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Severing the Russian Hemisphere as Problematic Global Lobotomy?

Engendering a transformative dynamic through the potential of meta-discourse

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Introduction

The current global campaign of sanctions against Russia curiously recalls the psychosurgical procedure of [lobotomy](#) -- much favoured in the USA and the UK subsequent to World War II during the Cold War period. In the case of the individual, lobotomy is a neurosurgical treatment of mental disorders by severing connections in the brain's prefrontal cortex. The originator of the procedure, Portuguese neurologist [António Egas Moniz](#), shared the [Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine](#) of 1949, such was the esteem in which the procedure was held

In a period in which much is made of a global knowledge-based civilization, and the implied emergence of an AI-enhanced [global brain](#), the relevance of lobotomy as a means of "severing connections" in the global brain merits exploration. This is especially the case when there is no lack of commentary on the "mental disorders" from which civilization currently functions (*Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society: speculations towards the development of cures and preventive measures*, 2008; *Comprehensive Pattern of Psychosocial Diseases and the Eases they Imply*, 2015).

The surgical procedure in the case of the individual focuses on severance of connections, via the [corpus callosum](#), through which the right and left hemisphere of the brain are linked. It was promoted as a means of "reducing the complexity of psychic life" characteristic of mental disorders. Following the operation, spontaneity, responsiveness, self-awareness, and self-control were reduced. The activity was replaced by inertia, and people were mostly left [emotionally blunted](#) and restricted in their intellectual range. The transformation was controversial, and is now widely considered to be inhumane, but the risks were held to outweigh the disadvantages in the period in which the practice was in favour. Arguably the promotion of sanctions against Russia can be recognized as a desire to reduce it to that condition -- if only in pursuit of a punitive agenda.

On a global scale is the past enthusiasm of health experts for lobotomy to be considered of relevance -- given the current incidence of [psychosocial disorders](#)? The questions is of particular relevance given the extent to which many national and international leaders are variously diagnosed as suffering from neurological disorders -- even by specialists in the matter. This has been the case with respect to Donald Trump and is now the case with respect to Vladimir Putin. More controversial however is the question of the neurological health of the populations sustaining both in power for a lengthy period in time -- and may continue to do so.

Reference to a global brain recalls the extent to which emphasis is placed in geopolitics on the [hemispheres of Earth](#) -- particularly those of West and East. Geopolitics has long exhibited a tendency of the West to marginalize and undermine that of the East. The two can readily be seen in overt, if not covert, competition, especially with the emerging role of China. A corresponding hemispheric organization is recognized between North and South -- also exhibiting competitive dynamics in the aftermath of colonialism. Other "hemispheres" of potential relevance to global organization include those of class, gender, race and colour. The framework could be extended to include the collectively memorable as a hemisphere -- in contrast to the widespread erosion of collective memory and to complacency in that regard.

Framed in this way it may then be asked whether a "corpus callosum" of the global brain might be recognized as the nexus of

hemispheric connectivity (*Corpus Callosum of the Global Brain? Locating the integrative function within the world wide web*, 2014). Given the questionable degrees of integration between the hemispheres identified, it could then be asked whether global civilization has already subjected itself -- unknowingly -- to a form of lobotomy, perhaps to be recognized as "lobotomy lite". The processes of the [cancel culture](#) can be explored in this light.

More radical, it is in this sense that promotion of the current array of **sanctions against Russia can be seen as a "surgical procedure" by which that culture is severed from the global system** -- "decoupled". As in the Cold War, this is designed to isolate that hemisphere as separate from the rest of the globe -- then to be acclaimed as singularly unified (if only in terms of a primarily Western perspective).

Clearly the past controversy surrounding the use of lobotomy, and its effective abandonment, is a potential source of learning regarding the systemic viability following any form of global lobotomy. With the focus on severing connectivity of every kind, it may then be asked how viable global connectivity would be recognized -- and from within what hemisphere? What is the integrative functionality for which two hemispheres emerged through the evolutionary process?

If [lateralization of brain function](#) into hemispheres is of such cognitive importance to survival, what might be the consequence of severing connections between hemispheres of the globe? What might be anticipated in the case of severing Russia in this way? How is the requisite hemispheric integration to be imagined for a viable future (*Engendering Viable Global Futures through Hemispheric Integration: a radical challenge to individual imagination*, 2014)?

The following speculative exercise develops an earlier argument which endeavoured to highlight the merit of transcending the conventional binary "us-and-them" articulation of disasters such as Iraq and Ukraine (*Ukraine versus Iraq -- Humanitarian Intervention versus Invasion? Russian "peacekeeping" or another "forever war"*, 2022). Lobotomy thus serves as a strategic metaphor for a process of severing connectivity -- one which has every reason to be considered "unfit for purpose" given the ineffectual responses to current crises.

The question here is how to comprehend and enable higher orders of connectivity in the face of dysfunctional simplicity (*Time for Provocative Mnemonic Aids to Systemic Connectivity? Possibilities of reconciling the "headless hearts" to the "heartless heads"*, 2018). Is there a mode of meta-discourse to be "re-cognized" as enabling a transformative dynamic?

Mixing metaphors, given the relationship of the complementary hemispheres of the brain to sight, what is the paradoxical perspective enabled by [stereoscopic vision](#)? How might a transcendent "stereoscopic strategy" then be understood? By contrast, is severing a hemisphere to be promoted from a Christian perspective in the light of the Biblical injunction:

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. (*Matthew 18:9*)

The eye metaphor offers further insight with regard to mainstream assumptions concerning the irrelevance of alternative perspectives -- traditionally highlighted by [one-eyed entities in mythology and fiction](#) (*Transcending One-eyed Global Modelling Perspectives*, 2010; *Cyclopean Vision vs Poly-sensual Engagement*, 2006).

Psychosocial pathology of leadership -- and of electorates?

On a global scale, is the past enthusiasm of health experts for lobotomy to be considered of relevance -- given the current incidence of psychosocial disorders? Of some relevance is explanation as to why the lobotomy gained popularity and widespread use despite widespread scientific consensus it was ineffective (Tyler Cowen, *The Political Economy of Lobotomies in the United States, Marginal Revolution*, 27 November 2018; *The Rise and Fall of the Prefrontal Lobotomy, Science Blogs*, 24 July 2007; Michael A. Gallea, *A Brief Reflection on the Not-so-Brief History of the Lobotomy, BC Medical Journal*, 59, 2017, 6).

The questions is of particular relevance given the extent to which many national and international leaders are variously diagnosed as suffering from neurological disorders -- even by specialists in the matter. This became a focus in the case of Donald Trump (James Hamblin, *Is there something neurologically wrong with Donald Trump, The Atlantic*, 4 January 2018; Kristine Lofgren, *Donald Trump may have unaddressed 'neurological issues' says former White House physician, Inquisitr*, 19 November 2019; Bandy X. Lee, *Let's Talk About You Know Who's Deteriorating Mental Health, DC Report*, 25 November 2019).

The possibility is now a focus in the case of Vladimir Putin, whether as propaganda or otherwise (if the latter can be distinguished from the former). He is variously held to be a madman, a psychopath, and the like -- if only speculatively and for purposes of orchestrated propaganda:

- Rebecca Rosenberg, *Russian President Vladimir Putin has features of a psychopath: expert (Fox News*, 2 March 2022);
- Emma Kenny, *Vladimir Putin is egocentric, narcissistic and exhibits key traits of a psychopath (The U.S. Sun*, 26 February 2022);
- James Fallon, *Is Vladimir Putin a Sociopath or Psychopath? an Assessment (YouTube*, 3 June 2020).
- Javier Urra: *Forensic psychologist analyses Putin's gestures: He can't stand weakness, he thinks he is above everyone else (Marca*, 1 March 2022)
- Stephan Richter and Uwe Bot: *Europe's New Hitler: Another Psychopath at Work -- Vladimir Putin is a murderous despot: (The Globalist*, 24, February 2022)
- Florian Wurzinger: *Putin ist ein Psychopath, seine Droge ist Macht (Nachrichten*, 2 March 2022)
- Bess Levin: *An "Increasingly Frustrated" Putin: a madman with nuclear weapons, is lashing out at his inner circle (Vanity Fair*, 1 March 2022)

- Tobias Siegal: *US envoy to Israel calls Putin a 'madman,' tells Iran, China to note world response* (*The Times of Israel*, 1 March 2022)
- Joan Smith: *President Putin is a dangerous psychopath - reason is not going to work with him* (*The Independent*, 1 February 2015)
- Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy: *Putin Personality Disorder* (*Foreign Policy*, 15 February 2013)
- *Putin was dubbed a "violent psychopath" by Miss BumBum after he stared at her' during an awkward dinner* (*TechnoTrenz*, 4 March 2022)
- *Is Vladimir Putin a high functioning, high IQ psychopath?* (*Quora*)

As noted by [Jonathan Cook](#):

How convenient for western leaders that every time another country defies the West's projection of power, the western media can agree on one thing: that the foreign government in question is led by a madman, a psychopath or a megalomaniac... At a drop of a hat, western leaders are absolved of guilt or even responsibility for the terrible events that unfold. The West remains virtuous, simply a victim of the world's madmen. Nothing the West did was a provocation. Nothing they could have done would have averted the disaster. (*Russia-Ukraine war: A different invasion, the West's same 'madman' script*, *Middle East Eye*, 28 February 2022)

More controversial however is the question of the neurological health of the populations who have sustained Putin and Trump in power for a lengthy period of time -- and may continue to do so. More generally it is especially appropriate to ask whether many leaders are framed in this way, most notably those of large corporations -- and are in some sense required to be so:

- Lindsay Dodgson: *Here's why CEOs often have the traits of a psychopath* (*Business Insider*, 7 July 2017)
- Harriet Agerholm: *One in five CEOs are psychopaths, new study finds* (*The Independent*, 14 September 2016)
- Jack McCullough: *The Psychopathic CEO* (*Forbes*, 9 December 2019)
- Karen Landay and P. D. Harms: *Psychopathic CEOs: Fact or Fiction?* (*Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, 4 November 2019)
- K. Landay, P. D. Harms, and M. Credé: *Shall we serve the dark lords? A meta-analytic review of psychopathy and leadership* (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104, 2019, 1)

Leadership may be vulnerable to its particular pathology, as articulated by Jim Lukaszewski (*The Pathology of Leadership Error in Crisis: Self-Inflicted Leadership Crisis Response Failure Behaviors*, e911). Can the skills required of effective leadership in practice be clearly distinguished from modalities which are readily deemed pathological -- at least by some?

