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# Editor's Note

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The twenty-first century's opening decades have witnessed the slow erosion of the rules-based order put in place after the Second World War. We live in a world beset with challenges and institutions that should rise to these challenges but are unable to do so.

The Great Recession of the first decade of the century undermined trust in the economic order; at the end of the second decade, the COVID-19 pandemic with global lockdowns upended and changed the world as we knew it; the post-COVID reorientation of economies adjusting to deglobalization disrupted supply chains, and labor shortages have unleashed rampant inflation, at levels not seen since the 1970s. Rising interests are playing havoc with the markets, and in the early years of the third decade, the war in the Ukraine threatens to escalate into a wider conflict. It has resulted in massive increases in energy costs in Europe, with secondary effects to its economies and political order.

The war has reached a stage where the prospect of a tactical nuclear strike by Russia targeting Ukraine is no longer unthinkable. It has entered the realm of the possible, not yet likely, but increasingly part of the conversation as Russia continues to lose ground to a smaller but much superior Ukraine, armed with sophisticated military hardware supplied by the United States. With every military setback, Vladimir Putin raises the stakes and the West responds by sending Ukraine ever more sophisticated weapons. This escalatory trajectory can only end badly.

Throw in a China making increasingly threatening noise about Taiwan, and a leader, Xi Jinping, convinced that the United States is in decline, who wants to Make China Great Again. On the geopolitical margins, Kim Jong-un, trying to reassert North Korea's prominence on the global stage, is back to testing intercontinental ballistic missiles. A slow drift to authoritarian rule is enveloping floundering democracies, including the United States. Climate warming is savaging countries with temperatures in some parts slowly reaching the unlivable. Drought and famine are ravaging huge swaths of the Middle East, China, and Africa; forest fires across the US west and parts of Europe are scorching the earth; flooding in Pakistan swamped a third of the country in what was described as a "monsoon on steroids"; and Hurricane Ian flattened Puerto Rico and thrashed parts of the west coast of Florida with catastrophic storm surges.

The EU countries are undergoing their own reckoning. The need to redefine their security needs and build their defenses as a bulwark against Russian aggression that can no longer be discounted has shifted some power to countries on the eastern periphery, such as Poland and the Baltic states. The Poles in particular see Russia as an enemy, but many Poles also see Germany as the "Other," calling on Germany to pay €1.3 trillion in reparations for its 1939–1945 occupation.[1] Germany remains the economic powerhouse but is wrestling with reorienting its energy sector in an effort to terminate its dependence on Russian oil. Trying to ward off a deep recession has led some of the richer countries to take measures that tend to undermine the integrity of the Single Market.

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The semi-authoritarian regimes in Poland and Hungary, the right-wing government in Italy lead by the far-right Giorgia Meloni, the stunning rise of the Sweden Democrats, rising support for Marie Le Pen in France, and Vox in Spain moving from the periphery into the mainstream don't augur well either for the European Union's democratic credentials or its ability to hold together when the winter cold tests its resolve to maintain solidarity of support for Ukraine. On all fronts there are fissures in the consensus.

The US midterm elections in November are predicted to give Republicans control of the House of Representatives. Dozens of Republican candidates are running on platforms embracing the Big Lie—that Donald Trump won the 2020 presidential election. Investigations into all things Democratic are promised. Expect proceedings to impeach President Joe Biden. Tit for tat, as the country racks itself on polarization and its democracy under threats last seen during the Civil War.

The articles in this issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* reflect aspects of the changing world order as it continues to adjust to the digital age.

In "Complex Adaptive Systems in a Contentious World," Yasmin Merali draws on the Complex Adaptive Systems paradigm "to explore how world order emerges from the dynamics of network relationships between the players in the cyber-social landscape." She elaborates on "mechanisms underpinning resilience, adaptation, and transformation of socioeconomic systems in turbulent contexts," emphasizing "a need to reconsider conventional logics and mindsets." "World leaders," she writes, "need to choose whether to persist in defending the international rule-based order or to embrace network thinking and create conditions under which each country can find a sustainable niche in a global ecosystem." In "Bounded Confidence: How AI Could Exacerbate Social Media's Homophily Problem," Dylan Weber, Scott Atran, and Rich Davis interrogate one of the drivers of polarization, examining how the Internet is impacting the functioning of democracies. Heralded at the time of its advent "as a revolutionary development in the democratization of information," online conversations on social media have tended to "narrow the information landscape of its users." "This dynamic," they write, "is driven by the propensity of the network structure of social media to tend toward *homophily;* users strongly prefer to interact with content and other users that are similar to them." Kumar Ramakrishna's "Enter the Age of Csywar: Some Reflections on an Emergent Trend" discusses the changing nature of warfare in the digital age, the emergence of what he terms "csywar"—"an indirect, hybrid strategy" on the part of intervening states that "seeks to attain data, infrastructural, and epistemic dominance over the target state." He weighs the merits of "various defensive counter-csywar strategies that target states could pursue" and makes the case for "developing deterrent counter-csywar capabilities against hostile intervening states."

