A CRITIQUE OF WAR AS INSTRUMENT OF PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HEGEL: A DIALOGUE INTO THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR IN THE LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW*

Abstract

This paper interrogates Hegelian notions of war as a rational instrument of historical development and progress in the context of the Russia–Ukraine war and contemporary international law. It considers the thesis that war serves a dialectical role of overcoming stagnation and asserting the ethical life of the State, and promoting the unfolding of the World Spirit, by referencing G. W. F. Hegel's works; the Philosophy of History and Philosophy of Right. Thus, although Hegel argues that warfare is necessary to maintain the vitality of a nation and avoid civil dissolution, this paper undertakes a critique of such claims by uncovering the contradictions that war poses, both the ethical, human, political and legal contradictions of its justification. The paper first provides a discussion and outline of Hegel's claims for war as a rational moment in the progression of the State and freedom, before, using historical-analytical and doctrinal methods to engage in a dialogue with contemporary just-war theory, human rights, distributive and retributive arguments for justice, and post- Hegelian critics to challenge the glorification of warfare as a developmental tool. It then relates this concept to present international developments by interrogating the justifications proffered, and consequences of the ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict of 2022, through analyzing against the back-drop of the UN Charter, the international law of armed conflict, international humanitarian law and international criminal law; the war's human, legal, and moral ramifications on statehood, nationhood and the international order. While we might appreciate the Hegelian dialectic for some understanding of how conflict can indeed precipitate political change, the war has revealed the limitations of classifying warfare as either rational or progressive in the twenty- first century and it has argued for alternative routes to achieving world history through peace, human rights and the strengthening of institutional mechanisms of governance and recognition.

Keywords: Hegel's Philosophy of History, War, Russia-Ukraine War, *Jus Ad Bellum*, International Humanitarian Law, Development.

1. Introduction

Throughout the history of political thought, war has been a somewhat ambiguous subject. It has been condemned as destruction and hailed as a catalyst for political integration, national preservation, liberty, revolution or historical advancement. The central question deals with if war can be rationally understood from a normative perspective, that is, can violence be regarded as a means through which man advances towards a higher kind of political existence. Perhaps, no explanation for the dilemma of war is more challenging than that presented in the writings of G. W. F. Hegel. It is as if the purpose of history for Hegel is to drive the Spirit to self- consciousness in freedom through the operation of contradiction, negation, struggle and conflict. States are significant expressions of ethical life and their relations highlight their lack of essential nature and finite condition. War, from this philosophical vantage point, performs the controversial role of preventing political stagnation, and sustaining the ethical integrity of the state. This is of particular consequence in the twenty-first century with the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war beginning in 2022, recontextualising concerns for sovereignty, nationalism, power as well as the efficacy and legality of force. Realist and Hegelian minded proponents will view such an event as a manifestation of underlying contradictions among states and drivers of historical progress. Critics on the other hand will identify such conflict as testament to war's futility as a method of advancing mankind in light of the enormous amount of devastation, humanitarian crises, global consequences and direct assault on universal human rights and The United Nations Charter of 1945.

The argument arises because, whereas Hegel wrote in an international environment without the institutional infrastructure created after 1945. The United Nations Charter laid the groundwork for a sovereign equality and peaceful settlement of disputes, a prohibition on the threat or use of force and set up the principles governing self- defence and collective security.[1] Subsequent legal regimes have refined rules on the humanitarian use of force; human rights Law has firmly inserted the well- being of the individual into a global system and human rights criminal Law makes provision for crimes against humanity.

The African regional order adds significantly to this picture of international normative jurisprudence; The African Union Constitutive Act provides for the maintenance of peace and security, an outright ban on aggression among states and the protection of human rights and rule of law among others, and for a sense of collective security in the face of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.[2] Such issues are not new within an African or Nigerian philosophizing. Nnajiofor

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[1]The United Nations Charter of 1945

[2] (AU Constitutive Act, 2000)

and Ifeakor,[3] for instance, have argued that terrorism and organised violence in Africa demand a philosophical, rather than a merely military response if any durable peace is to be secured, a claim that anticipates the present paper's insistence that the ultimate remedy for war lies in reasoned dialogue and institutional design rather than in force alone. Read alongside such scholarship, the Hegelian valorisation of war appears not simply as a historical curiosity but as a live philosophical position that African and international scholarship alike must continue to interrogate.

