

Changing Geopolitical Realities in Europe: The Case of Russia-Ukraine Conflict

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Abstract:

This article provides a comprehensive examination of the different perspectives and the actions taken by Russia and United States throughout the Ukrainian conflict, with an objective of understanding the escalation of local hostilities in context of global power struggle. It aims to cut through the prevalent biased, self-serving narratives and offer an objective analysis of key strategic maneuvers. U.S. is trying to extend NATO's influence into Eastern Europe however Russia is endeavoring to reinforce its sphere of influence in its neighboring territories. This study seeks to clarify the complex network of interests and strategies that have shaped the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict and to consider how the involvement of these global powers has altered its course and impact. By adopting a qualitative research approach, this paper synthesizes data from an array of sources, including books, academic journals, websites, and periodicals, facilitating a clear understanding of the complex geopolitical dynamics at play.

Keywords: US-Russia strategic roles, Ukraine crisis, NATO expansion, Hegemonic dominance

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Introduction:

One of the most contentious issues in the current political dialogue on the international stage is the situation in Ukraine. The protracted armed conflict is beginning to influence national and international security policies in Europe and throughout the world. Since Ukraine's independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the nation has grappled with political and physical divisions that reflect its complex historical affiliations and regional disparities (Moore et al., 2017).

The Orange Revolution, which began in Ukraine in 2004, was a pivotal moment in the country's post-Soviet history, marked by massive protests and political demonstrations sparked by widespread concerns over escalating corruption, electoral fraud, and the demand for more democratic governance (BBC, 2014). It led to a political dispute about who should rule the country and what was the nature of the confrontation between pro-Western politicians Victor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovich? President Yanukovich, a pro-Russian, was elected in 2010, and his historic choice to reject the much-anticipated Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) in November 2013 was hotly contested. The agreement would have increased Ukraine's westernization and independence from Russia by strengthening its political and economic links to the European Union (EU).

The rejection by President Yanukovich of an association agreement with the European Union (EU) also served as the catalyst for the Euro-Revolution, also known as the Euromaidan movement, which peaked in the February 2014 Revolution, leading to widespread anti-Yanukovich protests and his eventual ousting from power. As a result, Kyiv saw its bloodiest days in more than 70 years, during which, at least 88 people perished in less than 48 hours. On account of the revolution and attendant consequence, President Yanukovich had to seek for refuge in Russia in 2015 (Rabinovich, 2022).

The decision by Yanukovich to reject Western influence and EU membership has raised questions, as such a move could have potentially bolstered political and democratization efforts, strengthened the rule of law, promoted economic development, improved governance standards, and supported environmental sustainability in Ukraine. Motyl suggests that there might be undisclosed motivations behind Yanukovich's rejection of the agreement, especially in light of the concurrent involvement of other parties, such as Russia and later the United States, in the unfolding situation

(Kubicek, 2005). Over time, the U.S., E.U., and Russia provided political and financial assistance to those who backed the opposition. President Putin's proposal to use force to defend the two pro-Russian individuals in Ukraine was granted by the Russian parliament in 2014. Obama, the then US president, begged Putin to withdraw his troops in order to quell domestic unrest but Putin made no response. As a result, Putin seized control of the Crimean Peninsula, which is now a part of Russia (Motyl, 2013).

That is to say, it is clear that the Ukraine crisis has changed from being a regional issue to a trilateral conflict involving the U.S., the E.U., and Russia. Despite the country's noticeable ethnic differences, a growing sense of a shared national identity permeates politics. A complicated situation has arisen as a result of the conflict, comprising regional, minority, and inter-national struggle, as well as a special international power struggle between both the United States and Russia (Taylor, 2014). This paper seeks to explore the multifaceted aspects of the Ukraine crisis, dissecting its historical roots, examining the involvement of key international actors, and analyzing the impact on Ukraine's national identity. In the subsequent sections, we will investigate into the following topics: Literature review, background of Ukraine conflict, Russia's Strategic role, the U.S's strategic role, NATO's strategic role, and the future of the Ukraine Crisis.

Research problem

The Russian-Ukraine conflict is the latest manifestation of Lord Ismay's fateful comment on the purpose of NATO- "keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." Over the decades, Europe has unified as E.U., and Germany has become a strong nation-state; Russia has moved 'out and away from Western Europe after German Unification and the creation of several East European states acting as the buffer zone. Russia began shifting its focus away from Western Europe in the years following the German reunification and the creation of several East European states, which acted as a buffer zone. This shift in focus took place in the early 1990s. The bid to expand NATO to these East European states does not make much geostrategic sense as it makes Russia fearful and drags the region towards a dangerous confrontation that is adverse to the interests of Europe in particular and the world in general. The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict calls for a re-evaluation of the purpose of US-led NATO in the changed geopolitical realities of the time.

