

عواقب الأزمة الأوكرانية سياسياً وجغرافياً

* د. نزار قنوع

** د. عيبر ناعسة

*** عمار ياسين مرهج

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□ ملخص □

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الأزمة الأوكرانية كونها قضية دولية مهمة ومعقدة، حيث تتميز الأزمة الأوكرانية بعدة نقاط رئيسية، كالصراع القائم بينها وبين روسيا بشأن السيادة والتأثير في المنطقة. إلى جانب القضايا القومية واللغوية والدينية التي تؤثر على الانتماء السياسي للشعب الأوكراني.

تتمثل الجهات الرئيسية في الأزمة للأوكرانية في كل من أوكرانيا وروسيا، حيث تسعى كل منهما لتحقيق مصالحها السياسية والاقتصادية في المنطقة. بينما تشمل الجهات الثانوية لهذه الأزمة كل من الاتحاد الأوروبي والولايات المتحدة ودول أخرى تسعى للتأثير على الأزمة ودعم الجانب الذي يروونه مصالحتهم.

لتتراوح قرارات الدول وعلاقتها بين الدعم السياسي والاقتصادي لأوكرانيا وروسيا، والعقوبات الاقتصادية المفروضة على الجانب المعتبر مسؤولاً عن التصعيد في الأزمة.

بدأت الأزمة الأوكرانية بتصاعد التوترات والاحتجاجات الشعبية في أوكرانيا في عام ٢٠١٣، و ثم تطورت إلى عملية عسكرية روسية في شبه جزيرة القرم وشرق أوكرانيا. بسبب تباين الرؤى الروسية والأوكرانية بشأن الأزمة، حيث تعتبر روسيا العملية العسكرية داخلية وتدعم الجمهوريات المعلنة ذاتياً في شرق أوكرانيا، بينما تعتبر أوكرانيا الأزمة صراعاً بين الدول.

وبالنتيجة أحدثت الأزمة الأوكرانية تداعيات سياسية كبيرة على المستوى المحلي والعالمي فتضمنت هذه التداعيات تغيرات في التوازنات السياسية والاقتصادية في المنطقة، وتأثيرها على العلاقات الدولية والتحالفات الإقليمية والدولية.

باختصار، تعد الأزمة الأوكرانية قضية دولية مهمة ومعقدة تتطلب فهماً عميقاً لأسبابها وتداعياتها. تؤثر القرارات والآراء المتعلقة بالأزمة على العلاقات الاقتصادية والسياسية العالمية، وتشكل تحدياً للمجتمع الدولي في سعيه لإيجاد حل سلمي .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأزمة الأوكرانية - العملية العسكرية الروسية - الاتحاد الأوروبي - الناتو.

* أستاذ - قسم الاقتصاد والتخطيط - كلية الاقتصاد جامعة تشرين - اللاذقية - سورية.

** مدرس - قسم الاقتصاد والتخطيط - كلية الاقتصاد جامعة تشرين - اللاذقية سورية.

*** طالب دكتوراه - قسم الاقتصاد والتخطيط - كلية الاقتصاد - جامعة تشرين - اللاذقية سورية. ammarmarhej@tishreen.edu.sy

The Consequences of the Ukrainian Crisis Political and Geographic

Dr. Nezar Qanue*

Dr. Abeer Naasie**

Ammar Yaseen Mrhej***

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□ABSTRACT □

This study aims to analyze the Ukrainian crisis as an important and complex international issue. The Ukrainian crisis is characterized by several key points, including the conflict between Ukraine and Russia over sovereignty and influence in the region. Other points include national, linguistic, and religious issues that impact the political affiliation of the Ukrainian people.

The primary actors in the Ukrainian Crisis are Ukraine and Russia, each seeking to achieve their political and economic interests in the region. The secondary actors include the European Union, the United States, and other countries that seek to influence the crisis and support the side they perceive as beneficial.

The decisions of the countries range from political and economic support for Ukraine and Russia to economic sanctions imposed on the party deemed responsible for escalating the crisis.

The Ukrainian crisis began with escalating tensions and popular protests in Ukraine in 2013, which evolved into a Russian military operation in the Crimean Peninsula and eastern Ukraine. The Russian and Ukrainian perspectives on the crisis differ, with Russia considering the military operation as internal and supporting the self-declared republics in eastern Ukraine, while Ukraine views the crisis as a conflict between nations.

The Ukrainian crisis has significant political ramifications at both the local and global levels. These ramifications include changes in political and economic balances in the region and their impact on international relations and regional and international alliances.

In summary, the Ukrainian crisis is an important and complex international issue that requires a deep understanding of its causes and repercussions. The decisions and opinions regarding the crisis have an impact on global economic and political relations, posing a challenge for the international community in its pursuit of a peaceful solution

Keywords: Ukrainian Crisis, Russian Military Mission, European Union, NATO.

* Professor, Department of Economics and Planning, Faculty of Economics, Tishreen University, Lattakia, Syria.

** A Teacher, Department of Economics and Planning, Faculty of Economics, Tishreen University, Latakia, Syria.

*** Ph.D. Student, Department of Economics and Planning, Faculty of Economics, Tishreen University, Latakia, Syria. ammarmrhej@tishreen.edu.sy

Introduction:

Since the beginning of the Russian military operation in Ukraine, the European Union countries have continued to provide extensive support to Kyiv. Funding has been allocated from the European Investment Bank, in addition to individual countries sending their own funds. Furthermore, the European Council has granted Ukraine candidate status for EU membership, a status that other countries have had to wait for years and implement significant reforms to achieve. Despite this, it does not mean that Kyiv will quickly become a full member of the European Union. Experts and European officials recognize that the assistance to Ukraine comes at a high cost to the West. Europe has also faced a wave of refugees, economic inflation, energy crisis, and the risk of food shortages, among other crises.

