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### The Power of Trust

*Ingo Venzke on the World Order*

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Alexandra Sukhareva, A verb, first floor, 17th of August 2013. Courtesy of Osnova Gallery | [Find out more](#)

B E Y O N D   T H E   W A R /  
A N A L Y S I S

# The Power of Trust

Ingo Venzke on the World Order

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While the Russian attack on Ukraine marks a turning point in international relations, it is not the main reason for the need to reconsider this order and the principles that should guide it in the future. Those reasons lie beyond the war; they are deeper and wider. They include the decline of power in the West in relation to the East, both materially and ideationally. The rise of China is much more important in that regard than the position of Russia. Shifts in relative power have led to a change in the kind of international order, from a hegemonic to a multipolar constellation. Past rivalries of the Cold War are then instructive, as well as the institutional developments that ensured coexistence and facilitated cooperation. Still, the times are different, now marked by the concentration of private power and marred by the crises of social and climate justice. Those are the conditions and the opportunities to which principles for the future international order must respond.

## 1. Strengthen the International Court of Justice, Not Only the Security Council.

Writing during World War II, the great Austrian jurist Hans Kelsen asked: “International Peace—By Court or Government?”<sup>[1]</sup> His answer was clear: governments should not serve as judges in their own cause, and peace must be secured by a court. But his words were not heeded. The United Nations Charter instead vested the Security Council with the “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” That is where the permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—institutionalized their power and influence, together with the possibility to veto any decisions.

The Council continues to stand in the limelight today, together with its veto powers and the impossibility of condemning Russia. As early as the Korean War of the 1950s, the United States

sought to circumvent the Soviet veto in the Council and turned to the General Assembly, marshalling the “Uniting for Peace” Resolution. It did so again in 2022, with an overwhelming majority that did condemn Russia. But neither the Council nor the Assembly are the right places to determine—as Kelsen knew—what is illegal in the first place. A peaceful order requires the commitment to the International Court of Justice. Otherwise, the instrumentalization of law by the powers that be—the rule by law—will be more common than the rule of law.

Alexandra Sukhareva, A wing, ground floor, 17th of August 2013. Courtesy  va Gallery

## 2. Deterrence Is Important. So Is Trust.

Could the Russian attack on Ukraine have been prevented had Russia been more strongly deterred? Or would the attack in 2022 have been avoided had Putin been less isolated from the West? Developments during the Cold War as well as the present war suggest that deterrence and dialogue may well be false opposites. The liberal triumphalism of the 1990s has mistakenly portrayed the decades of the Cold War as a hiatus in the development of international law and order. It wrongly suggests that the original blueprint of liberal internationalism, which mostly reflected the interests and convictions of the United States after World War II, could be dusted off after decades of standstill once the Soviet Union dissolved. Such a view neglects the many significant and still highly relevant developments in law and practice that took shape amid East/West and North/South rivalry during the Cold War. Most notable are the principles and practices of coexistence as well as the many arms treaties of the 1970s and their innovative mechanisms for verification and building trust. “Trust, but verify” was the leitmotif that transformed international order. Incidentally, it derives from a rhyming Russian proverb.<sup>[2]</sup> Those decades in fact contain many lessons for an international legal order across ideological divides whose value might need to be learned anew.

Alexandra Sukhareva, Estate Grebnevo, apx 1939. From the archive of Sch  ate Museum of Architecture, Moscow. Courtesy of Osnova Gallery

## 3. Foster Civil Society Engagement in Addition to International Diplomacy.

Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik was better than its current reputation. It contained a kernel of truth that remains relevant today: dialogue needs to complement deterrence and civil society engagement should parallel international diplomacy. It paved the way for the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), whose successor organization played an important role in the war in Ukraine with its Special Monitoring Mission, already deployed in 2014 and recently discontinued in

view of Russian objections. In addition to setting out principles for political and military relations, the CSCE's foundational declaration—the 1975 Helsinki Final Act—also contained a commitment to civil rights that came to be an important source of mobilization for civil society organizations across Europe. [3] Helsinki Monitoring Groups were set up in many countries, also in the East, which was rather surprised by those developments. Current reactions to the Russian aggression such as the suspension of all kinds of educational and cultural cooperations are questionable in their confrontational nationalism. It is more convincing to build an order on potentially shared values around which civil society can mobilize.