Research Question

This research study will aim to address how Russia and the United States, with their different views have and actions, made the Ukraine conflict grow into a bigger global battle for power?

Literature review

The article posits that the conflict in Ukraine has triggered a major geopolitical contest for influence between the U.S. and Russia, evidenced by the competition to extend NATO's reach. The complexity of the Ukraine crisis is amplified by biased narratives propagated by the various stakeholders, making it a convoluted affair to decipher. Perspectives on the conflict vary widely, often aligning with the viewer's political allegiance. The review of literature undertaken in this article aims to dissect the discourse surrounding the issue, identifying key contributors and their standpoints.

Prominent political theorist John J. Mearsheimer, noted for his expertise on international politics and particularly for his work "A Tragic Result of Great Power Politics," contributed to the dialogue with his 2014 essay "Why the West is Responsible for the Ukraine Conflicts." In it, Mearsheimer posits that U.S. and Russian involvement in Ukraine was predominantly precipitated by the enlargement of NATO. Counter to Mearsheimer, Stephen Sestanovich (2014), an American scholar specializing in Russian and Eurasian studies, refutes the idea in "Why the West Has Won" that NATO's expansion catalyzed Ukraine's fortunes. Sestanovich argues that the last two decades have seen the U.S. bolster NATO, which in turn has reinforced Europe's security architecture and mitigated the intensity of the current crisis. He contends that without such NATO enlargement, the Ukraine situation would have been significantly more perilous.

Moreover, Sergey Karaganov, head of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, suggests that the U.S. is driven by the fear of Russia's ascent to preeminence. Karaganov insists that Russia's prominence is the principal driver of U.S. actions. He further argues that the U.S. has little to gain from a Western-aligned Ukraine, given its economic volatility, flawed governance, and societal challenges (Sestanovich, 2014). From Karaganov's perspective, the U.S.-Russia standoff is fundamentally about maintaining American dominance and forestalling Russian ascendancy, grounded in the geopolitical calculus at the Black Sea Region (BSR).

These conflicting viewpoints underline the complexity of addressing the Ukrainian crisis and the societal dilemmas confronting its numerous actors. Thus, the article endeavors to synthesize

diverse sources and perspectives to elucidate the underpinnings of the crisis and the motivations of those involved.

To highlight key considerations, the article employs the "offensive realism" theory as a form of abductive reasoning (Émile, 2022). The investigation into the research question categorizes the U.S. and Russia's actions into three spheres: military, economic, and diplomatic. Through the lens of offensive realism, it is deduced that both nations are vying for control in the Black Sea Area, acting out of self-interest to augment their power and curb their adversary's influence. The study suggests that the dynamics of the Ukraine conflict would likely have been altered if not for the strategic interventions by the U.S. and Russia (Karaganov, 2014).

Methodology:

This article is structured as a qualitative deductive study on the chosen research topic. The division of the text into sections serves the purpose of extracting the concepts believed to be of utmost significance to the research. By employing this approach, data collection involved with a comprehensive analysis of the selected literature representing contrasting viewpoints, the aim is to uncover the behaviors and actions of the two parties involved, which may at times remain concealed within the texts.

Background of Ukraine conflict:

In the first few months of 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, which led to a war in eastern Ukraine. The year before, Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, saw brutal suppression of rallies over President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to reject an accord for stronger economic relations with the European Union. President Yanukovich had sought for refuge in Russia in 2015. Russian armies seized the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula one month later, in March 2014 (Newman, 2022). The rights of Russian speakers who dwell in Crimea and southeast Ukraine must be protected, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin. When Crimeans chose to back the Russian Federation in a contentious municipal election, Russia inadvertently seized control of the peninsula. Racial tensions grew when pro-Russian rebels voted to proclaim their country's independence after the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk, two towns in eastern Ukraine (Post, 2021).

The fighting between the military forces of Ukraine and Russia rapidly became violent. Ukraine and NATO reported Russian troops and equipment positioned in Donetsk, in addition to Russian cross-border firing after Russia annexed Crimea. Moscow, meanwhile, remains opposed to any

forms of military intervention. The continual fighting and shelling across the front line between the eastern border areas controlled by Russia and Ukraine caused the conflict to become a prolonged standoff (Herszenhorn, 2014).