This paper therefore undertakes a four-fold task. First, it presents a critical exposition of Hegel's concept of war as a rational moment in the development of world history. Second, it subjects Hegel's concept of war to contemporary international law and human-rights norms. Third, it enters into dialogue with the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war to test, critique, and re-evaluate the relevance of Hegel's thesis in contemporary geopolitics. Fourth, it appraises both Hegel's thesis and the Russia-Ukraine war against the normative framework of international law, in order to determine whether the contemporary legal order has definitively closed the door that Hegel left open.

2. Hegel on War as a Moment of the World Spirit

The Philosophy of History is a major work by Hegel which presents events in order to show that history follows the dictates of reason and that the natural progress of history is due to the outworking of an Absolute Spirit. The Absolute Spirit is the rational intelligence behind all events in history. Hegel begins by distinguishing three methods or modes of doing history: original history, reflective history, and philosophical history. Original history is that in which the description of deeds, events, and states of society are those the historian had before his eyes. Reflective history is a general history which extends beyond the limits of the historian's experience. Philosophical history, or the philosophy of history proper, is what Hegel's intent 'signifies—nothing else but the thoughtful consideration of history'.[4]

In Hegel's idea, it is believed that reality is the self-unfolding of an Infinite Reason, and that reason must be the one acting and in full operation in human history, although one cannot tell in advance how it operates. To discover this, one has to study the course of events as presented by historians in the ordinary sense and try to understand the essential rational process in the mass of contingent materials.[5] Much of Hegel's effort in the Philosophy of History was spent defining and characterising Geist, or spirit. Spirit is similar to the culture of a people and is constantly reworking itself to keep up with the changes of society, while at the same time working to produce those changes through what Hegel called the 'cunning of reason'.[6]

According to Hegel, world history represents the development of Spirit's consciousness of its own freedom, and of the consequent realisation of that freedom, traced through the various cultures that have developed over time. Hegel's account of history begins with the ancient Oriental world, where only the despotic ruler is free; proceeds through the Greek and Roman worlds, in which the consciousness of freedom first awoke but only some, not all, were recognised as free; and culminates in the Germanic world, where, with the rise of Christianity, the recognition that all men are by nature free first emerged.

Hegel's geographical metaphor, that world history travels from East to West, with Europe as the absolute end of history and Asia its beginning, runs through his Philosophy of History. He explicitly presents his analysis as a theodicy, a reconciliation of divine providence with the evils of history, and considers the events of history in terms of Universal Reason. The spirit, in its progress towards full self-consciousness, takes the form of limited and one-sided manifestations of itself in the several national spirits.[7]

World history, on this reading, is governed by an ultimate design that is itself a rational process, one in which the Absolute Spirit comes to know and fully become itself through the triumphs and tragedies of history. It is at this point that Hegel introduces war as an instrument for deciding the fate of nation-states on questions of disagreement in international relations. Hegel does not deny the dark side of war: 'war can bring with it much injustice, cruelty and waste. But it has an ethical aspect and should not be regarded as an absolute evil and as a mere external contingent fact' (Copleston, 2008, p. 217). Hegel's position on war has, unsurprisingly, set off a lasting controversy among scholars as to whether Hegel glorified war. Those who argue that he did point to his status as the unofficial philosopher of the Prussian state; those who argue against this reading insist that Hegel never prescribed war to any nation but was merely describing history in its teleological movement.

[3] Nnajiofor, O. G., & Ifeakor, C. S. (2016). Robert Nozick's entitlement theory of justice: A critique. *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies.*

[4] Copleston, F. (2008). *A history of philosophy: Vol. 7. Modern philosophy: From the post-Kantian idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.* Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 218)

[5] Copleston, 2008, p. 219

[6] Ibid, p. 222)

[7] Ibid, p. 220

3. The Philosophical Critique of War as a Rational Progress

Hegel's philosophy of history emphasises the development of freedom and the consciousness of freedom over the course of world history. This development is marked by conflict and struggle rather than smooth, uninterrupted progress, and is manifested for the most part in political development broadly construed, including world-historical events such as the French Revolution, the significant actions of 'world-historical heroes' such as Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte, and the achievements of peoples and nations.

