

Ukraine and Russia War: Decoding Regional Dispute as a Catalyst for a New Cold War Era Between USA and Russia

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Abstract

This study analyses the Ukraine-Russia war by considering geopolitical dynamics, historical grievances, and international relations theories. It aims to determine whether this conflict could trigger a new Cold War phase between the United States and Russia. The study examines the intricate dynamics of power politics, national interests, and cultural identities that fuel the war, utilizing realism, liberalism, and constructivism as theoretical frameworks. The text examines the notable investments made by significant actors in military spending, the economic consequences for Ukraine, and the involvement of international organizations and sanctions in managing the crisis. The conflict's strategic and financial components are highlighted by graphical and quantitative analyses, which include comparisons of military expenditure and hypothetical regression analysis on the impact of military aid on conflict intensity. The report continues by offering advice to policymakers, highlighting the significance of employing a comprehensive strategy that encompasses military deterrence, economic sanctions, political and economic reforms, and diplomatic engagement. This analysis offers unique insights into the current geopolitical scene, providing options for resolving conflicts and emphasizing the broader consequences for global security and international relations. The results emphasize the urgent requirement for efficient worldwide collaboration and strategic preparation to tackle the intricacies of the Ukraine-Russia conflict and foster enduring peace and stability in the area and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Russia and Ukraine, formerly colonies of the Soviet Union, are currently embroiled in conflict once again, which began on 24 February 2022 when Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of a full-scale land, sea and air invasion of Ukraine. The full encroachment of Russia into Ukraine in February 2022 instigated a resurgence of a significant menace in Europe that has been absent since the end of the Cold War¹. The global niche that has now been occupied by the crisis on Ukraine, in which Crimea has been seized and hostilities continue in Eastern Ukraine, goes beyond the local strife. During the Brussels summit in June 2021, NATO leaders reiterated their commitment, made initially during the Bucharest summit in 2008, to Ukraine's potential membership in NATO. They emphasized that the Membership Action Plan (MAP) is integral to this process. Ukraine's assertion of its sovereign right to determine its future and foreign policy without interference from other sources has raised concerns from Russia. Russia views its geopolitical situation as one where the United States encircles it, which has significant implications for the ongoing conflict². This investigation delves into the

¹ Sudreau, L.B. *et al.* (2023) 'RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE: A NEW IMPETUS FOR THE HARMONISATION OF EUROPEAN ARMS EXPORT POLICIES? A trilateral perspective from France, Germany, and Sweden', *The Armament Industry European Research Group* [Preprint].

² NATO (2021) *Brussels Summit Communiqué issued by NATO heads of state and government (2021)*, NATO. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm (Accessed: 29 January 2024).

complex domain of global geopolitics, proposing that the conflict between Ukraine and Russia serves as a proxy battleground. This catalyst could ignite a new era of Cold War between the United States and Russia. Understanding the complex historical details, navigating the complicated geopolitical situations, and analysing the nuanced dynamics of proxy warfare is essential in uncovering the wide-ranging effects that might have a worldwide impact.

Statement of the Problem

A crucial question emerges when examining the intricacies of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Could the conflict between Ukraine and Russia escalate into a new era of tension between the United States and Russia, or is it primarily a regional dispute? This intriguing question encapsulates the core of our inquiry, necessitating a thorough examination that extends beyond geographical boundaries. The complex dynamics of the war between Ukraine and Russia prompt us to explore beyond regional conflicts. Whether the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is primarily a regional dispute or has the potential to ignite a new Cold War between the United States and Russia prompts us to examine both the intricate local dynamics and the broader global implications. As we embark on this intellectual journey, it becomes evident that we must explore the complex dynamics of the conflict, acknowledging that its repercussions may extend beyond the immediate geopolitical realm.

Significance and Relevance

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has significant global implications, necessitating a comprehensive scholarly analysis. The conflict has had extensive implications, impacting not just the international system but also the worldwide order and geopolitics on a global scale. Furthermore, it has resulted in substantial shifts in restructuring political alliances³. The study focuses on determining whether the conflict is a local disagreement or the start of a new Cold War between the USA and Russia. The implications of this differentiation have far-reaching effects that go beyond the boundaries of Eastern Europe, influencing the shape of global relations, security dynamics, and diplomatic scenarios.

In today's world, which is moving towards multi-polarity, the importance of this research is evident. The potential impact of this study on global geopolitics is significant. The findings offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of power, alliances, and strategic decision-making, which have far-reaching implications for the parties directly involved and the global community at large. As the world observes this geopolitical drama, this study seeks to provide a perspective for policymakers, scholars, and global citizens to navigate the changing landscape with a deeper understanding of the risks.

Research Questions and Objectives

Throughout this research, we will be finding the answer of some questions that related to our main research question that, "Whether the conflict between Russia and Ukraine a regional dispute or catalyst for a new cold war era between USA and Russia." The Questions are:

1. Which geopolitical dynamics and historical grievances have led to the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine?
2. To what degree does the conflict between Russia and Ukraine resemble a regional dispute?
3. How could this war set the stage for a resumption of hostilities between Russia and the United States?

This study seeks to offer a thorough comprehension of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. It will analyze the regional dynamics, examine its potential as a catalyst for a new era of Cold War, and assess its significant

³ Liu, Z. and Shu, M. (2023) 'The Russia–Ukraine conflict and the changing geopolitical landscape in the Middle East', *China International Strategy Review*, 5(1), pp. 99–112. doi:10.1007/s42533-023-00134-5.

consequences for global geopolitics and international relations. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the ongoing discourse on contemporary international affairs through rigorous analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical analysis of the relationship between Ukraine and Russia

The relationship between Ukraine and Russia has a complex and rich history, marked by a combination of collaboration, tension, and shifting power dynamics throughout the years. With its origins in the mediaeval era, the territories that make up modern-day Ukraine played a crucial role in developing the Kievan Rus. This ancient East Slavic state shaped the identities of both Ukrainians and Russians⁴. The historical connection between Russia and Ukraine can be traced back to the common heritage of the East Slavic peoples, who lived around the Dnieper River and its surrounding lands. It is noteworthy that Soviet scholars tended to refer the population of Ukraine as autochthonous of East Slavs while the western scholars consider them as a migrant population thereby forging a long-debate on the history of Ukraine⁵.

The rivalry between Ukraine and Russia has its roots in the competition for the legacy of Kievan Rus', which originated among the Eastern Slavs in the eleventh century. This animosity intensified during the ideological campaigns in an effort to sever Russian-speaking Ukrainians' relations with the Ukrainians in the western part of the country who had a very strong national consciousness⁶. These events were again blended with other aspects when arrival of Mongol intensified pressure and the control of princes of Novgorod and Moscow became more invasive to Kyiv, and thus traces of Kyivan identity changed gradually to Moscow with historical and cultural sites. Some of them influenced the further evolution of the Ukrainian national consciousness which caused concern for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that received control over West Ukraine⁷.

From the late 18th to the early 20th centuries, Ukrainians lived in two empires: about 80% of them were subjects of the Russian emperors, and the remainder inhabited the Habsburg Empire⁸. This geopolitical division was the cause of the rather sharp influences of the Ukrainian cultural and political experiences during this period⁹. Most of the time, the Russian Empire policies involved russification which in turned subdued the Ukrainian cultural and later gave rise to some cultural struggle and renaissance. Along the same line, the Habsburg Empire provided a license for cultural development in Galicia and Bukovina and hence, the Ukrainian identity emerged out of the process¹⁰. These historical developments predetermined the multiple connections and internal fractures that constitute Ukraine's contemporary geopolitics and the multifaceted entanglement with Russia at present days.

Subjugation under the Russian imperialism led to the Russianization policy that sought to eliminate all the Ukrainian cultural practices and language in favor of the Russian counterparts. In suppressing culture, imperialist Russians created a hardline Ukrainian nationalist politics, making Ukrainian resistance movements harder for more Ukrainian identity amid imperials¹¹. On the other hand, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire Ukrainians experienced quite a fair degree of cultural freedom and political enfranchisement, which helped in a way to

⁴ Ploky, S. (2015) *The gates of Europe: A history of Ukraine*. New York: Basic.

⁵ Subtelny, O. (2009) *Ukraine: A History*. University of Toronto Press.

⁶ Magocsi, P.R. (2016) *Ukraine: An illustrated history*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

⁷ Davies, N. (2005) *God's playground. A history of Poland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸ Subtelny, O. (1988). *Ukraine: a History*. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA07528591>

⁹ Magocsi, P. R. (2010). *A history of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples, Second Edition*. University of Toronto Press.

