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Note to Editors: This is a selection of news wire reports that have been edited to be relevant for audiences for the next two weeks. You are welcome to select and publish individual items or the whole stack.

Headlines in This News Package:

- War Criminals & Military Aggressors Who Occupy Seats in the Security Council
- Ending the World's Cycles of Conflict, Disaster and Extreme Poverty
- U.S. Policies Are Slowing World Economy

[NEWS ITEM TEXT]

War Criminals & Military Aggressors Who Occupy Seats in the Security Council

[1,583 words]

Come April 1, a post-Ukraine Russia, will preside over the UN Security Council in a month-long presidency on the basis of alphabetical rotation.

But Russia will not be the first or the only country—accused of war crimes or charged with violating the UN charter—to be either a member or preside over the most powerful political body in the United Nations.

Stephen Zunes, a professor of politics and coordinator of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of San Francisco who has written extensively on the politics of the Security Council, told IPS the United States has served as president of the Security Council while committing war crimes in Vietnam and Iraq.

France and the United Kingdom, he pointed out, served while committing war crimes in their colonial wars. China has recently served despite ongoing war crimes in Xinjiang.

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“So having Russia take its turn as Security Council president would hardly be unprecedented.”

“It is certainly true that Russia would be the first to illegally annex territory seized by military force. However, given how the United States has formally recognized illegal annexations by Israel and Morocco of territories seized by military force, it’s not like Russia is the only permanent member to think that is somehow okay,” declared Zunes.

The ICC has also previously accused several political leaders, including Omar Hassan al-Bahir of Sudan, Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia and Libya’s Muammar el-Qaddafi of war crimes or genocide.

Asked at a press conference in March about the anomaly of a member state that commits war crimes presiding over the UN Security Council, UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters: “You’re well aware of the rules of the Security Council, including the alphabetical rotation of the Member States of the Security Council for the Presidency of the Council, which is a policy that is held throughout the lifespan of the Security Council.” “And we have nothing further to say than that,” he added, just ahead of the ICC announcement.

But in a stunning new development, the ICC in March accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of war crimes and issued a warrant for his arrest, along with a similar arrest warrant for Russia’s Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova.

The announcement on March 17 specifically charged them for the illegal transfer of children out of war-devastated Ukraine, which was invaded by Russia last year, in violation of the UN charter.

Russia, which is not a signatory for the Rome Statute which created the ICC, dismissed the warrants.

In a statement released in March,, ICC’s Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan, said “on the basis of evidence collected and analyzed by my Office pursuant to its independent investigations, the Pre-Trial Chamber has confirmed that there are reasonable grounds to believe that President Putin and Ms Lvova-Belova bear criminal responsibility for the unlawful deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, contrary to article 8(2)(a)(vii) and article 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute.”

Incidents identified by the ICC office include the deportation of at least hundreds of children taken from orphanages and children’s care homes. “Many of these children, we allege, have since been given for adoption in the Russian Federation. The law was

changed in the Russian Federation, through Presidential decrees issued by President Putin, to expedite the conferral of Russian citizenship, making it easier for them to be adopted by Russian families.”

Thomas G. Weiss, Distinguished Fellow, Global Governance, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, told IPS the statement by the UN spokesperson is completely accurate.

“There is no precedent for preventing a rotating chair in the Security Council (SC)—yet another and only the most recent indication of the aberrant way that it was constructed.”

That said, the Russian ambassador will perhaps be squirming in his SC chair after the ICC’s embarrassing arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin, he noted.

“While it is extremely unlikely that he will be in The Hague anytime soon, the international pressure will only increase—we should recall the itinerary of Slobodan Milošević.”

Moscow is extremely unhappy with this development, Weiss said, as they were when the General Assembly unceremoniously ejected them from the Human Rights Council last year.

Bouncing Russia off (or Libya in 2011) was an important precedent to build upon for other UN bodies (other than the SC). Moscow detests being isolated, and fought against the decision for that reason, he added.

The biggest “what if?” takes us back to December 1991 when the USSR imploded. That was the moment to have called into question Russia’s automatically assuming the seat of the Soviet Union.

“We have thirty years of state practice, and so, we cannot call that into question (although Ukrainian President Zelensky has); we can only wish that we had raised that question then, instead of heaving a huge sigh of relief that the transition was so smooth,” declared Weiss, who is also Presidential Professor of Political Science, and Director Emeritus, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, the CUNY Graduate Center.

