



GLOBAL SECURITY DILEMMA AND GOVERNANCE AMID THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Wang Lincong

Vice President of China-Africa Institute, Deputy Director and Research Fellow of the Institute of West Asian and African Studies of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Vice President and Secretary General of the China Middle East Society.

Since entering the 21st century, humanity has shown solidarity in the face of global security threats and challenges, as manifested by the joint response to SARS epidemic in 2003, the global financial crisis in 2008, Islamic State terrorist organization from 2014 to 2017 and others. However, as the U.S. has turned to major country competition on all fronts, humanity is shifting from cooperation to confrontation in global security governance. This is evident in the deep divisions over COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022. The Russia-Ukraine conflict shows that geopolitical rivalry has once again taken the center stage of international politics. The deficit of trust, development, governance

and peace on a global scale has become more prominent, and division and confrontation are putting the world in jeopardy. Through the conflict we see the fragility of the global security governance system and the possibility of security issues spiraling out of control. The breakout of high-intensity local wars cannot be ruled out. That begs the question, how the security and development of humanity can be ensured? It will be difficult to ensure stable development of the world without respect for the legitimate security interests of all countries. Therefore, to rebuild trust, resolve dilemma, strengthen cooperation, and advance governance and system building on security issues should top the agenda of global governance.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT AND GLOBAL SECURITY DILEMMA

When one party advances its security capability unlimitedly out of its pursuit of absolute security without considering the security interests of the other party, the latter will be thus forced to respond by enhancing its own security capability which in turn will elevate the sense of insecurity for the former who will continue to improve its own security capability. This will end up with higher level of insecurity for both sides. Such a situation is referred to as security dilemma.

The pursuit of absolute security cannot bring security in a real sense. Instead it will create a serious security dilemma. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine stands for such a dilemma. If COVID-19 pandemic is a big black swan event, the conflict can be seen as a gray rhino event. It stands as the continuation and result of the geopolitical rivalry after the Cold War. The regional order adjustments in Eurasia after the upheaval in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union, represented by the Kosovo War, the Georgia War and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have shown that countries would turn to war for settling regional security order and shaping new regional security architecture. In this process the pursuit of global hegemony by the U.S. and Russia's resistance to it become the two sides of the same coin. How to deal with the so-called security threat posed by Russia has become the core of the security architecture in post-Cold War Europe.

After the disintegration of the bipolar structure the U.S. did not end its hostility to Russia. Instead it has intensified its crackdown on Russia, which eventually led to strong counterattack. The 2008 Georgia war, the 2014 Ukraine crisis and the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict played out against this backdrop. For sure, from the outset Russia did not see NATO's eastward expansion after the Cold War as a serious security threat, but it finally chooses to defend by force its own security interests as it has been encroached on by the U.S. and NATO step by step. This reflects the security dilemma between the U.S. and Russia, which is the deep cause of the outbreak of the conflict.

As the Cold War ended, Russian leaders accepted America's rhetoric about the defensive nature of NATO in the face of its eastward expansion and chose to acquiesce. However, this was not met with equal goodwill

from the U.S.; Instead, the U.S. continued to push for NATO's eastward expansion and ramp up security pressure on Russia. Since 2008, Russia has viewed NATO as a serious security threat instead of a defensive organization, and chosen to respond in a tough way to safeguard its security interests and strategic space. This is reflected in both the 2008 Georgia war and the 2014 Ukraine crisis where Russia took a tough response and was not strongly resisted by the Western countries. Therefore, the mindset that toughness is the only way to security became the urge behind the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict. However, judged from its results, Russia pursues security in a tough way only to find itself in a security dilemma rather than with enhanced security.

