**The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict: Renewed Soviet Ambitions**

**Abstract**

After a long military buildup, Russian recognition of the unilaterally declared Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic, and the entry of the Russian Armed Forces into the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine on February 21, 2022, the Russian forces launched a military campaign against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Kyiv and other cities around Ukraine were bombed on February 24 after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a military action to *“disarm and de-Nazify Ukraine”* in a speech. The purpose of this research is to shed light on why Russia and Ukraine are at odds and how NATO has played a part in fueling this old war. Since Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union, this study gives some context for understanding both Russia and Ukraine. To better comprehend the nature of the conflict, this study employs a descriptive analytical approach based on narrative and connections between data points.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Post-Soviet Era, NATO, Proxy War.

**Introduction**

In a dramatic escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War that broke out in 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24th, 2022. It was obvious that Kyiv would meet its fate because of the European approach, which included a British proposition made from a podium in Washington. Amid a lack of clear positions and decisive decisions, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy famously declared on the afternoon of the invasion, “We are alone defending our nation. Most of the Western community sympathized with Ukraine at the beginning of the war, but, contrary to what is believed, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s forces did not move to enter the war to support the Ukrainian forces, but huge budgets were allocated to support Ukraine financially and militarily, as well as political and media support through the huge campaigns supporting it (Szporluk, 2020).

Although globalization has been occurring for millennia, the rise of international organizations can be considered a more modern phenomenon. There was a strong and widespread desire for peace among nations after the devastation of World War II, and many international organizations were established as a result. These included the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, and the World Bank, among others. Almost any conceivable topic is covered by one of the many international organizations currently in operation.

The two primary schools of thought in international relations, realism, and liberalism, have had a contentious history of disagreement about IOs. In an anarchic world where there is no global government, realists claim that nations, the primary actors in international affairs, are primarily motivated by their own self-interest and concern for power and security. That is why they stress the importance of states exercising caution and moderation. On the other hand, liberals tend to hold a brighter vision of humanity, which they defend as inherently good. They have faith that global prosperity, peace, and stability can be achieved via concerted international effort. Realists have been much more wary about the potential benefits of IO proliferation than liberals (Fedor et al., 2017).

Those Western politicians in power frequently adhere to liberal orthodoxy and encourage the spread and extension of IOs, making this topic important in governance. However, the stabilizing effect of these institutions should not be assumed. If you want to know if IOs provide peace, democratization, and stability to global politics and inter-state interactions, look no further than the case of NATO enlargement. Policymakers should exercise caution before adopting liberal policies, and Ukraine crisis of 2014 and that of 2022 are telling case studies of the risks expansion sometimes involves (Abbassi et al., 2022).

The original purpose of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was to restrain Soviet aggression and shield Western Europe against communist expansion. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Atlantic Alliance “lost its reason for being”. NATO not only made it through the end of the Cold War but expanded in size, influence, and membership because it “managed to adapt itself to a profoundly altered environment”. Some academics, typically those with a liberal worldview, have seen this as a good thing, a win for the West, and a thriving example of global cooperation. However, realists, who tend to be more skeptical of international organizations, see NATO's expansionism as dangerous and frightening, claiming the alliance is a major contributor to tensions between the East and West, notably between Russia and the West (Feklyunina, 2016).

Two issues, the expansion of NATO and the recognition of Russia's special interest in the countries of the former Soviet Union, “caused the greatest tension and have the most potential to continue,” as they have, “to upset U.S.-Russian relations” beginning in 1994, during what Victor Israelyan calls the cold peace. Scholars continue to debate what the future of NATO should be, whether it should seek growth, and whether it should even exist at all (Kovacevic, 2009). It is possible to tell which of these two perspectives is more correct, or at least more pertinent in the present political situation, by looking at Russia's interests in the former Soviet bloc and its reactions to NATO's expansionist policies and activities in Eastern Europe.