Hegel's presentation is that the philosopher should seek to discover the rational within the real and not to impose the rational upon the real: 'reason dominates the world and world-history is thus a rational process'.[8] War, for Hegel, is one of the stages in the life of the Absolute Spirit and, as such, a rational process of self-development and actualisation of the Absolute Self; war is therefore a rational necessity, because whatever is real is rational. Preventing stagnation, on this account, is simply the means by which the dialectic of history moves on, progressing from a lower to a higher level of self-development and actualisation of the Absolute Spirit for the well-being of the state. War is an instrument of rational progression by the Absolute Spirit; the cruelty, injustice, and waste that accompany it are merely the different manifestations of the Absolute Self, in service of a higher goal. The Absolute Mind is an encompassing, infinite universal mind that expresses and realises itself through the course of events in history.[9]

The Absolute, on this view, is the whole, the totality, the universe, and this totality is a teleological process: the actualisation of the self-thinking thought that thinks itself in and through the particulars, the finite spirits. In Hegel's system there is no efficient cause distinct from nature that merely orders the course of events from outside itself; the Absolute is an all-encompassing being that lives in and through the finite spirits, and the historical movement is only an expressive mode of that infinite totality.[10]

War, therefore, is a perfect design in the Absolute Mind, not a game of chance; its teleology accords with its logical idea, for 'the idea reflects the goal or result of the process'.[11] Each war, on this account, is bound up with a particular thing, or particular things, which the Absolute Spirit wills to actualise for itself. Hegel's position on war resembles a theodicy, the justification of the ways of the Absolute amid the existence of evils and suffering in the world, an elaborative analysis of the nature of the Christian God rendered in religious language; Hegel consistently maintained that the subject matter of theology is the same as that of philosophy. In theology, scripture presents 'God as the one who created the light, darkness, peace and all evils'.[12] If God, in infinite wisdom, deems it rational and necessary to permit evils in the world, of which war is one, then such permission must itself be rational, which is the reason Hegel maintains that 'what is real is rational and what is rational is real'.[13]

4. The Contemporary International Legal Framework

Jus ad Bellum and the UN Charter

The post-1945 international legal system altered the conditions under which Hegel's description of interstate warfare ought to be regarded as valid. Article 2(3) of the UN Charter insists that members must resolve their disputes by peaceful means and Article 2(4) requires states to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.[14] This rule has considerable philosophical significance. Hegel's theory assumes a situation in which sovereign states eventually collide without a higher power that can substitute war as the ultimate deciding agency. Post-1945 international law is evidently not yet a world-state, but what it has produced, institutionally, is nothing less than an alteration in the legal meaning of interstate conflict: diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, adjudication and arbitration, collective security, and a variety of regional organizations provide viable alternatives to the view that war constitutes the terminus of international relations. It is not that, by virtue of the ban on war, international law supports absolute pacifism: it must do no such thing, for (according to the Charter) all states reserve for themselves in specific instances (such as armed attack against the State which leads to the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense under article 51; or the use of force, on authorisation by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII, to meet threats to the peace, breaches of the peace or acts of aggression) the right to use it.

[8] Ibid, p. 219
[9] Ibid, p. 197
[10] Ibid, p. 197
[11] Ibid, p. 197
[12] Holy Bible (KJV), Isaiah 45:7, as cited in the original manuscript
[13] Stumpf, S. E. (2008). *Philosophy: History and problems* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill, p. 297
[14] United Nations. (1945). Charter of the United Nations.

***Jus in Bello* and International Humanitarian Law**

Even where recourse to force is justified or where armed conflict is taking place, international humanitarian law permits indiscriminate violence only within certain, but in fact very narrow, constraints. The law on the conduct of hostilities is separate and apart from the law regarding use of force per se. The ICRC points this out; they also explain that the central rules governing conduct of hostilities are distinction, proportionality, and precaution.[15] Distinction demands that parties to a conflict distinguish civilians and civilian objects from combatants and military objectives, respectively. Proportionality requires that those who initiate or decide upon an attack shall evaluate whether the expected incidental loss of life, injury, or damage to civilian objects is excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage expected. Precaution entails taking effective measures and verification prior to attack that will limit loss of civilian life and damage to civilian objects (ICRC, 2019, 2026).

