

Russo-Ukrainian Conflict: A New Cold War

Dr. Muhammad Tahir Rashid

Assistant Professor, Sciences & Humanities, FAST NUCES, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, tahir.rashid@nu.edu.pk

Abstract

This research work focuses primarily and solely on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a conflict that has once again pushed the world into an ideological divide. The war in question is not confined to one, but two battlefronts: the one in Ukraine, with Russian and Ukrainian boots fighting with one another, whilst the other has been opened on the diplomatic front. The latter is a mosaic of different diplomatic actions undertaken to try and contain the Russian advance in Ukraine. They include and are not limited to- economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, usage of international institutions against the other and extraordinary military and financial aid to Ukraine by the Western power. To better understand the prevalent international order, it is imperative to explore the differences between the two conflicts- the Cold War of 20th Century and the contemporary Ukrainian conflict (or the emerging Cold War). The original Cold War never involved a direct altercation between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was realized as a diplomatic quarrel to contain the competing power through any means necessary but direct engagement.

Key Words: Cold War, Russia, Ukraine

Introduction

The human course of history is dotted with unprecedented and innumerable conflicts and wars. From hand-to-hand combat to nuclear bombing of an enemy state or nation, the means and ways to materialize a conflict have evolved in exponential terms. This evolution of war tools is not limited to military weapons and prowess. Post-World War Two, states have been apprehensive in challenging an enemy state of the same power status and therefore have included economic sanctions and competition coupled with diplomatic efforts for political isolation (of an enemy state) as the key aids. Bernard Baruch, former adviser to US Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Harry S. Truman, coined the term 'Cold War' for explaining the conflict between the United States and Soviet Union, which changed the course of history for decades to come. Today, in an anarchic international system, states are at odds with one another ever so frequently and are perhaps in an infinite toxic cycle of continued cold war.

At the end of world war ii Europe isolated itself from world affairs as in the past since 1648 the world affairs were actually the European centered. The Europeans focused on human welfare because they saw and gone through the destruction and consequences of war. Again in post-cold war era, especially on the eve of Maastricht Treaty Europe again got role in international politics. Now Russia, the successor state of Soviet Union is regaining the old glory and potential emerging power. Russia proved its power in Georgia, Crimea and in Syrian conflict and gave tough time to the NATO forces and other factions involved there (Yaseen, Muzaffar, & Naeem, 2019). Now the problem is that this Russo Ukrainian conflict which was actually initiated due to Ukrainian desire to get the membership of NATO alliance. This NATO extension on the doors of Russia threatened President Putin and he did preemptive strike. Seeing the developing situation, it is assumed that this would be the commencement of new Cold War in the region and Europe will again suffer in catastrophic time after 1945 (Muzaffar, & Khan, 2016).

Literature Review

Multiple works by known writers have been reviewed for this particular study as the situation changes day by day because the crisis yet not ended. Much literature has been written and still in pipeline with the discourse of the event.

The writer narrates in the writing “Crimea and the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict” revolves around inspecting the context of the stated conflict with Crimea. It puts into perspective the claims of both, the Russians and the Ukrainians. Furthermore, it delineates the events that led up to the materialization of the conflict. Moreover, it suggests or notes down the actions that could be taken to resolve the conflict (Bebier, 2015)

“The economic cost of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict” This article analyzes the dependence of the world markets on the energy sources originating out of Russia. Furthermore, it showcases that instability caused by the Russo-Ukrainian conflict will have far-reaching effects that will be hard to control. Moreover, it makes clear that the markets of developing countries will find it harder to keep up with the receding economic outlook. Moreover, it presents the economic cost that will be imposed on the local economies of Russia and Ukraine (Liadze, et al., 2022).

Another important work “The Russia-Ukraine conflict: its implication for the global food supply chains” emphasizes on the need to maintain sustainable global food supply chains. Ukraine, being one of the biggest exporters of grain and wheat, will be incredibly impacted by such an act. Moreover, Ukraine uses the Black Sea to export its wheat to the world, a naval blockade by the Russians would be detrimental to the supply chains and push wheat prices up throughout the world (Jagtap, et al., 2022).