The modern Ukrainian state is young and plagued by internal disputes and violence. It is easy to point the finger at the country's cultural, linguistic, regional, and ethnic schisms as contributing factors to the state of the country's democracy. After the fall of the Soviet Union, those in the east and in Crimea, which was part of Russia from the 18th century until 1954, displayed strong Russian nationalism, while those in the west exploited nationalistic pride and pro-west impulses to rebel against their former “master. As a result, ethnic and linguistic lines are quite sharply fractured in Ukrainian politics (White & Feklyunina, 2014).

Apart from the country's internal strife, it is also squeezed between two global powers striving for influence: the United States and Russia. Both have attempted to achieve their objectives through a variety of economic, historical, political, and ideological means (Zreik, 2022). Ukraine's defensive alliance aspirations and the military alliances it currently has partnerships with are of the utmost importance. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the separatist movement in eastern Ukraine can be traced back in part to the tense relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Russia, and Ukraine.

Although the Crimean Peninsula has historical ties to Russia due to its ethnic, cultural, and linguistic similarities to the Russian people, its strategic value is the primary reason it has always been at the center of conflicts and has been a frequent target of invasion, conquest, and annexation. Its proximity to the Black Sea is the single most important strategic factor in its favor. Yanukovych and then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the Kharkov Accords in 2010 to renew and prolong the agreement, allowing Russia's Black Sea Fleet to be stationed in Sevastopol from 2017 to 2042. The new government's anti-Russian bias and its support for the European Union and NATO make it likely that the Accords would have been annulled, creating a major roadblock for Russia's access to its Black Sea base in Sevastopol (Kuzio, 2018a).

It was the prospect of losing such a valuable strategic asset that prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin to seize Crimea. NATO's position in the crisis is more telling and crucial than the European Union's, even though the crisis originated over whether the Ukrainian government should sign an economic deal with the EU or Russia. This is primarily because of the character of NATO itself. NATO is a military alliance that has been Russia's foe ever since it was formed in 1949, while the European Union is a real and severe economic competitor for Russia, especially if Ukraine were to join this institution. Lacking a standing army and a history of successful military action, the European Union is ill-equipped to defend itself. A NATO-aligned Ukraine would increase this hostile military danger and bring it to one of Russia's most vital frontiers; thus, Russia has good reason to worry about NATO expanding into its sphere of influence (Abbassi, 2022).

1. **The Beginnings of the Russian Military Campaign in Ukraine**

Russian forces launched a military campaign against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The campaign began after a long military buildup and the Russian recognition of the unilaterally proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic and Lugansk People’s Republic, followed by the entry of the Russian Armed Forces into the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine on February 21, 2022. On February 24, after a speech in which Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a military operation with the aim of “disarming and de-Nazifying Ukraine”, bombings began on sites across the country, including in the capital, Kyiv (Ben Hassen & El Bilali, 2022).

Prior to the Russian surprise with a Soviet flavor, the common belief was that there would be no military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine due to the strong bonds between the two peoples, which are based on their shared Slavic heritage, belief in the same Christian faith, and shared historical experiences, as well as the fact that the Russian language is practically spoken by everyone in Ukraine.

The second, and more compelling, reason is that people have learned from the bloody conflicts of the last several centuries that killing each other is pointless, and they are terrified of the prospect of a third world war in which nuclear weapons are deployed. Hiroshima and Nagasaki's atomic bombings, as horrific as they were, were executed with very rudimentary technology compared to modern arsenals.

Despite Ukraine's proximity to the territory of the Republic of Belarus, under the influence of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which can be described as the “Putin Republic,” the conventional military capabilities of the Ukrainian forces show a great ability to withstand and repel hordes, especially from the capital Kyiv (Chortane & Pandey, 2022).

Roughly 142 million people live in the Russian Federation; of them, 69 million are working-age adults; 850,000 serve in the Russian armed forces; and another 250,000 are in reserve units. Russia's annual defense spending is estimated at 154 billion US dollars, out of a total defense budget of a little over a trillion dollars (Jagtap et al., 2022).