The U.S.-led NATO military bloc continues to expand eastward, attempting to increase its own absolute security at the expense of Russia's security interests. Meanwhile Russia's perception of such expansion has changed significantly, that is, it sees NATO as its biggest security threat. The two sides are thus locked in hostilities over perceived security threats, stand in sharp opposition in security objectives and play tit for tat in security means. In particular, NATO recognized Ukraine as enhanced opportunities partner in 2020, which led to a rapid rise of sense of insecurity for Russia. It was only a matter of time for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine to break out. Thus, when Russia once again resorted to military means to eliminate security threats in February 2022, the U.S.-led Western world struck back in kind, plunging the world into a security dilemma and triggering security crisis at an unprecedentedly dangerous level.

THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT ON GLOBAL SECURITY

The Russia-Ukraine conflict carries both the feature of hybrid war and proxy war. Although it remains a local war within Europe, it has sent shock waves to all countries and exerted overall and long-term impact on the world.

One, it exacerbates global security crisis in both traditional and non-traditional fields. On the one hand, the conflict shows that traditional security issues still pose serious challenges in a real sense. First, it accelerates the pace of global militarization. Since the conflict broke

out, Western countries quickly joined the efforts to arm Ukraine by delivering large quantities of such weapons as stinger missiles, drones, armored vehicles, body armor and other small arms. However, as both a practical and symbolic support for Ukraine, the arms aid would not only prolong the conflict but could make it spiral out of control. Furthermore, the conflict also results in higher military spending in Europe. Germany is planning to increase its military budget and reinvigorate its armaments. Japan, far away in Asia, is also taking the opportunity to beef up its military and plans to raise its military budget to 2% of its GDP. Some developing countries are purchasing advanced weapons and equipment, leading to a surge in arms sales orders and increasing militarization on a global scale. Second, it increases the risk of nuclear war. Russian President Vladimir Putin made it clear on February 27, 2022 that Russia's deterrent includes nuclear weapons, making it the first public nuclear warning since the 1960s. Although it is believed that as long as NATO does not directly deploy troops in Ukraine, it is unlikely for Russia to use nuclear weapons directly. With that said, the Western countries' continuous efforts to bog Russia down into war and bleed it out have caused great antipathy in Russia. The risk of nuclear war has not been completely eliminated. In addition, the conflict has also encouraged some countries to consider possessing nuclear weapons, which further destabilizes the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

On the other hand, the conflict worsens non-traditional security issues including food security, energy security, financial security and war refugees. First, it further disturbs global food security. Russia and Ukraine together accounted for about one-third of global wheat exports in 2021, making them the world's largest and fourth largest wheat exporter respectively. The breakout of the conflict has not only directly pushed up global food prices, but also affected global food supply, putting great pressure on food importers. Take the Middle East as an example, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and other countries that rely heavily on food imports from Russia and Ukraine, have faced greater food security pressure and financial stress due to the conflict. The wheat price in Egypt, for instance, rose 50 percent one month after the conflict broke out. Second, it hurts human security. High energy and food price due to the conflict, compounded by record high inflation in many countries and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, pose a

direct threat to human security and survival, particularly for low-income population. These problems may lead up to secondary risks that, together with existing ones, could trigger popular protests and renewed waves of political and social unrest in some countries. Third, it creates new refugee crisis. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the conflict has resulted in 6 million refugees and displaced 8 million Ukrainians. Not only will they face immediate physical and emotional stress, but will also be shadowed by the long-lasting impact of the conflict and suffer insecurities in terms of their health, education and social welfare conditions.

