

The Changing World Order by Frank Owarish, Ph.D., CEO, IISRT; former senior UN executive International Institute for Strategic Research and Training New York State registered think tank dealing with academic research <https://internationalinstituteforstrategicresearch.info/> Presented: CASA Singapore 2023

Introduction

The world has reached a population of 8 billion (Scherbov et al., 2011); the focus/structure of the paper is a compilation using available studies and credible news, capturing the essence of the ongoing transformation and shaping up a new world order. This paper highlights the significant challenges currently facing our world. It also focuses on some of the problems requiring urgent attention and offers solutions in broad brushstrokes (S. Owarish, personal communication, January 12, 2023). Progressive and regressive forces are at war after a lull. Instead of a large military budget for the superpowers, the resources should be used to address the many issues facing humanity. The tragedy is that we have the solutions and the means, but foolish politics and self-interests compound the problems.

The author believes that there may be bickering among world leaders, but no one wants World War 3, particularly a nuclear disaster. Instead of using resources for military confrontation, we should focus on constructive actions to improve the world by resolving economic and social issues in developing and developed countries. The author notes that this may sound like idealism and the vested military interests are very strong but let us beat swords into plowshares (United Nations, 2023)

World Trauma

The world has been dealing with the trauma of Covid 19, which is less of an issue now in several countries, although the risk of variant and resurgence is still there (Dzinamarira et al., 2022). China's zero Covid policy, perhaps because of the size of its population, warrants attention (Chen et al., 2020). It is expected that recovery from the lockdown will be fast. Also worthy of attention are several developing countries facing a lack of resources.

The Russia-Ukraine War caused major shocks and aftershocks to practically all world countries (Selyukh et al., 2022). There are several types of effects both for the developed countries from Europe to North America to developing countries around the world. The first set of countries is having to deal with energy issues with a steep increase in prices resulting in inflation which is proving difficult to mitigate with a ripple effect for the stock markets, in the case of the UK, even leading to a change in government leadership (Guenette et al., 2022). In the case of the US, with midterm elections in sight, the government leadership is trying to mitigate the price of oil, which has risen to a high-level (Frieden, 2020). The effort to bring Saudi Arabia, including OPEC, onboard failed with the claim of market manipulation—a significant rift between traditional partners. On the stock markets, investors seem less inclined for hi-sech stocks, some of which are

speculative and jumped to the energy bandwagon, going sky high (sommer, 2022). Green energy appears to be going to the back burner while developing countries face different issues (Rahman et al., 2022).

Countries in Asia seem to be facing less trauma and have more stability, and this is the case also for countries in the middle east, with the oil-producing countries having a windfall (Wang & Xu, 2022). The MENA countries are experiencing an economic boom. Countries in South America seem to be pursuing their dynamics, while drought is a factor in several countries (Khedair, 2022).

Looking at one set of underlying reasons, it should be recalled that Russia is a significant exporter of energy commodities and Ukraine of grains (Tan, 2022). At the start of the war, consideration of interdependencies may have been overlooked, resulting in a rude awakening, and it is now mission impossible to push the clock back. Besides, the vested interests may be pursuing their agenda. Lobbying can be very subtle. Several countries face the effect of climate change. Migration is a significant issue (Blanchard, et al., 2022).

The United Nations is caught in the middle, with the maestro having difficulty conducting; The Security Council chamber orchestra is in cognitive dissonance, and the entire orchestra of the General Assembly is in harmony on many pieces and at odds with other components. They remember Zubin Mehta performing on UN Day several years ago, calling for harmony. The UN Singers came up with Let There be Peace on Earth.

The world seems to be in disorder; in a nuclear confrontation, there will be no winner; the transition to a new world order is in progress, with Asia and the Middle East capturing the front seats (Saran, 2023).

The Major Issues

Ending the Russia-Ukraine War: both sides and all countries stand to win by the end of the war; the UN General Assembly has the proper tool to make this happen (Abonyi, 2022). Promoting cooperation between China and Taiwan: going past strategic ambiguity to a fair deal with allies on each side announcing a partnership between these two great countries. How about a confederation? (Asia Society, 2023). Fostering international cooperation: the United Nations does more than its fair share in helping countries maintain good relations (Clark et al., 2022). Dealing with migration issues: there are bad situations in several parts of the world; in some instances, the case is being correctly handled; but numerous mishandling problems come to mind (Madhav & Tyagi, 2022). Fighting poverty: abundant material shows that the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and WFP. FAO and other organizations are actively helping countries deal with the issue (Margulis et al., 2023).

Literature Review

Challenges: Climate change

There is a lot of bad news on climate. The US is experiencing extremely high temperatures, wildfires, and storms that cause flash flooding and kill people (Clarke et al., 2022). Europe started

to have wildfires, too, this Summer. For the past four years, Eastern Africa has been battling the worst droughts and locust swarms that are wiping out crops, leading to countless cases of malnutrition (Otto, 2023). Madagascar is a perfect example of a victim of climate change: the once lush and green island is turning into a red desert (Altaba, 2022). The World Food Programme warned that the island was at risk of seeing "the world's first climate change famine" as it faced a severe food crisis (Mehrabi et al., 2022).