Two articles, Mike Hardy's "Responding to Turbulent Times: Where Does Leadership Come In?" and Michael D. Buhrmester, Michael A. Cowan, and Harvey Whitehouse's "What Motivates Barrier-Crossing Leadership?" examine where and what constitutes leadership in the twenty-first century where the challenges are complex, interconnected, and existential. Hardy observes that "the success of leadership responses to challenges of violent conflict and health pandemics as well as the extent to which we see futures through fragmented or solidarity lenses has created real interest in global perspectives in leadership and a new research agenda that is associated with this imperative." The article concludes by "identifying work in progress, by assessing the universality of characteristics that have been associated with good leadership and how globalization is changing leaders' perspectives and required competencies." Buhrmester, Cowan, and Whitehouse report on a different question. Their article presents the results of surveys in seven communities, contrasting barrier-crossing leaders ("who pursue group interests by recognizing rivals' interests and working

with them to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes") with barrier-bound leaders ("who champion their group's goals against those of rivals from seven communities"). "In line with new theories from group psychology and anthropology," they found that "barrier-crossers uniquely reported intense, family-like bonds to both ingroups and outgroups," and that "these outgroup bonds result from past, personally transformative experiences shared with outgroup members."

In "The Youth Inferno: Two-Way Working on Ancestral Lands," Pamela Nathan presents some of the work of Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment (CASSE) in Central Australia, Northern Territory, with the youth in the justice system. In "the monster world of trauma, for the youth who are its casualties," she writes "CASSE has endeavored to contain the 'too much' and to fill the 'too little' with stories and hope." "In two-way working," she adds, "CASSE seeks to replace fear with hope and deadness with aliveness, transforming extraordinary, catastrophic darkness to light the ordinary with companionship, compassion, resilience, and reflection." She concludes: "Over ten years, CASSE has become a trusted organization. Aboriginal people now recognize CASSE as a trusted container that can hold the good and the bad, bear the pain and deposit trust in the Other and catalyze change. In a landscape of trauma, the psychoanalytic frame has been fundamental to enabling the work to endure and to empower."

The Northern Ireland peace process is the focus of three articles. In "Managing the Atmosphere: Intelligence and Assessment in the Early Years of the Northern Ireland Peace Process—An Interview with Sir John Chilcot," Graham Spencer asserts that Chilcot, a Northern Ireland Office official, was "central to the development of the peace process." Spencer details the challenges Chilcot faced "in assessing intelligence across a range of sources and collating that intelligence in ways to best serve the strategic objective of achieving peace." The interview, he says, "provides important information about the British government's role in the early stages of the peace process, when sensitivities and risks were high, and it details the significance of building foundations that were consistent with key principles interpreted and applied through a pragmatic and imaginative assessment of intelligence."

Coming up to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland remains an unsettled place. Since Brexit, the word most associated with the peace process is "fragile." When young loyalists rioted at the Lanark interface separating Catholics on the Springfield Road from Protestants in the Shankill in April 2021 to protest the Northern Ireland Protocol—the sea border in the Irish sea that requires checks on goods coming into Northern Ireland from Great Britain as part of the post-Brexit arrangement that keeps Northern Ireland in the European Union's Single Market and ensures seamless trade between Northern Ireland and the Republic, a member country—Irish prime minister Michael Martin, then British prime minister Boris Johnson, EU Commission president Ursula Van Leyden, and US president Joe Biden warned that the keeping the peace was paramount, that the Good Friday Agreement offered the best safeguards, and that the peace was fragile, what Brendan O Leary and other scholars call a "dirty peace." The Agreement ended the horrific violence of thirty years, but despite hundreds of millions of dollars being poured into reconciliation projects, the reconciliation between the two communities, nationalist/republican and loyalist/unionist or Catholic nationalist/Protestant unionist has been slow and sporadic. Republican and loyalist paramilitaries remain in the shadows.