In order to facilitate talks, France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine initially discussed the Minsk Accords in February 2015. The agreement's primary requirements were the cessation of hostilities, the evacuation of heavy weaponry, and the complete Ukrainian government authority over the combat zone. However, diplomatic attempts to resolve conflicts and an agreement that satisfied all sides often failed (BBC, 2015).

In April 2016, NATO announced that it will deploy four regiments to Eastern Europe in order to prevent Russia from invading any other region of Europe, particularly the Baltic States. It would be evident how the alliance's military troops entered and exited Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In September 2017, the US sent two U.S. Army brigades to Poland to bolster NATO's presence there (News, 2016).

Further sanctions were imposed by the US in January 2018 on 21 Russian, including several officials and nine firms that were involved in the fighting in eastern Ukraine (Sharkov, 2017). The first shipment of deadly weapons since the start of the conflict was authorised by the State Department in March 2018 for delivery to Ukraine, in the form of anti-tank ammunition (Eckel, 2018). A series of crucial air drills were carried out in western Ukraine in October 2018 by the US and seven other NATO allies (VOA, 2018).

Cyberattacks have been common in Ukraine. In December 2015, an assault on energy suppliers knocked down electricity for over 225,000 people in Ukraine. In December 2016, a similar attack on a Ukrainian utility company resulted in a large-scale power outage that negatively affected Kyiv (BBC, 2016). In June 2017, private and governmental computer systems in Ukraine were targeted by the NotPetya cyberattack, which was traced back to Russia (Greenburg, 2018). In conjunction with the Russian invasion that occurred in February 2022, a series of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks were launched against various online assets of the Ukrainian government. These attacks specifically targeted the websites of key government entities, such as the interior and military ministries, financial institutions, and other relevant organizations (Centre for Cyber Security, 2022).

The current state of relations between the United States and Russia is marked by significant tension, and this strained relationship heightens the risk of a broader conflict unfolding in Europe.

Tensions between Russia and other members of the alliance, particularly the United States, will increase as a result of the coalition's security duties. The situation in Ukraine is poised to exert a substantial impact on the future collaboration among international actors concerning crucial matters such as arms control, cyberspace security, nuclear nonproliferation, environmental policy, and counterterrorism efforts (Nations, 2021).

The UN reports that since Russia began a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, there have been about 3,000 civilian fatalities and over seven million internal displacements. Five million more Ukrainians have fled their homes as a result of the atrocities; the majority of them have moved to Poland, a member of NATO, where the US and other allies are assisting in managing the refugee crisis (UNHCR, 2021).

Russia's Strategic Role:

Historians will undoubtedly remember the Orange Revolution of 2004 as the beginning of the political drama that resulted in the current Ukraine War. The "Orange Revolution," a populist rise, had a part in Kyiv's choice to choose a pro-Western administration. This was a momentous intellectual achievement for liberal democracy and, more importantly, a geopolitical turning point in NATO and the European Union's Eastward expansion, which was warmly received in the West. The shockwaves clearly had a big effect on the Kremlin. This represented a significant milestone for liberal democracy and, of even greater consequence, marked a pivotal shift in the eastward expansion of NATO and the European Union a development that was met with considerable enthusiasm in the Western world (Wiltenburg, 2020). Moscow reached out to NATO on its own, extended a polite apology, and even supported the US military effort in Afghanistan. Moscow had even provided backing for the United States' military endeavors in Afghanistan. These initiatives were seen as a show of weakness in Brussels and Washington (Wiltenburg, 2020). Moscow was seen as nothing more than the spectre of the once-proud grandeur of the Soviet Union (Samuel Charap, 2020).

The year 2004 saw a significant makeover. Then, a stunning development was discovered by Vladimir Putin and his squad, which has always included well-known ex-KGB operatives. They believed the Orange Revolution to be nothing more than a CIA-backed and non-governmental organization-sponsored coup attempt against the Russian government, financed by the State Department. Even while NATO may not have had the same aim to invade Russia as Napoleon or Hitler did, Moscow was concerned that if the appropriate circumstances occurred, such plans

would soon be put into action. They thought that after the Cold War, Sir Halford Mackinder's geopolitical theories about the necessity for maritime powers to govern the most critical areas of the so-called Eurasian "heartland" from the crescent's perimeter had not been disproved (Lewis, 2019).

President Putin has publicly denounced NATO's eastward spread and the push for a unipolar world, arguing that these actions damage international stability by raising the risk of conflict, reducing understanding among major powers, and intensifying military strains. This claim was made by President Putin in a 2007 address at the Munich Conference on Security Policy (Daniel and Kurt, 2022). Although the West mostly disregarded Putin's remarks at the time, it now seems that they were omens of things to come. George Kennan, Henry Kissinger, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer were among the few Western specialists who expressed similar reservations about the foolishness of attempting to surround Russia, but their views were the exception rather than the norm. These realist philosophers expected Russia to react forcefully (Masters, 2022).