There are around 1,543 military helicopters in the Russian Air Force, including 538 attack helicopters among the total of 772 fighter helicopters and 739 attack aircraft. Russian ground forces have over 30,000 armored vehicles and 12,420,000 tanks. There are more than 6,574 self-propelled weapons, 7,571 field guns, and 3,991 rocket launchers. In total, there are 605 ships in the Russian navy, which includes one aircraft carrier, 15 destroyers, 11 frigates, and 48 minesweepers (Ahmed et al., 2022).

There are 43.7 million people in Ukraine, but only 22.3 million are working-age men. The Ukrainian army has up to 200,000 soldiers, with another 250,000 in reserve. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense spends almost $1.1 billion annually on defense.

The Ukrainian Air Force possesses a total of 318 aircraft, comprising 69 fighters, 29 attack aircraft, 32 military transport aircraft, 71 training aircraft, and 112 military helicopters, of which 34 are attack helicopters. About 2,596 tanks, 12,303 armored vehicles, 1,067 self-propelled guns, almost 2,000 field guns, and 490 rocket launchers make up the ground troops. Ukraine's naval fleet is made up of 38 decommissioned Soviet warships, giving it a respectable amount of seagoing might (Steffen & Patt, 2022).

Kyiv, the capital and a symbol of independence, sovereignty, and patriotism, is the clear goal of the invasion corps, and the Russian all-out offensive has rendered these inflexible figures ineffective.

1. **The Era of Ukraine Abandoning its Nuclear Shield in the 1994 Budapest Treaty**

The globe awoke to the sounds of war on February 24, when Russia launched a full-scale airstrike against Ukraine's defenses and hordes of ground troops charged across the border. The question was about the alleged deterrent from a country that inherited Soviet nuclear weapons and its enemy, the Russian Federation, when the conventional military power balance was tilted in Moscow's favor.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, four new states—Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—each acquired nuclear weapons. Kyiv now has the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, behind only Moscow and Washington. More than a thousand long-range winged nuclear missiles and 1,240 warheads were carried by the 176 intercontinental ballistic missiles and 44 heavy bombers (Pickyance, 1994).

In the post-Soviet era, Ukraine became a nuclear state with a Soviet legacy, a strategic arsenal of 1,900 nuclear warheads, and a tactical arsenal of 2,500 nuclear weapons. Ukraine's control over the nuclear weapons on its territory was undoubtedly more theoretical than operational, as the power to control their launch remained in Moscow's hands. Nonetheless, this was of little short-term concern, as the country is both uranium-rich and home to remarkable technological and, especially, production capabilities. In 1962, the Soviet Union supplied Cuba with ballistic missiles that originated from bases and manufacturers in Ukraine (Fitzgerald, 2019).

More than 50 countries met at a meeting in Budapest in 1994, and there the “Budapest Memorandum of Security Assurances” was signed, which now applies to Kyiv. The memorandum aimed to restart nuclear disarmament and complete the removal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine. When Kyiv gives up its weaponry, it will obtain a formal promise of its territorial sovereignty. This was a major distinction, but in the naive and optimistic atmosphere of the immediate post-Cold War era, it seems to have been ignored.

A Ukrainian envoy told his American counterparts that Ukraine was “never under the misconception that the Russians would honor the accords they had signed” prior to the signing of the Budapest memorandum. Ukraine knew that its former status as an empire would not allow it to survive so easily, and so its government hoped only to “obtain agreements that would allow it to seek help in international forums when the Russians violate” these agreements, a childish approach that does not amount to dealing with the destinies of nations and peoples (Bussas et al., 2017).

