



A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HYBRID APPROACH TO THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

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Abstract

This qualitative study endeavours to examine the struggle that lies behind the rise of NATO and the EU, the Russian-Ukrainian War, the hybrid posture taken by the European Union, and both of these. After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in what is known as a "cold war." Throughout the duration of the Cold War, the world was subdivided into communist and capitalist zones; however, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, a number of countries, including Ukraine, were granted their independence. The conflict that has broken out between Russia and Ukraine may be broken down into two categories: A territorial conflict exists between Russia and Ukraine, and (B) Moscow considers Ukraine to be a significant strategic asset. According to the results of this study, Moscow is opposed to the expansion of both the European Union and NATO, which includes membership for Ukraine. If Ukraine were to join NATO, Russia maintains that this would turn the country into a battleground between the United States and Russia. In addition to providing assistance to Ukraine and increasing sanctions against Russia, the European Union also has the goal of bolstering commercial activity. This is due to the fact that, should any state decide to join the EU, there will be only one market and one trading system available. According to the findings of the research, Russia should approach the conflict with Ukraine with tact in order to avoid creating a rift within the country and instead use the situation as an opportunity to strengthen national



cohesion.

Introduction

After World War II, the United States of America and the Soviet Union engaged in what is known as a "cold war," which is defined as a "conflict over ideological differences without military action and without dissolving diplomatic ties." During the time of the Cold War, the world was divided into two blocks: the American Block and the Soviet Block. In 1991, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a number of countries, including Ukraine, won their independence. On August 24, 1991, Ukraine attained its independence from the Soviet Union. Ukraine, which borders the European Union and Russia, is the second-largest country in Europe after Russia. Kyiv is the name of Ukraine's capital city. Despite having a bad economy, Ukraine is vital to Europe's geography (Samokhvolav, 2015).

A peninsula in the Black Sea called Crimea is so crucial geographically that battles have been conducted there for aeons. Viktor Yanukovich, the president of Ukraine, rejected a request to join the European Union in November 2013, provoking demonstrations. As a consequence, Russia backed Yanukovich in the crisis, while the US and Europe supported the protestors. Antigovernment demonstrators toppled Yanukovich's regime in February 2014. As a consequence, Russia invaded Crimea the following month. Crimean residents cast their votes on March 16 in favour of joining Russia; nevertheless, the international community considers this succession to be unlawful. In 2014, violence broke out in Eastern Ukraine, which is also often referred to as Donbas. Because of its substantial mining operations, steel manufacturing facilities, and coal resources, the Donbas region, which borders Russia and contains the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk, is of great importance to the industrial sector. When the pro-Russian or pro-Moscow government in Ukraine was overthrown in 2014 by enormous rallies in Ukraine, the nation is now divided between factions that are pro-Russian and groups who are pro-Ukrainian. Russia gave its backing to the separatists throughout their effort to grab control in Luhansk and Donetsk. Minsk Agreement was signed by Germany, France, Ukraine, and Russia between September 2014 and February 2015; however, it was never enforced, rendering the combat zone one of the most mine-contaminated regions in the world. Germany, France, Ukraine, and Russia all signed the Minsk Agreement (Hopf, 2016).

The expansion of the European Union and Ukraine's admission into NATO are the two most worrisome elements that are leading to the all-time high level of border tensions that now exist between Russia and Ukraine. The United States of America and Europe are using a hybrid approach to undermine Russian sovereignty by pushing for Ukraine's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. The use of both conventional and unorthodox tactics while operating inside the battlespace is what is meant by the term hybrid. Both as a means of transporting goods to the Black Sea and as a significant manufacturing hub, Russia is dependent on Ukraine. There is no question that Russia and Ukraine embrace diametrically opposed political viewpoints. But, given that the United States and Russia are hostile states, Moscow has good cause to be anxious about the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO. The fact that Russia and Ukraine share a border makes it much



easier for the United States to invade Russia. The elimination of Russian sovereignty is the end objective of expansionist policies pursued by NATO. The European Union has imposed comparable penalties on the Russian Federation. They do this by claiming that they want to protect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Cross, 2015).

