

Is World War III imminent?

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Abstract

You might find it hard to believe, but Nostradamus, a great French astrologer, predicted some of these prophecies 400 years ago. Their accuracy has been demonstrated throughout the centuries, whether it be with regard to the French Revolution or the emergence of Adolf Hitler. Or the atomic bomb's catastrophic effects. The "4-line predictions" by Nostradamus, penned in 1555, continue to astound historians and omen-makers. Even the present Russian invasion of Ukraine and the confrontation with Israel are included in his book, which foresees that these conflicts would soon cause a major war in the world. Will we be able to reject the opinions of professors and international relations professionals if we choose to dismiss the words of Nostradamus as well? The Russia-Ukraine war has made the importance of military might, which is one component of this, even more obvious. The Indo-Pacific Region, which is the hub of contemporary global geopolitics and new power games, would reportedly be the heart of this great power clash. This region is home to important economies like those of India, China, Japan, South Korea, and Arabia. Therefore, this area is quite crucial geo-economically. So, what are the factors due to which, after so many years of the 2nd world war, the world is once again on the verge of a great power war?

Key words: World war, Conflict, Policy, USA, Russia

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I. A new era of superior military technology

The general consensus was that such deadly weapons should be discouraged rather than encouraged after the end of the Second World War and the advent of the nuclear age. Nuclear weapons were promoted as deterrent weapons following the horrible destruction brought on by atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was argued that a country's nuclear arsenal would serve as a deterrent to other nations from attacking it,¹ but as nuclear arsenals continue to grow, their threat is becoming more significant. Naturally, there were many concerns raised about nuclear deterrence when Russia, which is believed to have the greatest nuclear arsenal, attacked Ukraine. Russia is one of the most powerful nuclear states in the world, therefore it would be folly to try to stop it, Russian President Vladimir Putin said before he gave the order for his troops to invade.² Pakistan, Iran, North Korea, and other nations are among those on this list. These authoritarian regimes are quite hospitable because they wield such power. For instance, North Korea has stated that it can formally employ preemptive nuclear strike to protect itself under a new legislation.³ Since this law renders its nuclear status reckless, disarmament negotiations will no longer be relevant to it. In a recent attack on Israel, Hamas shot thousands of rockets, killed 1500 civilians, and kidnapped an undetermined number of people. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to this action by saying that although Hamas launched this war, Israel would put an end to it.⁴ He had made it obvious that a protracted and challenging war was ahead on this expedition. Given the tight relations between Hamas, Iran, and Lebanon's

¹ Geneva Academy, Nuclear weapons under international law: an overview October 2014, <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Nuclear%20Weapons%20Under%20International%20Law.pdf>

² Andrew Osborn & Dmitry Antonov, Putin orders troops to Ukraine after recognizing breakaway regions, Reuters, 22 February 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/kremlin-says-no-concrete-plans-summit-with-biden-over-ukraine-2022-02-21/>

³ Josh Smith, North Korea law outlines nuclear weapons use, including pre-emptive strike, The Japan Times, 09 September 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/09/09/asia-pacific/north-korea-nuclear-weapons-policy/>

⁴ Josef Federman & Issam Adwan, Hamas surprise attack out of Gaza stuns Israel and leaves hundreds died in fighting, retaliation, AP, 08 October 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-gaza-hamas-rockets-airstrikes-tel-aviv-11fb98655c256d54ecb5329284fc37d2>

Hezbollah, the Hamas attack increased the likelihood of conflict spreading throughout the region. This foreshadows the possibility of a larger regional conflict.

Defense professionals now concur that the first ballistic missile war between major nations will occur in any significant conflict in the future. Any such escalation will put enormous pressure on the US leader in relations, making an all-out conflict inevitable. Even onlookers are quite skeptical about this, but why? Despite all these possibilities, international organizations and institutions may prevent such a situation from occurring.