Hence the warnings:

- Sonam Sheth and John Haltiwanger: *'Rational, consistent, and ruthless': National security veterans warn against painting Putin as an unhinged madman* (*Business Insider*, 3 March 2022)
- Paul Taylor: *Inside Vladimir Putin's head: paranoid megalomaniac or rational actor?* (*Politico*, 27 February 2022)
- Michael Krepon *Putin Plays The Mad Man Card In Ukraine* *Forbes*, 1 March 2022)

Taylor wonders whether Putin is reenacting Richard Nixon's so-called "[madman theory](#)" in which the then United States president tried to make the North Vietnamese believe he was ready to push the button, in hopes of frightening them to the negotiating table. This could be consistent with the argument of Scott Ritter (*Putin: Crazy Like a Fox*, *Consortium News*, 2 March 2022):

The pro-Ukraine crowd has put forth a narrative constructed around the self-supporting themes of irrationality on the part of a Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and his post-Cold War fantasies of resurrecting the former Soviet Union.

With respect to the elusive quest for appropriate discourse, Ritter then argues:

What passes for a national discussion on the important issues of foreign and national security are, more often than not, reduced to pithy phrases. The complexities of a balanced dialogue are replaced by a good-versus-evil simplicity more readily digested by an electorate where potholes and tax rates matter more than geopolitics. It is impossible to reason with a political counterpart whose policy formulations need to conform with ignorance-based narratives.

Vladimir Putin may, in fact, be crazy -- crazy like a fox.

The efforts to discount the perspective of Putin as the fruit of psychosocial pathology may therefore be highly dysfunctional -- if not pathological in their own right -- as in the case of Donald Trump or other eccentric leaders.

Political lobotomy as severance of connectivity

A valuable insight into the role of global connectivity has been identified by [Gregory Bateson](#) (*Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*, 1979) in making the point that:

The pattern which connects is a meta-pattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that meta-pattern which defines the vast generalization that, indeed, it is patterns which connect.

And it is from this perspective that he warns in a much-cited phrase: *Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality*. Global lobotomy can be usefully considered in this light.

The various historical instances of the repression of a culture can be understood as the destruction of cultural memory, most notably that of the indigenous Americas as promoted by the Catholic Church, or the Celtic culture by Britain. In the case of the invasion of Iraq this has been compared to lobotomy (Mina Hamilton, *The Sack of Baghdad: "Like a Lobotomy"*, *Dissident Voice*, 21 April 2003) citing McGuire Gibson, Professor of Mesopotamian Archaeology at the University of Chicago:

The looting of this museum is catastrophic. It's a lot like a lobotomy. The deep memory of an entire culture, a culture that has continued for thousands of years, has been removed. (*US Shamed by Looting of Antiquities*, *The Scotsman*, 19 April 2003)

Given such recognition it is curious that consideration of "medical apartheid" does not extend to the institutionalised racial segregation of [apartheid](#) as a form of lobotomy in cultural terms (Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: the dark history of medical experimentation on Black Americans from colonial times to the present*, 2007). The *Fred Habachi Report* notes suggestions in the 1960s that lobotomy ought to be performed on those who revive the memory of times past when colonialism was a reality (*Lobotomy to erase Memories of Colonialism*, 22 September 2017).

An early monograph, purportedly sponsored by the World Health Organization, even invokes "scientific arguments" in support of a physiological lobotomy of the African Negro (J. C. Carothers, *Frontal Lobe Function and the African*, *Journal of Mental Science*, 97, 1951, 406). This is cited by the Citizens Commission on Human Rights of Colorado as stating that:

*in many ways the African resembles a European 8- or 9-year old child in his reaction to the environment. He [Carothers] compared the African to a "leucotomized European". ("Leucotomy" is another word for "lobotomy", psychiatry's barbaric surgical procedure of cutting nerve connections in the front part of the brain to try to alter behavior.) (*Psychiatric Industry Aims To Profit From Racism, Targets African Americans*, 3 December 2020).*

With respect to the lobotomy metaphor, it is appropriate to note the comment of an anonymous blogger (*Avoiding the Global Lobotomy*) and especially that from a Russian perspective (Marina Lebedeva, *Political Lobotomy*, *Pravda*, 16 June 2005). The metaphor has been applied in commentary on political parties and processes (Richard Cohen, *The GOP's political lobotomy*, *The Washington Post*, 24 January 2011; Lorelei Kelly, *Dumb by Design: Gingrich's lobotomy of Congress and today's dysfunction*, *HuffPost*, 29 November 2011). There are many references to "national lobotomy" in that regard -- some of them humorous, as with those referring to "social lobotomy"..

As the brain of the nation, it is intriguing to note the bicameral organization of many parliamentary systems ("[bicameral representation](#)"), given associations to the bicameral brain, [bicameral mentality](#) and related hypotheses (*Julian Jaynes, The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, 1976). Speculation with regard to the hemispheres of the global brain and its lobotomisation then merit consideration in the light of a degree of institutionalized lobotomy in parliamentary systems -- appropriately framed by the metaphor -- especially when there is a breakdown of connectivity and an absence of bipartisanship.

The metaphor has been used with respect to decision-making arenas and their preoccupations (Lorelei Kelly, *Dumb by Design: Gingrich's lobotomy of Congress and today's dysfunction*, *HuffPost*, 29 November 2011; Rush Holt, *Reversing the Congressional Science Lobotomy*, *Wired*, 29 April 2009). What other issues have been effectively severed from the strategic nexus and shunned, as can be speculatively explored (*Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem*, 2009; *Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge*, 2008).

The point has been argued with respect to connectivity between the national executive and the committee structure (Camilla Hagelund and Jonathan Goddard, *How to Run a Country. a Parliament of lawmakers Reform*, 20 March 2015). In a foreword to [the report](#), Graham Brady writes:

The domination of the legislature by the executive and the pervasive corruption of patronage, effect a **collective lobotomy**. Intelligent and independent-minded people are too often transformed into lobby-fodder living in hope of even the most ridiculous sign of favour or preferment. [*emphasis added*]

Metaphor aside, it has been advocated for political purposes, as reviewed by Peter R. Breggin (*Psychosurgery for Political Purposes*, *Duquesne Law Review*, 13, 1975). With lobotomy explored as a form of "sanctioning", it is then of value to note its representation by journalists, as reviewed by Kenneth Ögren (*Portrayals of Lobotomy in American and Swedish Media*):

How did journalists write about lobotomy for the public in the years spanning 1936 to 1959, a period in which the American and Swedish **presses appeared inclined to describe the positive effects of lobotomy, while neglecting the negative and fatal consequences of the operation**. There are not only similarities but also interesting differences between the Swedish and the American articles depicting lobotomy. The media can be a powerful factor in the construction of "facts", which can significantly affect decisions made by people about their health issues. (*Progress in Brain Research*, 206, 2013, 11) [*emphasis added*]

With sanctions understood as a form of "shunning", it is appropriate to note how the [Kennedy family](#) treated one of their own -- having been secretly subjected to a lobotomy (Liz McNeil, *The Truth About Rosemary Kennedy's Lobotomy*, *People*, 6 November 2014; Linda Caroll, *They Gave Her A Lobotomy So Her Brother Could Be President: the tragic story of President John F. Kennedy's little sister*,

Medium, 30 August 2021).

There is seemingly a curious relationship between lobotomy and "divide and rule". The mindset enabling physical lobotomy would seem to be subtly manifest in many institutions and processes -- as evident from the arenas in which the metaphor is deemed appropriate.

Severing connectivity through sanctions

Sanctioning Russia: Very considerable emphasis has been placed on the imposition of [sanctions](#) on Russia, whether prior to the intervention in Ukraine, as a threat, or subsequent to that intervention. Curiously over many months, if not years, more sanctions have been periodically imposed -- implying a seemingly endless reservoir, however undocumented its contents.

In questioning the efficacy of sanctions in general, the earlier commentary noted the absence of systematic checklists of the connections implied by sanction process (*Efficacy of sanctions?* 2022). For convenience, portions of that document are reproduced here.