(Kirby, 2022). having the analyses in his article “Why did Russia invade Ukraine and has Putin's war failed?” the propaganda that Putin initially used to justify his assault on Ukraine. After doing so, it focuses on how the stances have changed on occasions and delineates the defeats that the Russian army has faced throughout the war.

This is a backgrounder by Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), in which a detailed text has been placed that explains the conflict in full detail. It analyzes the past conflicts, such as the Crimean Annexation of 2014 and analyzes the impacts and the consequences of the present-day conflict. It also analyzes the causes of the conflict and presents forwards the Russian and the Western stance (*Conflict in Ukraine*, 2022).

This article presents the reasons that Professor Mearsheimer puts forward in regard to the Russo-Ukrainian War. Moreover, it analyzes the consequences of the war and paints a different picture than what is usually found in the western media. (Mearsheimer, 2022).

In another literary work by Professor John J. Mearsheimer where he presents an alternative approach to the causes of the Ukrainian conflict. Initially published in 2014 at the time of the Crimean annexation, it holds significant importance today. As it stresses on the same issues that are still faced today, making it obvious that the Russian security concerns have not magically appeared today but that these concerns were present before too (Mearsheimer, 2014).

“Natural gas markets expected to remain tight into 2023 as Russia further reduces supplies to Europe” emphasizes on the impacts of the LNG and Natural Gas markets due to the scaling back in supply by the Russians. It analyzes the expected spot prices that might prevail in the immediate future (Gas Market Report, 2022).

“Oil Prices Face Fresh Volatility With New Russia Sanctions, OPEC Decision” This work emphasizes on the extreme volatility that is present in the Brent Crude market. Furthermore, it analyzes the impact of Russian sanction in light of the contentious OPEC decision which many have labelled as a profiteering agenda (Wallace, et al., 2022).

This work brings to light one of the central claims made by Ukrainian and Western officials. This claim revolves around their belief of Russia trying to recreate or revive the Soviet Union. This

article provides the reason that has been propagated most by the Ukrainians and by the West when explaining the causes of the conflict (Amaro, 2022).

Causes of the War

The causes of the Ukrainian conflict are a point of contention among scholars and analysts. Interestingly, the causes themselves are divided on ideological lines. Pupil from competing sides of the spectrum argue and debate the causes that lead to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In this research paper, the causes are explored in a pragmatic manner and opinions from both sides of the spectrum are explained. One thing is for certain, the Russian invasion was a gradual buildup of tension between the Western powers and Putin's Russia. However, a large stratum of the western foreign policy corps do not agree with that statement- in their view, the invasion is part of Putin's plan to rebuild the glory and the might of the Soviet Union. However, the Kremlin disputes this western claim and instead blames the NATO expansionist policy as the sole reason for the conflict. In this section, the goal is to critically analyze this claim in context of the Russian security interests and the western reasoning.

Ideological Clash

Great powers have a natural tendency to pursue a hegemonic position. If any power is to create a hegemony, they must first export their set of beliefs and then impose them on the international system. If any power is to maneuver itself in the international system as to pursue a hegemonic position, it will always be countered and checked by competing powers (who are trying to pursue their interests and expand their influence over the international system). With that being said, the reiteration of the first statement of this paragraph is rather crucial for the next set of arguments. Countries like the United States, Russia or China have the capacity to expand their influence in the world and pursue a hegemonic position, while they do so, they ruthlessly attack the set of beliefs their competing power hopes to spread. By doing this, the powers enter a war of narratives which showcases largely the ideological war that is at play. In the same manner, one of the key reasons for the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is the ideological mismatch between the Western powers and Russia. This ideological mismatch is no surprise to anyone. It was present at the time of the original Cold War, and it is ever-growing today.