Without the guidance of Russia, Ukraine would consistently find itself in a reactive stance, with limited options for strategic response to either conventional or nuclear aggression. The closer Ukraine got to joining NATO and the EU, the more hostile, defenceless, and isolated Russia would become. Consequently, the Russians were forced to step in. They became organised in Ukraine and used all of their resources, including political proxies, to rapidly impose a dictatorship that was supported by Russia. Moscow proceeded to use its extensive pipeline network as a weapon when selling natural gas to consumer markets in Europe (Alonso-Trabanco, 2022). To demonstrate their seriousness and get an advantage in negotiations, the Russians began questioning Washington's foreign policy objectives in the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Levant, Africa, and even the American hemisphere.

The year 2014 saw the toppling of Yanukovich's administration and the installation of a pro-Western one as a result of the Euromaidan rebellion. The statement refers to a significant political event in Ukraine's recent history. In 2014, there was a series of protests and political movements in Ukraine, collectively known as the Euromaidan, which began as a public reaction against President Viktor Yanukovich and his government's decision to suspend the signing of an association agreement with the European Union, favoring closer economic ties with Russia instead (Oliker et al., 2015).

As the protests gained momentum, they became about more than just the EU agreement; they grew into a broader movement demanding political reform, an end to corruption, and closer ties to the West. The situation escalated with instances of violence between protesters and police, culminating in the "Revolution of Dignity."

In February 2014, after months of civil unrest, President Yanukovich was ousted from power. His administration was replaced by a new, interim government with pro-Western leanings that sought to align Ukraine more closely with Western institutions, a move that was seen as a pivot away from Russian influence. This political shift was pivotal, as it set the stage for the subsequent annexation of Crimea by Russia and the pro-Russian separatist movements in the Donbas region of Ukraine, leading to ongoing conflict and geopolitical tensions in the region. As anticipated, the Kremlin experienced a profound sense of threat following this turn of events. Russia's response was not immediate, stemming from their suspicion that the United States was orchestrating efforts to undermine them (Derviş, 2022).

Rising Pressure, Ultimatum, and Invasion:

Following the Euromaidan movement, Russia initiated a hybrid warfare initiative against Ukraine. This multifaceted campaign primarily aimed to erode Ukraine's territorial integrity through the application of force, sow discord to hinder its integration into Western institutions, and assert Moscow's influence over Kyiv. This was evident through the outright annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the open backing of pro-Russian separatist factions in the Donbas region, serving as a stark reminder that Russian interests could not be ignored by Ukraine. It also comprised "active measures" such as provocation and covert coup attempts, economic pressure, military theatre, religious influence, media dissemination, and the activation of Russia's political tentacles in Ukraine. It is also the geopolitical setting in which infrastructure projects meant to bypass Ukraine and provide Russian natural gas to European nations must be understood. While this course of action made it more difficult for Ukraine to become a member of NATO, Kyiv's goal to join the Atlantic alliance remained unchanged (Alonso-Trabanco, 2020).

Russian troops, equipment, and infrastructure near the Ukrainian border saw significant growth in 2021. The Russians made little effort to conceal their actions, which many people saw as signs of an impending attack. In 2021, there was a notable increase in the presence of Russian troops, equipment, and infrastructure near the Ukrainian border. This buildup was widely observed, and it raised concerns about the possibility of an impending attack (Bielieskov, 2021). The Russian

Armed Forces began massing thousands of personnel and military equipment near Russia's border with Ukraine in March and April 2021, and they made little effort to conceal these actions. This significant military buildup, along with Russia's lack of secrecy, led many observers to interpret these developments as potential signs of aggression (Sanger, 2022). If the initial plan had been a tremendous attack, then such conspicuousness would not make much sense since the element of surprise would have been lost. It would make perfect sense, however, if the intention behind these preparations were to issue a severe demand or threat. Moscow's demands included guarantees that no more post-Soviet nations would ever join NATO or serve as bases for the transatlantic alliance's military operations; offensive weapons had to be removed from countries bordering Europe; NATO military facilities constructed in Eastern Europe since 1997 had to be destroyed; and various limitations on ballistic and nuclear missiles (NATO, 2022).