In the current context, some lists are made of current sanctions imposed by particular countries -- singularly or in collaboration with one another. *Sanctions against Russia – at a glance: list of people and organisations blacklisted by UK, US and EU*, *The Guardian*, 25 February 2022; *Russia sanctions regime*, Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; *Canada ratchets up sanctions against Russia, cancels export permits*, *Yahoo News*, 25 February 2022). These initiatives are necessarily inspired by that of the US (*The White House published its full list of sanctions against Russia*, *Today Bank News*, 25 February 2022; *US sanctions against Russia: here's what's in the White House's new plan*, *AOL*, 25 February 2022).

Missing from such documentation is any sense of what sanctions had been previously imposed and when -- or any sense of what sanctions have not been imposed which countries might choose to impose in the future. The EU, for example, declined to impose so-called "nuclear sanctions" with respect to oil and gas supplies from Russia. (*EU to consider Russia's expulsion from SWIFT in third sanctions package*, *Euronews*, 25 February 2022; *Why is booting Russia off SWIFT the one key sanction the US and Europe are still holding back on?* *ABC News*, 25 February 2022).

Also missing is any sense of how withdrawing from a treaty constitutes a form of severance equivalent to any conventional understanding of sanctions. Understood in that way -- as a form of lobotomy -- the USA has proven itself to be remarkable in its enthusiasm for cutting off its relation to the global context (Zachary B. Wolf and JoElla Carman, *Here are all the treaties and agreements Trump has abandoned*, *CNN*, 1 February, 2019).

Unidentified future sanctions? The range of undiscussed possibilities is evident from a question raised (*Could Russia be banned from Eurovision 2022?* *Euronews*, 24 February 2022; *Eurovision Song Contest: Russia will be allowed to compete despite deepening Ukraine crisis*, *Yahoo News*, 25 February 2022; *Russia banned from Eurovision 2022 as organisers say it would bring contest 'into disrepute'*, *Eurovision*, 25 February 2022). More to the point with regard to the future is the question: *What sanctions could West still impose on Russia?* (*BBC News*, 3 March 2022)

Also possible are so-called secondary sanctions of those recognized as only indirectly complicit, including allies, relatives and friends (*Secondary economic sanctions: effective policy or risky business?* *Atlantic Council*, 20 May 2018; Anders Corr, *Sanction China for Russia's Invasion of Ukraine*, *The Epoch Times*, 2 March 2022). Are the major space and energy projects, involving contractual collaboration with Russia, now to be considered at risk? (*Russian space program chief says US sanctions could 'destroy' International Space Station partnership*, *Space*, 26 February 2022; *Mission to Mars with Russia now very unlikely European Space Agency says*, *The New York Times*, 28 February 2022; *US sanctions on Russia hit ITER council*, *PhysicsWorld*, 20 May 2014).

Checklists of possible sanctions? Systematic lists are made of development aid to various countries -- and by various countries -- although no such documentation would appear to exist with respect to sanctions as its counterpart. Selective lists do however exist for those imposing the sanctions and/or by type of sanction although these may have no formal status (*List of 39 countries targeted by economic sanctions [by the US]*; *Countries Sanctioned by the U.S. and Why*, *Investopedia*; *Consolidated list of [EU] sanctions*, *European External Action Service*, 18 August 2015)

Whereas the forms of aid are assiduously categorized, no such systemic understanding of sanctions appears to have been formally elaborated. Whether or not considered to be of relevance to the abhorrent actions of other countries (including members of the UN Security Council), rather than sporadic announcement of sanctions to be acclaimed, a more systematic list (potentially applicable to individuals) might include, for example:

- freezing assets of the country held in banks elsewhere, and blocking participation in financial systems of exchange
- stripping a country of membership in international organizations, notably bodies such as:
 - UN Specialized Agencies
 - Interpol
 - sporting federations
 - professional associations
 - humanitarian and cultural associations
- exclusion of the country from international surveys and reporting procedures
- exclusion of the country from treaties and contracts, including agreements on climate change and copyright arrangements
- prohibition of international gatherings in the country
- cessation of collaboration in international projects with the country
- cessation of academic and other exchanges with the country
- exclusion of nationals of the country from editorial boards of journals or other academic positions
- closure of cultural centres associated with the country

- prohibition of use of the language of that country (notably at international gatherings)
- termination of phone, internet and mail communication with the country
- termination of transportation to and from the country (road, train, waterways, overflying, etc)
- termination or diversion of power supplies and natural resources (oil, gas, water) from that country
- imposition of restrictions on citizens of that country established elsewhere (including their internment)
- imposition of restrictions on relatives and friends of those originating from that country
- encouragement of public shunning of citizens originating from that country, or otherwise associated with it
- stripping citizens of that country of international awards
- removal of books authored by citizens of that country from public libraries (possibly to be publicly burnt)
- curtailment of citation of academic research other reports by nationals of the country
- prohibition of performance, broadcasting and sale of music from that country
- removal of statues and memorials celebrating the merits of the country
- revision of history books referring appreciatively to that country
- closure of restaurants associated with the cuisine of the country
- withdrawal from sale of food products associated with that country

Severing communication pathways: The lobotomy metaphor highlights the role of neural communications within the human brain. Within any understanding of the global brain, the communication pathways susceptible to severance include the following:

- **road transport:** It is to be expected that road transport into and from Russia would be blocked, whether or not bridges are destroyed. This notably affects transport of containers with goods vital to many aspects of the economy, including food supplies
- **railway transport:** As with the road network, it is to be expected that such transportation would be blocked
- **air transport:** At the time of writing, many airlines have ceased to fly into and out of Russia with consequences for many. Less evident is the issue of overflying and no-fly zones.
- **waterways:** At the time of writing the question of whether transport through the Bosphorus should be closed to Russia by Turkey is being considered. The Bosphorus is the only way for Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia (South-Western part) and Ukraine to reach the Mediterranean Sea and other seas.
- **pipelines:** At the time of writing there is considerable focus on the closure of oil and gas pipelines important for the Russian economy and on which parts of Europe are dependent (*West hits Russia with oil bans and gas curbs*, *BBC News*, 9 March 2022)
- **telephone:** Given the role of the International Telecommunications Union as an agency of the United Nations, it is to be expected that proposals for blocking telephone and fax communications will be made
- **mail:** Given the role of the Universal Postal Union as an agency of the United Nations, it is to be expected that proposals for blocking mail communications will be made
- **internet:** The disconnection of Russia from the Internet has been proposed at the time of writing, and provisionally rejected (*Russia-Ukraine: Is internet on verge of break-up?* *BBC News*, 9 March 2022; *Ukraine's request to cut off Russia from the global internet has been rejected*, *CNN*, 3 March 2022). Access to the internet is controlled by ICANN, an American multistakeholder group and nonprofit organization responsible for coordinating the maintenance and procedures of several databases related to the namespaces and numerical spaces of the Internet, ensuring the network's stable and secure operation. The vulnerability of countries such as Russia and China to such severance has resulted in their development of internal networks.

As a form of global communication in its own right, the annual migration of birds into and out of Russia could also be framed as enhancing the global spread of pathogens to which humans are vulnerable -- and their cross-species transmission (*Animal migration and infectious disease risk*, *Science*, 2011). Culling such birds is currently a matter of debate -- whether or not pandemic crises become entangled in imposition of heavier sanctions.

Ranking sanctions by severity? The range of such sanctions might be more appropriately organized (and ranked in terms of severity), as with the "defense readiness condition" of the USA (DEFCON) or the [threat levels of the UK](#). Their administration, and the transition from one level to another, could be most appropriately handled by the United Nations. As a reaction to human rights violations, the system might be termed HUMCON, for example.

Clearly an appropriate level of sanctions could then be applied "by tranche" to any countries or individuals charged with such violations (whether or not the violations were considered as severe as in the case of Iraq or Ukraine). The sanctions against Russia have highlighted controversy with regard to human rights violations by other countries against which [boycotts](#) have been proposed (Chris McGreal, *US accused of hypocrisy for supporting sanctions against Russia but not Israel*, *The Guardian*, 7 March 2022; [List of boycotts](#), *Wikipedia*).

A distinction is clearly required between sanctions which constitute effective infliction of the genuine punishment required and those which are merely symbolic. A danger in the case of token sanctions is that they may be perceived as somewhat ridiculous, thereby putting the HUMCON mechanism into disrepute (*Godfather of Vladimir Putin's daughter among latest names on EU sanctions list*, *The Guardian*, 1 March 2022; *Russian vodka pulled from US shelves*, *RT*, 28 February 2022).

Efficacy of sanctions? At the time of writing, the significance of regular media coverage of "new sanctions" over months past is however usefully reframed by a headline (*EU, US, UK and Canada announce sanctions targeting Vladimir Putin and Sergei Lavrov*, *BBC News*, 25 February 2022), but with the comment:

The EU, the US, the UK and Canada have moved to freeze foreign-held assets of Vladimir Putin and his foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, after Europe was accused by Ukraine's president of failing to act hard and fast enough against Russian aggression. **The initiative is largely symbolic, as the Russian president is unlikely to have identifiable personal wealth abroad**, but the move followed recognition that appeals for action from Volodymyr Zelenskiy had to be heard. *[emphasis added]*

Forewarned, it is appropriate to ask whether Russian elites and Putin's entourage would have rendered their personal wealth similarly unidentifiable prior to the Russian intervention in Ukraine.