Ukraine agreed to remove all nuclear weapons from its territory by the deadline set forth in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 (Jewell, 2015). According to the OSCE Final Document, the Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom committed to the following:

* Respect Ukraine's sovereignty, existing borders, and independence in accordance with the OSCE Final Document.
* No weapons shall be used against the political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, unless for self-defense purposes or in other cases under the Charter of the United Nations.
* Refrain from economic coercion, which is aimed at subjecting Ukraine's exercise of the inherent rights of its sovereignty to its own interests and thus securing any advantages for itself.
* Demand that the United Nations Security Council take immediate action if, as a state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Ukraine becomes the subject of a threat or victim of aggression using nuclear weapons.
* Nuclear weapons shall not be used against Ukraine except in response to attacks by that country on the parties to the Memorandum, their territories, and their allies.
* Providing advice if there is a disagreement about the obligations.

On Thursday morning, February 24, 2022, the head of Ukraine's National Security Council stated that “international guarantees were empty words,” commenting on the international nominal support, so far, for his country amid an all-out Russian invasion. “All aircraft capable of transporting nuclear bombs have been taken away from us as well. Ukraine suffered the loss of strategic bombers and cruise missiles, and the country's missile mines, and fuel were damaged. The treaty signed in Budapest is just that, a document, and does not contain any meaningful mechanisms for the execution of safeguards. What this suggests is that the disarmament of Ukraine is a done deal, and the guarantees are just that, words,” he added (Abbassi et al., 2022).

The secretary of Ukraine's National Security Council warned that “the Budapest memorandum proved the absurdity of disarmament, showed the destruction of the system of collective security, and transformed the new century into a medieval style (the law of the jungle and the logic of force) that poses a potential threat to everyone.”

1. **The Religious Roots of the Russian-Ukrainian Confrontation**

Russian and Ukrainian forces are currently engaged in battle across the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, as well as in Kharkov, Kherson, Berdyansk, the Crimea, and the outskirts of Kyiv. After hearing reports of “thousands of Chechen warriors currently deployed in southern Ukraine,” “hundreds of Chechen fighters arrive in the forest before heading to the Ukrainian front,” and “dozens of Chechen special forces carry cards with the names and photos of their targets inside Ukraine,” Chechen leader Ramadan Kadyrov made the announcement amidst Islamic songs, religious prayers, and mass prayers. In response, the Russian Ministry of the Interior claimed that they had prevented a terrorist attack by ISIS in the Kaluga region, which is located about 200 kilometers west of Moscow (Skinner, 2009).

Therefore, the following questions follow from logic:

Does the powerful Russian army really need a few dozen soldiers to win a war that is already in the bag?

Was this bizarre emergency necessary given the lack of religious and ethnic tensions between Russians and Ukrainians?

Why are the Chechens, who have a long history of fighting against the Russians in this civil war between two Slavic peoples who share a common racial heritage and a common faith in Orthodox Christianity, fighting against each other?

For what reason is “Delivery on Demand” the standard operating procedure for ISIS's terrorist acts?

Despite decades of Soviet repression, Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religious doctrine in both Russia and Ukraine, with over 71% of Russians and 78% of Ukrainians identifying as poor Christians (Richters, 2012).

Historically, the Orthodox churches have been organized on national foundations, with patriarchs enjoying autonomy within their respective churches despite their shared belief in the Orthodox faith. The Greek Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, currently based in Turkey, is widely regarded as the most influential of these patriarchs. He has a high standing among peers but, unlike the Catholic Pope, is not at the top of the church's hierarchy.

Unlike the Catholic Church, which is ruled by a single spiritual leader—the Pope—the Orthodox Church is made up of 14 separate churches with their own leaders and canons. The Russian Church is the largest of these, followed by the Roman Church, the Greek Church, the Serbian Church, and finally the Bulgarian Church (Marzuki et al., 2023).

Historically, the Slavic people, especially those located in what is now Ukraine, have been loyal to the Russian Orthodox Church, which is now known as the Moscow Patriarchate. The government estimates that there were more than 12,000 dioceses under this church's jurisdiction in 2018 (Ponomariov, 2019).