One such ethic limit is clearly problematic with any teleological schema which sees human suffering as merely a means toward progress; for example, the notion that a civilian can be seen as one's expendable component to the development of the *Weltgeist* is wholly repugnant. The present regime also reveals why the distinction between means and ends is so necessary: even though a state may consider security, liberation, correction of a historical wrong, or national survival to be legitimate goals, those goals cannot justify any and all acts in pursuit thereof.

Human Rights and the Primacy of Human Dignity

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights starts with a proposal at the centre of the international normative conscious, emphasizing on the importance of individual dignity in all people by asserting that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are entitled to all the right and freedoms set forth in this UDHR (United Nations 1948). Hegel's conception of ethical life becomes pertinent because individuals need an institution with which to take concrete freedom, but in modern-day rights discourse an additional requirement is present. Institutions exist for persons and not the reverse. States cannot justify any forms of coercion through claims of moral/ethical nature. This has a direct correlation with the work of Nnajiofor and Unadike[16] who discussed how to constrain coercive institutions with human dignity, the same logical extension should apply as it would with military power where all form of military engagement, due to the notion of human dignity, should have limitations.

International Criminal Law and Individual Responsibility

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court represents another decisive break from a purely state-centric understanding of international responsibility. While conditioned on meet jurisdictional requirements, the Rome Statute acknowledges both genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression to be covered within its jurisdictional reach.[17] International criminal law asserts that all moral responsibility can no longer be simply absorbed by states and that individuals themselves can still be liable for international crimes regardless of having acted under state command; nor does mere temporal development, territorial control, or political success serve to legitimise unjust conduct.

The African Legal and Philosophical Dimension

Genuine international scholarship cannot, therefore, omit Africa's own normative regimes and re-center Europe and North America as the exclusive loci of contemporary political morality. Peace and security were even earlier enshrined in African politics as peoples' rights, bound by ties of solidarity, dignity and shared humanity in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.[18] The Constitutive Act of the African Union further solidified the regional architecture. Article 4 enumerates peaceful resolution of disputes, the prohibition of the threat or use of force amongst member states, peaceful coexistence, respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, and a collective right to intervention in situations such as war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and other widespread and flagrant violations.[19] This regional consensus further offers a needed philosophical counterpoint to Hegelian philosophy. While the African Union respects sovereignty, it does not fetishise it; it imbues it with a dimension of interdependence.

5. Dialogue: The Russia-Ukraine War and the Limits of Hegelian War

According to Frederick et al[20], the Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2022 forced an unwanted reminder on many that war has not yet vanished from statecraft. Interpreted concretely, this statement implies that Hegelian war theory continues to be evoked today. In order to assess Hegelian war theory's contemporaneity, this part section examines it as much as possible in a direct dialogue with the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war to date, which may take place in three parts. Firstly, what might Hegel himself make of this war, given that belligerents have invoked two of Hegel's favorite, central terms to

[15] International Committee of the Red Cross. (2026). Conduct of hostilities and protection of civilians.

[16] Nnajiofor, O. G., & Unadike, C. (2023). Immanuel Kant's concept of human dignity: A panacea for police brutality in Nigeria. *Academic Journals Online*, 3(2), 101–108.

[17] International Criminal Court. (1998). Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

[18] African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981

[19] African Union. (2000). Constitutive Act of the African Union.

[20] Frederick, B., Evans, A. T., Hvizda, M., Laufer, A., Wang, H., Charap, S., & Gunness, K. (2025). *The consequences of the Russia-Ukraine War.* RAND Corporation.

describe this war, state, sovereignty, freedom, historical fate, ethical substance. Secondly, what is the Russia-Ukraine war itself saying to Hegel, and at what conceptual, moral and technological junctions does Hegelian war cease to operate as a rational element of progress and not regression. Thirdly, what does positive international law, almost completely unknown to Hegel in the early nineteenth century say to Hegel. The thesis to be articulated herein is that Hegelian language can describe this war but it fails to provide any justification for it, and ultimately the war is rendered illegal by standards of the international law that Hegel's own epigone helped to establish. To support this argument, this section explains what Hegel has learned from and what has happened since Hegel's era as a war theory has evolved.