The imposition of sanctions has been criticized as "an illegitimate form of collective punishment of the weakest and poorest members of society, the infants, the children, the chronically ill, and the elderly". It has been claimed that sanctions imposed by single countries or by an intergovernmental body like the United Nations are themselves "illegal" or "criminal" due to, in the case of economic sanctions, the [right to development](#) or, in the case of military sanctions, the [right of self-defense](#). Russia's Deputy Ambassador to the UN has argued that only Security Council sanctions are legal ([Russia, China reject 'unilateral' sanctions by US, Global Village Space](#), 8 February 2022).

There is a growing body of research questioning the efficacy of sanctions ([Sanctions: what are they good for? DW](#), 4 June 2021). Some countries have survived over decades despite an array of imposed sanctions, most notably Cuba, Iran and North Korea. Russia has already made clear that it can survive despite the array of sanctions envisaged ([The US embargo against Cuba turns 60 with no policy change on the horizon, El Pais](#), 7 February 2022).

With the current media focus on personalized sanctions against Putin, it is useful to recall the efficacy of the more "extreme sanctions" against Castro enabled by the US ([Assassination attempts on Fidel Castro, Wikipedia](#)) -- especially given proposals to assassinate Putin ([Sen. Lindsey Graham calls for Russians to carry out a Julius Caesar-style assassination of Vladimir Putin: 'Is there a Brutus in Russia?'](#) *Business Insider*, 4 March 2022; [Sean Hannity's take on the Ukraine crisis involves Putin being assassinated and NATO bombing Russia's military convoy, Business Insider](#), 4 March 2022).

Remarkably, but perhaps consistently as a follow-up to these calls for assassination, Meta (Facebook) has amended its policy to allow users in some countries to call for violence against Vladimir Putin. Meta says it has temporarily made allowances for some violent speech that would usually break its rules:

Under the amended policy, users in countries including Russia, Ukraine and Poland will also be able to call for the deaths of Russia's President Putin and Belarusian President Lukashenko ([War in Ukraine: Facebook to allow calls for violence against Putin, BBC News](#), 11 March 2022)

This is all the more curious in that this could be seen as a total betrayal of any positive interpretation of the recent rebranding of Facebook as Meta, with all that "meta" could be held to imply in relation to the metaverse with which it seeks to associate itself. Should members of the [Facebook Community](#) of billions of users consider themselves in any way complicit in such calls to assassinate, whether or not they terminate their accounts? Especially intriguing are the ecosystemic insights to be derived from any proposals to rebrand that community as a "metacommunity" as variously understood ([Metacommunity, Wikipedia](#); [Metacommunity, Wikiversity](#)). (Stephen P. Hubbell, [The Unified Neutral Theory of Biodiversity and Biogeography](#), 2001)

Should the same exception be applied to others variously held to be war criminals -- as yet unconvicted, but highly rewarded (Christopher Hitchens, [The Trial of Henry Kissinger](#), 2001; Michael R. Galant, [Welcoming War Crimes: the normalization of Henry Kissinger, The Harvard Crimson](#), 31 January 2017; Nicholas Wood, [The Case for Prosecuting Blair as War Criminal for Iraq Invasion, 2005; Blair's knighthood is a royal act of treachery against his victims in Iraq and Afghanistan, Middle East Monitor](#), 4 January 2022) ?

After decades of sanctions against Cuba, [Christopher Sabatini](#) concludes:

There is the legitimate concern that the sanctions hurt the very people that the policy claims to defend. They also serve as a rallying point for the Castro regime and a way to cover up for its own economic failures. But the most damning indictment of the embargo is that in its almost 50-year history it has failed to achieve its objectives.

If the matter is the efficacy of sanctions, then the US embargo on Cuba does not meet the test. It's not limited to Cuba. None of the cases of regime change that many of the embargo advocates love to cite, communist Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and South Africa had embargos as tight or isolating as those imposed on Cuba for nearly half a century. There's a reason for that. It's basic logic. ([US-Cuba Sanctions: Are They Working Yet? Chatham House](#), 20 August 2020)

In the case of Russia, the focus on imposition of sanctions on oligarchs -- and assumptions regarding their impact -- has been criticized as entirely misconceived (Olga Chyzh, [The Sanctions Strategy is Flawed: to defeat Putin, you have to know how the Kremlin works, The Guardian](#), 9 March 2022).

Indiscriminate suffering: Sanctions can be recognized as a direct cause of fatalities -- whose incidence they are purportedly designed to alleviate (Jacob G. Hornberger, [The Evil of Sanctions, The Future of Freedom of Foundation](#), 23 February 2022). With respect to Iraq, the Global Policy Forum notes:

From the earliest days of the sanctions, critics have pointed to many serious flaws, including the humanitarian suffering of innocent civilians, the lack of clear criteria for lifting, and the failure of the sanctions to put direct pressure on Iraq government leaders. ([Criticism of the Sanctions](#))

The point was made in a notorious interview with [Madeleine Albright](#), during her period as US Ambassador to the UN. On May 12, 1996, Albright defended [UN sanctions against Iraq](#) on a [60 Minutes](#) segment in which [Lesley Stahl](#) asked her, *We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?* -- to which Albright replied, *We think the price is worth it.*

Precautionary clarification regarding any remedy

[NB: Portions of the remainder of this document (amended and extended) have been published separately for convenience, since they did not appear in earlier variants of this document as posted, see: [United Nations as a Potemkin Institution faced with Potemkin Crises: potential of AI to enable a transformative dynamic through meta-discourse, 2022](#)]

International law? The quest in what follows needs to be carefully framed. A necessary preliminary clarification has been made by [Noam Chomsky](#) in an interview:

... we should settle a few facts that are uncontested. **The most crucial one is that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a major war crime, ranking alongside the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the Hitler-Stalin invasion of Poland in September 1939**, to take only two salient examples. It always makes sense to seek explanations... Of course, it is true that the U.S. and its allies violate international law without a blink of an eye, but that provides no extenuation for Putin's crimes... But when has justice prevailed in international affairs? Is it necessary to review the appalling record once again? (C.J. Polychroniou, [Chomsky: US Military Escalation Against Russia Would Have No Victors, OtherNews](#), 2 March 2022)...

The Russian invasion is in clear violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of another state. Yet Putin sought to offer legal justifications for the invasion during his speech on February 24, and Russia cites Kosovo, Iraq, Libya and Syria as evidence that the United States and its allies violate international law repeatedly. Can you comment on Putin's legal justifications for the invasion of Ukraine and on the status of international law in the post-Cold War era? There is nothing to say about Putin's attempt to offer legal justification for his aggression. Its merit is zero. Of course, **it is true that the U.S. and its allies violate international law without a blink of an eye, but that provides no extenuation for Putin's crimes.** [*emphasis added*]

In that same interview Chomsky provocatively makes the challenging point:

It's easy to understand why those suffering from the crime may regard it as an unacceptable indulgence to inquire into why it happened and whether it could have been avoided. Understandable, but mistaken. If we want to respond to the tragedy in ways that will help the victims, and avert still worse catastrophes that loom ahead, it is wise, and necessary, to learn as much as we can about what went wrong and how the course could have been corrected. **Heroic gestures may be satisfying. They are not helpful....** [*emphasis added*]

The manner in which international law is ignored by the UK, and despite condemnation in UN resolutions and rulings by the International Court of Justice, is illustrated by the case of [Diego Garcia](#), as described by Richard Norton-Taylor ([Britain's Occupied Territory, Consortium News](#), 2 March 2022). The UK continues to be in dispute with Mauritius over sovereignty of the Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean, where Diego Garcia (the largest island) hosts a major US bomber base under an agreement with the UK. The UK asserts ownership of the islands for what it describes as "defence purposes".

Another example is [Gibraltar](#) whose sovereignty is a point of contention in Anglo-Spanish relations, as Spain asserts a [claim to the territory](#). The sovereignty of the [Falkland Islands](#) is part of an ongoing [dispute between Argentina and the UK](#). Illustrating Russia's perspective, these examples featured in an argument by Russia's ambassador to the UN ([Return Malvinas and Gibraltar before talking about Crimea, Russia tells UK, MercoPress](#), 4 February 2017; [Give back Gibraltar before criticising us, says Russia, The Times](#), 4 February 2017).

The point has been clarified in other terms by Jeremy Scahill: **The fact that Putin is trying to justify the unjustifiable in Ukraine does not mean we must ignore the U.S. actions that fuel his narrative.** ([Putin's Criminal Invasion of Ukraine Highlights Some Ugly Truths About U.S. and NATO, The Intercept](#), 8 March 2022):

There are no excuses or justifications for what Vladimir Putin is doing in Ukraine. His brutal invasion is a bald-faced act of aggression, replete with war crimes, and is rightly being condemned as such by large numbers of people and nations across the globe. The targeting of civilian populations and infrastructure is a heinous act that belongs in the annals of major nation state crimes alongside the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Many governments of the world have denounced Putin's actions. But when it comes to the U.S. and its NATO allies, these condemnations demand greater scrutiny. While many statements from Western leaders may be accurate regarding the nature of Russia's actions, the U.S. and other NATO nations are in a dubious position to take a moralistic stance in condemning Russia. That they do so with zero recognition of their own hypocrisy, provocative actions, and history of unbridled militarism -- particularly in the case of the U.S. -- is deeply problematic.