On February 24, 2022, Russia began a "special military operation" to mask an actual invasion of Ukraine. In the history of contemporary Europe, there has never been a turning moment of this magnitude as when Moscow decided to use kinetic force to further its objectives. Initial indications suggested that the Russian military intervention had two main goals: to destroy the Ukrainian Armed Forces and fervently nationalist militant groups like the Azov Regiment and to ignite a diplomatic crisis that would shatter NATO's internal cohesion. A pro-Russian administration was to replace the Ukrainian government. However, the image is now more precise. The Russians do not intend to utilize focused attacks, "shock and awe" tactics, or a Blitzkrieg assault. One may argue that Moscow aims to utterly eliminate Ukraine as a legitimate national entity, even though it may take months or even years to do so, as is evident from the reality on the ground. This strategic objective is manifested in several ways, the deliberate mass evacuation of Ukrainians was part of the destruction of the country's infrastructure, loss of industry, assaults on historical monuments, and demoralisation of the surviving citizens (Dolan, 2023).

Additionally, these actions were carried out at a time when the nominal sovereignty of Ukraine was often disputed in the public discourse. Furthermore, far from being a weakness, Russia's heavy-handed use of military force projection, especially by bombers, artillery, and infantry in the encirclement and siege of vital districts, is a strength. Instead of nuclear sabre-mongering and spectacular building destruction by hypersonic missiles that are not explicitly intended for Ukraine, direct military intervention in favour of Ukraine would bring about Armageddon (Balmforth, 2021).

Given the supplies on hand, internal political dynamics, tactical blunders, and the Russian troops' obvious logistical limits, we do not yet know how far they are willing to go. However, the fact that they are now concentrating on the eastern and southern coastlines raises the possibility that these regions are being targeted because they are significant from a geopolitical perspective, particularly if the partition or outright annexation is believed to be in Russia's best interests. At first, it seemed like they were going to seize Kyiv and maybe even attempt to open a direct route to Moldova. Additionally, both outcomes can co-occur. Even if it is too soon to make a determination, it is crucial to consider the possibility that the whole Donbas might merge with the Russian Federation. At the same time, a "Novorossiia" is concurrently formed as a new state akin to Kosovo, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia (Jazeera, 2022).

Without these regions, what is left of Ukraine would be nothing more than a small, unsteady state with no hopes for the future. In any case, the Russians would not even have to seize it all. After all, the horrific bloodshed that would follow any attempt to seize and rule Western Ukraine, an area whose people have long fostered Russophobia attitudes, would exceed any possible advantages. Poland would likely annex Transcarpathia and Galicia. In contrast, Hungary may seize Transcaucasia if the Russians really divided Ukraine due to its social composition, history, and attendant instability (Jones, McCabe, & Palmer, 2023). The Kremlin would not oppose those developments as long as Russia can assert its sovereignty over the region east of the Dnieper River, since even though such a territorial reconfiguration would be beneficial to Warsaw's and Budapest's national interests, it would provoke confrontation within the EU and NATO (Martinez, 2021).

By using the paradoxical notion of "constructive devastation," Russia intends to alter the territory it now holds in Ukraine in order to achieve its objectives related to geopolitics, military, strategy, economy, and demography. Similar to Belarus, Moscow may see a highly Russianized administration that is closely aligned with the Kremlin on all important issues. It may also serve as a buffer zone and front position against Western troops (Alonso-Trabanco, 2020).

The US Strategic Role:

The commencement of the war in Ukraine coincided with a period of bipartisan political discourse in the United States characterized by a certain degree of imprudence a poignant irony. This timing had a notable impact on formulating the Biden administration's interim national defense strategy, which was presented to Congress on March 28, 2022. It could have been more comprehensive

under different circumstances (Defense, 2022). The extent of information disclosed by the administration regarding modifications to the number, composition, and deployment of U.S. troops and strategic alliances remains uncertain. Given the broad nature of the White House's March 2021 publication of the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, it is unlikely that any substantial changes would have occurred (House, 2021).

Practically speaking, the recommendations made by the Trump administration for the interim national security strategy and the military budget for FY2023 closely mirrored those presented by the Biden administration, exhibiting an unexpected bipartisan alignment. However, these recommendations lacked comprehensive programs, plans, or financial projections and did not address the reorganization of international strategic alliances, nor did they garner support from net assessments (Dhanani, 2022). While this may seem concerning, a more detailed strategy from the Biden administration could have made a persuasive case for maintaining strategic ties with NATO and Asia. Additionally, it might have offered a stronger rationale for addressing the Russian invasion of Ukraine and reestablishing American military presence in Europe. Furthermore, China might have been singled out if it had developed practical plans, comprehensive strategies, coercive measures, or long-term international competition goals (Defense, 2018).