Two, it creates a new security dilemma. On the one hand, the hegemony and power politics of the U.S. are resurging once again. Since the outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis, rise of the East and decline of the West is becoming ever more prominent. The U.S. has thus adjusted its foreign strategy, manifested by strategic contraction in the Middle East and major country competition in the Asia-Pacific and Eurasia. Such strategic adjustments, with the fundamental purpose of retaining U.S. hegemony, is the product of its strategic panic about China, Russia and other emerging countries. Since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the U.S. has continuously added oil to the flame of the conflict by supporting Ukraine and containing Russia. Such behavior is driven by two strategic motives: first, the U.S. tries to use the conflict to distract its people from domestic problems and realize its goal of curing internal ailments from the outside by challenging and provoking Russia to the limit; second, the U.S. intends to rally its traditional allies under its leadership and control in Eurasia, so as to achieve the purpose of using Ukraine to control Russia and using Russia to pressurize Europe. As the U.S. had been pushing ahead with such acts as insisting on NATO's eastward expansion, inciting color revolution in Ukraine, and interrupting the economic cooperation and the process of building a peace framework between Russia and Europe, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine eventually broke out. This is the victory of the offshore balancing strategy of the U.S., with its aim to consolidate its hegemony by weakening Russia and trapping Europe, and enrich its military-industrial complex. In short, the U.S. will not let this conflict end easily.

On the other hand, the U.S. is engaged in coercive diplomacy, threatening and enticing other countries to side with it. As far as the Russia-Ukraine conflict is

concerned, many developing countries did not respond positively to the demands of the U.S. and were unwilling to take sides. For example, many Middle East countries take a neutral position out of caution and try to hedge their bets between Russia and the West. Meanwhile they oppose the act of U.S. and European powers to impose extreme pressure and sanctions.

At the same time, the conflict shows that the security structure in Europe tends to collapse, forming the so-called security black hole. The U.S. is not only the initiator but also the driver and beneficiary of the conflict; both Russia and Ukraine bear huge losses and costs; and European countries as NATO members have not only changed their perceptions of security threats, but also witnessed crisis in their security systems. It's fair to say that, after peace and development for most of the century, Europe has once again fallen into a security dilemma.

Three, it severely affects global security governance system. The Russia-Ukraine conflict affects global security governance on all fronts, driving changes in security governance issues, governance modes and governance concepts. First, the rise of military conflicts and security issues are changing to some extent the theme of our times, i.e., peace and development. With the U.S. making a complete turn to major country competition, the world has entered a period of turbulence and transformation. It becomes more insecure with unprecedentedly acute military and security issues. As the Russia-Ukraine conflict is likely to escalate, and countries around the world are taking the old path of rearmament, the 21st century is facing the danger of returning to the jungle days. The U.S.-led Western world is scaling up arms race, launching a new Cold War and using the conflict to weaken Russia. At the same time, it continues to exert maximum pressure and provocation on China on issues related to Xinjiang, Taiwan and the South China Sea. In addition, the U.S. has mobilized tools in the fields of politics, security, economy, finance, science and technology to control the global industrial chain and supply chain, and block globalization through collectivization and regionalization, thus safeguarding its hegemonic interests.

Second, group confrontation has replaced institutional cooperation and changed the security governance mode. After the Cold War, major countries maintained a high level of coordination, especially on security cooperation through the UN Security Council, although there was no shortage of wrangles between them. However, the secu-

urity cooperation on the Russia-Ukraine conflict between major countries through the Security Council has come to an impasse. The U.S. is boosting group confrontation, and NATO is ever more engaged in its global expansion and action preference. It not only encroaches on Russia's strategic space by expanding eastward, but also disturbs Central and West Asia by attacking Libya to overthrow Gaddafi's regime, and intervening in Afghanistan and Iraq. Now it is extending its tentacles to the Asia-Pacific region by attempting to intervene in the South China Sea. It is fair to say that NATO is both an accomplice and a tool of the U.S. in its global hegemonic strategy.

Third, the zero-sum mentality has replaced win-win cooperation, further distorting the core concept of global security governance. In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the whole NATO is in a fanatic anti-Russia mood, and the sweeping sanctions against Russia reached its peak. The U.S. and other Western countries wouldn't take Russia's legitimate security concerns in a serious and rational manner. They are still obsessed with repeating the all-win scenario of the collapse of the Soviet Union. This further pushed up the sense of insecurity for Russia. The U.S. and Russia are trapped in the Hobbes culture of mutual hostility, with their mindset transforming to zero or even negative sum game. Their perspective of seeing each other as security threats and hence the hostile behaviors are hard to change in short term.