James Paul, a former Executive Director, Global Policy Forum, told IPS the Russian military campaign in Ukraine has raised many questions about international peace and security. Inevitably the debate has produced heated arguments at the United Nations.

Many Western governments (and liberal “idealists” among their citizenry), he said, would like to punish Russia in various ways through sanctions and isolation, in hopes that this will cause Russia to withdraw its military forces and give up its strategic goals in Ukraine.

“Some have proposed that Russia should not be able to take its monthly rotating seat as President of the UN Security Council in the month of April.”

This is a position that shows weak familiarity with international affairs and the workings of the world's most powerful state actors, including ignorance of the military history of the Western powers, now so exercised about Russian transgressions, said Paul, author of "Of Foxes and Chickens"—Oligarchy and Global Power in the UN Security Council

If the Security Council, he argued, had even-handedly denied its rotating presidency to members that break international law, invade other countries, forcibly change the boundaries of sovereign states or engineer the overthrow of elected governments, then all permanent members of the Council (not least the Western powers) would lose their presidencies.

Asked for the UN Secretary-General's reaction to the ICC arrest warrants, UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters March 17: "As we've said many times before here, the International Criminal Court is independent of the Secretariat. We do not comment on their actions."

Asked whether Putin will be permitted to enter the UN premises either in Geneva, Vienna or New York, or meet with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, he said: "I don't want to answer hypothetical questions because ... as you know, issues of travel involve others. We will continue... As a general rule, the Secretary-General will speak to whomever he needs to speak in order to deal with the issues in front of him."

Balkees Jarrah, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch, said the ICC announcement was a big day for the many victims of crimes committed by Russian forces in Ukraine since 2014.

"With these arrest warrants, the ICC has made Putin a wanted man and taken its first step to end the impunity that has emboldened perpetrators in Russia's war against Ukraine for far too long."

The warrants, Jarrah pointed out, send a clear message that giving orders to commit or tolerating serious crimes against civilians may lead to a prison cell in The Hague.

"The court's warrants are a wakeup call to others committing abuses or covering them up that their day in court may be coming, regardless of their rank or position."

Elaborating further, Paul said in a world of violent and powerful states, the UN is useful because it can bring warring parties together and promote diplomacy and conflict resolution.

"Those calling for punishment for Russia should realize that the United States would (if even-handed rules were enforced) be subject to regular penalties, since it has violated

other states' sovereignty with military forces on many occasions to pursue its own interests," he noted.

The Iraq War, he said, typifies the U.S. disregard for UN rules and Security Council decisions. U.S. wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan are further high-profile wars of this type. There are dozens of cases.

"Britain and France, too, have used their powerful militaries in contravention of international law, to carry out bloody wars against decolonization as well as later post-colonial interventions to insure access to mines, oil resources, etc."

The Suez War, launched against Egypt jointly with Israel, was a classic of this genre. Russia and China have had their share of military operations and interventions as well, including Russia's intervention in Afghanistan and its many wars in the Caucasus.

China, famous for promoting territorial integrity as a principle, annexed Tibet and fought several wars with its neighbor Vietnam, he said.

"So, the Permanent Members of the Security Council have a very poor record when it comes to setting the standard for international law. Even smaller states (with bigger protectors) have been in the invasion business. Israel, Turkey and Morocco come quickly to mind," declared Paul.

Asked whether the President of the General Assembly Csaba Kőrösi would be willing to meet with President Putin, his Spokesperson Pauline Kubiak told reporters that "President Kőrösi represents all Member States of the General Assembly, which includes Russia. He has been willing and remains willing to meet with President Putin."

By Thalif Deen - IPS UN Bureau Report / Globetrotter

Ending the World's Cycles of Conflict, Disaster and Extreme Poverty

[963 words]

This year marks the halfway point—eight years in and eight years out—of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty and reduce inequalities.

Yet we are a long way off from these commitments, and multiple crises—now known as 'polycrisis'—such as conflict, disaster and extreme poverty are converging on low income and lower-middle income countries, necessitating systemic change in our poverty eradication efforts.

The scale of the challenge before us is undeniable. Poverty has long been concentrated in certain low- and lower-middle-income countries that continue to experience conflict and a

high number of conflict-related fatalities, and high numbers of people affected by disasters from earthquakes, to floods, fires or drought.

These are just two causes of impoverishment and chronic poverty, which often combine with other crises and shocks including ill health.

This isn't just a concern, however, at the country level. The challenge we are increasingly facing because of polycrisis in many parts of the world is that inequalities within countries are also worsening. The complex and often multi-layered nature of today's crises means that policymakers need to develop longer term solutions, instead of firefighting crises as they emerge.