Research Problem:

The research problem stems from the ambiguity surrounding the Ukrainian crisis and the political manipulation by the West. It is often portrayed as a conflict between the East and the West, Russia and pro-Western forces, with the rise of new fascism and extreme right-wing ideologies. This is a result of failed policies, the rise of right-wing movements in Ukraine, their ideological references, and their relationship with Nazism. These factors have contributed to the emergence of a powerful political force in the country and the rise of a Russian nationalist movement seeking secession, alongside the spread of the "Russian Spring" in some Ukrainian cities in contrast to the "Ukrainian Spring."

Research Questions:

1. What is the significance of Ukraine for Russia and the West?
2. What is the Western stance on the conflict in Ukraine?
3. What are the foreign and domestic policy aspects of the Ukrainian crisis?

Significance and Objectives of the Research: The significance of the research lies in studying the Ukrainian crisis and its implications for the global order as a whole. By examining the geopolitical importance of Ukraine, its strategic significance for Russia, and the establishment of military bases and naval facilities on the Ukrainian coast, as well as vital transportation routes and Russian energy pipelines passing through Ukrainian territory, the research aims to shed light on the Ukrainian crisis as a highly significant and complex international issue. It also aims to understand the background, causes, major actors, and their decision-making processes regarding the crisis, and how it has affected global political and economic relations.

Research Hypotheses:

1. Ukraine is of great importance to both Russia and the West.
2. The West, represented by the European Union and the United States, supports Ukraine against Russia.
3. The Ukrainian crisis has significant political repercussions on both the external and internal levels.

Research Methodology:

The research utilizes descriptive, analytical, and historical methods. It explains the onset of the Ukrainian crisis, starting from the independence of the Crimean Peninsula and the events of 2014, particularly the shelling of the Donbas region (Donetsk and Luhansk) and reviews the history of the region, its governance, and the post-Soviet era. The study focuses on the consequences of the Russian military operation in Ukraine,

considering the Russian and Ukrainian perspectives and their rights to form alliances. The research employs an analytical approach to present a comprehensive analysis of the crisis and its impact on the surrounding region and the world at large.

Research Location and Timeframe:

- Research Location: Russia, Ukraine, European Union.
- Research Timeframe: Since the start of the Russian military operation in Ukraine in 2022.

Previous Studies:

1. Study by Al-Anbari (2016) titled "Russian-Western Relations and their Developments after the Events in Ukraine 2014": This study aimed to determine the ability of the Russian and Western parties involved in the conflict in Ukraine to achieve a balance of interests while maintaining bilateral relations, especially economic ones, after the events in Ukraine in 2014. The study examined the development of Russian-Western relations since the end of the Cold War until 2014 and the impact of the events in Ukraine in 2014 on these relations. The study concluded that:

- The Ukrainian crisis highlighted the importance of Ukraine for both Russia and the European Union and the United States.
- There are European and American efforts to support the Kyiv government in an attempt to strengthen its control over the entire Ukrainian territory[¹].
- The crisis in Ukraine led to a decline in production, destruction of factories, and increased public spending due to the war.

1. Study by Al-Zuhairi (2019) titled "The Russian-Ukrainian Crisis between Russian Ambitions and Ukraine's Orientation towards Europe": This study aimed to examine the causes of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and identify Russia's ambitions in Ukraine on one hand and the European Union's objectives on the other hand. It also explored how this crisis has affected the political and economic situations in Ukraine. The study concluded that:

- Russia cannot abandon Ukraine due to its geopolitical importance and the presence of approximately one-third of the population of Russian origin in Ukraine.
- The crisis in Ukraine has led to a decline in production, the destruction of factories, and increased public spending due to the war[2].

1. Study by Mohammed and Fadel (2022) titled "The Russian-Western Conflict in Ukraine in 2022 and its Implications for the Balance of Power": This study aimed to examine the variables that lead to changing the poles of the international structure, resulting in new international balances, especially in light of the indirect conflict between Russia and NATO. It also explored why Ukraine was chosen as the arena of confrontation and the objectives that the conflicting parties seek to achieve. The study utilized an analytical approach to address the research problem. The study concluded that:

- Russian foreign policy revolves around being a major power that focuses on ensuring national security, protecting the country's sovereignty and unity, with a particular focus on stability on its borders.
- The ongoing war cannot be considered a proxy war; it is a direct confrontation between the Russian Federation and the West, with various military and economic power dynamics.

- Russia seeks to assert its rising power and achieve its goals vis-à-vis the declining power of the United States and its allies after the Cold War[3]

Results and Discussion:

Importance of Ukraine: The Eurasian project, which was more of a political project than an economic one, is contingent on Ukraine. Considering that over 40% of Russia's foreign trade is directed towards the European Union, the potential increase in trade with Eurasian Union countries does not compensate for the potential losses. Additionally, Russia, whose exports to the European Union primarily consist of energy raw materials, will face a decrease in purchases as the Eurasian market, including China, will not be able to provide Russia with the necessary technologies for modernization.