¹⁰ Ploky, S. (2006). *The origins of the Slavic nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*. Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Ploky, S. (2017). *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. Hachette UK.

nurture Ukrainian nationalism as well as the call for independence¹². In the chaotic twentieth century, Ukraine went through the Russian revolution, Sovietization and consequent centralization, forced collectivization, and forced starvation under Stalin¹³. The grand political change due to the break-up of Soviet Union in 1991 provided legal sovereignty for Ukraine but historical memory, regionalism and political realism have kept Ukraine and Russia hostage in conflict cycle in the twenty first century manifestations in the form of sharing and occupations of Crimea and eastern Ukrainian regions¹⁴. Throughout these historical epochs, Ukraine and Russia's intertwined histories have been marked by an intricate interplay of collaboration, tension, and changing power dynamics, which have shaped their modern identities, geopolitical strategies, and international relations.

Regional Perspectives

Many as a geopolitical battle between Russia and the Western countries consider the current war in Ukraine. Russia still considers Ukraine as its strategic neighbor and regards the Ukrainian territory as within its security and immediate geographic interest and as an essential part of the Black Sea region due to Crimea¹⁵. Having gone through the emergence as an independent country after the breakup of Soviet Union in the year 1991 Ukraine has been keen on to de link itself from Russian Federation and integrate itself to EU & NATO. These actions, Russia sees as threats to its influence as well as security¹⁶. The attack on Ukraine is a part of Russia's efforts to reclaim its dominance in the post-Soviet states; the interest in energy sources and applying political pressure on those nations who tried to turn towards the West¹⁷. According to Richard Sakwa, this is not a regional conflict but a global struggle whose pawn is Ukraine that is sandwiched in between Russia and the western world¹⁸.

Another factor that complicates regional relations in this regard is economic relations between Ukraine and Russia. As a basis, before the beginning of the conflict, Ukraine was closely reliant on Russian natural gas imports. Russia has many resources and has, in the past, applied political pressure on Ukraine owing to its influence. It is true that the economic relations are not only in the area of energy but also in trade and investments, interlinking both countries¹⁹. The conflict has had adverse effects especially in the economic relations between these two areas, thus having a huge effect on their economy. This demonstrates the entwined relationship of their regions' actions as noted in other works²⁰. For Russia, they are important since they hold a strategic location as well as military value mainly due to the Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol²¹. It should be noted that the actions of the Russian Federation in the Ukraine in 2014, one could discuss the function of deliberate effort in establishing Russia's control over military and naval facilities in Crimea effective utilization of the Black Sea as sea line of communication guarantee and assertion of influence in the Black Sea region. This action also acted as a clear signal to other post-Soviet states informing them the level of force that Russia is willing to use in order to protect what it considers its sphere of influence²². Finally, the regional viewpoint on the Ukraine situation emphasizes a complex fight for influence between Russia and the West. The conflict is shaped in major part by

¹² Wilson, A. (2015). *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation, Fourth Edition*. Yale University Press.

¹³ Applebaum, A. (2017). *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*. Penguin UK.

¹⁴ Kuzio, T. (2017). *Putin's war against Ukraine: Revolution, Nationalism, and Crime*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.

¹⁵ Charap, S., Shapiro, J. and Demus, A. (2018) *Rethinking the regional order for Post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia* [Preprint]. doi:10.7249/pe297.

¹⁶ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin. *Foreign Affairs*, 93(5). <http://connections-qj.org/article/why-ukraine-crisis-west-fault-liberal-delusions-provoked-putin>

¹⁷ Mankoff, J. (2012) *Russian foreign policy: The return of great power politics*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

¹⁸ Sakwa, R. (2022) *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

¹⁹ Balmaceda, M. M. (2013). *The politics of energy dependency: Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania Between Domestic Oligarchs and Russian Pressure*. University of Toronto Press.

²⁰ Pirani, S. (2007). *Ukraine's gas sector*.

²¹ Götz, E. (2018). *Russia, the West, and the Ukraine crisis*. Routledge.

²² Mankoff, J. (2014). *Russia's Latest Land Grab: How Putin Won Crimea and Lost Ukraine*. *Foreign Affairs*, 93(3), 60-68.

historical links, economic interdependence, and geopolitical factors as well as by Emphasizing the complexity and depth of the regional dynamics at hand, the writings of academics like Mankoff and Sakwa offer insightful analysis of the motivations and actions of the important people engaged.

Global Perspectives

Globally, the war in Ukraine can be viewed not only as a further stage of the Russian's aggression, but it is also considered as a stage of confrontation between the East and the West. Obviously, the United States and European Union, Russia's action in annexation of Crimea in 2014 and military operations in Eastern Ukraine have unsettled the diplomatic relations between Russia with western nations²³. These occurrences have brought issues on the concept of sovereignty and international law; which saw Russia punished and more NATO activities in Eastern Europe²⁴.

"The Eagle and the Trident: The book "Falling: A Murder in Ukraine, U.S. -Ukraine Relations in Turbulent Times" by Steven Pifer provides comprehensive outlook for the conflict's global effects. ex-U. S. ambassador to Ukraine for an elaborated discussion on the impact of the conflict on the bilateral relationship between Ukraine and the United States as well as the general overall situation on the international stage. He notes that the post-Cold War system is threatened with the war in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. These acts have eroded the concepts of territorial integrity, and sovereignty that underpin the current order hence making Western nations to reconsider its security strategy²⁵. Pifer also focuses at how American's key partners in Europe assisted in addressing the events. This was to force Moscow into changing its behaviors through the economic consequences of the measures that had been taken. The objective of these sanctions was to detach Russia from the global economy and international diplomacy, and thus, push the country into areas that the western states consider sensitive and vulnerable, namely finance, energy, and defence. In addition, the intended rise of military forces that NATO promised to deploy in Eastern Europe and construction of new bases for them would not only reassure Eastern European members of the organization, but it would also impress upon Russia that this is not acceptable further advancement²⁶.

In the article "Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It" Anders Aslund focuses on the issues of political and finance challenges facing Ukraine after the war. Current senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and economist Aslund provides an analytical work in relation to Ukraine and internal economic reforms and its engagement with global money institutions. Although he insists on the necessity of support from outside of the west for Ukraine, he claims that the future for this nation's stability and prosperity lies in its ability to perform drastic political and economic reforms. It is worth emphasizing the issues of corruption and improving the quality of governance in Aslund's texts. Of which the foreign organizations especially the World Bank and the Foreign Monetary Fund (IMF) in assisting Ukraine in its reform efforts²⁷. The stance on the Ukraine crisis is also associated with universal discussions in global politics as to the tendencies in the relations of countries, including the threat of a new Cold War. Echoing ideological and geopolitical divide of the Cold War the crisis has thus brought out core differences between Russia and the West. Certain scholars have stated that the conflict in Ukraine pointed to the onset of a new multipolar world characterized by power transitions, economic boycotts, and proxy wars²⁸. Some of the major premises used under this framework include the efficiency and consequences of penalties. It is certain that sanctions have most certainly placed economic pressure onto Russia, nonetheless, the impact that sanctions will have on the future behavior of Russia remains ambiguous²⁹. Another

²³ Stent, A. (2019). *Putin's world: Russia Against the West and with the Rest*. Hachette UK.

²⁴ Allison, R. (2013). *Russia, the West, and military intervention*. OUP Oxford.

²⁵ Pifer, S. (2017). *The Eagle and the Trident: U.S.—Ukraine Relations in Turbulent Times*. Brookings Institution Press.

²⁶ Arya, C. (2022). *NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine*. Surendra Publications.

²⁷ Aslund, A. (2015). *Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It*. Peterson Institute for International Economics.

²⁸ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin. *Foreign Affairs*, 93(5), 77-89.

²⁹ Gaddy, C. G., & Ickes, B. W. (2014). Can Sanctions Stop Putin? *Brookings Institution*.

criticism of sanctions is that these have only increased Russian nationalist sentiments and directed the country to other non-Western countries like China³⁰. Some people state that the unceasing economic stress might eventually lead Russia to seek the political settlement³¹.