In April of 2018, then-President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko attempted to form an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, whose position as the Cape Bishop of the Old Capital of the Byzantine Empire is essential to his continuing legitimacy. Constantinople, Alexandria, Greece, and Cyprus were the first to recognize the newly formed Orthodox Church of Ukraine, but the Moscow Church and the Orthodox Church in the United States of America were swift to reject it.

A clear and severe challenge to the hegemony of Moscow's political authorities, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine enjoys full autonomy as the result of decades of effort by Ukrainian nationalists Yin-Yang in cooperation with the West. Their stated goal was to establish their own national church, independent of the authority of the Russian Church, to express the spiritual independence of the Ukrainian Church of Ukraine.

Ukrainian Orthodox constitute 30 percent of all Christians associated with the Moscow Church; hence, the Ukrainian Church's announcement of its departure from the Russian Church was “a significant blow to the objectives of the Kremlin and the Russian Patriarchate on numerous levels” (Demydova, 2019).

The Moscow Patriarchate, the “mother and foundation,” affirms that Russians and Ukrainians are one people who must be unified by one church, and this affirmation is at the heart of the current conflict between the Moscow Patriarchate and Kyiv Church. Putin has used this slogan publicly, saying the radical Nazis in Ukraine are damaging the “spiritual union” of the two peoples (although he is pushing Chechen “Sufi” fighters into Ukraine).

In a public speech rejecting divorce and homosexuality and promoting traditional family values, President Putin is portraying himself as a champion of conservative traditions and the authority of the church. Putin is rumored to have been baptized in secret in the early 1950s, when the Iron Curtain and the prospect of the Gulag camps threatened any little religious smell. His mother is supposed to have given him a cross necklace on the occasion (Kuzio, 2018b).

The Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill, has spoken out in support of the Kremlin and the Russian military, expressing pride in the country and its military, and highlighting the Church's importance in protecting the system of “Orthodox values that the sacred Russian civilization holds for the world” in his homily.

However, the current president of Ukraine, a Jew named Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has not placed the same emphasis on religious nationalism as his predecessors have. He made an announcement on the stormy Saturday of the Russian bombardment, saying that he had spoken to the spiritual leaders of all major religions in Ukraine, including the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Muslim faith, and the Jewish faith.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church backed the president, while they were a staunch opponent of the Russian imperial tradition of epiphany, writing that “as a Ukrainian people, they will not have a unique culture and that “Ukraine has its own church” that backs the country's sovereignty and independence from the Russian Federation.

In the midst of this religious-ethnic tangle in its cultural-civilizational connotation, it is important to note that 75 percent of the two peoples share commonalities in doctrine, ethnicity, and history. This leads us to revisit our original questions, to which we have not yet received satisfactory answers (Suslov, 2014).

1. **Indications for the Use of Decisive Russian Military Force Against Ukraine**

Even though previous Russian military assessments and Western expectations led to the capital not holding even for two days, Ukraine held its ground, and Kyiv did not fall despite fierce fighting. The European media's gloomy outlook was justified by the proximity of Kyiv to the Belarusian border, through which the initial waves of the direct attack had swept.

From a previous estimate of 100,000, it is now believed that the invading forces number closer to 200,000 and that they are supported by combat formations of tanks, artillery, coverage, and naval support. Moscow was compelled to contribute additional troops to support the Russian army's war effort after the initial attack consisted of a missile strike followed by ground advances with ineffective air cover. This included sectors of the National Guard and internal security units. Some 60 percent of Russia's total war capacity, across all branches, has been amassed on the fronts of the Russian-Ukrainian war, according to leaks from British sources. Approximately two-thirds of the attacking forces are effectively spread out along multiple axes, with a depth of up to 500 kilometers inside Ukrainian territory, according to the leaks, while the remaining one-third is deployed in tactical depth inside Russian territory to ensure access to logistical support (Associated Press, 2022).