A Hegelian Reading of the Russia-Ukraine War

Interpreted through Hegel, both Russia and Ukraine could be said to be playing their assigned role in performing scenes from the World Spirit.

Russia: war as the affirmation of statehood and historical rectification: From the Hegelian perspective, Russia's reason could echo The Philosophy of Right wherein man must assert his autonomy under the anarchical conditions in the state of nature of the world republic there can be no higher judge or power standing over man. Russia's own politicians have continually voiced the concern of NATO expansion and Ukraine's orientation toward the West as a fundamental violation of the ethical integrity of the Russian state and so-called Russian World. Within a Hegelian frame, this is war as self-preservation. As the dialectician posited that war keeps a state from sinking into the muck and mire of peace, Russia claims to only use force to avoid its civilizational demise, and uphold a multipolar order. Russia's appeal to the re-establishment of historicity to correct the alleged tragedy of 1991 evokes the explanation that states act as vessels for Spirit operating within particular nations, and yet, as has already been indicated in former Section, if that historical redress comes by force, how it accords with an adequate theory of just entitlement when acquired still remains very complicated.

Ukraine: war as the struggle for recognition, sovereignty, and freedom: From the standpoint of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and the struggle for recognition therein, Ukraine's cause fits into the picture more accurately. Ukraine stands as a sovereign and self-determining ethical subject against subjugation. Nationalism, defense of freedom and democracy, and the creation of political unity through struggle is as Hegel explained state processes become concrete. War, in this regard, creates a higher-level unity by overcoming particular regional and language-based divisions. Ukraine is merely realizing its freedom through this act of national overcoming rather than defense of its territory, which has parallels with Nnajiofor and Edidiong's[21] identification of self-overcoming as an appropriate pathway to development; the will of a people to remain what they chose to be in the face of a determined external threat wishing them otherwise. There's a simple, superficial interpretation of these Hegelian interpretations which might posit Russia and Ukraine as equally rational actors and pieces of the puzzle that war accomplishes all of Hegel's tasks.

The Limitations of Hegelian War in Empirical Reality

When the analysis moves from descriptive idealism to empirical outcome, five basic limitations on its reach come to light which Hegel's 19th- century framework cannot accommodate.

The ethical limitation and the problem of humanity as a means: For Hegel, individuals are subsumed under the ethical life of the state and any suffering which they undergo is justified by its role in history's higher rationality. The Russia-Ukraine War replies that, in the age of human rights and international humanitarian law, this is unsustainable. As of 2025, the UN estimates over 10 million people are displaced and tens of thousands have died and documented war crimes and infrastructure damage will have setback development by decades. Calling this 'progress' involves turning real people into mere means to the World Spirit's ends. It is our modern ethical understanding, reflected in international human rights law and humanitarian law that refuses this compromise. The limit here is moral: for war to be our means is now morally impermissible.

The technological limitation and the problem of total destruction: Hegel's era experienced limited wars with muskets and cannon, and it was naturally assumed that any war would always be an encounter which leaves intact the parties to a future legal relation. Nuclear weapons, intercontinental missile systems, the risk of escalation - the Russia-Ukraine War responds that, in the nuclear age, mutual annihilation awaits each warring party; war is no longer a dialectical negation leading to synthesis but mere mutually assured destruction and, as the saying goes, the end of history. Drone attacks, cyber warfare and information warfare have given war a global and a civilian character. The limit here is existential: in the nuclear age, the war between states is simply too destructive to function as a mechanism of rational development.