The conflict in Crimea similarly has provoked discussions about where European security, or NATO for that matter, ought to be going. The fight has galvanized NATO; it has spurred higher spending on defense and new focus on the group's unity. What the alliance did in response to the crisis such as the EFP in Eastern Europe; the VJTF exemplify a strategic shift towards deterrence and defense against a possible Russian strike²⁶. Many of these steps are attempted to prove to Eastern European NATO members that their alliance is committed to mutual defence and to calm them down³².

Analysis of Theories and Scholarly Debates on the Potential for a New Cold War Era

The concept of neo-Cold War has shifted in a result of the Ukraine crisis and the overall relations between the Eastern and the Western states. The essence of the 'new Cold War' construct is based on the belief of a renewed bipolar standoff between major players, which resembles the structure of relationships like that of the mid-century 'American-Soviet rivalry'. This section deals with how different theorists and scholars have approached the question of a new Cold War, especially with regard to the Ukraine crisis and shifts in the geopolitics.

Realist Perspective

In international relations, the realist viewpoint stresses the part national interests, state power, and anarchic character of the international system play³³. Realists contend that states seek authority to guarantee their life and security, so their main concerns are these ones. Since it emphasizes the strategic objectives and power dynamics of the important players engaged, especially the United States and Russia, this paradigm is rather relevant for understanding the Ukraine issue and the possibility for a new Cold War³⁴. Immersed in realist with perspective, the Ukraine crisis represents the key characteristic of anarchy, which is the battle for power among dominant states. The Russian actions in Ukraine such as the annexation of Crimea and military assistance to pro-Russian rebels in the Eastern Ukraine can be viewed as attempts to regain influence over the post-Soviet space and prevent the Western led NATO and the EU from drawing closer to Russia's strategic zone of vital interest²⁸. According to realists, Russia considers Ukraine as a buffer state and core for its influence indispensable for the country's and the region's security³⁵. For the United States and its NATO partners the support for Ukraine has more fundamental reasons as a means to curb Russian influence and to keep a check and balance on the situation in Europe. The Membership of Ukraine with NATO and EU along with their expansion towards east posing threat to key security interest of Russia³⁶. This perception supports the realist's argument that the Ukraine crisis was part of game between two blocs in which the main objective of each side is to stop the other side from gleaning a significant advantage over them³⁷. Another fundamental realism idea is the notion of the security dilemma, whereby measures undertaken by one state in the pursuit of its security result in the state is making others equally insecure, thus provoking responses from these states. It leads to an escalation, or what in political science is known as an arms race, as demonstrated by the Cold War. The security dilemma best characters

³⁰ Charap, S., & Colton, T. J. (2018). *Everyone loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia*. Routledge.

³¹ Ashford, E. (2016). Not-So-Smart Sanctions: The Failure of Western Restrictions Against Russia. *Foreign Affairs*, 95(1), 114-123.

³² Smith, J. (2018). *NATO's New Trajectories: Why the Alliance Needs to Adapt*. Brookings Institution.

³³ Donnelly, J. (2000). *Realism and international relations*. Cambridge University Press.

³⁴ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. W.W. Norton & Company.

³⁵ Walt, S. M. (2018). *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

³⁶ Sakwa, R. (2015). *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. I.B. Tauris.

³⁷ Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. Addison-Wesley.

Ukraine crisis whereby NATO advancing towards east is deemed as a threat to Russia and in turn, Russia acts in a way that the western world perceives it as expansionist³⁸.

Russia views NATO's presence in and its missile-shield deployment to Eastern Europe as acts aimed at putting pressure on and neutralizing it. In response, Russian has sought to increase its military build-up in areas such Ukraine and also recklessly executing military maneuvers in places such as the Kaliningrad region. These actions are viewed by NATO as hostile actions and as a result of which, it continues to build up its forces and support Ukraine. This cyclical process of action and reaction is in harmony with the realist philosophy about states that they are constantly chasing security, which in fact hikes insecurity and conflict amongst them³⁹. Realists suggest in essence the society of states is strategic and international relations are characterized by anarchy as states constantly balance for power in an attempt to ward off any state aspiring to become the hegemon. Thus, the matter of the balance of power is at the core of understanding the bewildering situation with Ukraine. The political, economic, and military support to Ukraine from the USA and its allies works to deter Russia from regaining sovereignty of Eastern Europe to balance the power like it used to. This support is nevertheless vital in preventing the reinforcement of Russia influence as was seen in the period before. Russia, on the other hand, is keen on balancing the influence of the west hence striving to recuperate more control over Ukraine and ensure it does not fall of the spheres of Russian control. The events such as the annexation of Crimean, the result of Military mobilization to Eastern Ukraine are seen as reasonable measures to ensure that Ukraine does not fully with the western world institutions. Thus, Russia ensures its security and domination in the region by preserving the disruption of power that the West tries to establish in Ukraine.

Neo-realist writers like Kenneth Waltz argue that states is acted on by the structure of the international system. From neo-realist perspective, the international structure is systemically anarchic and this prescribes on states that they act in a manner that will make them survive and be as powerful as possible. Thus, the Ukraine crisis can be seen as structural in terms of the unipolarity that ensued after the Cold War. These tendencies truly contribute to the opportunities for new rounds of great power rivalry, given that the US hegemony is over and the regional powers such as Russia and China are coming to the stage⁴⁰. Thus, it is possible to regard the actions of Russia in Ukraine as the part of the overall attempt to challenge the unipolar world led by the United States, while trying to restore its leadership in the post-Soviet space. In the same way, Washington's obsession with Ukraine stems from the necessity to guarantee the primacy of the American empire and stop the emerging process of building a multipolar world order. The actors are pressured by the structural requisites to use assertive strategies at a time that augurs the possibility of new cold war between Russia and the US. These actions, according to neo-realism, are not the function of any individual state's desire but the system in its anarchy. Hybrid warfare and aggressive actions are the true nature of relations between the USA and Russia in Ukraine; these actions stem from the structural factors that shape state actions. Thus, the actions and the military activities which both nations are taking are viewed as the rightful reaction to structural factors of the international system and point to the timeless and immutable nature of the great power competition.

Even though realist viewpoint is quite convincing while providing structure for the Ukraine conflict analysis, it is not without imperfections. There are limitations to it one of which is its deterministic view of state actions; at times it fails to consider the roles home politics, philosophy, and leaders – personal have in shaping foreign policy. Anti-realist argue that realism focus on state self-interest and power politics and does not take in to consideration key aspects such as diplomacy into international affairs⁴¹. Nevertheless, realism pays little attention to characteristics such as using international institutions and standards to decrease the intensity of conflict. Sometimes, Realist work may disguise the role of the United Nations, the European Union and other agencies in the management of the Ukraine issue. Axelrod & Keohane 1985 some of the activities, which these

³⁸ Glaser, C. L. (1997). The Security Dilemma Revisited. *World Politics*, 50(1), 171-201.

³⁹ Jervis, R. (1978). Cooperation under the Security Dilemma. *World Politics*, 30(2), 167-214.

⁴⁰ Waltz, K. N. (2000). Structural Realism after the Cold War. *International Security*, 25(1), 5-41.

⁴¹ Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (1977). *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Little, Brown.

organisations can be rather important at, include; conflict regulation, diplomacy and providing humanitarian assistance to conflicting parties⁴².

Liberal Perspective

Internationally, the liberal perspective focuses on the requirement for the global organization, integration, and enhancing a democracy's role in the promotion of inter-state harmony⁴³. While, the realism see the world politics as power politics and self-interested, liberalism assumed that structure of international politics can be changed to minimize conflict with a view of achieving cooperation⁴⁴. Thus, this part highlights the liberal focus on international organisations and economic relations as well as promoting democratic agenda in detailing the view on the Ukraine situation and the new cold war threat⁴⁵.

In liberal perspective, many global organizations have the fundamental purpose of preventing war and creating cooperation between nations. Bilateral and multilateral organizations like the United Nations, NATO and the European Union are established with the objectives of bringing together countries for diplomacy, to solve disputes and enhance security among others⁴⁶. About the situation in Ukraine, these institutions played the role of the mediator and try to solve the crisis and reduce the level of confrontation. The Ukraine conflict is one of the conflicts that the United Nations has been endorsing diplomatic approaches to solve. In essence, the UN strives to achieve a peaceful resolution in a conflict through passing of resolutions and peace making missions among other objectives. OSCE also accompanied a major role in monitoring ceasefires and negotiation between Ukraine and Russia apart from AU⁴⁷. These efforts evident the liberalist thinking that an international institution can offer some methods of how to handle a conflict and ensure it does not reach a more severe level. Thus, NATO's participation in the Ukraine crisis, including military and political support for Ukraine and military action against Russia, illustrates the collective security paradigm. NATO's goal to prevent aggression and ensure regional security comes to its member states and other nations such as Ukraine, where the organization offers security protection⁴⁸. At the same time, this highlights that there is a challenge of how one can effectively deter while also maintaining that one will not be provoked, something that liberal institutions need to tread. Economic interdependence is one of the fundamentals of liberalism, as it prescribes that greater amounts of interaction between states decrease the propensity for war. The explanation is that states that have large amounts of economic entwinement will be reluctant to go to war as they will lose money⁴⁹. An example of the variation of this principle is the problematic integration process of the European Union and the broad trade connections Russia has with some of the EU members.

