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THE UNPRECEDENTED horrors of World War II compelled humanity to create a world order rooted in the UN Charter with the express purpose of preventing its recurrence. Despite some notable transgressions, global stability was by and large established; for decades, international law and order generally held. This was predicated on the great powers sharing an overall understanding of the rules of the road as well as of the potentially cataclysmic consequences of their reckless violation—especially after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

THE END of the Cold War ushered in a genuine hope that the dawn of a new era would result in the elimination of unilateralism, thereby entrenching a functional and just multilateral system. Geopolitics would wither away as part of the “end of history.” For a decade, it seemed to work: all major military interventions were authorized by the UN Security Council.

THIS CHANGED in 1999 when NATO waged war against Yugoslavia without a UN mandate. This affront to international law was papered over ex post facto by Security Council Resolution 1244. However, that destabilizing precedent was unfortunately followed by another: the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing” war against Iraq in 2003.

THE NEXT stage in the unilateralist trend began in February 2008 with the declaration of independence by Kosovo’s ethnic-Albanians, which was overwhelmingly supported by the countries that participated in the 1999 and 2003 wars. At the time, warnings about how this attempt at secession would set a precedent were largely ignored. Only six months later, however, Russia acted similarly in Georgia, and years later in Ukraine. The Kosovo precedent has also gone on to add a new dimension to ethno-territorial conflicts in places as disparate as the South Caucasus, continental Europe, the British Isles, both South and East Asia, the South Atlantic, parts of Africa, etc. Various authors in the present edition of *Horizons* discuss many of these conflicts in their respective essays.

WHERE THE past now most dramatically meets the future is in Ukraine, however. Differing perspectives of that war’s grave consequences for world order are also elaborated in these pages. None is more arresting than the fact that it has clearly accelerated a descent to the twenty-first century version of cold war, this time involving the U.S. and China. Its risks will be exponentially greater in the event that all parties fail to regain the wherewithal to jointly uphold the basic norms governing international relations, taking into account the legitimate security interests and concerns of all countries.

THE SPILLOVER effects on global progress are evident: no country will achieve sustainable development by the 2030 deadline, and the developing world’s looming debt crisis is unlikely to be adequately addressed. No region remains immune to the underlying locomotions, including Central Asia. These grave matters, too, are taken up in our pages. It is not simply Germany, the EU, or the West that has reached a geopolitical *Zeitenwende*; it is the world *tout court*.