

GUEST EDITORIAL

The Economist Sounds the Alarm

by Daniel Platt

April 23—*The Economist* began publishing during the heyday of the British East India Company in 1843, and has continued its role as the flagship publication of the modern, privatized British Empire to the present day. Under the headline, “What is at Stake in Ukraine,” the City of London mouthpiece explains in an April 16 article that what’s really at stake in Ukraine is “a world-view.” Whose?

The article is a dizzying mélange of war-propaganda bombast and psychological projection, blended with some sobering truths with which the publication hopes to rally the neocon faithful. The author’s opening salvo:

Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine to force it to renounce the West and to submit to the Kremlin. He believes that big countries should be free to dominate smaller ones. Ukraine counters that it will choose its own allies. With Western backing, it is affirming the universal principle that all countries are sovereign. Whoever prevails on the battlefield will win a fundamental argument about how the world should work.

There is a generous dollop of irony here, considering that the US/UK axis has relentlessly sought to impose its vision of a “unipolar world,” now re-branded as the “rules-based order,” on smaller countries since the demise of the Warsaw Pact in 1991. The world saw this dynamic on display this week, as the Organization of American States voted on Thursday to suspend Russia as a permanent observer in the organization, with abstentions by Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina—the only countries large enough to resist the behind-the-scenes

arm-twisting. The U.S. policy of economic warfare to punish non-obedient nations, commonly referred to as “sanctions,” presently targets 26 countries, according to the Treasury Department.

Similarly, the “West” showed its contempt for “the universal principle that all countries are sovereign” by spending upwards of \$5 billion in order to arrange the violent overthrow of Ukraine’s democratically elected government in 2014. But let’s return to this “fundamental argument about how the world should work.”

Off the battlefield, warns *The Economist*, “this is an argument the West is losing.” Why? Because, as the author admits, most of the “emerging world” either backs Russia over its invasion or is neutral, with many nations seeing the West as “decadent, self-serving and hypocritical.” Even those who might reject the invasion, think it’s someone else’s problem. “This is a stunning rebuke.”

The author reveals that it was “The Economist Intelligence Unit” that had to figure out that the vote at the UN General Assembly in which 141 countries voted for a resolution condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (while 5 voted against and 35 abstained), really wasn’t a vote for the West: one-third of the world’s people live in countries that have condemned Russia and imposed sanctions, but most of these are Western. Another third is neutral, including India, and “tricky allies” Saudi Arabia and the UAE; and a final third are countries that “are echoing Russia’s rationale for the invasion.” This includes China, which has also denounced American bioweapons labs in Ukraine.

The conclusion? The power of the West and America over small countries is declining; the West has lost influence.

Up until the time of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the author laments, the West "seemed to have lost faith in the universal principles it espoused." The EU seemed "helplessly self-absorbed." The West hoarded vaccines during the pandemic while China and Russia supplied vaccines to the world. So, to no one's surprise, poorer countries see the West as hypocritical. Europe talks about universal rights, but look how it treats refugees. There was the illegal invasion of Iraq, not authorized by the UN. Saddam Hussein, the criminal, couldn't have been more different from Zelenskyy (says the author; in reality, Hussein and Zelenskyy share the distinction of having been used as proxy warriors for the West against Iran and Russia, respectively.) "Yet the rulers of other countries worry that if the West is free to act as judge, jury and executioner they will get summary justice," complains *The Economist*.

Those are all surprisingly candid admissions by this oracle of the oligarchy. But *The Economist* asserts that this "is a poisonous cocktail of legitimate grievances and exaggeration, all laced with a lingering resentment of colonialism." And now come the admonitions:

The pity is that emerging countries are making a grave error. As sovereign powers, they too have a stake in the war. All the West's faults do not outweigh the fact that, in the system Mr. Putin is offering, their people would suffer terribly. The reason is that the world Mr. Putin desires would be far more decadent, self-serving and amoral than the one that exists today.

The Economist goes on to speak of Putin's "extravagant lies about Nazis in Kyiv" (the problem of Nazis in Kyiv was actually documented rather thoroughly by Britain's own news media prior to the decision at the beginning of this year to cross Russia's "red lines" and initiate the war, after which the cone of silence descended upon any discussion of Ukraine's Nazis), and charges that his "brazen claim that NATO provoked the war, posing an intolerable threat to Russia by expanding into central and eastern Europe is self-serving." The author pleads that "Those countries were not swallowed up: they chose to join NATO for their own protection after decades of Soviet tyranny."

Of course, Soviet tyranny came to a close 10 to 20 years before the Eastern European nations joined NATO, and this assertion was published within days of State Department spokesman Ned Price's comment to a press briefing that:

We understand that the Solomon Islands and the PRC are discussing a broad security-related agreement building on recently signed police cooperation. Despite the Solomon Islands Government's comments, the broad nature of the security agreement leaves open the door for the deployment of PRC military forces to the Solomon Islands. We believe that signing such an agreement could increase destabilization within the Solomon Islands and will set a concerning precedent for the wider Pacific Island region.

This is certainly yet another illustration of how the "rules-based order" is "rules for thee and not for me."

The Economist's great fear is that the world order will indeed change, should Putin prevail in Ukraine, predicting that "bullying, lying and manipulation will further permeate trade, treaties and international law—the whole panoply of arrangements that are so easily taken for granted, but which keep the world turning." So therefore, to ensure that the world keeps turning, we need to protect the present level of bullying, lying and manipulation. But under the present level, the world is not merely turning; it is digging its own grave, as the imploding London-dominated financial system generates an array of consequences including famine, pandemic disease—and war.

What the oligarchy and its media courtesans will never admit is that there is an alternative to their "whole panoply of arrangements": a new paradigm based on "win-win" cooperation and global infrastructure development by means of the Belt and Road Initiative. This was the missed opportunity of the *Sternstunde* of 1991, when the Cold War ostensibly came to an end, only to be supplanted by the imperial "rules-based order" that sought to make permanent the rules of colonialism. But this "argument" will not be won, or lost, on the battlefield of Ukraine.