The main support units needed for the military campaign have moved to their positions alongside the fighting forces, according to reports from the United States. Russian and allied forces suffered heavy casualties, necessitating the deployment of tank repair facilities, field hospitals stocked with blood supplies, and mud removal machinery.

Here, we must define the “spring phenomenon of Rasputitsa,” in which the melting of ice turns the earth into a sea of clay. This occurred around the middle of March in the countries of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and led some to conclude that “it seems that the scenario of a blitzkrieg has been completely ruled out with the continued resistance of the Ukrainians to the Russian attack as best they can. The Rasputitsa phenomenon, where the ground is covered with a layer of clay that makes you feel your weight is getting heavier as you try to move through it, may soon confront the Russian armed forces, which have previously defeated those who have tried to invade Russia in the past (Al Shaher & Zreik, 2022). During the ongoing operations, Russian forces will be able to overcome this phenomenon with means and equipment that have been specifically invented to counter it. Alternatively, Russian forces may try to avoid it by concentrating on the major cities rather than the rural areas where farms and mud land abound (ECB, 2022).

When the reserve forces were called into action, some supporting units traveled 4,000 miles from the Russian Far East, and heavy armor was transported by rail from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border (Zreik, 2019). Many special battalions came in via land, while others entered through Kursk, which is only about 80 miles from the Ukrainian border. Karachev must be traversed to get to the Bryansk area (Reuters, 2022).

Massive Russian forces, including infantry and airborne forces, have arrived on the Crimean Peninsula, with some units already reportedly engaged in operations deep within Ukraine. In the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, both to the east and west of Crimea, Russia has stationed amphibious assault ships.

Moscow has deployed the strategic threats of the Iskander short-range ballistic missile launcher, Spetsnaz special operations forces, and substantial air defenses to prevent any irresponsibility on the part of NATO. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, the Russian Navy routinely holds military exercises. As many as nine Russian frigates in the Black Sea area are armed with cruise missiles, and another four Russian vessels with cruise missiles are stationed in the Caspian Sea.

Since the letter “Z” does not appear in the Russian alphabet, its presence on Russian military vehicles during the early days of the conflict has been viewed as a mystery. However, like other letters such as (O), (X), (A), and (V), the “Z” was an abbreviation for (аад) “Zapad,” which means “West” in Russian, or (а оеду) “Za pobedu,” which means “to the victory” (Tosun & Eshraghi, 2022).

1. **Russia's War of Attrition on the Ukrainian Front**

According to the principles of theoretical military reasoning, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is not a fair fight between equal opponents. The Russian Federation has a significant advantage over the Ukrainian resistance in terms of infantry, armored forces, armed vehicles, and attack aircraft. The successor states to the Soviet Union were equipped with innovative weapons, many of which had been evaluated in Syria, as well as superior military might and experience projecting force across national boundaries (Greene & Robertson, 2022).

Russian forces have been repelled at the gates of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, the focal point of their initial advance to assume a pro-Moscow puppet government, even though the Russian hordes have been stuck there for weeks despite their overwhelming numerical superiority. Russian forces have been unable to maintain control over strategic positions inside Ukraine due in large part to their inability to perform even the most fundamental of logistical tasks, such as ensuring that military vehicles have enough fuel, soldiers have food, and wounded military personnel receive treatment.

The Russian security system has been riddled with resignations and firings among high-ranking officials because of the country's inability to properly study and analyze the Ukrainian interior, adding insult to injury after the disastrous military defeat. Estimates from Russia before the war stated that the Ukrainian people—with their Slavic ancestry, Orthodox religious ties, and Soviet historical memories—were unhappy with their current leadership and skeptical of their country's westward trend and, by extension, joining NATO. Therefore, Russia’s primary invasion plan was based on this superficial assessment, with the assumption that Ukrainian resistance would be marginalized by some elements of the Nazi far right. “Russia has made big assumptions about its ability to reach Kiev within 48 hours, and most of its decisions have been shaped by this subject. It was a strategic choice, shaped by bias and assumption, which tried a crazy dash that failed. While traditionally in such a conflict, militarism calls for the heavy use of so-called “common weapons,” the common attack elements of the military strike force, such as armored tanks, mechanized infantry, attack aircraft, and cruise missiles, to launch a full-scale, coordinated attack (Bounguo & Yatié, 2022).

