21] 1) What were the main causes of World War I, and what was it about the old world order that led national governments into a war which resulted in misery for millions? 2) What were the main lessons learned from World War I? How could the recurrence of a war of this kind be prevented? And 3) On what basis could a new international order be created, and how could international institutions, and particularly the League of Nations, ensure that states complied with its defining principles?

It is in this context that the international society of states gained its standing as the dominant model in the current international order. The critical reflections that I have raised suggest that this is no longer desirable, if durable, insofar as the institutions of international society rest primarily on great powers, their sovereignty, and their wars.[22] The peoples who must choose sides count no more as cannon fodder. Any alternative, if we insist on the continuity of the international society of states, will have to be heard from the powers – but then insist we must on all powers: great, middle, the little, and the lowly.

There is a deeper and more primordial sense in which 'we' is invoked and to which we must give testimony. It is in a greater humanity that is not merely universal in scope but eternal in its longing to see generations hereafter live peacefully. The big unknown is that while our responses to these questions may ultimately have recourse, that is, find some answer in the political arena of the state. We are at a loss; that is, we do not know where to look for humanity – what I call our 'togetherness' – whenever we project our longings for security and survival

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[21] See Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater, eds., *Theories of international relations* (Basingstoke, Hampshire [U.K.]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[22] The ongoing debate on UN reform, and more specifically, on the privilege of the veto exercised by and only the Permanent 5 of the Security Council offers an insight into this reality: United Nations AFP, "Russian attack revives debate on UN veto power", *Taipei Times* (Taiwan) 2022, World News; United Nations AFP, "Ukraine Invasion: War places sharp focus on calls for UN reform", *Taipei Times* (Taiwan) 2022.

and peace on the world stage. More precisely, where is humanity in the international system? We – the international community – have used the international system to manage war and conflict primarily through the institutions of the international society of states; but where do we – 'the peoples' – stand in the international system? How do we define ourselves as subjects in the global realm? To this we shall come back another day, but how the war will end, in whose name freedom is being fought – and hopefully, will be won, – and the good life be lived in the global realm, are questions which will be lost if we do not see the international system as a human project.

I echo the perplexities implicit in the questions that Michael Marder raises: "Is the war in Ukraine a temporary setback for freedom's continued march around the world? Is it a temporary obstacle to the atavistic restoration of imperial Russia? Or is something else afoot on Ukrainian soil?"[23] The third of these questions is particularly pertinent. What is afoot, I think, on Ukrainian soil, is humanity. It is the indomitable togetherness of peoples. We can be cynical of the weapons in the name of freedom, but we cannot be cynical of the cries of mothers and children; we can betray our states, but how can we betray Ukrainian and Russian civilian forces who are blinded and lost in the fog of war; we can surrender to death, but can we surrender to evil? The critical reflections on the stage of international politics that I have opened above emerge, in contradistinction to a world of hegemonic struggles, from a world of 'original encounters' – a humanist paradigm that is summed up in eight propositions.[24] It is with these that I shall end:

1. The world in its present form is passing away and so is our place in it as humanity. As actors on the political stage, we are peoples, and all peoples are equal in freedom and dignity.

2. As peoples we are free to commune and determine ourselves as political communities. Whether it be a 'village or as a tribe', a 'nation or as a state', a 'republic or as a kingdom', and so forth, all peoples stand as equals in the global realm.

3. As political communities we are free to organize our interests, powers and beliefs and group ourselves into 'associations', 'coalitions', 'unions', and so forth, so that, as it were, kings among kings may be kings, and servants among servants may serve each other but that neither servant nor king be a slave nor a master to either.

4. Every individual, community and organization will speak in a language they choose – a working language; there is and shall be no official language.

5. Every individual, community and organization will engage and will be held accountable to the principle and spirit of togetherness: to write their accords and discords together in communal solidarity. For the sanction is not war but "banishment from brotherhood" – from the association of peoples itself.

6. A community (a group of sentimental peoples bound by flesh, blood, and memory) chooses its own name, as every union, coalition, or association (a group of practical peoples bound in love and war) between and among communities shall call itself by another. Our name marks the beginning of our political community.

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[23] Michael Marder, "The Implosion of History", *Project Syndicate* (4 April 2022). The Implosion of History by Michael Marder - Project Syndicate (project-syndicate.org).
[24] Villanueva, "How have we kept the peace in ASEAN and how can we secure its promise among all peoples in Southeast Asia?: preliminary reflections on a humanist paradigm", 14-15.

7. Wars that are waged between and among members who belong to the same association; must not be used to legitimise armed intervention by other peoples unless otherwise called for by a member of the association. Arising from the imperative of togetherness, armed intervention that takes place when not called for by a member of the association, is an act of aggression on the entire association.

8. In light of preserving each other's faiths and religions, races and colours, genders, and sexes, and the languages that we write and speak, all peoples in a spirit of togetherness desire to form humanity on Earth. Sovereignty belongs to the world of states; humanity belongs to the world of peoples.

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