The original Cold War ended with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The world was very much a bipolar world before it but instantaneously after, a unipolar world order was found. In this unipolar international system, the Western nation states pursued a so-called policy of democratization across the world. They pushed for a worldwide adoption of democracy and the subsequent value system as the true order of the world. Being pursuant to this policy of so-called democratization, the United States interjected in and invaded a number of states with the pretext of demolishing 'authoritarian systems' and installing democracy (the efficacy of which is highly argued but is unfortunately not a goal of this study). The United States, alike the Western coalition it inspires, is a staunch advocate of a liberal international order. The basis of such an order is based primarily on the democratic peace theory (DPT)— a theory which states that if all the states in the world were pursuant of a liberal democratic structure, there would be no war. The reasoning given behind the DPT is the premise that liberal democracies are way too concerned about their economic situation and the well-being of their citizens and therefore they tend to avoid war at all costs. The belief that democratic systems are inherently more peaceful as compared to other systems and the relentless pursuit of such a system establishes the first disagreement in this conflict. Furthermore, the West has long established a tradition of demeaning other systems and praising their own as the system deserving of embrace. This demeaning is not restricted to a war of words but includes significant materialistic action. The toppling of governments in the Middle East over the pretext of their rulers being autocratic is a clear example of how such a belief is materialized in quantifiable action. This belief system tends to push the Western powers to a complete disregard of other systems— to a point where the beliefs of other states (pertaining to what the international system should be like) is invalidated and termed as an ancient system. For example, the Western foreign policy corps terms the Balance of Power as an ancient age thought and establish that it has no place in a 'progressive and modern world'.

The Russians disagree with the Western thought system. They still hold the Balance of Power to be a very much relevant concept and they materialize this thought by strengthening their defenses and warning the West against NATO transgression and expansion. National security is a diminishing concern for many of the Western states, simply because they have adopted a policy of Collective Security—a system where allied countries pool in their defenses and guard their interests together. However, for Russia, national security is a crucial concern. In many ways, Russia still holds the neorealist or realist concepts to be the defining factors in an international system, however, this is not so true in the case of Western Powers.

The preceding paragraphs describe the ideological war between Russia and the West. The importance of correctly understanding this theory is crucial as it is playing an important part in truly grasping as to how the war of influence is being played out.

A War of Influence

With the theory covered and the foundations established, it is important to see how this thought is materialized in Ukraine. Before the Russian invasion of mainland Ukraine materialized, there was continuous contention between the Russians and the West. This contention was primarily because either side did not want the competing side to have sizeable influence in Ukraine. Russia wants to see a neutral Ukrainian state and is threatened when the Western powers pump in money and influence the Ukrainian government to take actions and adopt policies that would have significant impacts on Russian national security. However, for the West, the choice of Ukraine being neutral or not rests with the Ukrainian state and people. The West, therefore, maintains a sizeable influence over Ukraine and encourages the Ukrainian demand for joining NATO and the EU. During the tenure of the current Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine adopted a policy of staunch indifference to the Russian state and a significant tilt towards the West. This Ukrainian policy was naturally seen as a threat by the Russians. Putin and his deputies publicly aired their concerns numerous times, but the West disregarded them (the Russian concerns) as being ‘expansionist’ and foul. The Western reluctance to understand and accept the issues of competing powers is another factor that fuels this conflict.

Moreover, to make matters worse, President Zelenskyy made the claims of a Ukrainian assault on Crimea several times. He saw the Russian annexation as reversible and wanted to make efforts towards achieving such a thing. The issue of Crimea is a sensitive area for the Russians and its importance cannot be understated. Crimea is home to the port of Svestopol, a warm water port on the Black Sea. Russia has only so many warm water ports and faces freezing temperatures in winters, to a point where mainland ports (present on the edges of the state) are frozen. Svestopol serves the purpose of defending the Russian trade and maritime interests. Furthermore, it provides cover to the Russian port of Novorossiysk, present on the eastern side of Svestopol, also on the Black Sea. The context in which Crimea was annexed is integral in understanding the Russian stance on Ukraine. When Ukraine was about to sign an association agreement with the European Union, Kremlin convinced the then Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovich, to do so otherwise. Yanukovich suddenly pulled out from the deal and accepted a much better Russian offer, however, this action sparked civil unrest and protests throughout Ukraine leading the Russian deal to be scrapped and Yanukovich to be removed from power. Russia, being a Great Power, wanted to secure its interests and therefore saw the cessation of Crimea as an integral part in doing so.