Research and Analysis

The book "Triangle of War" by Kuzio (2007) examines the geopolitical importance of Crimea as well as the existence of separatists in this region. The book focuses on Ukraine, Crimea, and Russia. Crimea is essential to Russia because it gives the country access to the Black Sea. Only in the peninsula of Crimea, which is politically divided between pro-Western and pro-Russian forces, can members of the Ukrainian government and ethnic Russian Crimeans engage in interethnic violence with one another. Furthermore, this research also draws attention to the "Donbas," which is the second-most significant area after Crimea and is characterised by pro-Russian influences as well as the emergence of autonomist views. In addition to this, the "Donbas" is characterised by the emergence of autonomist views.

Guyer (2022) asserts that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the fundamental source of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Due to the fact that Ukraine is a former Soviet state and shares a border with Russia, being a member of NATO would require the country's acceptance of the principle that any assault on one member state constitutes an attack on the whole alliance. Should Moscow launch an assault on Ukraine, this would bring it into direct war with the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and other members of NATO.

At whatever price, Russia will not consent to Ukraine joining either NATO or the EU. Russia launched an attack on Ukraine; however, if Ukraine did not back down from its membership in NATO and the EU, the situation could become more serious for all of Europe. This is due to the fact that the European Union is already concerned about the issue's potential to damage the economy of the continent (Faiola, 2022).

If Russia joined NATO, its goal of recovering its prior stature as a superpower would be rendered impossible. If Russia were to join NATO, it would become a member of the organisation and, in essence, "just another major European nation," putting it on same footing with other Great Power Nationalists such as France, Germany, and Britain. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance, and for Russia to join it would suggest that it is an ally of the United States, which is very unlikely (Bohm, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

A powerful explanation for the current state of war as well as the rise and fall of huge or great powers is provided by the theory of power politics that is referred to as realism. The core foundations of



realism are the concepts of national sovereignty, national security, and national interest. The British leader Lord Palmerston once said in a piece of writing, "We have no permanent allies, and we have no everlasting opponents." Given the enduring nature of these interests, it is our duty to pursue them (Frankel, 1970). Realist may be understood in a number of different ways, including through the lenses of classical, structural, and neoclassical realism. The concept of "national interest" is central to the realist worldview since every nation on the planet pursues the same overarching goal, and thus makes "national interest" the most important aspect of this perspective. Liberalism and realism are the two most influential schools of thought in the field of international politics. Realists believe that the only way to achieve goals is via power politics, whereas liberals urge for complete individual liberty (Morgenthau, 2001).

Considering the current situation in Ukraine, it is essential to understand two different sets of explanations. The first explanation, which comes from the realist school of thought and seeks to determine why this invasion was unavoidable or who the primary perpetrators are, posits that both of these questions may be answered simultaneously. The second part of this justification has its roots in the liberal-institutional peace school, and it explains why the first part was not delivered. The first group, known as the Pro-Realists, believes that the United States is to responsible for the crisis that is taking place in Ukraine. It is argued by "John Mearsheimer," one of its most prominent proponents, that the attempts made by the West to coerce Ukraine into joining NATO led to Russian anxiety. He maintains that the expansion of NATO was not even a consideration in the past, and that it was only after the reunification of Germany and the fall of the Soviet Union that this idea was entertained. Opponents argue that politics, international laws, and institutions rather than force are responsible for governing the world in today's society (Attaullah, 2022).

