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The New Normal: Multifaceted and Multidimensional Crises and the Interplay of Geoeconomics and Geopolitics

JON-HANS COETZER , DANIEL RAJMIL  AND LUCÍA MORALES 

The world's economic and social systems are subject to a significant state of influx, with the G20 leaders pointing out cascading crises captured by discussions about polycrisis or permacrisis. Global governance, economic growth, and political agendas are intertwined in converging multidimensional and multifaceted crises that need to be considered from the geoeconomic and geopolitical frameworks. The War in Ukraine and the Middle East's rising levels of violence with the outburst of the Israel and Hamas war, compounded by ongoing armed conflicts in different regions, are shaking up the global economic and political systems. The international community's diplomacy seems unable to bring a conclusive end to the ongoing conflicts, failing to commonly identify adequate ground for dialogue and mediation. The world is immersed in violent episodes flagging the significance and importance of solid institutions, their link to peaceful and stable societies, and their role in preserving countries' sovereignty. Tensions arising from the consequences of climate change overlap existing cleavages, bringing new dimensionalities to existing conflicts. The new geoeconomic and geopolitical dynamics resulting from the polarization of wealth have intensified. Within the outlined context, this special issue explores the relationship between conflict and its geoeconomic and geopolitical implications as we consider growing inequalities, the critical role of natural resources, and education to navigate growing levels of uncertainty and instability.

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Over the past two decades, the world economic and political landscape has been subject to rising levels of uncertainty and continuous and abrupt changes impacting global dynamics. Some of the most remarkable events that have occurred range from war, rising levels of conflict, political crises, economic disruptions, or their combination, which have led to multidimensional and multifaceted crises. From the war side, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and more recently, the war in Gaza are just a few examples of a decade that has witnessed an explosion in conflict and civil wars, amongst many others. From the economic front, we have experienced the 2001–2002 Argentine Economic Crisis, the 2007–2009 Global Economic and Financial Crisis, the 2014 Russian Financial Crisis, and the 2020 Global Health Crisis that turned into a geopolitical crisis to control economic assets.

Humanity has lived through periods of war and peace, with peace being the antithesis of war, representing a state change and being interrelated (Keen 2000). The interconnection between war and peace, increasing levels of conflict situations that escalate or deescalate threatening human security and integrity levels, require a different approach to understanding geoeconomics and geopolitics. In addition, there is a need to reconsider existing socioeconomic and environmental systems. The challenges posed by the continuous environmental deterioration reflected within the climate change discourse can provide critical value to peace and conflict studies within the United Nations 2030 Agenda (UN 2015). While the United Nations has provided a working framework to countries to enable the implementation of a sustainability agenda, the international community's ability to progress with the goals and targets and to cover the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economy, social development and the environment have proved to be unrealistic. The world economies are clearly divided between the wealthy Global North and the poor Global South, differentiated by complex economic, political, social and environmental landscape.

As we approach the Sustainability Agenda 2030 deadline, it is evident that the climate crisis has enhanced, as illustrated by the latest IPCC (2023) report, providing evidence that climate change is happening all around us, with temperatures already increased by 1.09 °C since pre-industrial times, faster than at any point in at least the last 2000 years. The report signals the reliance on fossil fuels as the root cause of climate change. But, to the climate change dilemma, we need to add the economic and social dimension, as the global economy has weakened, the emergence of new wars and heightened conflict and the lingering effects of the Global Health Crisis are questioning countries' ability to achieve the outlined goals, targets and objectives. The world leaders met in September 2023 in the UN New York headquarters to renew their commitments to

the agenda, facing a stark reality as the number of people living in extreme poverty is higher than it was four years ago. Hunger levels have also increased, and it is reported as being back to 2005 levels; gender equality is now estimated to be 300 years away, and the climate crisis is intensifying, with the Summit concluding that we are facing a defining moment that requires urgent actions.

This special issue explores the many forms and realities of new interactions between geopolitical and geoeconomic implications in conflict, war and peace processes. We aim to reflect on the following question: What is the importance of the geoeconomic and geopolitical dimensions when assessing peace and conflict scenarios? The globalization process and the concentration of economic activity and political power among a few players have significantly impacted international and domestic inequalities, leading to increasing levels of instability that have materialized into adverse spillover effects on international cooperation and globalization. As scholars previously noted, geoeconomics has been defined in broad terms, covering “borderless economic zones, strategic economic instruments of foreign policy, both neoliberalism and economic nationalism. The risk is that the concept becomes overly extensive and loses its analytical power” (Vihma 2018, 48). Within this broad dimension of geoeconomics and the interconnection with the current geopolitical dynamics of today’s multifaceted crisis, we are contributing to the extant literature as we are exploring four themes that bring together the significance of the new realities we are facing as the global context is subject to dramatic change.