Furthermore, Russia is rapidly losing its positions on the international stage. While Europe still relies on Russia for gas supplies and trade income, there are various economic and political sanctions imposed. However, it is important, from the Western perspective, to recognize that we have returned to the image of the state that existed during the Soviet era, where limited trade, government visits, and fluctuations in "thaw" are possible, albeit with restrictions. The situation is different from the time of the Soviet Union, as there is no longer equality in capabilities. Russia is far from being the Soviet Union.

Russia's current relationship with the European Union and the United States is not determined by our perception of their behavior in the Ukrainian conflict or our assessment of the fairness of their actions. We do not question their motives but rather the real consequences. Our appeals for their double standards, hypocrisy, or desire to seize our resources are not always fair and only work on the domestic propaganda front.

From a pragmatic perspective, without Western technologies, the path to the necessary modernization will continue for many years. The signs of a breakthrough in missile technology, such as the Stalin-Beria era, are not valid today. Other priorities in life and the difficulty of returning to a command economy also complicate matters.

Moreover, Russia's global strategy is of utmost importance, especially as it inherited a heavy legacy after the collapse of the Soviet Union and built a strict system, particularly in terms of security. It cannot afford any disruptions, and it is a major power with a long history in this regard. Russia sought integration with Western Europe due to its close proximity during the time of former Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, but this option did not work as Russia hoped, given the influence of the United States on the Western bloc of the European Union, which clearly aligns with its policies. However, with Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency, Russia has been able to rise through global openness. He, as a former intelligence officer, cannot allow Ukraine to be a security concern for his country. He began working on creating alliances on a global level instead of succumbing to the Western side. Many organizations have secured important positions for Russia, whether in the Middle East or Central Asia, as well as economically with the BRICS group[4]

Development of Ukraine in terms of geography, culture, and ethnicity:

The current southern and southeastern territories of Ukraine have been inhabited by both Ukrainians and Russians since the 18th century. When the Central Council declared the Ukrainian People's Republic in November 1917 and the state's independence in January 1918, it already demanded the territories with mixed population density. In response to this, in February 1918, the Bolsheviks announced the establishment of the

Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih Soviet Republic as part of the Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of Russia, which, however, was included a month later in the newly established Soviet Ukrainian Republic.

During the formation of the Soviet Union - in 1924 and beyond - several territories of the Soviet Ukrainian Republic and the Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of Russia changed their administrative affiliation in favor of or at the expense of each other. The cultural, intellectual, and linguistic proximity between the peoples reduced the friction that arose. However, before and after World War II, Ukraine included Western Ukraine, part of Bukovina, as well as the Russian Subcarpathian region (Transcarpathia), which was never part of the Russian Empire. Not only the minorities living there (Romanians, Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks, Rusyns), but also the Western Ukrainians differed significantly in their cultural and intellectual characteristics from the rest of the Ukrainian population. Some of them were also united, Greek Catholic, adherents of the Greek Catholic Church, while almost all Eastern Ukrainians were Orthodox and had been part of the Moscow Patriarchate for several centuries. In Western Ukraine, there was a strong nationalist movement, initially directed against Polish rule, then against Soviet power, which was associated with the "Moscow occupation." During the war, as is known, many nationalists collaborated with the Germans, served in the SS Galicia division or in punitive detachments. It is true that when it became clear that the Germans did not intend to grant independence to Ukraine, some nationalists launched an armed struggle against them. At the same time, they stained themselves with heinous crimes against the Poles, such as the Volhynia Massacre of 1943-1944.

The Ukrainian "mosaic" became more complex due to the resettlement in 1944-1945 to several cities in the southeast, especially in Donbas, of a relatively large number of workers and specialists from the Soviet Federal Socialist Republic of Russia to restore the destroyed mines and facilities. As a result, Russians now constitute 51-53% of the population in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Additionally, it is worth mentioning the arbitrary annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, which is predominantly Russian, to the Soviet Ukrainian Republic in 1954. Russians, along with other Russian-speaking residents, make up almost 100% of Sevastopol, not to mention their perception of the city as a symbol of Russian military glory.

It is also worth noting that urban culture in eastern Ukraine, historically, despite the bilingual official language, was primarily based on the Russian language. The Ukrainian language has been preserved among a portion of intellectuals, as well as in the form of dialects in small towns and rural areas. In Western Ukraine, the Ukrainian language dominated in major cities[5].

Geographical Location of Ukraine:

Ukraine is located in southeastern Europe. It is bordered by Russia to the east and north, sharing its longest land borders of 2,200 kilometers. It is also bordered by Belarus to the north and by Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova to the west. All of these countries, except Moldova, are members of the European Union and NATO. Ukraine has a land area of 603,700 square kilometers, making it the second-largest country in Europe after Russia.

From a geopolitical standpoint, Ukraine occupies a position that places it at the heart of the global competition between Russia and NATO. It is also bordered

by the Black Sea to the south, which connects it to Turkey and Bulgaria. The Black Sea holds geographical and strategic importance for Russia. Ukraine, strategically, holds a prominent position in the European security system, despite not being a member of the Union. Thus, the Russian military intervention in Ukraine was an attempt to impose its influence on the West, which did not address its security needs. This intervention came after Russian President Putin declared the Minsk II agreement of 2015 as if it never existed. It was a step to redraw the military balance with the West and establish new security equations in Europe.