Chomsky's point may be highlighted otherwise by reference to "anti-war" demonstrations where these focus primarily on the party perceived as the aggressor -- in this case Russia ([Ukraine invasion: Anti-war demonstrations take place across Europe, Euronews](#), 6 March 2022). These notably serve to obscure the need to "inquire into why it happened and whether it could have been avoided". To that extent such conflicts may indeed be perceived as "understandable, but mistaken" in avoiding the more radical cognitive challenge, as in the more general case for anti-everything ([Elaborating a Declaration on Combating Anti-otherness](#), 2018).

Academic diffidence? Noting that one university has cancelled a course on the writings of Fyodor Dostoevsky, a call for careful discernment is also articulated by [Binoy Kampmark](#) with regard to academic ties between countries in times of crisis. This concludes:

In discriminating on the political and ideological standing of academics and students, a slippery slope presents itself. Putting all your institution's eggs into one basket and cause is never a good thing, however meretriciously popular and virtuous it might be at the time. But the Academy, and the modern university, work in contradictory, self-defeating ways. Wars do not merely make truth a casualty but kill off intellectual inquiry (*Cutting Ties: The West, Ukraine, and the Russian Academy*, *Australian Independent Media*, 8 March 2022).

This view has been echoed by Victor Davis Hanson (*Potemkin Universities, Real Clear Politics*, 4 May 2017)

Distortion of complexity by polarization: For [Boaventura de Sousa Santos](#):

We are living in an extraordinarily stressful moment, the repercussions of which are being made plain by the intense media focus on the Ukraine crisis, notably along the North-Atlantic axis, including Australia, Japan and Brazil. In other parts of the world, the Ukraine crisis tends to be placed in context, either because it involves the kind of armed aggression (invasions, bombings, the death of innocent civilians) of which those regions have long been the victims, or because the regions in question are currently being faced with problems that they consider to be more serious or, at least, more urgent (e.g. hunger, lack of water and vaccines, jihadist violence)... In turn, the polarization of opinions in the North-Atlantic axis is such that it is no longer possible to bring complexity into the debate. What we have instead is a **knee-jerk response** that is very similar to the situation in which we found ourselves in the period immediately following 9/11. Any position that seeks to contextualize or problematize is automatically viewed as treasonous. (*Ukraine: Complexity and War: Is it still possible to think?* *Other News*, 11 March 2022) [emphasis added]

Democracy, equality and coercion? As also noted by de Sousa Santos, forms of inequality have been highlighted:

If the people in these regions see the Ukraine crisis as taking on dramatic relevance at all, it is because of issues that are invisible or devoid of meaning when seen from the point of view of public opinion in the North-Atlantic axis. Thus, for example, the African Union has just issued a strong statement against the "**shockingly racist**" [behavior of the authorities on the Ukrainian-Polish border](#). They accuse them of [discriminating against African citizens](#) living in Ukraine who have been subjected to unequal treatment on account of their color as they tried to flee the war. On 2nd March 2022, members of the African bloc accounted for 17 -- i.e., one third of the African countries -- of the 35 countries that abstained from voting on the UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russia for the invasion of Ukraine.

Having failed to obtain the requisite condemnation in the UN Security Council, a total of 141 countries voted in favour of an historic condemnation of Russia; 5 countries voted against it, with 35 abstentions (*General Assembly resolution demands end to Russian offensive in Ukraine*, *UN News*, 2 March 2022). It is curious however that little is said of the fact that the vote was not held in secret. The UN only uses [secret ballots](#) for elections (*UN Documentation: UN Voting*).

The UN practice, curiously upheld as an exemplar of democracy, contrasts with the secret ballot considered appropriate in many arenas where that is deemed essential to the spirit of democracy and equality. **A secret ballot forestalls attempts to influence the voter by intimidation, blackmailing, and potential vote buying -- to which UN voting processes are presumably highly susceptible.** Whereas the resolution was acclaimed by the UN as sending a "loud and clear" message, the extent to which many voting countries were subject to undue pressure from the USA is far from apparent, as suggested by past analyses:

We obtain strong evidence that US aid buys voting compliance in the Assembly. More specifically, our results suggest that general budget support and grants are the major aid categories by which recipients have been induced to vote in line with the United States. When replicating the analysis for other G7 donors, no comparable patterns emerge. ([Axel Dreher, et al, *Does US Aid Buy UN General Assembly Votes? A Disaggregated Analysis*, *Public Choice*, 136, 2008, 1/2; *Do the IMF and the World Bank influence voting in the UN General Assembly?* *Public Choice*, 151, 2012, 1/2](#))

A later study addressed the dilemma associated with a US stipulation dating from 1985:

Democracies are more supportive of US positions on important votes in the UN General Assembly than of nondemocracies. Is this because democracies share common perspectives, or does this pattern reflect coercion? Since 1985, US law has stipulated that the US State Department identify important votes and that aid disbursements reflect voting decisions... In a parliament of parliaments and dictators, it is disturbing that the United States disproportionately uses changes in aid disbursements to manipulate the voting behavior of poor democracies. Further, to the degree that the legitimacy of UN decisions depends on the democratic legitimacy of its members, it is unfortunate that US foreign policy systematically coerces the votes of democracies. (David B. Carter and Randall W. Stone *Democracy and Multilateralism: the case of vote buying in the UN General Assembly*, Cambridge University Press, 21 October 2014).

Is the UN claim of a "loud and clear" message an unrecognized instance of the misinformation which the UN otherwise claims to abhor? Some clarification of the correctives as yet to be widely appreciated -- in the light of voting with regard to the [US invasion of Grenada](#) (1983) -- is offered from a Jamaican perspective by Ambassador Audley Rodrigues (*Great power invasions and voting at the UN General Assembly*, *Jamaica Observer*, 6 March 2022).

In that regard the Group of 77 with China submitted a resolution to the General Assembly (*Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries*, A/C.2/74/L.5, 19 October 2019) as promoted by civil society organizations (*Support The UN Resolution Against Unilateral Coercive Measures*, *Popular Resistance*, 3 November 2019). The resolution follows one on the same issue adopted earlier (*Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/62/183, 31 January 2008).

How many countries would have found it prudent to be seen to vote as the US had indicated? To what extent **is the pattern of votes for the resolution against Russia to be considered as effectively the result of the kind of coercion and blackmail purportedly deprecated by the UN itself as completely undemocratic?** (*The Secret Ballot at Risk: recommendations for protecting democracy*; Peter Golds, *When the secret ballot is abandoned, so is democracy*, *Anglican Mainstream*, 18 October 2021).

The issue is presented more specifically by Daud Khan:

At Government level the choice of which narrative to accept, and what positions to take, for example at the UN, will be based on the economic, political and strategic interests of the country or of its rulers. Did Palau (population 18,000) make any objective assessment of facts before cosponsoring the UN motion condemning Russia, or did they simply go along with the wishes of Australia and New Zealand their largest trading partners and donors? Did the Government of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka assess the evidence or did they abstain in the General Assembly vote in order to have the option to make deals with whichever side offers better terms? (*Miles' Law and the War in Ukraine: where you stand depends on where you sit*, *Inter Press Service*, 4 March 2022)

These questions have implications for the current challenge by Ukraine to the legitimacy of the Security Council permanent memberships of Russia and China (Thalif Deen, *Ukraine Challenges Legitimacy of Russia's UN Membership*, *Inter Press Service*, March 2022). **Any change to the UN Charter in that regard requires a two-thirds majority of the 193 members -- with many potentially subject to coercion.**

Potemkin democracies and armies? Reference continues to be made to the façade of a **Potemkin village** (dating from the Crimea of 1787), but also as a metaphor, most recently with regard to the Russian armed forces (Daniel Gros, *Putin's Potemkin Military*, *Project Syndicate*, 7 March 2022; Jamie McIntyre, *Russia's Potemkin army*, *Washington Examiner*, 3 March 2022).

Given that framing, it is however strange that some variant has not been widely applied to the US army -- "**retreating**" from Afghanistan with allies in 2020-1 (Danny Sijursen, *America's Potemkin War in Afghanistan (and Elsewhere)*, *Military Truth*, 3 December 2019). This "withdrawal followed an unsuccessful 20-year war, with unlimited resources, using every conventional military facility -- against an enemy defined as incompetent and in support of a construct defined using the term (Florian P. Kühn, *The Unravelling of the Afghan Potemkin Village*, *School of Blogal Studies*, 19 August 2021). The metaphor has however been applied to NATO and to EUFOR (Ted Galen Carpenter, *NATO: The Potemkin alliance*, *Daily Caller*, 13 June 2011; *EUFOR: The West's Potemkin Deterrent in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, *Atlantic Initiative / Democratic Policy Analysis*, October 2015)

There is a sense in which "Potemkin" is readily applied to any social constructs of an opponent or enemy -- framed as necessarily "fake", if only for propaganda purposes.