WAYS TO ADVANCE GLOBAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE

The Russia-Ukraine conflict highlights global security crisis and the difficulties as well as urgency of security governance. The so-called security governance dilemma refers to the stalemate state caused by the lack of consensus among security governance subjects. However, that does not mean that there is no way out. To crack the dilemma it requires rational response and incremental accumulation of enabling conditions.

What is needed is to start with rebuilding mutual trust on security, to gradually change the perception of security threats, and to establish a security risk prevention mechanism, so as to ease security crisis and get rid of the dilemma. On 21 April 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, "we humanity are living in an indivisible security community". He further proposed for the first time a

Global Security Initiative as follows: we stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security; stay committed to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; stay committed to abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter; stay committed to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously; stay committed to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation; and stay committed to maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional areas. The Initiative has enriched the new security concept. It not only provides new ideas for resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but also a new plan and blueprint for global security governance.

First, we need to foster the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security as well as that of harmonious and co-existing security. The path to global security governance cannot be built without the establishment of a new security concept. The Russia-Ukraine conflict triggers or intensifies global security crisis. The zero-sum or even negative-sum game thinking can lead to crisis everywhere. In fact, Ukraine can only achieve its security by taking a stance between Russia and NATO. The more it keeps drawing close to NATO, the higher its security crisis and risk will be. This shows the necessity of independent security and the importance of mutual security. It is in view of these multiple crises that China has put forward long-term and fundamental approaches to address these issues – building a community with a shared future for mankind and advancing the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative. This is derived from traditional Chinese wisdom and the concept of harmonious and co-existing security. It is a global public good provided by China in the new era. Therefore, it is important to ensure lasting peace, stability, prosperity and development of the world by centering on the new security concept, strengthening the sense of a security community in which mankind co-exists in harmony, and promoting the building of a global security governance system.

Second, we need to establish an inclusive security mechanism and an interest-driven security governance mode. Security mechanism should be inclusive and cooperative in order to be equitable and sustainable. Such mechanism must embrace Russia. At present, the U.S., UK and France are deliberately excluding Russia at the

Security Council, even trying to build a new system without China and Russia. Such a system will not only be ineffective and fragile, but also worsen the current security problems. Only by respecting the legitimate security interests and concerns of all countries and adhering to the principle of indivisibility of security, which means that one country should not enhance its own security at the expense of another, can an inclusive security architecture be reasonable, benign and durable. At the same time, the current crisis-driven security governance mode should be replaced with the interest-driven one, as the former is compellent and the latter is proactive and focuses on the internal mechanism of promoting development and sharing security. It will help to build a universal and inclusive security community.

Third, we need to take a holistic approach to safeguard traditional and non-traditional security. In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the focus has been put on the traditional security issue of military confrontation, as the international community is concerned about how to achieve a ceasefire. If NATO continues to support Ukraine in its confrontation with Russia, it will only exacerbate Russia's insecurity. This will not only fail to safeguard Ukraine's security interests, but also make it hard for Russia to end its military operations. At the same time, food security, energy security, financial security, refugee security, environmental security and other issues brought about by the conflict have affected all countries in the world with far-reaching impact. It has now become a complex security problem that needs to be solved urgently and jointly by the international community to prevent the situation from getting out of control.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is a sign that the world is falling apart. Hegemonic thinking and power politics are the biggest threat to human development and security in the 21st century. In the face of increasingly severe global problems, only by adhering to the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind can we usher in bright prospects. The Global Security Initiative is constructive and should play a guiding role. We should fully respect the legitimate security interests of all countries, work together to shape an inclusive, cooperative and shared security governance mechanism, and build an authoritative and efficient global security governance system. This requires foresight, reason, inclusiveness and action on the part of governments of all countries. ■