For as long as paramilitarism remains "a clear and present danger," to quote successive reports of the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC), a monitoring organization created under the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement, there will always be some set of circumstances that will breathe fire into the ashes of their violent pasts. Some paramilitaries justify their continued existence as having

become key figures in the conflict transformation phase of the peace process, as they manage the tensions at the interfaces between their respective communities.

Unless the steps the IRC outlines in great detail—especially massive measures to address the scale of deprivation in both communities—are implemented, and the paramilitary presence and their dissident counterparts in republican and loyalist communities permanently eradicated, the IRC will continue to wail "a clear and present danger" in their reports, and tentacles of paramilitarism will continue to exert their vice-like grip in these communities. In March 2022, the "terror threat level" was downgraded from "severe" to substantial in the North for the first time in twelve years.[2] Days later, because of a bomb scare, Irish foreign minister Simon Coveney was evacuated from the Houben Centre in Belfast, where he was attending a peace dialogue. And almost immediately the Ulster Volunteer Force issued its own threat.[3]

Adrian Guelke has written that "in a deeply divided society conflict exists along a well-entrenched fault line that is recurrent and endemic and that contains the potential for violence between the segments."[4] That fault line in Northern Ireland is still a yawning geopolitical gap between two sets of competing perspectives on the present and the future. In a divided society saturated with binary choices, every decision, from the trivial to the existential, receives the same zero-sum stamp.

Going on a full generation after the conflict, on the way to a milestone where the Good Friday Agreement peace has more years behind it than the decades of conflict, that potential for violence still exists and is invoked very effectively by one side or another when it perceives a threat to its interests. "Is a return to violence on the cards?" the *Financial Times* asked after reviewing what the political endgames might be following the May 2022 Assembly elections. And it answered its own question: "No one expects a full-scale return to the Troubles, but there have been worrying flashbacks—a van hijacking/car hoax last month, and petrol bombs hurled at police this week."[5] Small-scale stuff but sufficient to push the alert button.[6]

In two articles, "Cultural Work in Peacebuilding among Traumatized Communities of Northern Ireland 1: Background and General Considerations," and "Cultural Work in Peacebuilding among Traumatized Communities of Northern Ireland 2: Talking about Culture," Eugen Koh argues that the peace remains fragile because "many aspects of the sectarian conflict have been embedded in cultural substrata of the respective communities." Accordingly, "cultural transformation is necessary to achieve comprehensive and sustained peace." History casts a long and unforgiving grip. Assumptions about the Other "have their origin in traumatic events that occurred more than three hundred years ago." The detritus of these events has been "reinforced by the more recent three decades of conflict." As a result, "these traumatic individual and collective experiences across the generations have had a profound effect on the culture and peace processes within Northern Ireland." Koh offers "a psychodynamically informed understanding of the sectarian conflict" and "'culture work' as a means to cultural transformation."

The first article "discusses general contextual issues," the psychoanalytic concepts that inform his history of Northern Ireland from a "psychodynamic perspective," most notably from the early seventeenth century through the twenty-first, and presents a "framework for considering culture and a process of transformation." The second describes an ongoing project, "Talking about Culture," a pilot project involving community leaders from both sides of the sectarian divide and some who are nonaligned in what he terms "a psychodynamic trauma–informed approach to cultural conversations involving an in-depth analysis of culture that avoids becoming stuck." He concludes with outlining "a framework and set of preconditions that enable such deep

conversations" and some of the necessary conditions that may enable such work to take place and identifying some "key features and processes involved."

## Notes

[1] Jan Ciensk, "Poland to Germany: Pay Up!," *Politico*, September 2, 2022.

[2] IRC Fourth Report, December 2021, https://www.ircommission.org/news-centre/irc-fourth-report; Allison Morris. "The Northern Ireland-Related Terrorism Threat Level in Northern Ireland Has Been Lowered for the First Time in 12 Years," *Belfast Telegraph*, March 22, 2022.

[3] "Simon Coveney: 'Loyalist Paramilitaries behind North Belfast Security Alert,' Police Say," BBC News, March 25, 2022.

[4] Adrian Guelke, *Politics in Deeply Divided Societies* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 9.

[5] "Your Essential Guide to Northern Ireland's Elections," *Public News Time*, April 21, 2022.

[6] Seanin Graham, "Threat of Violence Rises as Loyalists Vent Frustrations with Protocol," *Irish Times*, March 31, 2022.