Therefore, it can be said that the crisis in Ukraine is just the tip of the iceberg, as the conflict in eastern Ukraine hides a divergence in perspectives between Russia and the West, led by the United States, regarding Russia's position in the post-Cold War global order and the post-Soviet era[6]

The Geopolitical Competition between Russia and the West over Ukraine: Ukraine was not a priority in US foreign policy in the post-Soviet era, as Washington at that time was not aware of Ukraine's geopolitical importance for its strategy in the post-Cold War era in the Eurasian region. The United States was primarily focused on dismantling the nuclear arsenal in the former Soviet Union countries (Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan). It was only in the late 1990s that the West realized the geopolitical significance of Ukraine, as it discovered its importance in Russia's strategy to rebuild its power in the Eurasian region.

This led the United States and its allies to view Russia's policy towards Ukraine as part of the Russian challenge to the global order dominated by the United States since the end of the Cold War. Due to its geographical location and historical significance in Russian history, Ukraine has become a major focal point for escalating tensions between Russia and the West.

For the European Union, it adopted an incentivizing policy to attract Ukraine and push it away from Russia. This included enabling Ukrainian citizens to enter the Schengen area in 2017. The European Union is also the main source of foreign aid to Ukraine, as Ukraine received over 13 billion euros between 2014 and 2019. Additionally, the European Union provided Ukraine with a financial assistance package worth 190 million euros in 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic, along with 2.1 million euros in the form of loans to mitigate its economic repercussions[6]

Based on the referendum and the federal law adopted by the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on March 21, the Crimean Peninsula and the city of Sevastopol were annexed from Ukraine and incorporated into the Russian Federation.

In the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, long-standing grievances led to armed protests by individuals who did not recognize the removal of Viktor Yanukovich, with the involvement of foreigners, including Russian citizens. The self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk were declared, resulting in casualties among the armed participants and civilians, as well as an influx of refugees from Ukraine into the Russian Federation.

Furthermore, the Russian Federation did not recognize the authorities in Ukraine that were formed after the ousting of Viktor Yanukovich, as well as the alleged Donetsk and Luhansk republics. In the bordering regions of the Russian Federation adjacent to Ukraine, significant military capabilities were concentrated. While they did not directly participate in the armed conflict, alongside Russian border guards, they did not prevent the infiltration of unidentified individuals and weapons, including heavy weaponry, into Ukrainian territory[7]

Based on the above, there are several observations regarding the Ukrainian crisis, according to the researcher:

1. Lack of common rationality in international relations and its fragility: The Ukrainian war has produced many variables, and the role and powers of the United Nations in the Security Council should be considered, as it has become clearly ineffective. This means that the dialectic between law and power among sovereign states needs to be reconsidered.
2. Small size of European armies and the absence of European defense: European military assistance was not sufficient to enable Ukrainian forces to resist.
3. Nuclear threat: Russia used the nuclear threat to deter any retaliation on its territory, creating a strategic inconsistency that significantly limits Western assistance to Ukrainians.

Beginning of the Ukrainian crisis: Historically, the Soviet Union tried in every possible way to prevent or at least delay the outbreak of war in 1940 and early 1941. However, it turned out that attempting to appease the aggressor on the eve of the Great Patriotic War was a costly mistake for our people. Based on that, Russian President Vladimir Putin said, "We will not allow such a mistake to be repeated." The problem is that on our historical territories adjacent to us, an anti-Russian entity has emerged, which is completely under external control and heavily armed by NATO forces[8].

Therefore, the real reasons behind the military operation in Ukraine were the expansion of NATO and Kiev's refusal to comply with the Minsk agreements. For Russia, NATO expansion is unacceptable as it directly affects its national security due to its proximity to its borders. Additionally, disarmament, de-Nazification, and the protection of Russian-speaking populations in Donbas were important factors.

Russia had been urging Kiev to engage in dialogue regarding Donbas for eight years, but the Ukrainian authorities refused to negotiate with their own citizens, labeling them as "terrorists" or "separatists." The issue escalated when the Ukrainian authorities openly declared their non-compliance with the Minsk agreements. President Putin stated, "Russia can no longer tolerate the genocide of the people of Donbas. The Minsk agreements no longer exist." According to him, Europe cannot force Kiev to implement "Minsk-2" because there was no other way out except recognizing the Donetsk and Luhansk republics, and the Minsk agreements were violated long before the recognition of the republics[8].

The decision to send forces to Ukraine was made swiftly due to information about an imminent Ukrainian aggression in Donbas and the Crimean Peninsula, as well as the possibility of Ukraine using nuclear weapons against Russia. This was convincing for Moscow, especially since Zelensky was in Munich on February 20, 2022, just a day before Russia recognized the independence of Donetsk and Luhansk, announcing Ukraine's readiness to withdraw from the Budapest Memorandum and obtain nuclear weapons for its protection. Perhaps Kiev already had everything ready for it, including carriers and components for manufacturing nuclear warheads.