Russian Security Interests and NATO Expansionism

Mainland Russia or the modern Russian Federation was once before the Russian Empire and the mighty Soviet Union. In contemporary history, the might and the size of mainland Russia has always been enormous and unprecedented. The Russians alike many other have always been apprehensive about their security interests. However, for Russians, one particular area of interest lies north of the Carpathian Mountains. This passageway, which is inherently flatland through and through is known as Ukraine. The Russians have seen armies marching towards Moscow from this particular route many times. They saw it when Napoleon Bonaparte of France invaded the Russian Empire and again when

the Germans mounted a sizeable assault through the same passageway. The Russians, therefore, realize the importance of a neutral and nonaligned Ukraine. The map below encircles the topographical structure of Ukraine, showcasing the strategic importance of Ukraine to the Russian state.

As can be seen from the figure above, access to Russia through the Carpathian is impossible. Ukraine is inherently a flatland providing easy access to and inside the heart of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the upper or northern route (through Finland) is a difficult pathway to invade Russia from. Primarily because it is not inherently a total land route but has the Baltic Sea in between which would be difficult to move land armies from. The other routes through Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are in military terms 'narrow' and do not provide as easy an access as is present through Ukraine as they form what is known as a bottleneck. With the strategic importance of Ukraine explained, another key area that concerns the Russians is the NATO Expansionism.

The transatlantic partnership, NATO was formed as primarily an anti-Soviet Union pact. The Soviets tried to construct their own Warsaw Pact in return, but the effort was short lived. Most of the countries that were then signatories to the Warsaw Pact later joined NATO as member states. Consequently, the expansive policy of NATO has always been deemed a real threat by the Russians, who are ever concerned with the security ambitions of NATO. Therefore, seeing NATO guns being stationed on a strategic flatland with easy access to Moscow is a no-go area for Kremlin. The efforts by the Ukrainian and Western leadership for Ukraine's accession to NATO is one of the fundamental reasons the conflict today rages on.

The Western Claims

A significant chunk of the Western foreign policy corps is indifferent to what the Russians are saying. To them, the strongman Putin's ambition to recreate the mighty Soviet Union is the policy Kremlin is in pursuit of. There are some key reasons why the West makes such a claim. To the west, individual security is perhaps a dwindling concept as collective security now takes precedence. Furthermore, when the Russians talk about the NATO threat or its expansionism, a lot of academics seem to shrug the apprehension off as false. They explain their indifference by saying that the Russian apprehensions are unfounded and not representative of the international order that exists in modern times. As was explained in the section pertaining to the ideological clash, the West sees major conflicts on balance of power and territorial conquests as an outdated concept and therefore is indifferent to any apprehensions that are brought in regard to it. This indifference forms the basis of the Western claims which is in turn formed by ignoring the Russian security concerns.

Examining the Causes

With most of the mainstream causes listed, the study aims to pragmatically weigh and compare the causes and compare it to the reality of the world. This examination and analysis forms the opinion of this study and is not a final word on the issue.

Tim Marshall in his book "Prisoners of Geography" presents a thesis where he links geography with the inevitable. In his opinion, geography can be a restricting factor when it comes to the policies a nation state can pursue (Marshall, 2016). The latter statement is reasonable in every regard. If a state were to be surrounded by mountains on all four sides, it would make it difficult for a competing state to mount an invasion. Moreover, that fortunate state would realize the gift it has and not need to have a sizeable military to protect its borders as the mountains form a natural cover. Likewise, an Island needs to focus on building a sizeable navy to protect its maritime borders. Therefore, the impact of geography on socio-economic and military structures is a known and documented fact. Geography takes its toll on geopolitics too. When a country of smaller influence is placed side by side with a Great Power, the policies that the smaller state can pursue are restricted and constrained. Great Powers are always apprehensive about their security and would do whatever they can to guarantee their interests in the region. In such a scenario, the unfortunate reality for a smaller state is of submission and pragmatism. The latter statements can be applied in the case of Ukraine too. For Ukraine, exploring close relations

with the far West has its consequences as it upsets its most immediate neighbor, which also happens to be a Great Power. Therefore, for peace to be guaranteed in the region, Ukraine would have to some extent, strike a balance between its policy towards the West and its most immediate neighbor. However, when Ukraine tipped those scales in favor of the far West, Russia responded.