The fourth-largest island on the planet and one of its most diverse ecosystems, Madagascar have thousands of endemic plant and animal species, such as lemurs (King, 2023). Four years of drought, linked by the United Nations to climate change and deforestation caused by burning or cutting down trees to make charcoal and farming, threaten both the ecosystem and the people. Starvation has become the companion of people living in the country's far south (Hasan et al., 2019). And ruffed lemurs, a representative species in Madagascar, could lose 38 percent to 93 percent of their habitat by 2070 due to climate change and deforestation, according to a paper published in *Nature Climate Change* (Weiskopf et al., 2021).

Asia and the Pacific region experience faster sea-level rises and are predicted to experience more intense heatwaves and heavier rainfall in the coming decades (Dhara & Koll, 2022). For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts more frequent high-intensity cyclones and storm surges (created by cyclones). Sea level rise alone is expected to submerge 17 percent of Bangladesh by 2050, leaving approximately 20 million homeless (Ahsan & Özbek, 2022). And extreme-weather events or the slow onset impacts of climate change, such as saltwater intrusion, will displace millions more people in the country. The small island developing States are recognized as among the most vulnerable to climate change.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has killed over 6 million people worldwide, with the United States officially surpassing one million reported COVID-19 deaths in May 2022 (Rudan, 2022). Among the survivors, the disease is causing long-term adverse effects in many people, known as post-COVID conditions or "long COVID. Because of health inequities, some people from racial or ethnic minority groups and some people with disabilities may be more likely to not only contract COVID-19 (because to their environment, place of employment, or lack of access to healthcare), but also develop protracted COVID (Okonkwo, et al., 2021).

The small island developing States are among the most vulnerable to the continuing effects of the pandemic. The pandemic has severely hit their economies, which are heavily reliant on tourism and services exports.

Most African countries have so far escaped the worst health impacts of the pandemic, that is, deaths. Experts worry that Africa's people would be very vulnerable victims if other more transmissible and deadly subvariants of the Omicron virus emerged due to the low percentage of the continent's population that is fully immunized against COVID-19 (20% as of today, with many countries having less than 10% of their population immunized) (Oberemok et al., 2022). And Africa is not the only continent affected because unless the virus is tamed everywhere, it can reach

every continent's shores; the Monkeypox virus outbreaks in Europe and the United States are proof of that Liang et al., 2022).

Beyond its health impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the most profound global economic recession in years. Today, 60 percent of workers have lower real incomes than before the pandemic; 60 percent of the poorest countries are in debt distress or at high risk of it; developing countries miss \$1.2 trillion per year to fill the social protection gap, and \$4.3 trillion is needed per year - more money than ever before - to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Alfani, 2022; United Nations, 2022).

The socioeconomic fallout of the pandemic has been particularly terrible in Africa, the poorest continent in the world. Financial markets were no longer accessible to African countries, and commodity prices fell, mainly hitting oil-exporting countries (Buheji et al., 2020). The cessation of tourism also severely affected small island developing States such as Cape Verde, Mauritius, and Seychelles. And the measures taken by governments to contain the spread of the virus disrupted demand and production. The fallout pushed the region into its first recession in 25 years and threatens to undo over a decade of development progress (Sumer & Joseph, 2018).

In particular, the pandemic has pushed more people into poverty in Africa. The 2021 extreme poverty rate (proportion of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day) is estimated to have increased by three percentage points because of the pandemic (that is, compared to pre-pandemic poverty levels projected for 2021). (Moyer, et al., 2022). While 478 million people lived in extreme poverty in Africa in 2019, an estimated 490 million people did so in 2021, 37 million more than projected without the pandemic (Moses et al., 2021). No African country has been spared the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic, even the most developed ones like South Africa, Mauritius, Tunisia, and Morocco.

The COVID-19 crisis has clarified that global interdependence can be a source of strength and efficiency, but it can also increase vulnerability and amplify external shocks (Forbes, 2021). While developed country economies have been better equipped to address the negative socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic with online education and work, online services provided by the governments, and more flexible fiscal space, the pandemic has disproportionately impacted the least developed countries (LDCs) (Loayza & Pennings, 2020; UNCTAD, 2022).

Against this backdrop, the Doha Programme of Action, agreed on March 17 2022, aims at sustainable and inclusive recovery and increased resilience from COVID-19 in a sustainable and equitable manner, leaving no one behind (Rydz-Żbikowska, 2022). The Doha Programme of Action contains commitments by both LDCs and their development partners to undertake necessary actions to achieve sustainable development in LDCs (UNCTAD, 2022).