The Russian leadership, angered by the Ukrainian people's resolve, has ordered the use of “some” of Russia's most devastating weapons and tactics, such as the widespread bombing of cities. Efforts were made to avoid employing such weapons to maintain the “surgical military operation” veneer applied to this war by the authorities. A large amount of firepower is unnecessary for this purpose.

With the help of NATO member states and US intelligence, the Ukrainian forces put up an impressive defense and fierce resistance, making the Russians pay dearly for their careless advance and their weak supply lines. Despite suffering heavy damage in the initial Russian bombardment, Ukrainian air defenses have been holding strong for the past few weeks, denying the Russians air superiority, and thus preventing them from achieving the decisive factor necessary to claim victory. Russian supply lines were long and emaciated, but the Ukrainians used a Turkish drone called Bayrakdar to effectively slash them (Abbasssi et al., 2022).

It is too soon to declare Ukraine the victor in the conflict and the protector of its independence and sovereignty; armies typically adapt during conflict, and Russia may change tactics and adopt a more appropriate strategy to destroy the fierce Ukrainian resistance, thus the massive tactical bombardment and siege of Ukrainian cities.

Not only has Russia failed to deploy its elite teams, its most capable fighting force, but it has also become mired in conflicts fought by conscripts, who lack the training and dedication of professional soldiers. With each passing day of fighting (and ambush), however, Russia suffers greater human costs, economic hardship, and diplomatic pressure. As a result, it is crucial that the battle be won by the best forces possible (Reuters, 2022).

The Kremlin is wagering that Russia can quickly defeat Ukraine's military if it can quickly adjust its approach and withstand its genuine power. However, NATO made an early statement on its stance toward direct military intervention: “Due to the fact that NATO is not a military party to the conflict, US President Joe Biden has stated categorically that when Russian weapons clash with the Americans,’ NATO is not a party to the conflict, and therefore Article V of the Charter of Establishment of the Alliance does not apply to Ukraine. If this happened, it would be the third global war “, which he and his European allies do not want. To wear down the Russian military, economy, and state, the West is instead engaged in a “proxy war of attrition” (Zreik, 2023).

Ukraine's military had potent defensive weapons, including US-made Javelin portable anti-armor missiles and Stinger portable air defense missiles, which prevented Russian forces from enjoying air sovereignty and the surge of armored corps (Associated Press, 2022).

Is it time for direct negotiations between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to end the bloodshed, considering that five months have passed since the start of the war, there is no chance of a quick Russian victory, the morale of the Ukrainian resistance is high, and US and NATO support for the Kiev government is on the rise? Will Slavic brotherhood prevail over global tensions? Or is it inevitable that the United States and the Russian Federation will go to war?

**Conclusions**

As the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has escalated over the past few months, we have witnessed huge military, economic, and political changes. Contrary to the premise upon which Moscow is so adamant, radical nationalism in Ukraine is not the only driving force, or even the dominant cause, behind the obstinate Ukrainian resistance. Even though there are significant differences between the two faiths in Russia and Ukraine, the significance of the current religious renaissance in both nations should not be overstated, and hence this conflict cannot be viewed as a religious one. It is not just a border disagreement, though regional concerns have been and continue to be a major roadblock to peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv.

The root of the current dispute is found in the fact that the two countries' social and political systems are fundamentally incompatible. A fundamental enmity exists between the two points of view on the nature of the international system and the globe today. Two competing theories explain how a state makes decisions and how power is distributed throughout its institutions. The criteria for the efficacy of state authority are distinct from more fundamental considerations about the nature and sources of legitimacy.