The second group of people believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin is to blame for the disruptions that have occurred in the European economy as well as the situation in Ukraine. Critics argue that all of these crises involving claims of sovereignty, such as the conflict between Ukraine and Russia or the problem with Taiwan and China, are simply the result of the "Power Game," which is the realist perspective. They cite examples such as the conflict between Ukraine and Russia or the problem with Taiwan and China. Moscow is aware that if Ukraine joined NATO and the EU, Russia would be entirely blocked off from the rest of the world as a result of the growing power of Europe and the United States, who would not allow Russia to resist. If anything like this were to take place, people's views of the world would change from liberal to realism. (Attaullah, 2022)

The most charitable kind of liberalism, which is represented by the so-called "superpower" of the United States of America, advocates for peace and freedom; nevertheless, they do it from a realist point of view. (2006) Miller. Threatening China is one of the most important interests that the United States has in Taiwan, and it is the same tactic that the United States is using to deal with the crises in Russia and Ukraine. Both China and Russia are important world powers, but their ties with the United States are strained, which is the primary factor contributing to these disagreements. Expanding NATO and incorporating Ukraine in it simply helps to erode sovereignty in both nations, which is not



compatible with a liberal stance but rather with a realist attitude. Taiwan, when Nancy Pelosi visits Taiwan, The primary reason for starting these wars is because the United States wants to maintain its status as the world's only "superpower," and it does not want the world to evolve into a "multipolar" system in which China and Russia are recognised as powerful nations (Martin, 2022).

Politics at the Highest Level

There is no other explanation for the situation in Ukraine other than a "Great Power Struggle." The current crisis in Ukraine has brought to mind the concept of great power competition and the impact that it has on the relations between countries and the safety of the world. As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the international order transitioned from being bipolar to being unipolar, with the United States emerging as the only superpower. The ambition of the big nations to maintain or reestablish their hegemony is the underlying factor that has led to the current predicament in Ukraine. Notwithstanding the importance of the United States' strategic position in the Ukrainian conflict, Russians see the aggressive engagement of the United States in Ukraine as an effort to affect their opinion. The United States of America and the European Union both want Ukraine to become a member of NATO and the EU so that they can maintain their hegemonic positions. As soon as Russia joins, it will be entirely under their control, and since Ukraine is Russia's neighbour, it is projected that the United States would find it simple to attack Russia. If Russia enters, Ukraine will be completely under their influence. With the end of the Afghanistan War in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Russia fell into a period of silence during which it started working to regain its standing as a great power. The Cold War lasted for the whole of the USSR's existence. The engagement of the United States in Ukraine has the goal of turning it become Russia's version of Afghanistan in order to maintain the world in a unipolar state and stop Russia from regaining power (Briggs, 2022).

Every nation-state devises its own foreign policy in order to promote its national interests and protect its sovereignty. International relations are built on the basis of foreign policy. Russia is a big actor, and the majority of experts are of the opinion that the quarrel between Russia and the United States, which Moscow accuses of actively intervening in Ukraine, is the main problem at hand. The United States of America agrees with Russia's stance that Ukraine should not join either NATO or the European Union. If Ukraine joined, Russia would be isolated from the rest of the world because capitalism would totally control its borders. As a consequence of this, Russia considers the initiation of a confrontation with Ukraine to be nothing more than a means of protecting the nation's sovereignty, which is the most essential aspect of it. Another justification for this conflict is for the United States to reclaim the hegemony it held before the fall of the Soviet Union. Many experts forecast that the international order will shift from being unipolar to multipolar, with Russia and China rising to the status of the world's next superpowers as a result of this shift (Briggs, 2022).

Russia, as well as NATO

In 1949, the name North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was given to the international security



alliance that was established by thirty nations throughout Europe and North America. By political and military action, the primary objective of NATO is to ensure that its members continue to enjoy the same level of safety and autonomy that they already enjoy. After World War II, the primary objective of NATO was to thwart the expansion of the Soviet Union into Europe. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, a large number of the Soviet Union's former allies in Eastern Europe joined NATO (Goswami, 2022).

On February 24, 2022, Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, issued a declaration of war on Ukraine and sent Russian troops to the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk located in eastern Ukraine. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the most important driving force behind the current crisis between Russia and Ukraine. Russia opposes Ukraine's ambition to join NATO. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were considered to be the world's preeminent superpowers in the era immediately after World War Two. Only the United States has retained its status as a global powerhouse since the fall of the Soviet Union.