Therefore, Ukraine is not just a Western project "against Russia," but essentially a labor re-education camp for Russian-speaking populations that has been operating for 30 years. Throughout these years, there has been a gradual dehumanization, which peaked in 2014. At that time, Ukrainian aircraft bombed Luhansk and Donetsk, resulting in the deaths of women and children. In Odessa,

nationalists burned people alive in the Trade Unions House, laughing and justifying it by killing "separatists." Over the past eight years in Ukraine, there has been brutal suppression of any free thought and even the slightest sympathy towards Russia. This means that the issue is very old, and there will be no retreat until all Russian goals are achieved[9]

The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia and the fighting in Donbas in 2014 contributed to the escalation of anti-Russian sentiments in Ukraine. This gave nationalists a reason to talk about forming a unified "civil nation." Many Ukrainians believed that Western assistance would help them overcome government corruption, poverty, and the conflict in Donbas. However, in practice, the opposite happened: corruption increased, and Ukraine became the poorest country in Europe, partly due to the severing of economic ties with Russia. The conflict continued, tarnishing the reputation of traditional politics, including the elite and state authorities. In such circumstances, the election of political newcomer Volodymyr Zelensky as the President of Ukraine was natural, as he received a mandate from the people for change, including resolving the situation in Donbas and improving relations with Russia. However, the settlement in Donbas will not only require direct communication between Kyiv and the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics but also Moscow's influence over these self-proclaimed entities.

The European connection to Ukraine: Another part of Ukraine, primarily consisting of the western and central regions, including Kyiv, dreams of rapid integration into the European Union. These Ukrainians view the EU as a club of wealthy countries and hope that membership will quickly solve the country's social and economic problems, especially the issue of poverty affecting the majority of the population. It is worth noting that while there was a noticeable increase in the standard of living for many Russians in the period from 2000 to 2007, Ukraine has experienced continuous impoverishment since 1991, with the per capita GDP decreasing by about three times by 2013, with all the consequences this has for residents. In western Ukraine, the attraction to the European Union intensifies not only due to economic motives but also due to cultural and civilizational factors. At the same time, the European Union, the United States, and the West as a whole actively engaged with Ukrainian society, especially the youth, to spread pro-Western sentiments.

The decision by Yanukovich, in favor of closer relations with Russia, to postpone the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013, as known, led to unrest in the capital and several western Ukrainian cities, eventually escalating into the "Maidan Revolution" with support from the European Union and the United States[5]

Naturally, in the Soviet Union, all of this was not of great importance, especially since the communist leadership in the country adhered to the principles of internationalism and promoted the idea of the "new historical community - the Soviet people." However, when Ukraine suddenly gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, its national, ethnic, religious, cultural, and mental diversity, especially the coexistence between Russian and Ukrainian cultures, gradually contributed to the division of Ukrainian society. To legitimize its independent existence, some Ukrainian elites began promoting the "Ukrainian national idea" based on the myth of no kinship between Russians and Ukrainians and the "imperial occupation" of Ukraine by Russia for centuries. Ukrainians were portrayed as "true European people - founders of European civilization" forcibly incorporated into the "Eurasian Asian Empire" that

emerged from the Mongol-Tatar horde. This myth gained particular popularity in western Ukraine, where it originated during the Austro-Hungarian period. Since Western Ukrainian nationalists could boast of fighting for independence, they quickly emerged as a leading force in "Ukrainianism," despite representing less than 40% of the population.

The political instability in Ukraine, caused by these coups and events, especially biased policies in favor of the West without considering Ukrainian interests, was a major factor in escalating the conflict in Ukraine. This has led to the current situation in Ukraine, where it seems that the plan is to continue on this path. This is one of the main reasons for the conflict that Russia is working to stop to ensure the protection of its national security[10].

It primarily involved translating all residents, if necessary, into the Ukrainian language. The Russian language had to be expelled not only from all public spheres but also from everyday life. Nationalists presented the Great Patriotic War as an "imperial war" imposed by Russia on the country, where Ukrainians were forced to fight on both sides of the front. Therefore, it was necessary to remove Russian and Soviet historical symbols. It is evident that all of this was supposed to involve a comprehensive revision not only of historical memory but also of the foundations of the cultural identity of the vast majority of Eastern Ukrainians, not to mention the millions of Russians living in Ukraine. This direction inevitably led to division within Ukrainian society and was fraught with conflicts. Ironically, the nationalists undermined the process of transforming into a "unified Ukrainian nation," which they presented as the main goal. At the same time, they objectively interfered in the process of building the actual state, which had just begun. Naturally, the Ukrainian state had the necessary attributes, but it was weak and ineffective.

It is worth noting that the emergence of a strong state, among other things, was (and still is) hindered by the mentality of the majority of Ukrainians, given that slavery did not exist in Ukraine for a long time, and the "free" Cossacks did not live in the suburbs but were scattered throughout the region, serving as an example for other residents. Ukrainians developed a certain anarchic principle that is not very compatible with the veneration of hierarchical power and the rule of law, so the idea of "vertical power," which is considered a given in Russia, has little chance of existence in Ukraine. Additionally, the connection to the village predetermined some sensitivity towards promoting the Ukrainian language, which the nationalists certainly took advantage of.

The early presidents of Ukraine, especially those who spoke Russian, despite supporting the enhancement of the national identity of Ukrainians and attempting to "balance" Russia's influence with a "quiet drift" towards the European Union and the West, also tried to avoid extremism in "Ukrainianism." This was particularly evident after Article 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution was issued, guaranteeing the use and development of other languages in the country, especially Russian. However, Viktor Yushchenko, who came to power in 2005 as a result of the "Orange Revolution," not only "turned" Ukrainian politics sharply towards the West, leading to "gas wars" with Russia but also gave new impetus to promoting the "Ukrainian national idea." At his initiative, the Institute of National Memory was established in 2006, which quickly became the main tool for revising Ukrainian history with a nationalist, anti-Russian spirit.