Historically, prior to the Ukraine crisis, Russia and EU continue to have significant interdependence, where EU was Russia's leading trading partner and Russia was instrumental in meeting much of Europe's energy demands. This economic interdependence was supposed to be the preventive measure against conflict⁵⁰. Thus, the case of the annexation of Crimea and sanctions against Russia with the assistance of the EU and the USA proved that

⁴² Axelrod, R., & Keohane, R. O. (1985). Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions. *World Politics*, 38(1), 226-254.

⁴³ Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (1977). *Power and interdependence: World politics in transition*. Little, Brown & Co.

⁴⁴ Doyle, M. W. (1986). *Liberalism and World Politics*. *American Political Science Review*, 80(4), 1151-1169.

⁴⁵ Ikenberry, G. J. (2001). *After victory: Institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars*. Princeton University Press.

⁴⁶ Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton University Press.

⁴⁷ Fawn, R. (2009). *Globalising the Regional, Regionalising the Global: Regional Organisations, International Order and the Challenges of Globalisation*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁸ Rynning, S. (2017). The Divide: France, Germany, and Political NATO. *International Affairs*, 93(2), 267-289.

⁴⁹ Rosecrance, R. (1986). *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World*. Basic Books.

⁵⁰ Copsey, N., & Pomorska, K. (2014). The Influence of the European Union on Russian Foreign Policy. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66(7), 1155-1172.

economic integration does not guarantee non-violent conflict management. Russia continued with its actions in Ukraine even with the costs implying that economic interdependence alone is not enough to prevent such aggressive states that have strategic and security interests. However, economic sanctions have been one of the weapons employed by the global community to apply pressure on Russia. These punishments, which seek to ostracize Russia socially and economically, should make it shift its conduct⁵¹. Sanctions are said to be effective for some and as seen ineffective for others; nevertheless, it is in line with the liberal approach of utilizing economic tools instead of force. Sanctions cannot be considered effective or ineffective altogether due to the variety of cases and the goals pursued when using economic interdependence as a weapon.

The Liberalism fundamental argument is that democracies are likely to fight other democracies and this is described as the Democratic Peace Theory⁵². Democratization in governance that is the expansion of democracy all round the world is expected to enhance world peace. Such events as the Euromaidan protests and the subsequent removal of President Yanukovich in 2014 in Ukraine were determined by those actions as a transition to the process of democratization and the adoption of the norms of the Western democratic model. Specifically for Ukraine, it has been aspiring as a part of the EU and endeavours to meet all the necessary democratic standards that correspond to liberalism's conviction that democratization of the society will automatically decrease the level of interstate conflict. However, Russia regards these actions as negative attempts in regard to its influence in the region and to the stability of its political system⁵³. The conflict between Ukraine's attempts to become a democratic state and Russia's example of an authoritarian regime describes a general confrontation of two models of the world – liberal democracy vs. authoritarianism. Western democracies' backing of Ukraine, through political and financial assistance and military help, symbolises the liberal conviction to standing for democratic change and opposing authoritarian force. This support is concerned with enhancing democracy as well as protection against threats in Ukraine. At the same time, it can deepen the confrontation with Russia, which regards such actions as interference in its area of interests⁵⁴.

However, it is also closely connected to normative and constructivist premises that underline the functioning of ideas, norms and identities in the state. Discussing the Ukraine crisis, one has to turn to the concept of normative power, which explains the EU and the US processes of exporting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in their international relations⁵⁵. Western liberal policies and the Russian conservative outlook are considered to be in conflict when it comes to Ukraine. Thus, Moscow's claim to defend the rights of Russian speakers in Ukraine, along with the portrayal of the West as a threat to traditional identity, may be regarded as an element of an identity contest. This ideational battle persists in structuring the decisions made in the domestic and international arenas by the participating states⁵⁶.

Although the liberal viewpoint offers an excellent premise of understanding the Ukraine crisis, it has certain disadvantages. One major failure is that liberalism does not lay sufficient focus on the institution of power politics an aspect that realists put high emphasis on. The skills of economic interdependence and international organizations in averting conflict are questioned by persisting geopolitical animosities and security threats⁵⁷. Also, the liberal concepts of democracy and human rights may cause the interventionist policies which create conflicts with the authoritarian states. The drive toward the democratisation in Ukraine thus far has been seen as

⁵¹ Drezner, D. W. (2015). Targeted Sanctions in a World of Global Finance. *International Interactions*, 41(4), 755-764.

⁵² Doyle, M. W. (1986). Liberalism and World Politics. *American Political Science Review*, 80(4), 1151-1169.

⁵³ McFaul, M. (2018). *From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

⁵⁴ Tsygankov, A. P. (2019). *Russia and America: The Asymmetric Rivalry*. Polity.

⁵⁵ Manners, I. (2002). Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), 235-258.

⁵⁶ Checkel, J. T. (2017). *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War*. Yale University Press

⁵⁷ Mearsheimer, J. J. (1994). The False Promise of International Institutions. *International Security*, 19(3), 5-49.

unfriendly to Russia and its sphere of influence and has been seen as a liberal intervention thereby contributing to tensions and conflict⁵⁸.

Constructivist Perspective

One of the renowned theoretical approaches on structures of international relations is the constructivist perspective which captures ideas, norms, identities, and other social constructs determining the behavior of states and the world system⁵⁹. Constructivism avers that the international environment is not, therefore, populated by brute facts pertaining to threat capability and resource endowment but with claims that are social facts, such as norms, beliefs, and identity. This theory is effective in uncovering the Ukraine-Russia tension since it focuses on historical, social and constructed nature of narratives and self-images and the resultant threats and interests⁶⁰.

Thus, national identity is a formative area in the constructivist approach to the Ukraino-Russian conflict. The mutual cultural and historical ties, as well as national differences have always characterized the historical background of the relations between Ukrainians and Russians. National identity as an idea has been one of the primary concerns in Ukraine's development since the Soviet period. This quest includes activities aimed at the recognition of its sovereignty, official language, and cultural identity pertaining it to be distinct from Russia⁶⁰.

Ukraine has always gone through the influence of one state or another, from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union and the present-day Russian Federation. They have developed the spirit of resistance and the need to govern themselves among Ukrainians. This is evident in the Euromaidan protests and the changes in Ukraine's government as representing this identity to strive more toward the European values and affiliations⁶¹. Thus, for Russia, Ukraine is not just the neighboring state but is a part of its historic and cultural reference group. The notion of the "Russian World" or *Russkiy Mir* has always been tightly linked to the Russian national idea, which encompasses Belarus and Ukraine as part of its importance. This view is based on Kievan Rus, Orthodox Christianity, and the Russian language⁶². Thus, many in Russia view Ukraine's Western orientation as a danger to Russian historical unity and identity.

Constructivism established historical narratives and social construct as the key concept that define the behavior of states. Sustaining Ukrainian-Russian conflict is the struggle over historiography, as a story that both sides tell and turn to. For Ukraine, historical reading is based on the long-standing desire for freedom and the fight against the domination of other countries. This story focuses on Ukraine and right of that nation to stay independent and be recognized as different from Russia or being a part of Russia's sphere of influence⁶³. On the other hand, the Russian story frequently situates Ukraine as part of the Russian culture and history. This idea is always supported by political leaders and state media and radio, which always express how Tanzania and Rwanda have had a historic past of friendly relation because of being culturally related. Similarly, the invasion of Crimea in 2014 was justified by Russia as the correction of a historical injustice that is perceived as an enumerated novelty. These two accounts are not only historical but are also consequential to the present day political affiliations and political policies. In accordance with the constructivist perspective, these narratives were created by society and explained how they affected both Ukrainian and Russian elites. The conflict, therefore, is not just a struggle that pits geopolitical entities against each other but also a struggle of how people want to remember and define themselves as nations.