If the sketch plan had followed the FY2023 budget request, it would not have been able to establish a workable Future Years Defense Program or tackle important problems highlighted by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), Government Accountability Office (GAO), and Congressional Research Service (CRS) in relation to procurement programs for the U.S. armed services. It would have also failed to address key objectives, such as building the capability for integrated cross-domain operations, despite advocating for increased R&D expenditures (Gaido, 2023).

To effectively avert Taiwan-related conflicts, both the Biden administration and Congress must expand their focus beyond reacting solely to the situation in Ukraine. They must also move beyond treating Iran and North Korea as distinct and less critical challenges (Aagachi, 2023). The United States must develop a global strategy with attainable long-term goals and financial objectives, which include strategies for hybrid and grey area warfare, deterrence, and the capacity to conduct large-scale wars to compete with China and Russia. Furthermore, it must provide a detailed plan for resuming weapons control measures (Defense, 2018).

NATO's Strategic Role:

The need for a revitalized NATO alliance to adopt a European and worldwide containment policy rises as it deals with a crisis with significant economic, humanitarian, and military components. More military troops capable of protecting territory have recently bolstered the Black Sea beaches of Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states. This strategy emphasizes the need to strengthen NATO's defences to offer the capability to fight off any Russian attack on land, at sea, in the air, or in space and cyberspace (Shea, 2022). This project has garnered support from ten partner nations, resulting in the integration of 40,000 troops under NATO's command. While concerns about the future of the transatlantic security partnership persist, there have been noteworthy developments, such as the relocation of US Stryker units from Germany and Italy. The United States has significantly bolstered this mission by deploying elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and 3rd Armored Division to Poland. It's essential to acknowledge that the US contribution remains substantial, eclipsing the combined European efforts (Garamone, 2022). Nevertheless, other NATO allies have also made valuable contributions, such as France and the UK deploying aircraft to Romania and Germany and the Netherlands providing Patriot batteries to Slovakia. The current presence of 100,000 US troops in Europe, the highest level since the mid-1990s, highlights the ongoing commitment to transatlantic security (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2021).

In the Black Sea region, NATO plans to establish four additional multinational battalions and has deployed the High Readiness Reaction Force for the first time. These initiatives are important steps in enhancing regional security. However, it's worth noting that many of these deployments are temporary in nature (NATO, 2023). The partner countries in the region have expressed a preference for NATO to consider more permanent stationing arrangements. This raises complex questions, including the need to reevaluate the 1997 agreement with Moscow that restricts the stationing of sizable combat units in Eastern Europe. This agreement was initially made in response to the political climate of that era (Ferrari, 2015).

Moving beyond immediate deployments and deterrence, NATO's new Strategic Concept must address longer-term considerations. One key decision is whether to shift away from the current Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) strategy, which emphasizes military reinforcement and mobility across Europe, and explore options like deploying heavy armoured brigades or divisions in long-term positions near borders (Shea, 2022). Another priority is the development of a unified theatre-wide strategic plan overseen by the NATO command structure and the Supreme Allied

Commander in Europe. While these measures may not be directly effective in combat, they are crucial for bolstering the alliance's eastern flank (GIRGIN, 2015).

NATO should also place a strong emphasis on enhancing its training exercises, ensuring that forces sent beforehand seamlessly integrate with local military, police, and border guards. This preparation is vital to address the evolving threat landscape and counter any potential hybrid warfare tactics employed by Russia. Furthermore, NATO must strengthen its cooperation and interoperability with partner countries, including Sweden and Finland, as part of ongoing military preparations (Krimidas, 2022).

NATO's success in this crisis extends to its political messaging. In response to Russia's increasing assertiveness and unpredictability, NATO has maintained its reputation for steadfastness and reliability. To prevent feeding into President Putin's narrative of an 'aggressive NATO' or creating the perception of encirclement, NATO should reiterate its core defensive role, calmly reject provocative nuclear posturing, and refrain from deploying forces in Ukraine. However, when faced with a Russian escalation within Ukraine, such as the deployment of chemical weapons, NATO's strategic ambiguity may offer a valuable diplomatic tool. The tragic events of the Russian invasion of Ukraine underscore the importance of NATO's revitalization and its renewed focus on its fundamental objectives, reinvigorating the multilateral system with a renewed sense of purpose (Mattelaer, 2020).

Furthermore, by recognizing the aspirations of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Western Balkan countries to join the European Union (EU), the EU is not only embracing its geopolitical role but also shouldering responsibility for the security and economic integration of the entire continent. Through regular policy dialogues and active collaboration, the EU and the US have demonstrated the potential for effective partnership and regional stability.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is stepping up to deal with the effects of decreased grain exports from Russia and Ukraine. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is stepping up to investigate and hopefully prosecute Russian war crimes. In other places, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is stepping up to deal with the shipping crisis (Kramer, 2015).