The Russian security concerns are in many ways, not unfounded. The West is led by a power that has enjoyed a hegemonic position for a considerable period. This hegemonic position of the United States forces it to be aggressive towards any power that endeavors to create a hegemony of its own or simply challenges the status quo. Therefore, hegemon does not view the concerns of competing powers as valid as to it, the only nation that matters is itself. Furthermore, the United States has unfortunately coupled their hegemonic position with its ideology and believes it to be the true order of the world. Therefore, it shrugs off security concerns of others but embraces its own. This dual faced approach is also unfounded and unfortunate.

Lastly, the Western claim of Putin wanting to recreate the Soviet Union is inherently a weak argument. If Putin wanted to recreate the Soviet Union, he would certainly have been more aggressive with his assault. It is to be noted that in the early days of the Russian invasion, their military was able to reach the outskirts of Kyiv in the first two weeks. Their reluctance to launch a full scale invasion of Kyiv points to the fact that maybe complete dominance of Ukraine is not the goal. Moreover, the Russians have been very cautious in advancing in Ukraine. This is not to say that the conflict has not been bloody, every war is bloody, and this is no different. But the scale of the Russian invasion has never been contiguous. Airstrikes have been sparse and a full-scale invasion of Ukraine has not been on the cards. Therefore, the Russians perhaps do not want to conquer Ukraine and reclaim the lost glory of the Soviet Union. But perhaps, what they want is a guarantee of their security concerns and apprehensions.

Therefore, in the view of this study, the Western claim of Putin's ambitions is perhaps not reasonable given the sequence of events. What is definite is that the two sides are prolonging the war by not coming to a logical conclusion and that the plight of the Ukrainian people has worsened due to the inability of the two sides to come to a reasonable agreement. In the successive section, the impacts and consequences of this new Cold War will be listed. Along with a reiteration on how it is termed to be a Cold War that involves a bloody conflict.

A New Cold War

As was explained in the introductory parts of this study and was made increasingly clear in the causes, this conflict is extraordinary in nature. It materializes as both: an indirect and direct conflict. The direct conflict is being fought between the Russians and the Ukrainians whilst the indirect conflict is being fought between the seemingly united West and Russia. In the original Cold War, between the Soviets and the Americans, tough sanctions were placed upon the Soviets in order to isolate them from the world. Furthermore, the then superpowers were involved in massive arms buildup that threatened an all-out nuclear war. Whilst today, there is no arms race as such, but the threat of a nuclear war is very much there. Moreover, along the lines of the original Cold War, tough sanctions have been placed upon the Russian Federation which has impacted the economy of the world and has added to the prospects of a global economic recession. In this section, the study analyzes the sanctions that have been placed upon the Russian Federation and notes down the impacts and consequences of those sanctions.

After the Russian invasion, the West sounded alarms and warned the Russian state of tough sanctions if it didn't cease its advance. These sanctions initially had a tough impact on the Russian economy and the Ruble but both eventually recovered.

Exclusion of Russia from the SWIFT Banking System

Soon after the Russian invasion, a decision was made by the Western powers to exclude Russia from the SWIFT banking system. The SWIFT system allows banks from different parts of the world to send money to each other. The exclusion of Russia from the SWIFT system was a key blow to Russian businesses as they were unable to keep partnerships and pay their suppliers. Moreover, the Russian giant Gazprom found it increasingly hard to receive payments for clients and this was present for other businesses too.

Trade Sanctions on the Russian State

Trade sanctions were placed on Russia. These sanctions prohibited trade with businesses operating in or from Russia. The effect of this sanction was massive. Russian workers were laid off and MNCs and international food chains began exiting the Russian Federation. This not only spurred the unemployment rate to an all-time high but also imposed a significant energy crunch on the world. This energy crunch is explained in a heading of its own as the importance of it demands such.