Of relevance to this argument, however, reference is widely made to "Potemkin democracy", especially in describing autocratic democracies from the perspective of Western democracy (*From Potemkin Village to Potemkin Democracy*, *Center for International Private Enterprise*, 18 July 2006; Jos Boonstra, *Eurasia's Potemkin Democracies*, *The Diplomat*, 3 February 2015). Whilst frequently applied to Russia, the term it is also applied to Ukraine (Christopher A Hartwellon, *Ukraine's Potemkin Institutions: Neglected Foundations*, *Collapsed Buildings*, *4Liberty.eu*, 26 June 2014)

The term features in critiques of European reform (Antoine Vauchez, *A Potemkin Democracy? Democratizing Europe*, 2016), of politics in the West (Richard A. Epstein, *Potemkin Politicians*, *Hoover Digest*, 2019, 1). Democracy in the West is mistakenly understood, as argued by Bruce Thornton:

When progressives speak of "democracy" today, then, they don't mean the Constitutional Democratic Republic comprising diverse sovereign states, but rather concentrated technocratic rule over the masses of citizens whose diversity and interests are marginalized and ignored if they don't conform with those of the global managerial elite. It's a "Potemkin Democracy", giving us freedom over our consumer choices and private appetites and preferences, but constraining our political rights and freedom whenever they stand in the way of the technocracy's ambitions to maximize Leviathan's power. (*Our Potemkin Democracy*, *Frontpage*, 23 December 2021)

Façade? These indications point to an even more general concern with the façade of politics globally in a period of unprecedented propaganda (Leif Thomas Olsen, *Our 21st Century Potemkin Democracy*, *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20 November 2018; David Chandler, *Potemkin Sovereignty: statehood without politics in the New World Order*, *The Monist*, 90, 2007, 1; *Globalization within a Global Potemkin Society a strategic challenge to proactive participation in society: extracts from web resources*, 2000).

There is a curious irony to the role of Facebook in crafting and sustaining this façade, especially given the associations between face, facebook and façade -- and Potemkin (Alan Farago, *Facebook: A safe harbor for right-wing Potemkin Villages*, *HuffPost*, 17 January 2017; Adrienne LaFrance, *The Largest Autocracy on Earth*, *The Atlantic*, 27 September 2021; John Naughton, *Facebook's 'oversight board' is proof that it wants to be regulated -- by itself*, *The Guardian*, 16 May 2020). Especially relevant to the argument is the complicity of Facebook and political interests in the manipulation of faces and façades, as exemplified by the **Facebook-Cambridge**

[Analytica data scandal](#) and the inquiries it evoked in relation to fake news (*Varieties of Fake News and Misrepresentation*, 2019).

Of further relevance to the argument is the role of "loss of face", especially in some cultures and institutional settings -- and hence the role of Potemkin constructs in "saving face". The importance of face is all the more problematic given the curious coincidence of preoccupation with religious face-covering and pandemic masking (*Facism as Superficial Intercultural Extremism: burkha, topleness, sunglasses, beards, and flu masks*, 2009).

Potemkin institutions? There is no lack of references to "Potemkin parliaments":

- Mark Steyn: *Potemkin Parliament* (*National Review*, 18 October 2013; *Steyn on America*, 7 January 2021) [USA]
- Ralph Berry: *A Potemkin Parliament's Humiliation* (*Charlemagne Institute Chronicles*, 5 July 2019) [Europe]
- Stephen Daisley: *Nicola Sturgeon's Potemkin parliament* (*The Spectator*, 11 March 2022) [Scotland]
- Shashi Tharoor: *Pimping the parliamentary facade Narendra Modi's Potemkin democracy* (*Qantara*, 2021) [India]
- William S. Smith: *Welcome to the Potemkin Village of Washington Power* (*The American Conservative*, 2 December 2019) [USA]
- *Potemkin Parliament* (*The New York Times*, 26 December 1955) [Russia]

By extension, with respect to governance, the term would seem to lend itself more generally to the description of superpowers (Paul Krugman, *Russia Is a Potemkin Superpower*, *The New York Times*, 28 February 2022; Minxin Pei, *Asia's Real Challenge: China's "Potemkin" Rise*, *The Diplomat*, 7 May 2013; Nate Blevins, *'One World, One Dream' falls flat in Potemkin China*, *Yale News*, 29 August 2008).

The application to the USA is more restricted:

- Shane Harris: *Biden's Coming Potemkin State of the Union Speech* (*Association of Mature American Citizens*, 10 February 2022)
- Daniel W. Drezner: *Donald Trump's Potemkin foreign policy*, (*The Washington Post*, 5 February 2020)
- Lyall Swim: *Empty Chairs and the Potemkin Presidency* (*American Thinker*, 16 January 2016)
- Dave Lindorff: *Bush's Potemkin Town Meetings* (*CounterPunch*, 7 April 2005)

Predictably it is those perceived as enemies of the US, which are believed to see it as a façade:

Vladimir Putin in Russia, Xi Jinping in China, Khomeini in Iran, Kim Jong Un in North Korea. This gruesome foursome is always probing, always looking for ways to exploit cracks in what they regard as the American façade. (Bob Ehrlich, *Now That They See Biden in Power, the 'Gruesome Foursome' Will Come A-Knocking*, *The Western Journal*, 8 March 2022)

The façade of coercion-free voting in the UN General Assembly can then be understood as effectively only for purposes of public disinformation. **Missing is any reference to the degree to which the UN itself invites recognition as a "Potemkin institution" -- a façade -- namely as a "Potemkin United Nations"**. Ironically the references to "façade" in that context apply solely to the architecture of the building (*United Nations Headquarters Facades*) -- possibly mirroring applications of the term to academia (Kathy Lund Dean, et al, *Premises, Promises and Perils of Academic Potemkin Villages*, *Management Learning*, 3 March 2020).

The future may well see the current drama associated with the Ukraine-Russia crisis as a tragic encounter between Potemkin façades -- whether it be those of Russia, Ukraine, the USA, NATO, their armies, or the framing of their interaction by the media and especially by Facebook. Ironically use of "Potemkin" could be caricatured by the abbreviation "*Gone to Pot*".

Context and perspective: As with other phenomena framed as dangerous, if not evil, a shift of perspective is required to engage with the cognitive challenge, as argued by George Lakoff (*Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: what categories reveal about the mind*, 1987; *Metaphorical Thought in Foreign Policy: why strategic framing matters to the global interdependence initiative*, Aspen Institute, 2000). The categories through which Putin is conveniently framed may be as indicative of issues with the framer as with Putin (*Proportionate Response in the Eye of the Beholder: educational fables for faith-based global governance*, 2006). In the light of Lakoff's study of the justification of the Gulf War (*Metaphor and War*, 1991), the issue is explored otherwise by Karolina Kaminska (*President Vladimir Putin's justification of the annexation of Crimea: a cognitive-linguistic analysis*).

Drawing on critical discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor theory, a study by Svetlana Tsirkunova argues that the metaphorical system offered by Lakoff is insufficient for conceptualizing the US policy regarding the Ukraine conflict, and claims that the choice of cognitive construals is governed by the context in which they are used and by the perspective adopted. (*Through the Prism of Metaphor: a case study of the US and UK political discourse on the Ukraine conflict*, *Acta Scientiarum. Language and Culture*, 38, 2016, 4).

The more fundamental question is indicated by Evangelos Vallianatos (*Hypocrisy Over Ukraine*, *CounterPunch*, 3 March 2022):

If there's a silver lining to the war in Ukraine, it is the hope of a more comprehensive understanding and practice of cooperation among humans in America and Europe and the greater world.

Questionable adequacy of "dialogue" as practiced?

Varieties of dialogue: Much is made of the desirability and potential of (diplomatic) dialogue as an alternative to conflict -- and sanctions. Far less evident is the fruitfulness of such dialogue in practice in the face of seemingly incommensurable perspectives. There are many approaches to dialogue acclaimed as fruitful, as reviewed separately (*Overview of a variety of approaches to dialogue and conversation*, 2021). These may be clustered as:

- Dialogue analysis
- Persuasive dialogue

- Dialogue for learning
- Decision-making dialogue
- Inquisitory dialogue
- Healing dialogue
- Conversation as an art
- Mapping dialogue-

It is far from clear how many of the acclaimed dialogue processes have been proposed or envisaged in response to the Ukraine-Russian crisis -- including those associated with the most eminent places of learning and their engagement with governance, such as the [Harvard Negotiation Project](#). (Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: negotiating agreement without giving in*, 2011).

The absence of information on the methods of dialogue used in crucial situations contrasts curiously with the technical details and performance of the military hardware made available in conflict situations or which it is hoped to use. There is therefore little available insight into why a given method of dialogue proves inadequate -- despite subsequent arguments for renewing the "dialogue".

Renowned dialogues: As noted separately (*Challenging impoverishment of conventional discourse*, 2016), it is appropriate to recognize the appreciation associated with particular dialogues between two or three individuals, suggesting that their quality should be considered exemplary, even when hypothetical:

- Kenneth N. Cissna and Rob Anderson. *Buber, Rogers, and the Potential for Public Dialogue* (2012)
- J. Krishnamurti and David Bohm: *The Future of Humanity: a dialog between Krishnamurti and Bohm* (1990)
- **Bohr-Einstein debates:** Don Howard, *Revisiting the Einstein-Bohr Dialogue*, (*Science 2.0*, 2009)
- Jung-Pauli dialogue: S. Gieser, *Depth Psychology and Quantum Physics: Wolfgang Pauli's dialogue with C.G. Jung* (2005)
- Ralph Abraham, Terence McKenna and Rupert Sheldrake: *Trialogues at the Edge of the West: chaos, creativity, and the resacralization of the world* (1992)
- Daniel Fidel Ferrer: *Trialogue between Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Nagarjuna in Todtnauberg* (2011)

What form might an exemplary dialogue between Russia and the Ukraine take, even if hypothetical? Noteworthy is that those cited above do not include dialogues renowned in other cultures and only include one (involving Krishnamurti) that could be understood as "between cultures".