Even if it is oversimplified to fully express all the complexity and depth of the contemporary world, the story of a fight between democracies and authoritarians in the twenty-first century has been demonstrated. The chance exists for the transatlantic community to bolster its defences and

establish a multilateral structure that is more effective, founded on shared values, and capable of systematically retaliating against aggression and breaking the law.

The Future of the Ukraine Crisis

It has taught us equally crucial lessons regarding the direction of the civilian component of conflict. The Ukrainian crisis, which began in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the subsequent conflict in Eastern Ukraine, has indeed provided several significant lessons regarding the function of contemporary armed forces in contemporary warfare. The conflict in Ukraine highlighted the concept of hybrid warfare, which involves a combination of conventional military tactics, irregular warfare, and non-military actions such as propaganda, cyberattacks, and information warfare. Russia's use of these tactics in Ukraine demonstrated the importance of comprehensive military strategies that encompass both conventional and non-conventional elements (Hafeznia , 2023).

The Ukrainian crisis highlighted the critical role that cyberwarfare plays in modern-day wars. In the current digital era, cyberattacks are powerful instruments that both state-sponsored and non-state actors may use to obstruct communication, destroy vital infrastructure, and get information. This emphasizes how urgently strong cybersecurity safeguards and the integration of cyber capabilities with the military forces are needed.

In addition, proxy forces such as Russian-backed irregular troops and separatist militias were involved in the fighting in Eastern Ukraine. The intricate network of participants posed significant queries over responsibility and management, rendering it difficult to identify the real catalysts for the dispute.

The Ukrainian crisis underscored the need of efficient coordination and administration between the civic and military sectors during times of war. A key factor in determining the final result was the Ukrainian government's capacity to handle the crisis' civilian components, provide necessary services, and tend to the humanitarian needs of the impacted populace (Parmar, 2022).

The crisis also serves as a warning about what happens when significant governmental change is not implemented in Russia. Russia's foreign policy goals were called into question, its ties with other countries were strained, and economic sanctions were imposed as a result of the crisis in Ukraine. These events highlight the need of prudent and flexible governance in a world that is changing quickly. It highlights the importance of diplomacy and the potential consequences of international isolation.

The Ukrainian crisis has already imparted numerous significant lessons concerning the function of contemporary armed forces in contemporary warfare. The scenario serves as a warning that, without significant governmental reform in Russia, the civil side of the conflict has become far more deadly (ECC, 2022). Even if this confrontation ends in a compromise, agreement, or ceasefire, it is still possible that it may ignite a protracted civil war between Russia and NATO, the E.U., and the U.S. At this point, it is doubtful that the disagreement will be resolved definitively. As a result of the conflict, Russia will most likely continue to rank alongside China in the United States' strategic priorities, Russia will continue to be far more likely to result in war than before Russia invaded Ukraine. Along with finding political and economic ways to benefit from any unrest or opportunities in Asia, Africa, or Latin America, the conflict may also push Russia to officially and intimately align itself with China. It could also encourage Russia to look for new areas and opportunities to expand its military hegemony (Cordesman, 2022).

Another illustration of how hard it is to terminate a battle in ways that lead to enduring peace is the war's expanding effects on society. Nevertheless, it currently appears that Ukraine won't retake its eastern territory, won't receive the assistance it needs to quickly rebuild, will continue to be threatened by Russia in the east, making it difficult for it to revitalise an industrialized region, and will experience significant problems with maritime trade. Any peace or truce between Russia and the bulk of Europe, as well as between Russians and Ukrainians, is likely to leave a dreadful legacy that will take a decade or more to erase, given the horrifyingly high political tension between these two groups of people. Fighting must stop, but its effects on the economy and civic society must continue. The urban core, municipal, and provincial governments, as well as a significant portion of Ukraine's infrastructure, have already been devastated. These projections are based on the assumption that the war will be resolved by a large, long-lasting political and economic agreement that allows Ukraine to reclaim at least the area it lost during the conflict and strengthens its economy to levels it had before the conflict (USIP, 2022).