The victory of Viktor Yanukovich, a native of Donbas, primarily reflected the confrontation between two almost equally strong parts of Ukraine from an electoral perspective. One part, mainly the southeastern region due to its linguistic, cultural, and mental proximity to Russia and the continuous orientation of most of its economy towards the Russian market, was drawn towards the Russian Federation without significant objections to closer ties with the European Union and the West as a whole. During his tenure, an advanced partnership agreement with the European Union was prepared, and Ukraine's cooperation with NATO gradually increased. However, the situation was different for his predecessors[5].

The Conflict in Ukraine and the Threat to European Security:

While countries like France and Germany saw the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as a threat to European security (hence their initiative to create the Normandy format), for the United States, it was an opportunity not only to "tear apart" Ukraine from Russia but also to drive a wedge between Russia and Europe. This has always been a strategic goal of US diplomacy. Therefore, the sanctions against Russia, the supply of weapons and trainers to the Ukrainian army under the pretext of ensuring Ukraine's independence, align with this strategy. Essentially, these agreements have perpetuated the armed confrontation and hindered Kyiv's allies from implementing the Minsk agreements. The United States, particularly with the support of its large Ukrainian diaspora (mainly consisting of immigrants from western Ukraine), Canada, Poland, and the Baltic states, have contributed to implementing this policy[5].

The reduction of the Soviet Union's disintegration at the geopolitical level was a significant mistake, especially for Russia's confidence in the post-Soviet space. Russia attempted to maintain relationships, either bilaterally or through alliances within organizations. This was the case with Ukraine, which remained under Russian scrutiny. However, during that period, Russia desired more openness and sought strong relations with the West. For Russia, Ukraine's strategic[11].

The Western Stance on the Conflict in Ukraine:

Member states of the European Union, the United States, and Canada, supported by the United Nations General Assembly (March 27, 100 countries in favor, 58 abstentions, and 10 against), opposed the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia and what they perceive as Russian support for Ukrainian separatists. Ukraine signed the political part of the Association Agreement with the European Union and expressed readiness to sign the economic part of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area.

According to prevailing wisdom in the West, almost all blame for the Ukrainian crisis can be attributed to Russian aggression. The argument is that Russian President Vladimir Putin's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula was driven by a long-term desire to revive the Soviet empire and potentially pursue the rest of Ukraine and other Eastern European countries. From this perspective, the overthrow of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 provided Putin with the pretext to order Russian forces to seize parts of Ukraine. However, this narrative is flawed. The United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The main problem lies in NATO's expansion, which is the central element of a broader strategy to remove Ukraine from Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. Simultaneously, the expansion of the European Union eastward and Western support for pro-democracy movements in Ukraine, starting with the Orange Revolution in 2004, have also been decisive factors. Since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders strongly opposed NATO expansion, and in recent years, they have made it clear that they will not stand idly by as their strategically

important neighbor turns into a Western stronghold. For Putin, the unlawful removal of democratically elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who was pro-Russian, described as a "coup," was the last straw. Russia responded by annexing the Crimean Peninsula, fearing it could host a NATO naval base, and destabilizing Ukraine to discourage its Western integration efforts.

The Russian-Ukrainian war, although confined to Ukraine, has had global implications and sparked discussions about the future of the world order and Russia's role in accelerating the transition to a multipolar system, either through cooperation with China or on its own with its unique resources. It also raises questions about the future of political and security alliances among the parties involved in the direct and indirect conflicts. If the war ends with Russia successfully achieving its main demands, such as preventing Ukraine's NATO membership and declaring it a neutral state, it would be a victory for Russia, while Europe, relying on US decisions, would have failed and collapsed politically, economically, and perhaps morally[6].

Regional hegemony has been one tool of foreign policy to ensure the national security of a single state. However, with the growing Western ambitions, the Monroe Doctrine principle of "America for Americans" has been challenged. John Mearsheimer limited this hegemony by adding the word "regional" because it requires significant military power and strategic superiority over all neighboring forces. This is the case with the United States in the modern era[12].

Therefore, in the researcher's opinion, this Western, particularly American, expansion, especially after the Cold War, has shown many forms of international protection, with the most dangerous being nuclear power. Although Russia has not yet used it, unlike the United States, it does not hesitate to threaten its use from time to time.

The Western Position on the Conflict in Ukraine:

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The most significant event was that in Ukraine, despite the armed uprisings in the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, presidential elections were held. As a result, the economies of Ukraine, the autonomous Republic of Crimea, and Luhansk and Donetsk were severely affected. In 2014, this led to a decrease in GDP by 4-5%, and the country was on the verge of default. The International Monetary Fund, the United States, and the European Union discussed the size, form, and conditions of financial support for Ukraine. Gazprom, which was released from its obligations under the maximum gas price according to the December 2022 agreements, demanded a return to the previous price (under the 2009 agreement), which was half the previous price. It threatened to cut off supplies if the debt was not paid. However, the cost of the issue for everyone involved is extremely high to the point that both sides exercise restraint and patience in negotiations involving representatives of the European Union.

It is worth mentioning that in August 1991, Ukraine declared independence, which was confirmed in a referendum in December 1991. This led to a radical change in the nature of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine.