Our work at the [Chronic Poverty Advisory Network \(CPAN\)](#) in [Afghanistan](#) saw that the pandemic, layered with the transition in power, drought, and heightened economic crises, all combined to drive poverty and a dramatic increase in hunger.

Its consequences were especially worrying for certain groups, not least women and girls, and with intergenerational consequences.

In [Nigeria](#), research points to a confluence of hardships over the years experienced by the poorest populations due to sequenced, interdependent crises. The poorest households pre-pandemic were more likely to experience hunger and sell agricultural and non-agricultural assets to cope during COVID-19 in 2020.

As time went on they were also more likely to pay more than the official price for petrol in 2022 during rampant economic crisis, and to expect drought and delayed rains to negatively affect them financially into 2023.

Yet despite interconnected crises, most governments and international agencies respond to each disaster individually as it arises. This could limit the effectiveness of poverty eradication interventions or create additional sources of risk and vulnerability amidst polycrisis.

For example, the singular focus of many countries responding to COVID-19 often diverted resources from other interventions including peacebuilding operations, thereby [allowing new conflict risks to arise](#).

Working 'In' and 'On' Polycrisis: Centring Equity and Risk

To reach the goal of poverty eradication and reducing extreme inequities, it is critical to respond in a way is sensitive to working in places experiencing polycrisis. This requires at a minimum upholding principles of 'do no harm' and being sensitive to local conditions and contexts.

At the same time, we need to find ways of proactively working on polycrisis, by responding to multiple crises simultaneously rather than one at a time. In other words, building on [learning from conflict contexts](#), we need to be working in and on polycrisis in the road to zero poverty.

Many countries worked ‘in’ polycrisis when responding to climate-related disasters during COVID-19. For example, the Bangladesh government [adapted its Cyclone Preparedness Plan](#) through various actions including modifying dissemination of messaging through public announcements and digital modalities, and combining early warning messaging with COVID-19 prevention and protection messaging.

Afghanistan disaggregates needs by sector, severity, location, and population groups in its [humanitarian needs overview](#), which when considered holistically can help ensure responses that prioritize benefiting people in poverty.

There are equally important lessons from working ‘on’ polycrisis. The World Food Programme’s [operational plan](#) in response to COVID-19 was regularly updated to consider evolving layered crises and support pre-emptive action, scale-up direct food assistance, and reinforce safety nets.

There are also examples we can draw on for reducing poverty from around localized decision making, relying on the knowledge that local communities, [women’s rights organizations](#), and local disaster risk management agencies have about populations in the areas in which they operate.

Flexibility in funding is important in this process to be able to respond to rapidly changing contexts and needs.

Working ‘in’ and ‘on’ polycrisis together necessitates matrix thinking, rebooting and recasting what we know of complexity of intersectionality. While we previously recognised intersecting inequalities primarily by identity markers, such as gender, caste, and socio-economic status, we need to increasingly be aware of how inequalities of people and place converge over time, and how we might [center equity](#) in risk-informed responses. This requires a fundamental shift from single-issue technocratic approaches to crisis management. For example, though social protection—direct financial assistance for people—was heralded as a key mitigation measure during COVID-19 and in response to recent food and energy price inflation, most [cash transfer programmes averaged just four to five months](#) during the pandemic.

Social protection could be adjusted to increasingly target the vulnerable as well as people in poverty, and within those categories the people who have arguably been most

disadvantaged by these crises. Recovery programmes by governments and international agencies also need to go on for longer than they typically do to build people's resilience in times of uncertainty.

Disaster-risk management agencies within government could also consistently [integrate conflict considerations](#) in their activities. There are [examples of anticipatory action](#) such as early warning systems that draw on local, customary knowledge that could be built on in this process.

Investments in coordination between disaster risk, social protection, and peacebuilding agencies, as well as multilateralism between governments, civil society, and international organizations more broadly are needed to anticipate and adapt to systemic risk.

But this [risk-informed development](#) will only get us so far, if equity is not centered alongside risk management. Just as crises are increasingly layered and interdependent, we need to similarly integrate our responses to break the link between polycrisis and poverty.

by Vidya Diwakar - IPS UN Bureau / Globetrotter

U.S. Policies Slowing World Economy

[863 Words]

Few policymakers ever claim credit for causing stagnation and recessions. Yet, they do so all the time, justifying their actions by some supposedly higher purpose.