II. International Organizations: A New Battle ground, New Obstacles

International organizations like the United Nations were formerly founded to prevent a third world war from breaking out and to preserve world peace and security. Additionally, the USA and its Allies played a major role in the development of the world system in which we currently live. In their opinion, multilateralism is no longer as committed to collaboration and collective security as it once was when it was governed by ideas like free trade and collective security.⁵ One indicator of the demise of long-standing collective security arrangements is the motto "America First" used by former US President Donald Trump.⁶ Even as Trump's management of the trade conflict with China worsens, there is an important dispatch of the leadership of the current American President, Joe Biden. Although the situation surrounding US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan had already gotten so bad that China had boosted military operations nearby, the UN was powerless to intervene in this case, just like it was during the Russia-Ukraine war. Critics have been raising the problem of how the five permanent members of the UN continue to advance self-interest with complete impunity for years.⁷

With multiple power centers emerging and the stability and coherence of the global order appearing to be eroding, the Security Council's inefficiency is made all the more painful today. If we turn the pages of history, we can see how this multi-polarity led to the outbreak of World War One in Europe.

III. A Multiple World Order Is Dangerous

The distribution of power is a key determinant of the stability of the international system. To keep the global order stable, it is crucial to maintain an equilibrium, and the unipolar and bipolar world orders are the ones that most reliably achieve this equilibrium. When there is just one hegemon in the world, first discussing unipolarity, other states stay in its shadow since they are unable to oppose that hegemonic force. Due to the fact that no state wants to become the hegemon's target, security competition is reduced in a unipolar world.⁸ After the Cold War, when the United States became the lone superpower, it had the ability to uphold peace and security institutions, preventing serious rivalry and local security crises. When discussing a bipolar world, it is also maintained in balance. because it equally divides power amongst the leading powers. Whether it be economic systems, political philosophies, or technological and military equipment. The world was split into two such armed games after the Second World War, with the USA on one side and the Soviet Union on the other.⁹ This bipolar system, which lasted for almost fifty years, was characterized by a fierce power battle between the two big powers, yet retraining Due to many reasons, it was just the Cold War. However, in a multipolar world it becomes difficult to preserve this equilibrium, as World War One attests to. Five European powers—Austria-Hungary, Germany, France, Britain, and Russia—were responsible for this terrible conflict. Although several treaties between these great countries were negotiated prior to this war, these alliances instead of fostering stability became a source of contention. Experts claim that the existing global order likewise resembles World War 1. Even if there is a continued trend of growing economic integration, political and military conflicts continue to spread around the world. Additionally, just as it was nearly inevitable for powerful empires like the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungary to fall at that time, it is now clear that the United States and Europe are losing their dominance. The

⁵ Will Moreland, The purpose of multilateralism A framework for democracies in a geopolitically competitive world, Brookings foreign policy, September 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FP_20190923_purpose_of_multilateralism_moreland.pdf

⁶ Krishnadev Calamur, A short history of America first, The Atlantic, 21 January 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/trump-america-first/514037/>

⁷ Jeremy herb & Eric Cheung, US house speaker Nancy Pelosi lands in Taiwan amid threats if c=Chinese retaliation, CNN, 02 August 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/02/politics/nancy-pelosi-visit-taipei-taiwan-trip/index.html>

⁸ Kenneth N.Waltz, The Stability of a Bipolar world, Vol.93, pp. 881-909, summer 1964, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20026863>

⁹ Cold Conflict, WWII The national wwII Museum new Orleans, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/cold-conflict>

entire amount of debt weighing down on the US economy today exceeds its GDP¹⁰. Russia, on the other hand, continues to be a significant force because of its natural riches and energy supplies. China's economic growth will soon surpass that of the USA, and India is also growing as a major force alongside China. Experts predict that India will overtake Japan and Germany to become the third-largest economy in the world soon.¹¹ In addition, Gulf nations have considerable military, energy, and economic capacities that give them enormous influence in international events. Mutual mistrust, antagonism, and shaky alliances boost the likelihood of becoming a great power in such a scenario, much like in the pre-world war era.