Ukraine is now an exemplar of a successful liberal democracy in the West. Contrarily, Russia has departed increasingly from the liberal democratic paradigm, especially during the past two decades. Ukrainian society is organized from the bottom up, in contrast to the top-down structure of Russian society and politics. It is hard to put a finger on what caused such a dramatic divide to open between the two major groups of Russian people and the prospects for either. But for the time being, the fundamental mismatch between the two social organization models appears to have not only turned into a military clash in the heart of Europe but also substantially determined the logic of the behavior of the participants in this battle.

There have been two opposite stages of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict so far, and the world is on the cusp of a third, the nature of which is hotly debated.

Since February 24th, 2022, the Russians have been on the offensive. The Donbas region, the northern and western outskirts of Kharkiv, the southern city of Kherson, and the western capital of Kyiv have all been targeted to replicate the blitzkrieg strategy. Troops were attacked and pushed from three directions: to the north and east of Russia, to the west of Belarus, and to the south of Crimea.

Weakness in command and control, poor supply plans, underestimation of Russian capabilities, and the spread of misinformation are all contributing to the current situation. As a result of these severe setbacks, the Russian military has lost a significant amount of ground.

The war entered its second phase, which consisted of traditional military conflicts between two adversaries. The Russians reverted to their more conventional fighting tactics, pulling back from Kyiv and the surrounding area to concentrate on the east (Donbass province) and holding on to the south while they continued their offensive to seize the rest of the coastline along the Sea of Azov.

A slow and natural advance of the forces occurred in relation to their capabilities and the size of the losses. However, they are working to take advantage of their mistakes in the first stage by concentrating efforts and not distracting them and by paying attention to the transfer and securing of logistics and the mobilization and concentration of means of fire.

The Russians have a fantastic opportunity to weaken the Ukrainian resistance as we enter a new phase, which is now in full swing. Attention is diverted to the south to capture Mykolaiv and Odessa and gain control of all of Ukraine's Black Sea coast (Slovanisk, Kramatorsk, Constantinev, and Yeka). Second, expanding southward from the seized territory and shifting focus to the north in an attempt to capture the remaining cities in the Donbass region, with a particular emphasis on the cities to the west of the region all the way to the capital, Finally, conceivable outcomes for Russia's “special military operation” inside Ukraine's territory may be presented, each with far-reaching geopolitical ramifications.

It is the Western position that a return to the “unipolar moment” in international affairs, when the United States was the dominant power, is possible if Moscow is beaten in this conflict.

For Ukraine, the fact that the current government has been able to hold on despite losing certain border regions represents a “taming” of Putin's Soviet-dreamy Russia. The final resolution of the battle between the Russian and Ukrainian development models would be again postponed if, as the second scenario suggests, the war ends with an incomplete but mutually acceptable political compromise between Moscow and Kyiv as well as between Russia and the West. It is possible that a short-term peace agreement between the West and Russia will be followed by a continuation of the core conflict between the two social organization paradigms. The agreement between Russia and the West calls for a significant investment of time, effort, and political flexibility on all sides. The agreement's results, however, will alter the global landscape by, among other things, reshaping the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and other multilateral institutions, modernizing the rules of public international law, and bringing the United Nations system to the forefront of global governance.

The third possibility is that no agreements will be reached regarding Ukraine conflict anytime soon and that the escalation will continue in accordance with the following mechanisms: attrition of the parties, a fragile truce, the accumulation of troops, and a new escalation. If this occurs, the conflict in Ukraine could become a catalyst for the final collapse of the modern international order. There will be a dramatic increase in regional conflicts; a proliferation of nuclear weapons will set off a domino effect of other dangerous weapons; and international terrorism will thrive as ineffectual international and regional institutions lose their footing in world politics. Such shifts will bring about widespread unrest and even chaos in the years to come; it is only after this unrest and chaos have subsided that the first shots of the new global order will appear.

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