Now, that higher purpose is checking inflation as if it is the worst option for people today. Many supposed economists make up tall tales that inflation causes economic contraction which ordinary mortals do not know or understand.

Inflating Inflation's Significance

Since early 2022, like many others in the world, Americans have been preoccupied with inflation. But official U.S. data show inflation has been slowing since mid-2022.

Recent trends since mid-2022 are clear. Inflation is no longer accelerating, but slowing. And for most economists, only accelerating inflation gives cause for concern.

Annualized inflation since has only been slightly above the official, but nonetheless arbitrary 2% inflation target of most Western central banks.

At its peak, the brief inflationary surge, in the second quarter of last year, undoubtedly reached the "highest (price) levels since the early 1980s" because of the way it is measured.

After decades of 'financialization', the public and politicians unwittingly support moneyed interests who want to minimize inflation to make the most of their financial assets.

War and Price

Russia's aggression against Ukraine began last February, with retaliatory sanctions following suit. Both have disrupted supplies, especially of fuel and food. The inflation spike in the four months after the Russian invasion was mainly due to 'supply shocks'.

Price increases were triggered by the war and retaliatory sanctions, especially for fuel, food and fertilizer. Although no longer accelerating, prices remain higher than a year before.

To be sure, price pressures had been building up with other supply disruptions. Also, demand has been changing with the new Cold War against China, the Covid-19 pandemic and 'recovery', and credit tightening in the last year.

There is little evidence of any more major accelerating factors. There is no 'wage-price spiral' as prices have recently been rising more than wages despite government efforts ensuring full employment since the 2008 global financial crisis.

Despite difficulties due to inflation, tens of millions of Americans are better off than before, e.g., with the ten million jobs created in the last two years. Under Biden, wages for poorly paid workers have risen faster than consumer prices.

Higher borrowing costs have also weakened the lot of working people everywhere. Such adverse consequences would be much less likely if the public better understood recent price increases, available policy options and their consequences.

With the notable exception of the Bank of Japan, most other major central banks have been playing 'catch-up' with the U.S. Federal Reserve interest rate hikes. To be sure, inflation has already been falling for many reasons, largely unrelated to them.

Making Stagnation

But higher borrowing costs have reduced spending, for both consumption and investment. This has hastened economic slowdown worldwide following more than a decade of largely lackluster growth since the 2008 global financial crisis.

Ill-advised earlier policies now limit what governments can do in response. With the Fed sharply raising interest rates over the last year, developing country central banks have been trying, typically in vain, to stem capital outflows to the United States and other 'safe havens' raising interest rates.

Having opened their capital accounts following foreign advice, developing country central banks always offer higher raise interest rates, hoping more capital will flow in rather than out.

Interestingly, conservative U.S. economists Milton Friedman and Ben Bernanke have shown the Fed has worsened past U.S. downturns by raising interest rates, instead of supporting enterprises in their time of need.

Four decades ago, increased servicing costs triggered government debt crises in Latin America and Africa, condemning them to ‘lost decades’. Policy conditions were then imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank for access to emergency loans.

Globalization Double-Edged

Economic globalization policies at the turn of the century are being significantly reversed, with devastating consequences for developing countries after they opened their economies to foreign trade and investment.

Encouraging foreign portfolio investment has increasingly been at the expense of “greenfield” foreign direct investment enhancing new economic capacities and capabilities.

The new Cold War has arguably involved more economic weapons, e.g., sanctions, than the earlier one. Trump’s and Japanese ‘reshoring’ and ‘friend-shoring’ discriminate among investors, remaking ‘value’ or ‘supply chains’.

Arguably, establishing the World Trade Organization in 1995 was the high water mark for multilateral trade liberalization, setting a ‘one size fits all’ approach for all, regardless of means. More recently, Biden has continued Trump’s reversal of earlier trade liberalization, even at the regional level.

1995 also saw strengthening intellectual property rights internationally, limiting technology transfers and progress. Recent ‘trade conflicts’ increasingly involve access to high technology, e.g., in the case of Huawei, TSMC and Samsung.

With declining direct tax rates almost worldwide, governments face more budget constraints. The last year has seen these diminished fiscal means massively diverted for military spending and strategic ends, cutting resources for development, sustainability, equity and humanitarian ends.

In this context, the new international antagonisms conspire to make this a ‘perfect storm’ of economic stagnation and regression. Hence, those striving for international peace and cooperation may well be our best hope against the ‘new barbarism’.

by Jomo Kwame Sundaram - IPS UN Bureau / Globetrotter