Alexandra Sukhareva, Incident of the street of eternal volunteers, ground floor of December 2013. Courtesy of Osnova Gallery

#### 4. Build Up Global Data and Communication Governance.

Another adage holds that truth is the first victim of war. It may be recalled that the Moscow office of Deutsche Welle was shut down only weeks preceding the attack. The transmission of Russia Today was later blocked in Europe to suppress war propaganda. While the two measures are dissimilar, and the latter may be in fact be justifiable, regulatory interventions remain a slippery slope. The more general point is about the need for reliable and accessible information, and about the infrastructure and power relations lying behind the information and communication. Public reporting and regulation may then not be the main concerns, rather than private power and discretion. There are currently about one hundred other wars going on around the globe, and social media plays an important role in many of them, certainly in Ukraine.

Elon Musk became an important factor in the war by providing satellite-based Starlink internet in Ukraine, for which President Zelenskyy thanked Musk warmly on Twitter. With the purchase of Twitter, Musk becomes an even greater factor, and his private power should be reconsidered. It turns out again that such work does not need to start afresh. In the 1970s many developing countries already criticized the adequacy of news reporting and campaigned for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). They rallied around the right to “seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” and called for a redistribution of power and infrastructures. Private monopolies are as much a treat to his right as restrictive public regulation.

Alexandra Sukhareva, Side Gates of The estate Grebnevo, 1930s. From the collection of Schusev State Museum of Architecture, Moscow. Courtesy of Osnova Gallery

5. “No Peace without Justice.” Include Social and Climate Justice.

Crimes should not be committed with impunity. Already before evidence revealed the abhorrent mass atrocities in Bucha and elsewhere, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court started a full investigation of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide (the Court does not have jurisdiction over the crime of aggression in this case). Criminal justice expresses compelling moral principles, and it is an important building block for lasting peace, even if it might give some way to considerations of prudence. Looking further beyond the war, considerations of social and climate justice are at least of equal importance for a peaceful international order.

It is a difficult argument to make amid the present array of atrocities, and it is also fragile for its broadness: it seems that a lot of what has gone wrong in Russia in the last couple of decades, and what has provided the breeding ground for the imperialist ideology carrying current policies, connects to a failed transition from a socialist to a market economy and to the immense social inequalities that have riveted Russian society since then. In addition to social injustice, global warming and climate injustice are likely to be an even greater cause for conflict.

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F O O T N O T E S

1 – Hans Kelsen, “International Peace—By Court or Government?,” *American Journal of Sociology* 46 (1941), no. 4: 571.

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2 – In Russian: Доверяй, но проверяй (Doveraj, no proveryaj). See *Trust, But Verify: The Politics of Uncertainty and the Transformation of the Cold War Order, 1969–1991*, ed. Martin Klimke, Reinhild Kreis, and Christian F. Ostermann (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

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3 – Gaetano Arangio-Ruiz, “Human Rights and Non-Intervention in the Helsinki Final Act,” in *Recueil des cours, Académie de droit international de la Haye*, vol. 157 (1977-1V), 195, 224–31.

A R T W O R K

After the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was cancelled. Artists Alexandra Sukhareva and Kirill Savchenkov, and curator Raimundas Malašauskas wrote in a

statement: “There is no place for art when civilians are dying under the fire of missiles, when citizens of Ukraine are hiding in shelters, when Russian protesters are getting silenced.” In her complex installations, Sukhareva investigates the phenomenology of objects and processes, notions of memory and experience. Her artist’s book “Witness”, featured in this newsletter, documents a series of experiments and observations within the space of an abandoned mansion in Grebnevo. Previously an estate of a prince, a residence of members of the spiritual movement of the Rosicrucians, a vitriol factory, a sanatorium, communal housing, abandoned in 1991, the place is now sporadically visited by romantics and pragmatists, subcultural communities and architectural activists, alchemists and skinheads, strollers and vagabonds—the witnesses who contribute to the creation of history.

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