Oil Prices in Spiral and Global LNG Shortage

After trade sanctions were materialized against Russia, the Oil Prices took a significant hit. The Russian Federation is a key member of the OPEC+ alliance, which is composed of a handful of oil producing and exporting countries. Trade sanctions on Russia made it increasingly hard for countries to buy oil from Russia, which eventually pushed up Brent Crude prices in the world. The United States, which is itself a major oil producer, found it hard to keep up with the inflated prices. The result of these sanctions was extraordinary. Developing countries found it hard to stimulate the economy with meaningful growth and the ordinary citizen, everywhere, found it hard to pay for the increase. The inflated oil prices still exist today and are a major area of concern for many developing and developed states.

To make matters worse, the Russians decreased their supply of natural gas to Europe. The importance of Russian gas is such that 80% of Germany's imported natural gas comes through Russia. Not to mention the other numerous European states that Russia supplies natural gas to. As the Russians scaled back, Europe found it increasingly hard to provide enough gas to the commercial and residential sector. The result of this, was a shift to Liquefied Natural Gas or LNG. The spot price of LNG skyrocketed as a result and developing countries in the East found it extraordinarily hard to keep up with the European bids. Moreover, as of now, the Nord Stream-1 pipeline stands to be completely shut, which puts more pressure on the global LNG market, pushing prices further up. As of current, there is a global LNG shortage. Developing countries like Pakistan and others have failed to secure enough LNG to meet their commercial and residential needs. In fact, the whole world is paying the price of the invasion in terms of the rise in energy prices.

Sanctions Against Russian Oligarchs

Russian officials and its oligarchy have been sanctioned by the West. Their assets inside the Western countries have been frozen or ceased. These sanctions have also led to European countries ceasing yachts belonging to a certain oligarch. Their businesses have been impacted by the sanctions and these oligarchs on many occasions have been told to go back home (to Russia).

Russian Exclusion from Sports

As part of the global divide, the Russian sportsmen were not allowed to compete in the Olympics. Furthermore, the Russian team has been recently excluded from competing in the FIFA World Cup which follows a similar trajectory as the one in the old Cold War.

Consequences of this Cold War

As was delineated in some of the consequences given above, this conflict is increasingly shaping up to look like a Cold War between Russia and the allied West. Europe, America and other countries have provided unprecedented financial aid to Ukraine to strengthen its defenses. Furthermore, Ukraine has been provided with missiles and advanced military systems to fend off or wear down a Russian assault. This unprecedented funding showcases the divide that is ever-growing. Moreover, the economic sanctions against Russia has made the prospects of an already recovering global economy worse. With oil prices pushed up, developing nations have found it hard to keep up. Protests against increasing inflation have become frequent all around the world and an economic recession is in the offing. As winter approaches, European and other nations around the world will find it increasingly hard to supply enough resources for residential and commercial heating and therefore, as demand will increase the LNG crunch will be made worse— adding to the woes of developing nations like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and more.

A Way Forward

This section will present the possibilities which could help in resolving the conflict at hand. These possibilities might come off as absurd to the reader as the relevance or the practicality of the possibility is not considered on writing. What follows at the end is a paragraph that corresponds to the opinion of this study. As to what the study believes is the best way forward in resolving the conflict.

Cessation of Hostilities with the Russians Leaving Mainland Ukraine

This is by far the most obvious and optimistic solution to the conflict. This possibility suggests that the Russian military cease their attack once and for all and return to their barracks. This involves the surrendering of the ceased regions of Luhansk and Donetsk. It follows that the Russians do so for the sake of international stability with absence of any treaty or agreement that guarantees their security interests.

Annexation of Ceased Regions with Ukraine Given a Freehand

This possibility implies that the Russian state annexes the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and consequently leaves the Ukrainian territory. This would have the implicit suggestion that perhaps the annexation of Donetsk and Luhansk were the primary and the only goal of this Russian invasion. Moreover, this possibility implies that after doing so, the Russians would have established a buffer between itself and Ukraine which it can now consider to be part of the hostile West.

An International Agreement that Guarantees Russia Security Interests

This possibility suggests that an international agreement be formed between the Russian Federation, the West and the Ukrainian state. Such an agreement should guarantee that Ukraine would remain a neutral state and would not cede itself to a particular school of thought. By doing this, the Russians return the annexed regions of Luhansk and Donetsk but keep Crimea as part of the Russian state, a fact which would be endorsed by such a treaty. Furthermore, such a treat restricts NATO and EU membership of Ukraine.