As a direct result of this, the NATO alliance continued to grow, and in 2004, nations that had previously been a part of the Soviet Union began to join it. These countries include Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In 2008, Georgia and Ukraine could have joined NATO if they had met the requirements, but they did not. You cannot completely encircle and isolate Russia and expect it to be able to protect its sovereignty. Russia has requested that NATO immediately cease its expansion and has also requested assurances that Ukraine would never become a member of the alliance. In addition to this, Putin demands that NATO remove all of its military installations from the Russian region and revert to the way it was before 1997. (Goswami, 2022).

The European Union and a Hybrid Way of Thinking

The European Union, abbreviated EU, is an organisation that was formed through the political and economic cooperation of many independent states. The development of Central and Eastern Europe has made it possible for Europe as a whole to enjoy greater levels of peace, prosperity, and economic stability. The European Union (EU) is the product of the countries of Europe working together to form a unified entity, and it has 27 member states at the current time. The countries that make up the European Union have established a unified commercial strategy, a customs union, and a single market in which there are no barriers to the free flow of products and services. There is just one currency used in all of twenty-nine of the states (Klinke, 2012).

The European Union has condemned the use of armed force against Ukraine, which they believe was uncalled for and without justification. The leaders of the European Union have sent an urgent request to Russia to stop all military operations in Ukraine, as well as to preserve Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a response to Russia's use of armed force against Ukraine, the European Union has increased its sanctions on Moscow and increased its level of help to Ukraine in the areas of finance, diplomacy, the military, and humanitarian aid (Averre, 2007).



As a result of the close strategic ties that exist between the European Union and NATO, Russia sees both of these organisations as a potential threat to its national security. A "Hybrid Approach" is when the European Union completely supports Ukraine, supplies help, and says that "Ukraine is an independent country, and as such, they have the freedom to make decisions for themselves." This is an example of what is meant by the phrase "Ukrainian is an independent nation." Employing both conventional and unorthodox strategies while operating inside the battlespace is what is meant by the term hybrid. Both the European Union and NATO have hidden expansion goals; for NATO, this means establishing American bases and complete influence over the Ukrainian government in that nation, which is antagonistic towards Russia and is located in close proximity to the United States. This will result in the European Union having joint commerce and a single market with Ukraine. On not one, not two, but all three fronts, Russia cannot function effectively without Ukraine's support. The whole procedure is unprecedented and designed to isolate Russia in order to prevent Moscow from regaining the position it had before to the dissolution of the USSR. (Foxall, 2017)

The current scenario in Ukraine and Russia is bad for the economy of Europe and might throw millions of people into poverty. Due to the fact that both Ukraine and Russia are economically significant, the European Union is particularly concerned about its own economy. The Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted in an increase in sanctions imposed by Russia, and eleven countries in Europe are highly dependent on Russia for their oil and gas supplies. Because of the fact that more than half of the EU's oil and gas imports come from countries that are not a member of the EU, Russia is an undeniably important supplier of oil and gas to the global market. As a result, any disruptions in trade or sanctions against Russia will result in higher prices for the countries that are a member of the EU. The European Union is working to promote its strategic goals, but the ongoing conflict has increased the Union's level of concern over the economy of Europe (Ahmed, 2022).

Putin and the Continuation of Russia's Imperial Identity

Putin's historical excursions often leave Europeans bewildered, even when they are not scathingly criticised for being obvious fabrications of history. Yet, the notion that Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians are all part of "one people" has a long tradition among Russia's most influential citizens. It continues to have an effect on persons who are in positions of power, not just in terms of how they talk but also in terms of how they act. The fact that Ukraine has lately become more of a "Ukrainian field" has been completely lost on the professionals working in Russia, who have been blissfully oblivious of the changes (Seddon, 2022).