Efficacy of dialogue: More to the point, **can it be objectively asserted that "dialogue", as currently advocated, promoted and practiced, is "fit for purpose" in the face of the conflictual dynamics of a cancel culture?** Pertinent questions are:

- Is the fundamental complexity and subtlety of current conflict dynamics far greater than the dialogue methodologies advocated?
- Where is research on dialogue undertaken -- relevant to incommensurable perspectives (inter-national, inter-faith, inter-disciplinary, etc)?
- Why does no international institution report annually on progress in dialogue methods?
- Where are the exemplars of dialogue appropriate to the global challenge (as distinct from those above)?
- In comparison with advances in other technologies (which may evoke the need for more sophisticated dialogue):
 - Where is dialogue of a higher order celebrated as a model and an inspiration?
 - Where are innovations in dialogue processes highlighted?

Given the failure of dialogue, apparent from the current incidence of unresolved conflict, is there a case for recognizing what is so systematically avoided -- namely the level of ignorance of forms of dialogue of relevance to the times? **Rather than the focus on any "Big Lies" cultivated in crafting such conflicts, is the "Bigger Lie" in fact the claim that remedial "dialogue", as advocated and practiced, is adequate to the challenge?**

Could it be said that current "dialogue technology" merits comparison with bows-and-arrows, or swords-and-shields -- faced with challenges based on far more sophisticated technology? Potentially indicative of their inadequacy is the seeming inability to apply current dialogues to the conflicts between proponents of particular dialogue approaches and their methodologies (*Controversies and consensus in dialogue research*, 2021).

Transcendent "stereoscopic perspective" via meta-discourse?

The examples of exemplary dialogues cited above raise the question of how they might be recognized as adequately self-reflexive. The missing sense of perspective, historical or otherwise, can be emphasized by the contrast between meta-data and meta-discourse. Whilst the former offers a form of perspective through statistical analysis, it is the latter which is indicative of a quite distinctive mode of inquiry.

One approach to this has been explored through *appreciative inquiry*. This is a positive approach to organizational change that focuses on maximizing an organization's strengths instead of purely looking for problems to fix or avoid (Mark Sparvell, *Appreciative Inquiry: getting more of the good stuff*, *Forbes*, 25 January 2021). Through its emphasis on the positive, it might however be asked whether it is sufficiently radical to be appropriate to the challenge of polarization explored here. There is some reason to expect that it would fall victim to the arguments of [Barbara Ehrenreich](#) (*Bright-sided: how the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America*, 2009) or those of [Yonason Goldson](#) (*Political Correctness: the lobotomy of the American mind*, *Jewish Express*, 9 May 2018). The relevance of appreciative inquiry to the Ukraine-Russia does not appear to have been indicated.

Another approach is through "meta-discourse", a term used in philosophy denoting a discussion about a discussion, as opposed to a simple discussion about a given topic. Closely related approaches are [meta-discussion](#) and meta-communication. It could be asked whether and how these might be applied to exploring the discourse -- and narrative -- regarding Ukraine-Russia, or the larger historical context framing such conflicts. The difficulty would appear to be the focus of such a perspective on questions of literary style. Despite assumptions that might be made about the relevance of this approach, no consideration of discourse regarding the Ukraine-Russia crisis

appears to have been made.

A distinct approach is that of meta-dialogue, as variously described separately (*Metadiologue*, 2009). However this appears to have been primarily explored in clinical and therapeutic work (Tom Andersen, *The Reflecting Team: dialogue and meta-dialogue in clinical work, Family Process*, 26, 1987; Nancy L. Tucker, et al, *Meta-Dialogues in Domestic Violence-Focused Couples Treatment, Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 19, 2000, 4). An application to policy has however been proposed (Yumo Xu, et al, *Meta Dialogue Policy Learning, arxiv*, 2006). More subtle, and potentially of far greater relevance, is the framing offered by Dorothee Gelhard (*Meta-dialogue and Identity or the Recovery of Meaning, The Dostoevsky Journal*, 1, 2000) in the light of the study by Emmanuel Levinas (*Ethique et Infini*, 1982). How indeed does the subtle sense of collective identity feature in comprehension of the Ukraine-Russia crisis?

As with the various approaches to "dialogue", **it would appear that the various "meta" approaches are equally inadequate to the challenges of crises like Ukraine-Russia** -- if not more so. Despite its strategic implications, the current relevance of **meta-politics** would appear to be equally questionable. This is **metalinguistic** discourse about politics; a political dialogue about politics itself. In this mode, metapolitics takes on various forms of inquiry, appropriating to itself another way toward the discourse of politics and the political. It assumes a self-conscious role of mediating the analytic, synthetic, and normative language of political inquiry and politics itself.

Again it could be most usefully said that **civilization has not developed the skills to discuss fundamental disagreement with the efficacy that is required to engage with the conflicts it engenders**. Dialogue as promoted is relatively successful in engaging with "low-level disagreement" with a narrow focus. Significant in this respect, when "dialogue" is proposed in a crisis, no indication is given of the methodology. This is evident in the case of any report on diplomatic dialogue -- despite its crucial importance to resolving a crisis. Could the specifics be obtained with a Freedom of Information request?

A remarkable case study is offered by the pattern of "dialogue" between North and South Korea (*Inter-Korean Dialogue: government to government talks, North Korea in the World*, 1971-2018; *South Korea extends another offer of dialogue to North Korea, Yeni Safak*, 10 February 2022). That dialogue could qualify for the *Guinness Book of Records* (*Sustainable discourse: longest conflict versus longest conversation?* 2019).

Dialogue as currently practiced and advocated would seem to distort the nature of the challenge when it purports to be "fit for purpose" in response to incommensurable perspectives. Indications of these are apparent to a degree in efforts to mediate in marital breakdown and parent-adolescent conflicts -- let alone those between faiths.

At this time **acknowledgement of collective ignorance with regard to the requisite dialogue skills** could prove to be a fruitful point of departure for future research (Nicholas Rescher, *Ignorance: On the Wider Implications of Deficient Knowledge*, 2009). It could also serve as an indication of the investment priorities and settings for such research -- in contrast with those in response to security challenges exacerbated by inadequate dialogue. **The threat to security of assuming adequacy of skills in dialogue is increasingly clear** -- when all the evidence suggests that it is proving inadequate to the challenge.

More speculatively, the ability to acknowledge ignorance could prove vital to framing engagement with "extraterrestrials" (*Strategic Clues for Alien Communication*, 2000). That argument included an indication of the increasing challenge of home-grown aliens -- "terrestrial extras" -- those increasingly alienated by mainstream discourse. Ironically, in the case of ETs, it is appropriate to recall that the long-standing debate on why humanity has not been contacted -- the **Fermi paradox** -- includes the possibility that humanity is subject to a pattern of "universal sanctions", as can be variously imagined (*Anticipation of Judicial Inquisition of Humans by Extraterrestrials*, 2020).

Potential role of AI in global dialogue?

It is remarkable to note the extent of the anticipated role of artificial intelligence in global governance. AI may have a major impact in reframing dialogue and addressing conflicts such as Ukraine-Russia, as can be variously argued (*Forthcoming Major Revolution in Global Dialogue: challenging new world order of interactive communication*, 2013).

The current information-based global civilization, of which the Ukraine-Russia crisis is a feature, is characterized by **information warfare**, **memetic warfare** and **cognitive warfare** variously recognized simplistically as "propaganda". Sanctions and severance of connectivity now merit recognition within the more powerful "language" of cognitive warfare (François du Cluzel, *Cognitive Warfare, Innovation Hub*, June-November 2020; Ben Norton, *Critical Analysis: Cognitive Warfare, Axis of Logic*, 31 October 2021; Silviu Costinescu, *Cognitive warfare is so much more than psyops, Silview*, 17 October 2021).

Cognitive warfare has been defined as an unconventional form of warfare that uses cyber tools to alter enemy cognitive processes, exploit mental biases or reflexive thinking, and provoke thought distortions, influence decision-making and hinder actions, with negative effects, both at the individual and collective levels (Johns Hopkins University and Imperial College, *Countering cognitive warfare: awareness and resilience, NATO Review*, 20 May 2021).

Supercomputers: The development of AI is associated with that of **supercomputers** but not dependent on them. They are ranked within the **Top500** listing. The most powerful as of November 2021 is in Japan; the most numerous are in China (183), followed by the USA (*Europe holds its own in supercomputer race as China squeezes out US, Science Business*, 27 January 2022). Some are blacklisted because of their military applications (*US blacklists seven Chinese supercomputer groups, BBC News*, 9 April 2021).

Only 7 supercomputers are noted as located in Russia, but with others in the Commonwealth of Independent States (*Rating of supercomputers of Russia and CIS of Top50, TADviser*, 1 April 2020). The **NDMC Supercomputer**, a military supercomputer located in Moscow, is designed to predict the development of armed conflicts and is able to analyze the situation and draw conclusions based on the information about past military conflicts. The database of the supercomputer contains data on the major armed conflicts of modernity for the efficient analysis of future threats.