Rejection of NATO and EU membership:

On its part, Russia rejected the threat of Ukraine joining NATO and the European Union in the near future, and possibly in the medium term. In the case of the European Union, it was made easier due to the clear crisis of European integration, which made EU expansion insignificant. However, in the long run, Russia felt the danger of "losing" Ukraine completely, which would turn into a constantly hostile state and exploit every opportunity to harm Russian interests. In this case, Ukraine's integration into NATO was not a matter of law but a matter of fact, just a matter of time. However, the United States and the European Union, with their "either us or Russia" stance, were severely mistaken in their calculations. By primarily looking at the situation in Ukraine through the lens of political geography (pressuring Russia) and ideology (believing in liberal democracy as a universal means to overcome all problems, regardless of the stage of development of the country), Washington and Brussels underestimated the reality of Ukrainian society. The "Maidan revolution" did not affect the system of the minority that controlled the country (with its usual vices, especially corruption). Under pressure from the European Union and the United States, the Ukrainian government adopted laws that were supposed to "improve" the economic life and state institutions, especially law enforcement agencies. This made it possible to improve the conditions for doing business to some extent, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and reduce government arbitrariness against ordinary citizens. At the same time, reforms related to combating corruption remained on paper among the elites. Corrupt officials continued to warm their hands even during the conflict in Donbas, which angered the population in particular[5]

The cost of Ukraine's membership in the European Union:

The European Union has been greatly affected by the Ukrainian crisis, despite the initial wave of widespread sympathy and solidarity with Ukraine, which captured public opinion. The European Union has provided significant economic donations and assistance to Ukraine, with 20 billion euros already disbursed and an additional 20 billion

planned for 2023. The EU has also accommodated 4 million Ukrainian refugees. In a meeting of the European Council in June, Ukraine's membership request was accepted, along with the possibilities of Moldova's accession and Georgia's potential membership. However, the situation has since reversed, and Ukrainian refugees are no longer as welcome. Today, there is doubt about Ukraine's potential membership in the Union, especially with its connection to Moldova. However, the most important factor is that if Kyiv relinquishes the territories under Russian control for the sake of peace, it is unlikely to join the European Union and the Atlantic bloc[14].

To ensure Ukraine's accession to the European Union, President Volodymyr Zelensky's government will need to complete judicial reforms, enact laws to improve the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and oligarchy, and change legislation related to national minorities. In fact, these conditions were already imposed on Ukraine in 2017 when it received a visa-free regime with Europe. However, the reforms stalled. Therefore, in the list of requirements, there is nothing new. Ukraine has a long way to go to join the European Union, especially as it is linked to the end of the war between Ukraine and Russia.

At the same time, the European Union has shown its willingness to pay a high price for Ukraine's integration and support Kyiv in its conflict with Moscow. The European Commission has proposed the establishment of an international platform to raise funds and recommendations for the reconstruction of Ukraine. The European Union has also allocated hundreds of thousands of euros from its budget to Ukraine for the purchase of weapons and military equipment. Additionally, many countries in the international community have provided weapons on a bilateral basis.

Despite the problems that have arisen within the European Union, member states continue to offer generous support to Ukraine. However, it is now clear that signs of fatigue from this situation have reached their peak. For example, French writer Nicolas Baverez proposed dividing Europe into two blocs: one including Eastern European countries and the United Kingdom, which aims to intensify confrontation with Russia over the situation in Ukraine, and the other including France, Germany, and Italy, which support a diplomatic settlement and seek a compromise solution. He added that the recent visit by French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi to Kyiv was supposed to symbolize the unity of the European Union in supporting Ukraine. However, despite announcing the "immediate candidate" status for the European Union and providing military assistance, Western countries have been unable to hide their differences on this issue.

Therefore, the attempts by European leaders since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis aimed to end the ongoing conflict. However, in essence, they are linked to the economic consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the Western sanctions that followed its inception. These restrictive measures particularly harm the countries that have implemented them, whether through slowing economic growth in EU member states, reaching record levels of inflation in European economies, accelerating annual inflation in the Eurozone, or contributing significantly to the rise in prices in European markets due to the high cost of energy carriers against the backdrop of anti-Russian sanctions.

The Foreign and Domestic Policy Aspects of the Ukrainian Crisis:

Discussion of the foreign policy aspects of the Ukrainian crisis can be preceded by the outcome mentioned by Gorbachev, who spoke about Europe's distrust of Russia being "irreversible" and that Russia will turn its attention to the Far East. As for the domestic political aspects of the events in Ukraine, they do not rely on Russia to save themselves from their own shortcomings in the state structure and the fundamental principles of their existence. No Ukrainian field has achieved its main goals: there was no democratic revolution against minority rule (although Ukraine returned to the 2004 constitution and reduced presidential powers). Instead, it was a coup where power shifted from one group of elites to another. Even if the confrontation between Kyiv and the southeast is resolved, the authorities will face social unrest. The precondition for Ukraine's participation in the European Union was austerity measures. Implementing the agreement with the European Union will also lead to economic problems in Ukraine, including reductions in pensions, social payments, and benefits (including for law enforcement agencies), a sharp decline in the state apparatus, increased gas prices for the population to market levels, unemployment, and more.

Additionally, it is likely that they will try to attribute the deteriorating situation for the population to Russia. However, blame for the bankruptcy of private companies and farms, which do not have sufficient funds to meet European standards, is also questionable. It is also doubtful that the European Union will grant Ukraine a visa-free regime, depriving people of another hope for a better life. Therefore, it is possible to predict the exacerbation of internal political conflict in Ukraine, but it is unknown which forces will exploit the "field of shattered hopes."