The governing class of Russia has expressed doubts about Ukraine's capacity to survive. Alexander Solzhenitsyn was of the same opinion as the Russian imperial authorities when they said that "talk of a separate Ukrainian nation existing since something like the ninth century is a newly constructed phoney." On the other hand, he was described as being "almost half Ukrainian by birth." Solzhenitsyn argued that in order to establish a "Russian Union," which would include the East Slavic core of the Soviet Union (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and northern Kazakhstan), the states of the Baltic region, the



South Caucasus, and Central Asia should be allowed to declare their independence. This would make it possible to incorporate these regions into the Russian Union. Throughout the beginning of his career, Solzhenitsyn has a reputation for being an outspoken opponent of the Soviet regime for its role in the brutal suppression of traditional Russian culture and identity. According to his analysis of standardised Ukrainian, the effect of Austro-Hungarian had "distorted," "unrelated to common usage," and "choked full of terminology drawn from German and Polish." Because of Ukraine's "painful severance" from Russia, Solzhenitsyn anticipated more waves of secession inside the nation in the wake of this event. Putin portrays himself as the reincarnation of Russia's imperial past in its contemporary iteration. Consistently, when he discusses Ukraine and the linkages between Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, he employs terminology that is imperialistic in nature. Putin asserts that NATO and the EU are enforcing "the ancient foundation of the Polish-Austrian ideologists to establish an anti-Moscow Russia" in Ukraine in order to separate Ukraine from its "true" identity and allegiance to Russia. This would be done in an effort to sever Ukraine from its "true" identity and allegiance to Russia. In his address on February 21, Vladimir Putin said that the government of post-Soviet Ukraine had "tried to construct their nation on the rejection of everything that unites us" with the assistance of "foreign forces." Putin made these statements against the Ukrainian government (Seddon, 2022).

New Development

Because of the hybrid mindset of the worldwide Russian gas producer, forty percent of the natural gas that is consumed in Europe originates from Russia. According to information provided by Gazprom, Russia put a temporary stop to the delivery of natural gas via the Nord Stream pipeline 1. On the other hand, after three days, the operation on the Baltic Sea restarted, and Gazprom asserts that a technical problem was the reason of the brief stop in operations. Despite this, there is a growing anxiety in Europe that Russia may restrict supply even more before the winter arrives. The governments of Europe have been making efforts to diversify their gas supplies by increasing their imports of natural gas from other nations, such as the United States. The Nord Stream pipeline transports Russian gas to European Union countries through two principal routes—one goes via Ukraine and the other goes over the Black Sea. (Seddon, 2020)

Conclusion

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine attained its independence, so resulting in the existence of two independent states alongside Russia. The concept of "sovereignty," which refers to an essential part of a state, lies at the root of the dispute between the two states. The expansion of NATO and the European Union, as well as Ukraine's membership in these organisations, are all things that Russia is opposed to. If Ukraine were to join NATO, Russia maintains that this would turn the country into a battleground between the United States and Russia. It will be entirely under the power of Europeans and Americans, and the United States will use the territory of Ukraine as leverage against Russia. Russia will be utterly subjugated. Both the backing of Ukraine by the European Union and the tightening of sanctions on Russia are motivated by a number of hidden agenda items. They



seek to boost commerce because if any state enters the EU, there would only be one market and one system of shared trade. Hence, they can only have one market. As a result of the close strategic ties that exist between the European Union and NATO, Russia sees both of these organisations as a potential threat to its national security. According to the opinions of a great number of financial experts, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia represents a significant risk to the economy of Europe and may result in widespread poverty. The economy of the European Union is a source of significant concern for the EU because of the economic significance of both Russia and Ukraine. Every nation-state devises its own foreign policy in order to promote its national interests and protect its sovereignty. International relations are built on the basis of foreign policy.

Recommendations

1. Given that the expansion of NATO is the fundamental driver of this conflict, the United States ought to put a stop to it.
2. Rather than furthering the strategic objectives it shares with its member states, the European Union. It is reasonable to be concerned about the state of the European economy in light of Russia's decision to halt gas exports; moreover, Europe is at risk of suffering another catastrophic economic calamity similar to COVID.
3. Russia should manage the Russia-Ukraine problem deftly so that it does not cause a national division that it can use to strengthen its internal unity.
4. Russia should begin supplying gas because waiting to do so is wrong and will have serious consequences.
5. Russia should begin supplying gas because waiting to do so is wrong and will have serious consequences.



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