However, the political hostility between Russia and NATO will remain the same as long as Russia has its current administration. The E.U. and the United States will restrict commerce, investment, technical interchange, and cultural interaction between the two continents. If Russia is unable to resume its prior levels of energy commerce and its greater economic links with Europe and the West, it will surely choose to turn to China and other Asian and African nations. For at least a decade, NATO and Russia appear to be engaged in significant military build-ups, which will,

among other effects on their economies, cause a massive arms race, increase each side's ability to endanger the other's population and economy, and raise military expenditure on each side's share of GDP by several percentage points (Ibrahimov et al., 2017). In assumption, the Ukraine War may have sped up the development of cutting-edge offensive weapons like hypersonic and other types of practical cyber and space weapons and conventional SIOP-like methods. These backup plans will entail varying degrees of escalation. Still, they will be possible because the strategic nuclear weapons of the U.S. and Russia continue to deliver increasingly lethal levels of mutually assured destruction (BBC, Henri Astier & Yaroslav Lukov, 2022).

Any sincere measures to improve and modernise conventional or nuclear weapons control might be derailed by the conflict in Ukraine. The United States may build theatre systems and low-yield nuclear cruise missiles. It may be necessary to restructure Britain's and France's nuclear arsenals to concentrate on Russia. Putin is capable of using every cutting-edge nuclear weapon system he has shown. It is impossible to divorce any of these incidents from the attention that China received before to Russia's invasion of Ukraine from the US, Europe, and its strategic allies in Asia. The Ukraine War may eventually bring Russia closer to China, even while U.S. strategy prioritises China above Russia's comeback (Lewis, 2019).

North Korea, Pakistan, India, Iran, the Arab world, Turkey, and other significant regional military powers like Israel and Egypt will all be impacted by the Ukraine Conflict and the long-term responses from the US, NATO, the EU, and Russia. It is almost a given that the de facto conflict between Russia, the United States, and Europe will impact arms control, security assistance, army bases, economic expansion, trade agreements, and diplomatic and diplomatic support on the developing world in the same manner that it affects the European continent. This will be particularly true if Russia and China begin to collaborate more.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The repurposing of NATO in the post-Cold War era, along with the geopolitical interests and security concerns of Russia and the United States, played a significant role in shaping the Ukrainian crisis. Understanding these factors helps shed light on the motivations and actions of the key actors involved and the potential consequences for the region and beyond. Diplomacy and conflict resolution remain critical tools for managing such complex geopolitical challenges. The United States and Russia have a stormy past together. Both of them have seen a number of events that have influenced their thoughts and deeds on the situation in Ukraine. The main goal of big

powers is survival since countries are always at war to maintain their internal political systems' independence and geographical integrity. The extension of the European Union, Russia's entry into the EEU, and the United States' involvement in NATO expansion show that governments may be accountable actors that are aware of their environment and continuously think about how to survive in the global arena. The pro-Russian Yanukovich dictatorship and Ukrainians' concerns about their shared national identity catalyzed the current conflict. Neither Russia nor the U.S. has indicated that they can ease tensions between the pro-Western and pro-Russian populations. The nation has become even more polarized as the U.S. and Russia engage in a global power struggle over the Ukraine issue. They could have acted in a particular manner to improve their standing within the BSR. The growth and securitization of energy resources and transportation routes have led to an economic interest in the area, as may be observed from a two-sided perspective.

Given the complex interconnections between nations involved in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and NATO's involvement post-Cold War, it is important to have recommendations on the necessary course of action. The primary arguments demonstrate the significance of using diplomatic responses and strategies to mitigate conflicts. It is imperative that they confront the complex issues arising from a power struggle between Russia and America. Based on these observations, the following suggestions are proposed:

Advocate for robust negotiations with Russia, the United States, and relevant parties to initiate dialogue and discover nonviolent means of resolving issues in Ukraine. International organizations, such as the United Nations, should play a role in facilitating negotiations and reaching consensus.

Initiate a comprehensive assessment of NATO's objectives and aims in the post-Cold War era. It is essential to consider the expansion of NATO and its impact on regions characterized by tranquility. It is imperative that we engage in constructive dialogue with Russia in order to effectively address our mutual security concerns.

Advocate for enhanced collaboration in the Black Sea Area (BSR) to address shared challenges and develop mutual trust among neighboring nations. Collaborating in areas such as energy resources, transportation routes, and security measures may contribute to financial equilibrium. Additionally, it mitigates conflicts among nations.

Support organizations and non-governmental entities that aim to unite those who are pro-Western with those who are pro-Russia in Ukraine. Facilitate social interactions, foster cultural exchange,

and promote educational growth via various activities. This may facilitate mutual comprehension and mitigate the schisms among us.

Mitigate future conflicts by resolving the underlying causes that give rise to geopolitical tensions. This entails resolving financial disparities, promoting equitable governance, and fostering international cooperation to avert conflicts.

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