Conclusion

For any solution to be viable and lasting, it has to be reasonably accepted by parties on either side. The solution to this conflict must include pragmatism and international realities as the defining factor. Ukraine, as a state must realize that it being positioned next to a superpower has a significant impact on the policies that it can pursue. Therefore, the Ukrainian demand for total control over the policies it can pursue should be lessened. The Ukrainian state must aim to strike a balance between its relations with specifically the United States inspired West and the Russians.

With the basics established, it is now reasonable to envision a possible solution to the current conflict. As was assessed and analyzed by this study, the Russian security concerns are not unfounded and reflect a reality. Therefore, the West should realize and make room to accommodate these concerns. The Russians, on the other hand should allow for Ukraine to maintain relations with the United States and other key NATO allies. The best approach towards resolving the conflict in question revolves around the third suggested possibility. The West should agree to the demand of Ukraine staying a neutral state and sign a pact that restricts Ukraine from joining NATO or the Euro zone. Consequently, Russia should return the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk back to the Ukrainians. However, status quo must maintain over Crimea otherwise the Russians might not be party to such a treaty. Any pragmatic treaty or agreement that might cement a lasting and meaningful peace will unfortunately involve the national choices of the Ukrainian side being sidelined. Ukraine will have to accept conditions that might be extraordinary in nature. However, as was stated before, the unfortunate reality of being positioned next to a Great Power dictates that unfortunate and extraordinary terms may have to be accepted by a state that finds itself in such a situation.

To conclude, this study explored the various causes, consequences and the possibilities that can be used to resolve the conflict. Obviously, exploring every cause and every consequence is an impossible task. The consequences on civil society and the social structures have not been studied as part of this literature work. In this study, every effort has been made to keep the analysis as relevant and as pragmatic as possible. The conclusion pertaining to each part has been coupled with that very part in order to preserve cohesion.

In the view of this study, the Russian security concerns do hold enough value for the Western world to consider them. Any conflict can only be settled on the negotiating table. The Russians, in the view of this study, are not wanting an all-out war against Ukraine or total dominance. What they desire, although is an agreement that secure their security interests.

References

- Amaro, S. (2022). Russia needs to stop clinging to the idea of reviving the Soviet Union, Ukraine ambassador says. *CNBC*
- Bebier, A. (2015). Crimea and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. *Romanian J. Eur. Aff.*, 15, 35.
- Conflict in Ukraine* (Publication). (2022). Center for Preventive Action <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>
- IEA (2022), Gas Market Report, Q4-2022, IEA, Paris <https://www.iea.org/reports/gas-market-report-q4-2022>, License: CC BY 4.0
- Jagtap, S., Trollman, H., Trollman, F., Garcia-Garcia, G., Parra-López, C., Duong, L., ... & Afy-Shararah, M. (2022). The Russia-Ukraine conflict: Its implications for the global food supply chains. *Foods*, 11(14), 2098.
- John Mearsheimer on the causes and consequences of the Ukraine war* [Video file]. (2022). <https://www.eui.eu/news-hub?id=john-mearsheimers-lecture-on-the-causes-and-consequences-of-the-ukraine-war>
- Kirby, P. (2022, November 16). Why did Russia invade Ukraine and has Putin's war failed? *BBC*.
- Liadze, I., Macchiarelli, C., Mortimer-Lee, P., & Juanino, P. S. (2022). The economic costs of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. *NIESR Policy Paper*, 32.
- Marshall, T. (2016). *Prisoners of geography: Ten maps that explain everything about the world* (Vol. 1). Simon and Schuster.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault: the liberal delusions that provoked Putin. *Foreign Aff.*, 93(5), 77.
- Muzaffar, M. & Khan, I (2016). China-Russia Relations after the Cold War, *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 1 (II), 151-169
- Wallace, J., Strasburg, J., & Hirtenstein, A. (2022). Oil Prices Surge Above \$100 a Barrel After Russia Invades Ukraine.
- Yaseen, Z., Muzaffar, M., & Naeem, S. (2019). Resurgence of Russia: A case Study of Syrian Crisis, *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, 5 (II), 147-154