According to Constructivism the security threats are not out there but based on discourse and practice. The Ukraine events could be analyzed as an example of how threat images are constructed not only by one actor but

⁵⁸ Allison, R. (2014). Russian 'Deniable' Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules. *International Affairs*, 90(6), 1255-1297.

⁵⁹ Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics. *International Organization*, 46(2), 391-425. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300027764>

⁶⁰ Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press.

⁶¹ Kuzio, T. (2017). *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism*. Praeger.

⁶² Zhurzhenko, T. (2014). A Divided Nation? Reconsidering the Role of Identity Politics in the Ukraine Crisis. *Die Friedens-Warte*, 89(1-2), 249-267.

⁶³ Smith, A. D. (2000). *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. Polity Press.

also by the partners. To Russia, NATO enlargement to the east and Ukraine's desire to become part of the Western organization are threats to its existence. This perception is developed by utilizing a discourse that portrays NATO as an aggressive bloc expanding into the Russian's near abroad²⁸. In the case of the United States and NATO, Russia is seen as an aggressor in Ukraine, especially because of its annexation of Crimea and aiding of separatists in Eastern Ukraine. In this discourse, Russia is portrayed as an actor that questions the post-Cold War settlements⁶⁴. These constructed threats determine the body policies and rationalize activities like use of economic boycott, use of force, and diplomacy among others. Constructivism also gives an insight on how the domestic political actors and institutions help in construction of threats. In Russian Federation and Ukraine, political elites, media and non-governmental organizations are the agents performing the construction of the enemy's image. Both of these internal dynamics are essential for the analysis of how national policies are developed and how and why conflict intensifies.

At the same time, constructivism puts emphasis on such values of the international society as international norms and their impact on states' actions. The concerning Ukraine situation can be discussed based on norms revolving around sovereignty, territorial integrity, and self-determination. Some norms that are now associated with the responses of the international community to the crisis are based on ideas of international legal norms in international system⁶⁵. Sovereignty and territorial integrity as such became one of the key norms guiding the international reaction to Russia's actions in Ukraine. The invasion of Ukraine specifically the Crimea region was widely criticized as a violation of the norms thus provoking sanctions and diplomatic boycott of Russia. This response is based on the constructivist notion where international norms instruct state actions as to what is acceptable or prohibited in the system of states⁶⁶.

Constructivism offers a criticism for realism and liberalism since it focuses on the ideas, identities, and social constructivism. While emphasising the role of power and security, realism fail to take into account historical memories and national essences as factors that drive the states' activity. In this regard, Constructivism claims that the possession of material power is insufficient to explain the actions of such states as Russia and Ukraine; instead, the international relations' socialization and identities of these actors⁶⁷. In their turn, constructivists claim that liberalism pays insufficient attention to nation identity and historical frameworks of relations. The Ukraine confrontation shows that money relations and organizations are incapable of sustaining peace much less change when identity frames are salient and historical memories vivid. This means that Constructivism requires scholars to move a step further from developing a sophisticated understanding of international relations that includes the social and ideational aspects of reality⁵⁹. Therefore, the constructivist approach insightful and relevant in understanding the conflict situation between Ukraine and Russia because of aspects such as national identity, historical memory, and the construction of threats. It helps to explain how these factors define the behavior of states and impact on the processes going on in the conflict. Thus, constructivism, in contrast to the first one, reveals ideational and social aspects, allowing for a better understanding of the greatness of the Ukraine crisis and the emergence of a new epoch of the Cold War. Hence, this perspective gives a better view of the realism and liberalism while at the same time providing an analysis of the interaction of material and social factors in world politics.

⁶⁴ McFaul, M. (2018). *From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin's Russia*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

⁶⁵ Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization*, 52(4), 887-917.

⁶⁶ Risse, T. (2000). Let's Argue!: Communicative Action in World Politics. *International Organization*, 54(1), 1-39.

⁶⁷ Adler, E. (1997). Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics. *European Journal of International Relations*, 3(3), 319-363.

Debates on the New Cold War

The idea of a 'New Cold War' has received considerable attention among the scholars primarily referring to Ukraine-Russia confrontation and more broadly to the worldwide rivalry between USA and Russia⁶⁸. Closely related to the first term, this term points at the ideological, political and military confrontation that defined the first Cold War between USSR and the USA from late 1940s up to early 1990s⁶⁹. With tensions rising again altogether since Russia's taking of Crimea in 2014 and its actions in Eastern Ukraine, many analysts have been quick to draw a number of parallels with the conflict activity of the Cold War⁵⁸.

The opponents of the New Cold War thesis claim that many features described by the theorists of the new cold war already existed in the present world. Many critics note that NATO expansion to the east and the West's support for Ukraine have predictably elicited reactive actions from Moscow to which some scholars like John Mearsheimer argue that this explains the return of the Russia West Cold War¹⁶. This view focuses on the conflict aspect and force buildup, which resembles the military and ideological confrontation of the Cold War. From Mearsheimer's realist point of view, there is a belief that the structure of international relations fosters such confrontations. From this perspective the Ukraine crisis is seen as a result of the Western powers' attempt to encroach on the Russian sphere of influence which is considered an intolerable threat to Moscow's hegemony in the post Soviet space. The emerging conflict, thus, is viewed as continuation of the age-old struggle between the two dominants much like the US-Soviet Union bipolar confrontation of the Cold War. There are several issues that New Cold War thesis' critics address to stress that the current climate is not as different from the Cold War period. Thus, the one of the key differences between them is the lack of international ideological conflict. In the first Cold War, the USA and the USSR were fighting between capitalists and communists, both thus trying to spread their system globally. Today it hardly offers an ideological system which poses the threat to the liberal democracy in the same manner that the soviet union did⁷⁰. Besides, today's entanglement of Russia and the West economically is much higher than it was during the Cold War. Techniques used in this case were sanctions and political differences, however Russia remains open for the world trade and is tightly linked with European countries due to oil and gas exports. This economic interdependence produces a different structure of constraints and opportunities than in the relatively autarchic Soviet economy. According to Robert Legvold, this interdependence does interfere with the cleanly geopolitical split concept because both parties have much at stake economically that will deter an all-out clash⁷⁰. The nature of conflict methods is one of the critical discusses in the debate on the New Cold War. The contemporary conflicts have led to the appearance of hybrid conflict, which is a combination of conventional operations and information warfare. The activity of Russia in using these methods, especially it using them in Ukraine besides it interference in the Western election, has been identified as a transition from the blunt weaponry of the Cold War to subtler forms⁷¹.

Another prominent area of concern is the relations to nuclear weapons. In the first instance of the Cold War, the principle of mutually assured destruction formed a critical component of the superpowers' armistice. Even today both the U. S. and Russia still possess large stockpiles of nuclear weapons; however, enemies possessing WMDs including nuclear weapons and the possibility of local wars evolving to nuclear ones are some of the problems disturbing the contemporary strategic situation⁷². Due to the updated fields in nuclear capabilities, from the refurbishment of nuclear stockpiles to the studies on new strategic perspectives, some commentators associated the situation with the Cold War. Still, the current discourse also encompasses that threat of nuclear weapons being used by non-state actors, or used in regional conflicts, which was not present or not very significant during the original Cold War⁷². The setup of the global alliances also differs with that of cold war era. Even if NATO

⁶⁸ Legvold, R. (2014). Managing the New Cold War: What Moscow and Washington Can Learn From the Last One. *Foreign Affairs*, 93(4), 74-84.

⁶⁹ Friedman, G. (2016). The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces Both Russia and the West. *Geopolitical Futures*.

⁷⁰ Legvold, R. (2016). *Return to Cold War*. Polity Press.

⁷¹ Galeotti, M. (2016). Hybrid, ambiguous, and non-linear? How new is Russia's 'new way of war'? *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27(2), 282-301.

⁷² Sagan, S. D., & Waltz, K. N. (2013). *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate*. W.W. Norton & Company.

is still one of the major world's military alliances the Warsaw Pact is no more in existence and Russia has signed a number of treaties, one of which is the partnership with China. This new alignment does not have the clear bipolarity of the Cold War but it seems to create a multipolar world with constantly shifting and ultimately pragmatic alignments. Robert Lo comparing the Russia-China relations and stating that despite the fact the two countries are strategic partners their cooperation is more convenience rather than value oriented⁷³. Today, the world is much more bipolarized, and there are various major and minor regions that enter into political relations. The emergence of other superpowers like China, and India creates a more complicated picture of the new environment, and unlike bipolar world of the Cold War, it cannot be considered a stable one.