Of relevance to the current argument, however, is the capacity to formulate and explore questions relevant to the resolution of conflicts through dialogue, as argued separately (*Superquestions for Supercomputers: avoiding terra flops from misguided dependence on teraflops?* 2010). Would AI be able to reframe the blame-game tendency which is so frequently a prelude to conflict (*Reframing whingeing and blame-gaming through meta-discourse?* 2014).

Non zero-sum games? Given the questionable adequacy of the approaches to dialogue and meta-discourse highlighted above, **a key question is whether the envisaged "meta-capabilities" of AI will be relevant to global dialogue in times of crisis.** The much-publicized encounters of AI with chess and go grand masters -- and more recently poker -- are only suggestive in this regard (Keith Romer, *How A.I. Conquered Poker*, *The New York Times*, 18 January 2022). With respect to meta-reasoning, early exploration in terms of human machine interaction are indeed already evident (D. Perlis, et al, *Modeling Time and Meta-Reasoning in Dialogue via Active Logic*, *AAAI Technical Report FS-99-03*, 1999).

In the case of chess, go and poker the capabilities acquired by AI are to defeat the opponent -- to win -- as in the many ball-games which are an inspiration for military conflict, and are already in use for that purpose (George Gilder, *AI is not a Zero-Sum Game*, 23 April 2021; *Adversarial search and zero-sum games*). This suggests a need for crucial reframing as to whether humans are able to orient the neural learning of AI to enable other outcomes, and will AI be able to detect outcomes of that kind as preferable?

From a game theory perspective, can AI be adapted to dialogue framed as **non zero-sum games**, with the implied requirement for **non zero-sum thinking** and a recognition of any probability of **zero-sum bias**? An indication of possibilities is suggested by a new program called **Delphi**, developed by researchers at the University of Washington and the **Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence (AI2)** in Seattle, to teach AI about human values.

Paradoxically, as claimed by Yi Zeng, *Global Cooperation on Artificial Intelligence is not a Zero-Sum Game* (*International Research Center for AI Ethics and Governance*, 3 February 2021). In the case of the Ukraine-Russia conflict it might be asked whether the AI-enhanced supercomputers employed by all the parties for strategic purposes could be understood as having "collaborated" in any way. Would such collaboration be a feature of the emerging metaverse (*Future Psychosocial Implications of the Metaverse*, 2022)?

Adversarial collaboration: The potential of **adversarial collaboration**, as articulated by Nobel Laureate **Daniel Kahneman** (*Adversarial Collaboration: an Edge Lecture*), offers a contrast to the uncritical focus on crushing and eliminating any opposition. Related approaches can be envisaged (*Using Disagreements for Superordinate Frame Configuration*, 1993; *Interrelating Incompatible Viewpoints*, 1983; *Differences as a basis for Sustainable Community*, 1998).

AI may come to play a considerable role in meeting organization -- collective dialogue -- beyond that of the zoom-style current favoured (*From Zoom Organization to Zome Configuration and Dynamics*, 2020; *Envisaging the AI-enhanced Future of the Conferencing Process*, 2020).

More controversially, will AI systems seek to exploit outcomes -- or be used to that end -- as can be speculatively argued (*Governance of Pandemic Response by Artificial Intelligence: control of human agents unconscious of AI-elaboration of communication scripts?* 2021).

Reframing boundaries: In the light of the Ukraine-Russia crisis, it is especially intriguing to consider how AI might enable conventional boundaries to be reframed in dialogue. Given the anticipated impact of **quantum computing**, this capacity could notably follow from the arguments of **Alexander Wendt** (*Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology*, 2015; *The mind-body problem and social science: motivating a quantum social theory*, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 48, 2018, 2).

The boundaries in question -- as psychosocial constructs -- could necessarily include the geopolitical boundaries and the cultural boundaries conventionally associated with them, as discussed separately (*Boundary preoccupations: geopolitical, cognitive and otherwise*, 2022). Understood as an interface, the transfer across them could also be enabled and sustained by AI (*Cognitive Osmosis in a Knowledge-based Civilization: interface challenge of inside-outside, insight-outsight, information-outformation*, 2017).

The possibilities have implications beyond the nation state and overly simplistic initiatives towards world government and a new world order -- as currently formulated in preparation for any new pandemic (Rudolf Hänsel and Peter Koenig, *The WHO as a "Proxy World Government"? Abolition of the Nation State?* *Global Research*, 7 March 2022). How might "disease" then be fruitfully reframed by AI in generic terms, given the wider psychosocial and environmental implications (*Cognitive Implications of Lifestyle Diseases of Rich and Poor*, 2010; *Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society*, 2008).

Potentially more intriguing is how identity is then held to be associated with boundaries if the boundaries include understandings of **diasporas** and **spheres of influence**, potentially vital to the issues of Ukraine-Russia (*Georgia's EU bid raises existential question: What is Europe and where does it end?* *Euronews*, 4 March 2022). Especially significant in the light of quantum computing are the psychosocial implications of **quantum superposition** -- echoed to a very limited degree by dual nationality and the right to multiple passports.

Could AI be used to enable, enrich and sustain the earlier **condominium model** recognized in international law? *Wikipedia* cites numerous examples of **current condominiums**, **former condominiums**, and **proposed condominiums**. Understood otherwise, could AI be used to manage contractual relationships in new ways?

The possibility of shifting beyond the current emphasis on the static characteristics of psychosocial organization has been envisaged in terms of "**variable geometry**" (Fabrizio Tassinari, *Variable Geometries: mapping ideas, institutions and power in the wider Europe*, *CEPS Working Document*, No. 254, November 2006; *Alternation between Variable Geometries: a brokership style for the United Nations as a guarantee of its requisite variety*, 1985).

AI might then provide a context for such transformation, whether periodic or continuous, namely for **metamorphosis**. Some indication of this is offered by time-sharing, functional rotation and notions of "shapeshifting" (Daina Middleton, *Are You a Shape-shifter? The*

Importance of Building Organizational Resilience, 16 May 16, 2016; Rakhi Rajani, *Shape shifting organisations: a simplistic view*, *Medium*, 1 April 2017; Divina Paredes, *Why shapeshifting organisations are the future*, *CIO*, 17 July 2018; *Secret sharing, Shapeshifting and Embodiment*, (2011).

The focus on [dialogue among civilizations](#) by UNESCO has notably featured [Edgar Morin](#) (*Dialogue Assumes Equality*, *Courier*, January 2004), Morin makes extensive use of the metamorphosis of the caterpillar as a metaphor of social transformation:

A caterpillar can become a chrysalis from which emerges something new, something that has wings. Metamorphosis is not only a phenomenon for insects, like butterflies, but al a historical phenomenon of human societies. (*Complex Thinking for a Complex World: about reductionism, disjunction and systemism*, *Systema*, 2, 2014, 1)

Engendering and "re-cognizing" patterns in dialogue: The future may consider it extraordinary the investment in pattern recognition in sports, most notably the so-called "[passing patterns](#)" in team ball games (*13 Soccer Passing Drills for Great Ball Movement*, *SoccerCoachingPro*). From a future perspective, the question could be why that monitoring expertise and analysis is not systematically applied to [discourse analysis](#) in crucial international summits. **Why is AI not used to recognize more fruitful patterns of dialogue and to sustain their emergence?** Why is it not used to flag any [logical fallacies](#) in international summits?

It is curious that purportedly vital global summits do not call upon such expertise in the quest for viable strategies, as can be variously argued (*Identifying Polyhedra Enabling Memorable Strategic Mapping: visualization of organization and strategic coherence through 3D modelling*, 2020; *Multi-option Technical Facilitation of Public Debate: eliciting consensus nationally and internationally*, 2019; *Encoding Coherent Topic Transformation in Global Dialogue: memorability of cognitive implication in symmetry-preserving operations on polyhedra*, 2021).

It is clear that AI is used by the security services to analyse communication patterns in order to detect influential individuals whose marginalization or elimination may be considered strategically advantageous. This framing bears comparison with skill in detection of the key log to be shifted to free a river log-jam. Could AI be adapted to recognize arguments (or their advocates) inhibiting or enabling social change?

Requisite subtlety of dialogue: As noted with respect to any form of meta-discourse, missing is any "re-cognition" of levels of subtlety in dialogue -- which acknowledge the challenges of collective identity fundamental to the Ukraine-Russia crisis. With the classic articulation of an extreme of dialogue subtlety by [Martin Buber](#) (*I and Thou*, 1923), the challenge may be expressed as moving far beyond the simpler requirements of the [Turing Test](#) in dialogue (*AI Dialogue: beyond the Turing Test to the Buber Test?* 2020; *TAO of Dialogue*, 1996).

As a guide to such future possibilities, how are dialogues to be distinguished by "depth" (*EU and US pledge greater depth of dialogue*, *Agence Europe*, 16 April 2015). This might be understood in terms of "[levels of dialogue](#)"? Given the varieties of dialogue, what form of self-reflexive dialogue can be distinguished as "sustainable", and as fundamental to "sustainability" (*Sustainable Dialogue as a Necessary Template for Sustainable Global Community*, 1995; *12 Complementary Languages for Sustainable Governance*, 2003; *Sustaining the Quest for Sustainable Answers*, 2003)

With respect to the Ukraine-Russia crisis, of underlying relevance is [Eastern Orthodoxy](#) -- the Christian faith of fundamental significance to both countries -- with implications for a process of [apophatic discourse](#) of a subtlety not recognized in conventional diplomatic discourse.

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