There is a need to interconnect geoeconomics and geopolitics to assess the ongoing international scenario. [Table 1](#) outlines the core themes that emerged from researchers’ contributions and that we identified as being four significant areas of discussion and analysis: (i) The Geopolitics of Energy, Trade and Climate Justice, (ii) Geoeconomics and its Security Dimensions at the Global and Regional Level, (iii) The Geoeconomics and Geopolitics of Water Scarcity and Women Inequality, and (iv) The Power of Education to Navigate Global Dynamics. The essays associated with the identified themes help us put forward the importance of geoeconomic and geopolitical studies and their close relationship as we seek to grasp the complexities surrounding Peace Studies and their critical value to help us engage with proactive actions that moves forward the UN 2030 Agenda.

In this special issue, we are also considering the significance of SDG 16, which focuses on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The goal of promoting a peaceful world that will enable fair living conditions for everyone has put forward a very ambitious agenda as reflected by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its 169 targets that are affected by paramount difficulties. Goal 16:

Table 1. Special issue themes and essays structure.

Special issue themes	1. Gathering piece (introduction)
The Geopolitics of Energy, Trade & Climate Justice	2. Renewables geopolitics: toward a new generation of energy conflicts? 3. Geopolitical dynamics and their impact on trade between India and Pakistan: a comprehensive analysis 4. Resituating human rights within planetary boundaries: a promising narrative for peace and climate justice in the post-Ukraine world 5. The role of geopolitical risk in conflict analysis: critical insights 6. Peace, propaganda, and natural gas: the geoeconomics of Rwandan peacekeeping in Mozambique and implications for European and African regionalism projects
Geoeconomics and its Security Dimensions at the Global and Regional Level	7. Paradoxes of West African Warlord Conflict Economy as a part of global market 8. The geoeconomic simulacrum of BRI and the South Asian regional security complex 9. What are the geoeconomic consequences of Japanese demography? 10. The interplay of geoeconomics and deterrence: unraveling the security dimensions 11. Competing regionalisms in Asia-Pacific? Versatile sustainable development issues in FTAs 12. Extractivism in Mexico: questions of geopolitics, geoeconomics, and human rights
Geoeconomics & Geopolitics of Water Scarcity and Women Inequality	13. Geoeconomic and geopolitical dynamics of water scarcity in oil-rich economies: the case of Kuwait 14. Women inequality in the MENA region: insights from the Arab spring revolution
The Power of Education to Navigate Global Dynamics	15. The power of education in a globalized world: challenging geoeconomic inequalities 16. Education to navigate global power dynamics and conflict through the lens of caring

Source: Authors (2023).

is about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. People everywhere should be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives whatever their ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation. (UN 2015)

At the center of achieving the SDGs goals, we need to consider how strong institutions can enable and enhance the justice system and their impact on the development of peaceful societies that will be able to collaborate, coordinate and cooperate on the achievement of the interrelated

SDGs. We also argue on the significance of SDG 4 as progressing toward quality education is critical to allow achieving the other SDGs. On the other hand, conflicts and wars talk in the opposite direction, spreading uncertainty, fear, and violence to civil populations. Understanding that peace and war cannot be explained through conflict analysis formulas, there is a need to understand how current geoeconomics and geopolitics of main global actors are interrelated and will have a say in the upcoming future and global stability.

Rising uncertainty, insecurity and conflict levels are reflected in countries' inability to engage in diplomatic efforts and peace talks that seek common actions that drive peaceful solutions. The intertwined relationship between geopolitics and geoeconomics of peace and conflict leads to different scenarios whereby the dispute over the global balance of power (political, economic, social, and military) is constantly challenged. In this, current conflict and war scenarios in Ukraine, Gaza and different regions around the world show that geoeconomics and geopolitics are vital to dismantling war and conflict dynamics within a fractured and fragile international context. Assessing conflict and peace studies through geoeconomic and geopolitical measures can help better understand current peace and conflict dynamics and hopefully enhance the value of diplomacy as an enabler of peaceful discussions and negotiations. Moreover, it offers the opportunity for a multidisciplinary analysis that sheds light on ongoing complex scenarios necessary for any comprehensive conflict analysis.

Nonetheless, there is another side of the coin since a clear relation exists between development and economic movements leading to socioeconomic progress in countries and its some extent, peace scenarios. Trade among neighboring nations holds significant economic importance, influencing the socioeconomic development of countries. New actors and economic ambitions of nations also appear to be able to play a pacifying role in conflict and war scenarios, as in the case of India and Pakistan, where trade relations could overcome deterrence and conflict dynamics. The thin line between the use or misuse of geoeconomics and geopolitics depends on the overall need to resituate human rights on the center stage. In the complex, evolving and increasingly uncertain international scenarios, war and peace equally depend on geoeconomics and geopolitics to tip the balance in their favor.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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