As a result, the ongoing war in Ukraine between Ukrainian and Russian forces has ignited global geopolitical competition between Russia and the West, plunging the Eurasian region into an unprecedented confrontation between Russia and the West. This conflict differs from the Cold War in several aspects. It is not an ideological conflict but a traditional military conflict with economic and geopolitical dimensions. This conflict brings to mind the competition between the British Empire and the Soviet Union in the 19th century for leadership and influence. This new war of influence is likely to have significant and serious ramifications that go beyond Ukraine and the entire European continent, potentially extending to other regions of the world. The duration of these ramifications cannot be predicted, but it is certain that this war in Ukraine between Russia and NATO has ushered the Euro-Atlantic region into a new phase that is entirely different from its predecessors. It is undeniable that this conflict between Russia and the West will have its consequences for Europe, which appears to be the most affected party in the war in Ukraine, given the fragility of its security system and its dependence on external factors, especially in the energy sector.

Furthermore, problems have emerged during the conflict, including the division of the country and the division of interests at the expense of Ukraine itself. This is especially evident after the formation of militias and armed groups that have split from the regular armies and are known under various names (mercenaries, battalions, groups, such as the Azov Nazi Battalion).[15]

According to the researcher, the Ukrainian crisis has divided the world into two camps, each defending their interests under the same banner of "protecting Ukraine." The Russian camp has made it clear that it wants its security concerns on its borders to be addressed and the prevention of NATO bases, but to no avail.

Therefore, the Ukrainian crisis is not just a war; it is an extension of the political and military confrontations that took place in 2014, including the ousting of former pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and the events in Donbas. It is a war where borders, identity, and history are intertwined, making it difficult to find a solution. It is a geographical war centered around Ukraine, but its political and economic boundaries go beyond that. It is essentially a confrontation between Russia and the West, and between Russia and the United States and NATO. Ukraine was chosen due to its geographical location, situated in southeastern Europe. It shares its longest land borders with Russia, spanning 2,200 km, and is bordered by Belarus to the north. It is also bordered by Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova to the west. Geopolitically, Ukraine occupies a position at the heart of the global competition between Russia and NATO. It is bordered by the Black Sea to the south, connecting Ukraine to Turkey and Bulgaria, which is of strategic importance to Russia. Strategically, Ukraine holds a prominent position in the European security system, despite not being a member of NATO yet.

In terms of political developments, the Ukrainian political system is described as a hybrid system that combines democratic and authoritarian elements. It has a mixed parliamentary system where power is shared between the president and the prime minister appointed by the parliament. When the parliamentary majority aligns with the president's party, as is currently the case, the president's center of power becomes stronger than that of the prime minister, who is usually chosen by the president[6].

The Ukrainian government's perspective on the conflict in Donbas is that it is not a civil conflict but a conflict between states, with both Ukraine and Russia being subject to international law as sovereign nations. According to the official Ukrainian narrative, Ukraine has fallen victim to aggression from Russia, while the territories of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic are under Russian occupation. Therefore, resolving the conflict requires ending the occupation and returning these territories to Ukrainian sovereignty. Based on this stance, Kyiv initially attempted to internationalize the conflict, particularly seeking assistance from the West, primarily the United States. The Minsk agreements, signed in September 2014 and February 2015 within the Normandy format (Germany, France, Russia, and Ukraine), were seen as tactical maneuvers and were not intended to be implemented by Ukrainian authorities. In contrast, Russia views the conflict as purely an internal matter and sees a way out through direct negotiations between Kyiv and the authorities of the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics.

In such cases, the Ukrainian conflict has been driven by a combination of internal and external factors. Among the internal factors, attention should be drawn to the weak state and the incomplete formation of a unified nation, which has been exacerbated by difficult economic conditions and social tensions[6]

Conclusions:

1. Ukraine holds significant importance for both Russia and the West, and the Ukrainian crisis will shape the contours of the new world order due to the involvement of international actors in the conflict.

2. The West, represented by the European Union and the United States, seeks to support Ukraine against Russia because they believe that a Russian victory

would have far-reaching consequences. The Western approach aims to weaken Russia's global power, cripple its economy, and isolate it from the international community before achieving a final victory.

3. The Ukrainian crisis has significant political ramifications both externally and internally, leading to the emergence of new crises, such as the preparation for potential uprisings in Georgia and Moldova, which have stemmed from the Ukrainian crisis.

Recommendations:

1. Given the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Russia has a golden opportunity to accelerate its annexation of territories in Donbas (as seen in the recent battle of Avdiivka, which targeted Donetsk and its surroundings), especially with the shift of support from Ukraine to Israel.

2. Russia's recent plan to conduct patrols over the Black Sea in other areas hampers the continued supply of Western weapons to Ukraine.

3. Introducing new and advanced weaponry, such as the Kinzhal missile system similar to the Iskander missiles, into the conflict zone would yield tangible results.

4. Until the scheduled integration of Wagner Group forces into the Russian National Guard, they should be returned to the special military operation zone, considering their recent successes, particularly in Bachmut and Artemivsk, before the rebellion in June 2023.

5. For the Ukrainian side, given the challenges it faces and its recognition of Israel's dominance, it is recommended to reconsider its current policy and find a way to achieve peace by refraining from demanding the return of territories controlled by Russia (Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia) and abandoning the demand to revert to the borders of 1991

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