

# **Jørgen Østrøm Møller: Fred i Ukraine eller amerikansk hegemoni? Amerika må beslutte sig**

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## **Peace in Ukraine or U.S. Hegemony? America Must Decide**

The United States should come to terms with the fact that mending the global system is long overdue.

by Joergen Oerstroem Moeller

In his speech last week, Russian president Vladimir Putin announced a “partial mobilization” of Russian military reservists, a referendum in occupied Ukrainian territory, and made a thinly veiled threat to resort to nuclear force. This is fairly frightening for Ukraine, but also for the United States, Europe, and the rest of the world. It does not take much to predict that if Russia uses nuclear weapons, the United States must respond in kind.

But looking at it from another angle, Putin’s speech also presents a golden opportunity for the United States to checkmate Russia, end the war in Ukraine, avoid a nuclear catastrophe, and shape a new world order. It might sound strange, but this is a “now or never” moment to steer the world out of the immediate mess created by Russia, as well as decades of bad statecraft by the United States and Europe.

After analyzing U.S. statements and policies in recent years and months, it is doubtful whether this perspective is driving the decisions of U.S. policymakers.

For some years now, the choice has been to *either* solidify America's role as the undisputed leader, conveying that the U.S. perspective on global matters is correct and that the United States has the right to lead the world towards a model reflecting its values, *or*, realizing that the world has changed with rising powers like China and India willing to participate in the global system and question whether the United States has the right to define the rules. The United States seems to have chosen the first option but the time has come to reappraise whether this is still in the interest of the United States.

In connection with the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, Chinese president Xi Jinping and Indian prime minister Narendra Modi met with Putin. Both expressed what could be described as lukewarm support for Russia's war in Ukraine. In reality, couched in diplomatic vocabulary, they distanced themselves from Putin's reasons for launching the war and his objectives.

During his meeting with Xi, Putin said that he "highly valued the balanced position of our Chinese friends when it comes to the Ukraine crisis. We understand your questions and concerns about this. During today's meeting, we will of course explain our position."

However, after learning about Russia's plan for referendums in occupied Ukrainian territory, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman stated:

*China's position on the Ukraine issue is consistent and clear. We believe that all countries deserve respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity, that the purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be observed,*

*that the legitimate security concerns of any country should be taken seriously, and that support should be given to all efforts that are conducive to peacefully resolving the crisis. We call on the parties concerned to properly address differences through dialogue and consultation. China stands ready to work with members of the international community to continue to play a constructive part in deescalation efforts.*

For his part, Modi told Putin that "Today's era is not an era of war." Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan has not minced words either and said that Russia's invasion cannot be justified and that it should give back all the land it has occupied, including Crimea.

It is difficult to appraise how far and how deep the distance these leaders run. Maybe privately these leaders, all of whom have developed close relations with Putin over the years, said something different. However, this is unlikely. They do not only speak to the world but also to domestic audiences. Some kind of duplicity would be hard to explain.

The United States should find out whether it is possible to form a common position to end the Russo-Ukrainian War before it spirals out of control.

It will come at a price. These three countries will resist being enrolled in an initiative that has a hidden agenda of helping the United States maintain global supremacy. They more or less acquiesced to Russia in the first place precisely given their resentment of U.S. supremacy. This allowed them to overlook their adversarial interests with Russia in Central Asia, for example. To help end the war, they will ask that the United States soften the pursuit of its values abroad as a policy benchmark. Even more so, they will ask for the United States to amend and reform the international system so that it no longer serves American interests exclusively and is used by the United States to underwrite its global policies.

This may be difficult for U.S. policymakers to accept but the alternative is that the war risks turning into something much worse. The United States should come to terms with the fact that mending the global system is long overdue; in many ways, it still reflects how the world looked seventy years ago when it was designed by the United States and Great Britain. The rest of the world has come to the conclusion that now is the time for them to have more influence in the decision-making process and reflect their interests.

The United States might get away with going solo thanks to its military power. It might be possible to push Russia back and uphold America's right to be the global leader. Recalling prognoses for global economic growth putting Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDE) in the forefront, such a policy might postpone the reckoning by a decade. Yet, the risks of doing so are higher compared to the benefits of moving now when the United States is still strong and can play a major role in designing a new global system that does not exclusively reflect American and European interests.

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