In fact, some analysts contend that the instability of a multilateral system stems from the fact that the enemy of one party is also a party to another. They also assert that the Asian alliance system that the United States constructed is susceptible to responsibility shifting at any time. On the other hand, the situation may get even more tense with an alliance involving China, North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran.¹²

IV. War of miscalculation

A state may occasionally assault an adversary to gauge their strength. This challenge occasionally turns out to be beneficial. However, if the adversary is prepared to fight to protect its interests, a significant war situation could develop. If we think back to World War 2, a similar circumstance existed at that time. Germany under Hitler's rule developed into a totalitarian state that began attempting to rule all of Europe. It was believed at the start of the Second World War that superpowers like Germany and Japan could not be stopped, but it soon became evident that they lacked the necessary political, economic, and military capabilities to prevail in that world conflict. In the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine today, something analogous occurred. Putin believed he could quickly seize control of a minor nearby country like Ukraine by assaulting it. However, critics claim that this was Putin's biggest mistake of perception.¹³ Experts think China, which is pursuing an aggregation policy from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, may make a mistake along these lines. China is working to restore the imperial and middle kingdom eras' luster. China aspires to establish itself as a major superpower by investing in multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects like the Belt and Road Initiative because it believes that once upon a time it was the middle kingdom center of the world. Another significant reason influencing China's tough stance is the USA's dubious attitude. Whether it be the Taliban dictatorship in Afghanistan or Iran's nuclear program. Iran still views the United States' warnings to take the harshest possible action against it as mere threats. While the Taliban in Afghanistan, whom the United States fought for 20 years to expel, are now in power, despite their current isolation from the West, nations like Russia, China, Pakistan, and Iran International are attempting to establish their legacy by providing support.¹⁴

In this situation, it may be reasonable to wonder if it would be so simple to overthrow this liberal order founded on economic interdependence. Economic cooperation may not be able to preserve the global system, sadly, because of the degree of polarization and division that has occurred.

V. A liberal world power is eroding

Liberal academics nowadays frequently wonder: Does trade promote good relations, or do good relations promote trade? True, the status quo is now more economically reliant on its foes. Now think about how important Chinese manufacturing is to Europe and America, or Russian energy imports. It's equally true, though, that the process of decoupling from this dependence is also accelerating quickly. Western companies like McDonald's overnight left Russia following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. China's trade and investment are being hampered by

¹⁰ Daniel Araya, America's global dominance is ending. What comes next, Center for international governance innovation, 05 October 2022, <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/americas-global-dominance-is-ending-what-comes-next/>

¹¹ D.K.Srivastava, India towards becoming the third largest economy in the world, EY, 25 August 2023, https://www.ey.com/en_in/tax/economy-watch/india-towards-becoming-the-third-largest-economy-in-the-world#:~:text=India%20is%20predicted%20to%20become,the%20US%24%20trillion%20benchmark.

¹² Carl Baker & Brad Glosserman, Doing more and expecting less: The future of US Alliances in the Asia Pacific, Pacific Forum CSIS, Vol. 13-No.1, January 2013, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/161906/IssuesInsights_vol13no1.pdf

¹³ Guy Faulconbridge & Vladimir Soldatkin, Putin ponders: should Russia try to take Kyiv again?, Reuters, 14 June 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-ukraines-losses-are-vast-so-far-failed-counteroffensive-2023-06-13/>

¹⁴ Graeme Smith & Ibraheem Bahiss, The world has no choice but to work with the Taliban, Foreign Affairs, 11 August 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/afghanistan/world-has-no-choice-work-taliban>

recent legislation and regulations from the US, Europe, and Japan.¹⁵ China, meanwhile, is likewise hard at work distancing itself from the system of the free world. China has already refused to have its businesses registered on Wall Street in the United States, and it appears that other nations are doing the same.¹⁶ The persistent instability and instabilities in the world have been documented in numerous papers as a trend of declining globalization. De-dollarization is another rising tendency in this situation. The importance or hegemony of the dollar in international trade is being diminished through a process known as De-dollarization. De-dollarization is a sign of the growing friction between western and eastern nations as a result of the sanctions put in place in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The percentage of dollars in the world's foreign exchange reserves reportedly fell below 59 percent in the fourth quarter of last year (2022).¹⁷ For instance, countries like Saudi Arabia are currently considering using the Chinese currency yuan for Chinese oil purchases instead of dollars due to US sanctions.¹⁸ Today, it appears that the economic interdependence that had for so long preserved a balance between democracy and authoritarianism is slowly collapsing. However, up until now, we have only discussed core conflicts; therefore, it would be irresponsible if we did not also talk about the role that non-state players play in the devastation of a great power war.