The economic and global limitation and the problem of interdependence: The 19th-century states were more or less self-contained ethical totalities, war between two of which did not directly affect the lives and prospects of outsiders so

[21]Nnajiofor, O. G., & Edidiong, J. C. (2024). 'Nietzsche's principle of individualism and self-overcoming: A pathway for Nigeria's development'. In *Studies in religion, society and human relations: Festschrift in honour of Rev. Fr. Prof. B. A. C. Obiefuna* (pp. 728–732)

much as it did each state itself. Not so for Russia and Ukraine; Fidelis and Ahmed[22] assert that the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war should not be underestimated, it will have far-reaching consequences for national security, economics and financial global, humanitarian work, and food security. In fact, the consequences of Russia-Ukraine are more systemic than global with, in Europe, an energy crisis, in Africa a food crisis and worldwide supply-chain disruption and inflation. The result is not stronger states but weaker economies and an acceleration of deglobalisation, and damage to the Material infrastructure of progress. The limit here is systemic: war undermines development in our globally interconnected world; for such system-wide outcomes, our definition of war must also transform.

The Institutional Limitation and the Problem of International Law and Policy Implementation: Hegel assumed a state of nature between states: with no world sovereign, war was the only adjudicator. Frederick et al[23] note that conflict frequently arises when states perceive that the existing order no longer serves to advance their interests, and when they perceive an opportunity and incentive to renegotiate the terms of the regional or international system. The Russia-Ukraine war answers with the existence of the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and international law. Yet instead of war resolving contradictions and producing a new legal order, it has paralysed these institutions: the Security Council is deadlocked by the veto of a permanent member that is itself the aggressor, and sanctions have largely replaced diplomacy. This limit is, in one sense, purely political, but it is equally a familiar problem of policy implementation of the kind: even where a normatively sound framework exists on paper, whether a domestic development policy or an international legal prohibition on aggression, its practical enforcement can be frustrated by the very institutions and actors charged with implementing it.[24] War today, in short, does not lead to recognition; it leads to polarisation and to the exposure of an implementation gap between legal norm and political practice.[25]

The Problem of Disruption to Global Trade and Supply Chains: Hegel wrote in an epoch in which inter-state dependency was considered largely inconsequential to the global system. Abate and Asaye[26] observe that the Russia-Ukraine war has caused a breach and major disruption in the international community, noting that major disruptions to international trade and supply chains pose a risk to the global economy, and that Russia and Ukraine together represent thirty percent of global wheat exports, twenty percent of corn exports, and eighty percent of global sunflower oil, mineral fertiliser, and natural gas exports. The influence of these two countries on the global economy resides in their role as major suppliers of commodities and as parties to major trade transactions; the war has disrupted global trade, supply chains, and transport routes, and added stress to the existing global order.

Accountability, Retributive Justice, and International Criminal Law

The question of how the international community ought to respond to the violations catalogued above offers a lens that translates readily to the international plane. Egbe and Nnajiofor (2024) observe that the desire for justice is universal, and that when wrongdoers go unpunished, impunity is encouraged and the wronged are left to nurse their injuries unassisted, a dynamic that afflicts lingering, unresolved judgment in domestic criminal proceedings just as it afflicts the slow and politically obstructed workings of international criminal justice. Applied to the Russia-Ukraine war, the International Criminal Court's investigations, universal jurisdiction claims by national courts, and proposals for a dedicated tribunal on the crime of aggression, are not vindictive excesses external to the ethical life of the international community but are themselves constitutive of that ethical life, in precisely the sense that Hegel reserved for the state alone. Where Hegel located the ethical health of nations in their willingness to wage war, contemporary retributive justice locates the ethical health of the international community in its willingness and capacity to hold the makers of unlawful war to account after the fact, a capacity that, as with domestic implementation gaps of the kind Nnajiofor et al[27] describe, remains persistently frustrated by the political weight of the very states most likely to be called to answer. This accountability deficit is not confined to Europe. Nnajiofor and Ezugwu's[28] study of insecurity and insurgency in Nigeria, and its argument for the ontological interconnectedness of the forces that produce and sustain organised violence, is instructive here: insecurity, on their account, is never simply the product of a single armed actor but of an interconnected web of political, economic, and institutional failures that reinforce one another. The Russia-Ukraine war exhibits the same interconnectedness on a global scale, linking energy insecurity in Europe, food insecurity across Africa, and the erosion of the non-proliferation

[22]Fidelis, I., & Ahmed, I. (2023). Implications of Russia-Ukraine War on world peace and security. *Africa Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*

[23] Frederick, B., Evans, A. T., Hvizda, M., Laufer, A., Wang, H., Charap, S., & Gunness, K. (2025). *The consequences of the Russia-Ukraine War.* RAND Corporation

[24] Nnajiofor, O. G., Ifeakor, C. S., & Mgbemena, S. (2013). Nigeria and the enigma of policy implementation. *Creative Artist: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies*, 7(2), 224–241

[25] Fedorchak, V. (2024). *The Russia-Ukraine war: Towards resilient fighting power*. Routledge.