Russia-Ukraine war and food, fertilizers and energy crisis

While the pandemic and its effects are not over yet, the Russia-Ukraine war is another major shock that has exacerbated the global economic slowdown (Ben Hassen & El Bilali, 2022). It has triggered a devastating humanitarian crisis and aggravated the pandemic-induced strains of supply

disruptions and worsening financial conditions, leading to soaring prices and volatility in energy markets. It has also resulted in significant price hikes for grains, fertilizers, and other agricultural commodities, particularly those exported by the Russian Federation and Ukraine (Glauben et al., 2022).

All these factors have slowed economic growth in the world's largest and most developing economies and exacerbated inflationary pressures worldwide. The conflict has exacerbated food insecurity and extreme poverty in many countries, particularly those reliant on food imports and those living in poverty and vulnerable situations Wudil et al., 2022).

In addition, the war's impact on food security, energy, and finance is now speeding up. Together with the world's other crises, the war threatens to unleash unprecedented hunger, deprivation, and a cost-of-living problem. While the latter is hitting vulnerable people and countries particularly hard, no government or community will be untouched by this cost-of-living crisis.

Food prices are at near record highs. Fertilizer prices have more than doubled, sounding an alarm everywhere. Without fertilizers, shortages will spread from corn and wheat to all staple crops, including rice, devastatingly impacting billions of people in Asia and South America (Beals, 2022). Record high energy prices are also triggering blackouts and fuel shortages in all parts of the world. Violent demonstrations in Sri Lanka and from Latin America to Africa over the dizzying spiral in fuel and food prices are a forewarning that more vulnerable countries could go bust (Fraye & Fernando, 2022).

In recent months, the spiralling international fuel and food prices have pushed Sri Lanka from a severe balance-of-payments crisis to bankruptcy, with its (former) Prime Minister declaring that the national economy had "wholly collapsed (Karam & Rising, 2022). The financial squeeze continues in many developing countries on top of the risk of debt default and economic collapse because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the inequality of recovery, and the climate crisis. The combined effects of the lingering pandemic and the conflict are expected to lead to a net increase of 75 million people in extreme poverty by the end of the year 2022 compared to pre-pandemic projections (Moyer et al., 2022). The situation has potentially destabilizing consequences for low- and middle-income economies.

Discussions and Solutions

There is only one way for the UN to stop this gathering storm: a political solution must be found, in line with international law and the United Nations charter, to end the Russia-Ukraine war. Until that happens, the world must take immediate action on two fronts.

First, the food produced by Ukraine and the food and fertilizer produced by Russia must be brought back into world markets despite the war. This will ease global food and energy shortages, stabilize worldwide food and energy markets, break the vicious cycle of rising prices, and significantly relieve developing countries.

The UN is coordinating two task forces to help find the package deal that allows for the safe and secure export of cereals from Ukraine through the Black Sea and immediate access to global markets for grains and fertilizers from Russia.

This deal is essential for hundreds of millions of people in developing countries, including in sub-Saharan Africa. The UN has been working closely with several Moscow, Kiev, Ankara, Brussels, and Washington partners to move this deal forward. As a result, the first ship carrying Ukrainian grain since the beginning of the war set off from the port of Odesa on August 1, 2022, under an internationally brokered deal, passed by Turkey for inspection before heading to Lebanon. It is expected to release large stores of crops trapped in the country, easing global food shortages and a growing global hunger crisis. Other ships would also depart Ukraine's ports through the safe corridors in line with deals signed in Istanbul in July 2022.

Second, the world needs to make resources available immediately to help the poorest countries and communities. Governments must be able to borrow the money they need to keep their economies afloat and their people thriving.

And there is no solution to this global crisis without a solution to the economic situation in the developing world. The global financial system must rise above its shortcomings and use all the instruments at its disposal with flexibility and understanding to support vulnerable countries and people.

To conclude, immediate actions at the global level are required to save lives and livelihoods over the following months and years. Policies to address specific impacts on energy and food prices should focus on those most affected without distorting prices. And as the pandemic continues, vaccination rates must rise to guard against future variants. Finally, mitigating climate change requires urgent multilateral action to limit emissions and raise investments to hasten the green transition.

Conclusion

The world has become more complex; however, the basic principles of international relations are still pertinent and can lead to tangible results, such as cooperation, competition, conflict, and dealing with each situation with the appropriate tools (O'Connor, 2022; Sor, 2022).

Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, stated on Friday, November 11, 2022, that the United States and China must cooperate to manage differences effectively, advance mutually beneficial cooperation, prevent misunderstanding and error, and return China-U.S. relations to the path of sound and steady development (McCarthy, 2022; Yadv, 2022).

They were concluding thoughts by Sam Owarish, Ph.D. : All current world leaders want the best for their people. The war in Ukraine is a wake-up call for all of us, showing how a regional war can affect the whole world. All countries want to be prosperous and technologically advanced (S. Owarish, personal communication, January 12, 2023). These objectives can only be achieved by cooperation and peaceful co-existence, recognizing that interdependence is real. All political

systems have their flaws. Human rights and social justice should be upheld in every country in line with principles UN Member States have worked together to develop (Cleary, 2019).

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