Analyzing the impact of perceptions and media representation in the creation of the New Cold War, one comes to understand that these two aspects cannot be overemphasized. Speaking of the portrayal of the Ukraine crisis and U. S. –Russia relations in the media, one might find himself or herself dealing with the Cold War clichés in political discourse. This framing can shape the society's perception and shift the politician's actions to the direction of predicting an inevitable clash⁷⁴. Peter Pomerantsev explains how both Russian and Western media are involved in fostering such an environment through referring to historical analogies and making people scared. This kind of media depiction means that the social construction of a possible conflict governs the relationships and actions that may in fact lead to a new Cold War. It is necessary to accentuate that the New Cold War covers a wide range of opinions, as it is impossible to overestimate the current conflict's richness. The opinion that crisis in Ukraine and other acts of aggression in the contemporary world refer to the relations between the USA and Russia mean the beginning of cold war, some scholars argue that different picture exists here as well because of the fact that ideological conflicts, economical interconnectedness and nature of the contemporary warfare are different.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative research as a way of assimilating exhaustive findings on the triggers of the Ukraine-Russian conflict and possibility of this conflict as being the starting point of the new Cold War between the United States and Russia. Because the research questions are intricate, this approach enables a study of trends and patterns while at the same time considering reasons and ramifications⁷⁵. The type of data collection includes interviews with scholars of international relations, military officers, and policymakers to understand the implications of the given conflict. These interviews will be audio-taped, manually transcribed and analyzed qualitatively by the researcher using NVivo software. Government reports, policy papers, and other official documents allow defining the background and official position of some important actors due to which the document analysis procedures are the most significant for the current type of academic writing. These documents will be subjected to content analysis to ensure comprehension of the discursive structures of the topic in question. Secondary data on the other hand will support this through newspapers and historical data researching the history of Ukraine-Russia relations and any previous attempts by Russia. This approach will entail the examination of treaties, diplomatic notes, and historical documents among others with emphasis on the various periods of history.

In the case of qualitative data, the interviews and focus group discussions scripts and the memos will be read over and over again to look for patterns that can be emphasized. This will be made easier through the use of NVivo software that helps in organizing the data and a systematic processing to allow for the analysis. A quantitative data collection method is excluded from the study in order to cover only the qualitative aspect of the research. To maintain the validity and reliability of the information that will be gathered, the following techniques shall be adopted. Triangulation will be applied to ensure the results are accrued from different sources, which adds to the study's reliability. Purposively integrating interview data with the document analysis

⁷³ Lo, B. (2015). *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press.

⁷⁴ Pomerantsev, P. (2019). *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality*. PublicAffairs.

⁷⁵ Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

enables a richer understanding of the research questions as stated by Creswell⁷⁶. Member checking includes presenting the participants with the written or recorded copies of the interviews they underwent and the researchers' interpretation of the results in an effort to make corrections or point out any flaws. This makes sure that their ideas as well as their perception of the affairs of life is being well captured by the data being availed to the research. This is because; pilot testing of the interview questions will be conducted with a sample of participants in order to note down and correct any problems that may and are usually associated with the clarity of questions before the actual interview is carried out.

Therefore, the study has dealt with the probable restrictions and sources of bias like sample bias, response bias, and history bias. According to the aforementioned limitations, the diverse sampling technique should be employed to minimize the problem and ensure that the sample is representative. To eliminate prejudice, the participants are going to be selected randomly over a wide region, across the various classes or the population that has varied political stand. The anonymity of the participants and making their responses as confidential as possible will help obtain accurate responses. Relevance of appropriate explanation of the study's aim and, in particular, the utilization of data gathered from the participants to establish trust will be discussed. Interpretation of history is another difficulty, because reference to history, which occur such sources as documents and other materials of archival type, is distorted by values and beliefs. Thus, different sources and points of view will help check facts in a history narrative and avoid new biases at the same time. In this respect, the primary objective of the study is to provide a complex analysis of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia to highlight the fact that international conflicts contain more than one degree of interaction.

The presented methodology ensures adequate and effective analysis of the conflict in Ukraine / Russia and its impacts on the global arena. Thus, the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative procedures ensures that this study will be adequately positioned to respond to the research questions. Applying the procedures of data validation and reliability guarantees that this geopolitical, economical, and a social conflict analysis will offer an insight into the origin of the conflict and probabilities of a new Cold War. Concerning the method of the work, this study in the form of semi-structured interviews combined with the document analysis and archival research aims to provide comprehensive coverage of the conflict in Ukraine and Russia and expand the field's collective understanding of the conflict's implications for the geopolitical landscape of the world.

Analysis

Regional Dynamics of the Ukraine-Russia Conflict

Historical grievances and territorial disputes

Analyzing the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, one must admit that it is rooted in historical events, territorial and political disputes. Thus, Ukrainian-Russian relations have a long history that began with Kievan Rus, an early medieval state that formed the basis for both Ukrainian and Russian people. Founded in the late 9th Century, the Kievan Rus was a confederation of Slavic tribes mostly associated with the city of Kiev, which is in modern day Ukraine. It also contributed much to the region's cultural and religious evolution, especially in terms of the adoption of Christianity in the year 988 AD, with Eastern Orthodox faith. This common historical background is a frequently cited Russian argument in support of Russia's current claim to Ukraine, which explains the interrelated histories of the two states⁹. During the late Middle Ages, most of the lands within today's borders of Ukraine were partitioned between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as well as the Crimean Tatars. In 1569 in Lublin Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was created, as the result Poland gained actual control over a significant portion of what was then considered Ukraine. It was characterized by definite cultural and religious conflicts: in Ukraine, which was predominantly Orthodox, the Catholic Polish rulers made pressure on local population. The partitions of Poland in the second half of the XVIII millennium became the starting point for the transition of Ukrainian territories to the Russian Empire and the intertwining of the fates of the two countries⁵.

⁷⁶ Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Inclusion of Ukrainian territories into the Russian empire introduced new problems and new clashes. Russification policies were aimed at Ukrainian people's Russification which means that the usage of Ukrainian language and anything related to Ukrainian identity was suppressed. Revolutionary transformations took place also in the societal and economical areas: the serfs of Russia were freed; industrialization put its imprint on the Ukrainian territory, which was endowed with valuable entrega resources. The 20th century was especially violent for Ukraine. Ukraine gained independence after the First World War for only a short time and was included into the Soviet Union. The period of the First and the Second World War also inflicted a grave loss on Ukrainians, especially during the artificially created famine – the so-called Holodomor of the year 1932-1933, in which millions of people died. The Soviets' policies on collectivization and industrialization fueled the tensions even more and effected the Ukrainian people severely¹³.

For Ukraine as a state, the break off the Soviet Union in 1991 determined the process of its development. Ukraine declared sovereignty and started its long and difficult work on building the state's sovereignty. Nevertheless, the Soviet impact allowed a clear politico-ethical division within the population of Ukraine, where the proportion of people considering themselves as Russians or using the Russian language remains high. Some of these areas especially the Crimean Peninsula and the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk had close relations with Russia. This can be seen as both Orange Revolution in 2004 and Euromaidan in 2013-2014 laid serious flaws in the Ukrainian society. The latter led to the change of the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich and paved way to the Crimean annexation by Russians in 2014. The integration was followed by the reaction of foreign countries and became the cause for the present conflict in Eastern Ukraine when separatists in the region claimed independence from Kyiv, resulting in a vicious war⁷⁷.

Cultural and political factors contributing to the conflict

Presently, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has cultural and political explanations in addition to the historical ones. This has made the conflict diametrically different and has contributed to polarization of these elements. Therefore, the investment in such a country of multiple ethnic and lingual origins such as Ukraine is worthy. The largest ethnic group is the ethnic Ukrainians as it is with many other countries though there exists a large population of Russian speaking people and this is mostly evident in the regions of eastern and southern Ukraine. These linguistic and cultural barriers have been instrumentalised many a times in the continent by politics. The style and essence of their interference is driven by the idea of the Russian government as the defender of Russian speakers in Ukraine. It has a certain amount of appeal to some extent, in relation to the Russian-speaking population, especially in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine where people may have ancestral and social connections with Russia⁷⁸.