[26]Abate, G. K., & Asaye, M. (2024). Russia-Ukraine War induced human, economy and geopolitical crises in the global world. *International Journal of Current Research and Applied Studies.*

[27] Nnajiofor et al. (2013)

[28] Nnajiofor, O., & Ezugwu, E. C. (2022). Insecurity and insurgency in Nigeria: A case of negligence of forces and their ontological interconnectedness. *Nnadiebube Journal of Philosophy*.

and non-aggression norms that underpin international order, precisely the kind of systemic, mutually reinforcing insecurity that Nnajiofor and Nwankwo[29] identify as the central obstacle to any negligence-free account of security.

The New World Order as Synthesis: What the Dialogue Teaches Us

Descriptively, Hegel was correct in his assessment that states will use the language of destiny; freedom and historical necessity to rationalize warfare- Russia and Ukraine are indeed locked in a Hegelian battle for recognition and self-preservation. Yet normatively and practically Hegel was wrong. Twenty-first century material circumstances under a framework of positive international law, criminalising warfare and regulating the course of hostilities, has rendered it a backward not a dialectical form. Where Hegel saw war as preserving the ethical health of the state, the Russia-Ukraine war demonstrates that war erodes it through corruption, authoritarianism, and societal trauma. Where Hegel saw war as producing new forms of freedom, this war has produced refugees, economic decline, and a more dangerous world.

The limitation of the Hegelian war, then, is this: Hegel's theory presupposed a world in which war could be contained, rational, and developmental, and in which no positive international legal order stood ready to judge and, however imperfectly, to punish the transgressor. That world no longer exists. If war is no longer a rational instrument of progress, then what is? The final analysis argues that we must turn to another Hegelian concept that Hegel himself privileged, in the Phenomenology of Spirit's account of recognition, but subordinated to war in his mature philosophy of the state: mutual recognition, realised through law, diplomacy, and institutions. Progress in world history must now be pursued not through organised violence but through sustained exercise of reasoned, logical reflection on which those mechanisms depend.[30] If philosophy is an indispensable instrument of development, then the abandonment of Hegel's war-thesis is not a retreat from philosophy but philosophy's own self-correction.

6. Conclusion

This study has critically examined G. W. F. Hegel's conception of war as a rational instrument of historical progress and development, and tested its validity against the realities of the Russia-Ukraine war and the norms of contemporary international law. Hegel's claim that war acts as a dialectical tool for disrupting state inertia, re-affirming the moral standing of the state and allowing for the progressive movement of World Spirit, conceptually presents warfare as a necessary feature of historical development and an inherently beneficial phenomenon and not just a destructive event. However, this contention clearly has its limitations when analysed through contemporary issues. The Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022 illustrates that while war can serve to reveal political inconsistencies and reconfigure global balances of power, these impacts seem less a matter of progressive rational unfolding of history and more a humanitarian disaster, disruption of world markets and breakdown of internationally accepted norms. The conflicts between states historically under examination by Hegel (ie nineteenth century conflict), are far removed from today's interconnected and globally linked world system of nuclear proliferation, the codification of human rights and the existence of applied international law. The combination of United Nations Charter, IHL and ICL has rendered it impossible any longer to champion warfare as a catalyst to advancement on ethical and empirical, and more importantly, legal grounds.

[29] Nnajiofor, O., & Nwankwo, F. C. (2026). Between liberty and anarchy: A Burkean critique of revolutionary change and its implication for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *Njournals: Nigerian Journal of Arts and Humanities.*

[30] Obiajulu, M. M., & Nnajiofor, O. (2016). Philosophy and logic as inescapable organon for human development. *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies*, 6(1), 1–10.