VI. How non-state actors can fuel a powerful power conflict!

A military conflict between two countries is commonly referred to as war. When there are more than two states engaged, they typically form an alliance. However, following the Second World War, these trends started to shift. Due to non-state actors, unconventional warfare has become more frequent during the past few decades. Scholars have begun to discuss the evolving nature of war by examining military performance, the use of terror and other unconventional tactics by non-state actors. Take a look at the growth of a terrorist group like the Islamic State in 2014. Despite using a variety of military strategies, it was able to overpower conventional forces and seize territory. In addition, a variety of rebel groups have developed in the Syrian Civil War, which has been raging since 2011, with some of them fighting alongside Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and others opposed to him.¹⁹ In fact, it has expanded beyond just civil war and is now a multifaceted proxy conflict between regional and global forces. In addition to this, the Haqqani network, Al Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah in Palestine have been more visible since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. The main danger posed by these non-state actors is that they hold new technology from the fourth industrial revolution that has the potential to unleash unprecedented levels of devastation.²⁰ Artificial intelligence, quantum computing, communications, robotics, and hypersonic weapons are examples of advanced technologies that have the potential to revolutionize the global economy, society, and the battlefield. Defense specialists think that under this situation, scientific advancement and interactions between state and non-state actors have actually brought attention to the potential of enormous influence. According to many experts, the next big power confrontation may not include nuclear weapons, and such a war is not only possible but also likely to occur very soon in the near future.

VII. Conclusion

Well, it's not difficult to see that the kind of stress the globe is presently experiencing is of a permanent kind, meaning that it is not fleeting but rather long lasting. Well, it is obvious from looking around us that the kind of stress the globe is presently experiencing is one of a constant character. According to general consensus, the rising tension between East and West is the cause of this tension, which suggests it is long-lasting rather than passing.

Whether it is Russia's invasion on Ukraine or Hamas's jihadi attack on Israel, the world has reached a point where even a small spark can start a war. Even international organizations are now passive observers of this issue as new types of battlegrounds spring up all over the world, whether in the Middle East, on the Russian

¹⁵ Chi Hung Kwan, Decoupling Proceeding amid lingering U.S.-China tensions, RIETI, 2023, <https://www.rieti.go.jp/en/china/23051601.html>

¹⁶ Jeremy Mark, Deal or no deal, Chinese firms will still ditch Wall Street, Atlantic Council, 30 August 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/deal-or-no-deal-chinese-firms-will-still-ditch-wall-street/>

¹⁷ Michel Bromberg, De-Dollarization: What is it, and is it Happening, Investopedia, 16 August 2023, <https://www.investopedia.com/what-is-de-dollarization-7559514>

¹⁸ Zack Budryk, Saudi Arabia reportedly considering accepting yuan instead of dollar for oil sells, The Hill, 15 March 2022, <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/598257-saudi-arabia-considers-accepting-yuan-instead-of-dollar-for-oil/>

¹⁹ Ghadi Sary, Syria conflict: who are the groups fighting Asad? BBC, 11 November 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34710635>

²⁰ IEP, Global terrorism Index 2023, OCHA services, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2023>

Peninsula, or in the Indo-Pacific region. Tension has developed in all of these regions. These organizations solely function as paper-based institutions. With the shifting circumstances comes a growing polarization of the world, where even a small country's miscalculation can result in a major attack. In this context, non-state actors from some regions as well as the rise of terrorist forces and their tactics can result in a new level of devastation. The probability of world war is greatly increased by every circumstance and conflict.