

New Geopolitics and tomorrow's world order - the Asian perspective



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Marc Saxer

Is the war in Ukraine only a European war or is it about much more? With Mr. Marc Saxer, Head of Asia Department at the German Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, analyst, strategist and publicist, we discussed the struggle for power behind the war and the coming world order.

What we're seeing through the war is the geopolitical conflict between great powers, with Russia and China openly challenging the Pax Americana - marking an end to a hegemony that started after the Cold War. The question here is, what is the next world order going to look like? Mr. Saxer presented three models of world order we have witnessed in the past 200 years - how the power balance between world powers will play out and what new configurations emerge will determine not only the peacekeeping agenda but the global energy, production, distribution, and financial systems for the decades to come.

From 1815 to the first world war was a multipolar world by a concert of great powers. The way international conflicts between these powers were prevented was the constant backroom negotiations, similar to that of the G7 or G20. Europe was at the center of this world order and persisted 100 years of almost uninterrupted peace - however from

the perspective of the Global South, that peace was clearly bought by imperialist expansions abroad.

After the second world war came a rule-based multilateralism with the United Nations at the center, set up with a great emphasis on international law and an elaborate architecture of international institutions, allowing limited cooperation. Then came a unipolar, American-led liberal world order. This put great emphasis on the global promotion of democracy and human rights, sometimes with robust measures - and now this liberal world order is coming to a demise. We will see attacks on the role of the US dollar as the world-leading currency, a de-dollarisation which is something that China, Russia, India, Iran and other countries have been pursuing for a decade now.

Since the end of World War Two, the US has built a string of military infrastructure all the way from Japan to Borneo and Indonesia. Since the Obama administration's strategy of the so-called pivot to Asia, the US have been increasing their military might with their First Island Chain, because this is where the defense of the US homeland starts. This military presence, however, causes China to feel strangled and act aggressively defensive. Their Silk Road project is a way

to break free from the US stranglehold towards the West - ultimately reaching the European market to secure sales opportunities for Chinese products. Hence if a new Iron Curtain were to cut through the Chinese Silk Road, it would be a geopolitical and economic catastrophe for China. This is one of the reasons why China's support of Russia has been lukewarm. If the Ukraine war prolongs, China most likely will push further with maritime Silk Road. However, the idea of having a Eurasian space under control as a foundation of the next world order has been interrupted by the current developments. Even without this aspect, Russia and China's relationship is a very delicate, complicated and an ambivalent one. It is not clear just yet whether there is going to be a Russia-Chinese bloc. Although Russia will be a political and military ally, it has fallen back to a junior partner for China. The interconnectedness of these two economies will increase considerably, yet most likely in a way that Russia is at the mercy of China.

The competition over global hegemony plays between the US and China and that is the

reason why they do not wish to be drawn into the "European conflict".

How the power balance will play out in Asia remains largely unknown. There are rising concerns about China's posture but also doubt arises towards the West for their reliability in security guarantees. However, it is much more beneficial for the Asian states to stay open to both sides, despite being a tricky balancing act. The discussions that are going to be had now are going to determine what kind of world order we will live under in the 21st century, and that is what the war in Ukraine is really about.

The panel touched also the upcoming elections in the Philippines and the stressful situation for societies and journalists alike concerning free-speech, free press and the entanglement of various Asia countries and Australia.



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