An intense EU sympathetic side and a Russia sympathetic side have mainly defined Ukrainian Politics. That is why this division is frequently geographical: Western Ukraine has an orientation towards European integration, while Eastern Ukraine leans towards Russia. This has brought political instabilities and has inclined a part of the population favoring the continuation of the conflict. The protests that took place in Ukraine known as Euromaidan and changes that occurred in the country's political and economic vector spoke of many Ukrainians' wish to unite with Europe and escape Russia as an uncivilized country. However, the fast political change also led to a disadvantaged portion of the population that turned into separatism in the eastern Ukraine⁷⁹.

Nationalism and identity politics are involved in the conflict. Ukrainian nationalism which focuses on the unique values of the Ukrainian nation played a crucial role in Ukraine's struggle for independence and challenge or Russification. About this nationalism one can contrast with Russian nationalism, which sees Ukraine as a part of the Russian world. The events including the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine only facilitated nationalist sentiments on both the Ukrainian and the Russian side. In Ukraine there has been a revamp of the campaign to endorse the Ukrainian language and culture while in Russia the conflict has taken a dimension

⁷⁷ Wilson, A. (2014). *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West*. Yale University Press.

⁷⁸ Motyl, A. J. (2015). *Putin's Russia as an ethnic empire*. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 31(4), 279-303.

⁷⁹ Kudelia, S. (2014). *The Maidan and Beyond: The House that Yanukovich Built*. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(3), 19-34.

of fight against the suppression of the Russian and other related speaking Ukrainians by the Ukrainian ultranationalists.

Analysis of the conflict as a regional dispute

When one looks at the conflict from the position of regional politics, the issues that need to be considered relate to the tensions between Ukraine and Russia as well as the behavior of these two countries in terms of their regional interests. This view emphasizes the definite demands and goals that are applied by the conflict in the context of the area. Thus, the major causes of the conflict base on the local concerns of the people in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. In Crimea, the population spoke Russian and was mainly in support of the annexation as they saw this as a reflection or their cultural and historical selves. In the case of the 2014 referendum, while it is has been referred to as rigged and being a sham, it captured the mood of the people that yearned to be back in Russia⁴. In Ukraine, especially in the eastern part of the country, and primarily the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, there has been a constant call for self- rule. This made them feel neglected by the central government and the separation of the industrial east and the rest of Ukraine on the economic aspect contributed to the sentiment. This interpretive contradiction can explain the declaration of independence of these regions, as well as the conflict that followed, as reactions to these local concerns Error! Bookmark not defined.

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia also brings out the issues of regional hegemonic quality. In the case of Russia, the loss of Ukraine might be completely devastating considering the importance of the country in the general regional policies. Ukraine is a counterweight to NATO and a transit area for Russian gas to Europe. The Kremlin views Ukraine's drift towards the West as a devastating loss of the most important state for Russia¹⁵. On the other hand, the strategy of Ukraine's European integration and turn to the West is considered as the key to economic success and effective political development. Due to the geopolitical situation and strong pressure from Russia, the process of Ukraine's development in the political sphere has been largely dictated by the willingness of the state to secede from Russia's sphere of influence and join the European organizations⁸⁰. Thus, despite the fact this struggle is commercially driven, it includes the participation of regional and global players. The participation of the United States, NATO, as well as the EU in the conflict has brought in an international aspect to the situation. Ukraine has found support from the Western quarter in the form of economic, military and political assistance which has helped Ukraine to stand up to Russian incursions²².

Russia's actions in Ukraine are also influenced by its broader geopolitical strategy. Crimean crisis and backing of rebels in Eastern Ukraine are seen as Russia's attempt to regain control in post-Soviet area as well as to resist Western penetration in its vicinity. Such regional assertiveness is one of the distinctive features of the Russian foreign policy strategy pursued by Putin since he returned to the presidency in 2012⁸¹. The complexity of the conflict represents cultural policies and organizational structures, together with other social aspects that include regional characteristics of Ukraine and Russia.

Knowledge of these elements is important for explaining the behavior of the participants. The crisis concerns not only regional factors but also global ones; therefore, the conflict is in the focus of confrontation between Russia and the West. It is only through the analysis of the historical and cultural perspective as well as political aspect of the conflict that one can be in a position to fully understand the feelings and political partition that define the Ukraine-Russia conflict. This analysis is going to be useful for the further study of the conflict in the global context and the relation of that conflict to the possibilities of the new Cold War.

Global Implications and the New Cold War

Involvement of NATO and the United States in the conflict

The expressions of the conflict have been much influenced by the involvement of NATO and the United States of America in the Ukraine-Russia scenario. Their combined activities, in line with their separate policies, have

⁸⁰ D'Anieri, P. (2019). *Ukraine and Russia: From Civilied Divorce to Uncivil War*. Cambridge University Press.

⁸¹ Stent, A. (2014). *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press.

significantly affected the conflict's frequency and the geopolitical problem's outcomes. Over the years of the conflict, which began in 2014, Ukraine has received significant assistance from the United States. These supports have comprised of scholarships, provision of equipment, and trainings, political support and provision of a safe haven. The U. S. has been supporting Ukraine's state and non-state institutions against Moscow's penetration, calling the annexation of Crimea as unlawful and Russia has continued support to the pro-Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine as a violation of Ukraine's sovereign integrity⁸². That is why financial assistance received from the U. S. has been important for the stabilization of the Ukrainian economy that was significantly affected by the war. This assistance has comprised of; cash donations, guarantees for loans as well as funding towards economic liberalization processes. Furthermore, the U. S. has furnished nonlethal military assistance, comprised of body armors, medical equipment and communication equipment which entails lethal assistance; anti-tank missiles and small arms. NATO's role in Ukraine-Russia conflict can be characterized by the organization's firm commitment to collective defense as well as unity demonstrated through support for Ukraine. Though, Ukraine is not a member of NATO yet, the latter has shown a clear support of Ukraine and has boosted its presence in Eastern Europe to prevent further aggression of Russia. On the conflict NATO has undertaken several measures, such as tactical upgrades of presence in the Baltic States and Poland, air and naval surveillance, and reaction forces. These actions are to rebuild the confidence of the NATO member states in the eastern front and to prevent Russia from going further than Ukraine⁸³. The United States and the European allies' world power has also sought diplomatic intervention to give a permanent solution to the conflict. Normandy format with the support of financial Germany and France attempted to cease the fight and build the political decision- Minsk regulation. Yet, these agreements have become a problem of major difficulties at the level of implementation and no steps have been made on the political level with the continuation of ceasefire breaches. There has also been other measures that have been equally fostered by the U.S and EU, among them including utilization of economic measures on Russia. It is targeted at the major domains of the Russian economy with an emphasis on finance, energy and defense they are meant to draw a specific behavior from Russia or to deter it from carrying out a specific action. However, the positive result of Russian economy can be questioned, thus the effectiveness from the political aim perspective is doubtful⁸⁴.

Russia's strategic objectives and responses

In the case of Ukraine, geopolitical, political, and economic interests drive the action of Russia. An understanding of these aims provides insight on Russia's overall long-term gameplay and its countermeasures against steps made by countries from the West. Russia's principal long-term interest is to maintain the status of a regional hegemon in the post-Soviet space. Thus, Ukraine has significant relevance in this regard, mainly due to its geographical position and ties. In essence, Russia's ultimate goal is to dominate Ukraine hence have it as a buffer that will prevent the expansion of this organization and the western influence. Thus, the historical objective of safeguarding Russia's western borders and avoiding their closure by adverse forces can be attributed to their historical causes⁸⁵. This assault has been put forward by Moscow as a protective measure to ensure the rights of the ethnic Russians and individuals who speak Russian in Ukraine. Officially, it has been used to justify the incorporation of Crimea as well as support for rebels in South-east Ukraine. According to the Kremlin, the members of these communities face discriminations and are at risk of threats due to Ukrainian nationalism hence the need for protection. This rationale is well received by a certain cross section of the populace in the affected regions thus enhancing indigenization of support for Russians' endeavors⁸⁶. Energy is critical to the strategic calculations within Russia. Ukraine is a vital link in the transmission of Russian natural gas to Europe making it a vital partner in the context. Russia has an array of stakes on the economic front, primarily on the continuity of command over Ukraine's power sector as well as ensuring the stability of transit. To dodge Ukraine, Russia has embarked on some projects like the Nord Stream 2 in a bid to devalue the role of the intermediate in the conflict.

⁸² Mankoff, J. (2014). *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁸³ NATO. (2021). *NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence*. NATO Public Diplomacy Division.

⁸⁴ Oliker, O. (2015). *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*. RAND Corporation.

⁸⁵ Giles, K. (2019). *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West*. Brookings Institution Press.

⁸⁶ Sakwa, R. (2015). *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. I.B. Tauris.

The goal of this project is to provide for direct delivery of gas to Germany, thus reducing the dependency on the Ukrainian infrastructure⁸⁷.

Another factor caused by the Ukraine conflict was to display and flex military muscles. The events in Ukraine demonstrated how Russia was using hybrid warfare – aggression at the level of cyber and information operations, irregular forces, propaganda while at the same time participating in the more traditional armed conflict in relation to the annexation of Crimea and the support of separatists in Eastern Ukraine. This approach has been researched and applied in other countries, adding to how Russia changed its military concept⁸⁸. Sasha outlines the essential points of the contemporary essential questions in global politics and international relations including the conflict between Ukraine and Russia and the possible new Cold War. The Crimean Crisis and Military Conflict in Eastern Ukraine signify the newfound change in the world politics. It is easiest to explain this as being Russia's attempt to change the international order that was established after the Cold War. This conflict has shown that Russia is ready to use the military means to achieve its geopolitical goals disregarding the principles of state and territorial inviolability. This hostile international relation is characteristic of a new epoch of the confrontation of world interests when the division of the world between two antagonists is in sight once again the modern relations can be compared with the Cold War when the world was divided into two spheres of influence, the United States and Soviet Union. The present conflict has relaunched many of the tensions and suspicion that were present during that period in which strategies of the conflict were seen as performed by the other side.

Analysis of the conflict as a catalyst for a new Cold War

A major feature of the cold war was the superpowers arms race in which the U. S was in direct competition with the Soviet Union. Similarly, the Ukraine conflict has stimulated the military and the purchase of weapons in the European east. This arises from NATO's enhancement of forward presence and in parallel with Russia's augmentation of the military power. The economic and technological aspect of the conflict can be likened to the cold war with the conflict between two superpowers. Some have pointed out that Russia and the West have split an economic divide through which the other by way of countermeasures reciprocates every measure taken by one side. Such effects entail managing the sides' dependence on one another in technology and energy while trying to become self-sufficient. The west has over time attempted to use penalties as a way of pressuring Russia to change its policies and for a long time now, Russia has been disposed to shift its focus towards the domestic development of industries particularly the technology and defense industries. Exactly like this, the U. S. and its allies have overestimated the innovations' investment made by Russia and have made an effort to increase the protection against the Russian cyber threats⁸⁹. Cognitive aggression and psychological operations in turn were identified as one of the major characteristics of the warfare and looked like the Cold War. Here Russia has employed very sophisticated techniques to achieve the feat of promoting fake news and shifting the minds of the people and; voting systems in the western world. Some of these are – state owned media, social media manipulation and cyber warfare with an objective of causing political destabilization⁹⁰. Now the West has replied with the information warfare, or I will say it Information diplomacy, which is also referred as an informational wars aiming at the denazification or constructing the democratic values against Russian myths. This battle for people's affection is one of the fundamental and seemingly the most intrinsic aspects of the new Cold War as both sides attempt to seize the narrative.

In the Cold War period, the U. S. and Soviet Union supported opposite parties in many regional wars, that is proxy wars. The conflict in Ukraine can also act as an area of the confrontation of great powers. Supporting Ukraine as a western civilization and Russia supporting separatists bring another dimension of Hybrid War that brings into the conflict a geopolitical confrontation. Other actors within the region when added as participants

⁸⁷ Baev, P. K. (2018). *Russian Energy Policy and Military Power: Putin's Quest for Greatness*. Routledge.

⁸⁸ McDermott, R. (2016). *Russia's Armed Forces: A Modern Military for a Modern World?*. U.S. Army War College Press.

⁸⁹ Conley, H. A., et al. (2016). *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Eastern and Central Europe*. Center for Strategic and International Studies.

⁹⁰ Pomerantsev, P., & Weiss, M. (2014). *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money*. Institute of Modern Russia.

such as Turkey, which has supported Ukraine and condemned Russia's actions in Crimea complicate the conflict even more. These partnerships and antithetical relations can involve more nations into the conflict, increasing the sphere of the confrontation⁹¹. The war between Ukraine and Russia affects the global community and has been deemed to be causing what many have termed the New Cold War. The process of the western's sclerosis, goals of the Russian Federation, and the general conditions all contributed to this rejuvenation of animosity with the participation of the United States and NATO. The conflict also brings out the importance of regional conflicts of as part of the world order. The historical issue, cultural and political factors, and the strategic interests are important things to consider before fully comprehending the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The situation remains rather unstable, that is why the conflict will remain a continuation of the confrontation between Russia and the West affecting stability and security of the entire world.

Proxy War Characteristics

Evidence of proxy war elements in the Ukraine-Russia conflict

In engaging a civil war that involves two global powers, the organizations from Ukraine and Russia show many features of a proxy war. It is rather challenging to identify solely military aspects as Russia's role in the Ukraine conflict has included a direct military intervention, backing up separatists, and a vast usage of hybrid warfare strategies. A notable aggravation of the situation was seen in March 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine, and furthermore, supported separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Thus, the Russian involvement includes the supplies of weapons, training, as well as the deployment of actual human forces to the separatist units, which was confirmed by the numerous reports and the satellite images⁹². Russia's strategy also consists of cyber warfare, disinformation, and assorted economic advantage. Simplified, it means that it has been observed how hackers attacked Ukrainian infrastructure and how there was misinformation to weaken Ukrainian institutions and international allies. These actions correspond with the hybrid warfare model that implies the usage of conventional and post-modern methods to accomplish strategic goals⁹³.

The United States and NATO have had crucial heavy policy roles as far as supporting Ukraine is concerned. It has comprised, inter alia, monetary contributions, military help and diplomatic endorsement. The U, S has supplied Ukraine with billions of dollars in financial assistance and military hardware, arms, and ammunitions Launching Javelin anti-tank missiles, radar, and other protective equipment²². This cooperation in turn entails activities such as joint exercises, training and educating the Ukrainian military and intelligence cooperation. It can be stated that NATO has not militarily intervened in the conflict, yet its existence and assistance increased Ukraine's capability to defend itself and acted as a counter measure against potential Russian escalation². In the Ukraine conflict, other regional actors have been featured too. For example, Turkey has donated Ukraine the Bayraktar TB2 drones, which have proved effective against Russian-backed separatists. This support contributes to indicating the interests of other countries are positioned based on strategic interests⁹¹.

Comparison with historical proxy wars

Several historical proxy wars are similar to the Ukraine-Russia conflict to analyze its nature and peculiarities properly. The Vietnam War (1955-1975) could be considered as one of the most famous examples of proxy wars when the U. S. and the Soviet Union were on the opposite sides supporting Vietnam. The U. S supported the administration of South Vietnam while the Soviet union and china supported north Vietnam and Viet-cong. American support for the conflict was exhibited through military supplies and training, consultant ship and finally deployment of the American military. The conflict was characterized by military support, and consulting, and direct participation of the U.S military. Likewise, in the Ukraine situation the U. S. and NATO are on the side of Ukraine while Russia is on the side of the separatists. Both wars are filled with strong external

⁹¹ Kuzio, T. (2017). *Putin's War Against Ukraine: Revolution, Nationalism, and Crime*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

⁹² Galeotti, M. (2017). *The Modern Russian Army 1992–2016* (1st ed.). Osprey Publishing.

⁹³ Kofman, M., & Rojansky, M. (2015). *A Closer Look at Russia's "Hybrid War"*. Kennan Cable, No. 7. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

interferences, massive supplies of military support, as well as the combinations of conventional and guerrilla strategies⁹⁴.

The Afghan-Soviet War (1979-1989) raised the Afghan communism period and put the U. S and its allies supporting Mujahideen against the Soviet Afghan government. Mujahideen received aids such as armaments, military training and funds from the U. S, especially through Central Intelligence Agency's Operation Cyclone. This support facilitated Mujahideen to continue to fight Soviet forces, which later led to Soviet walk out in 1989. In Ukraine, thus, the affiliation of Ukrainian forces can be paralleled to the support given to the Mujahideen by the U. S. Both conflicts seek the utilization of local actors against a dominant power and military occupation, where a large amount of external assistance is decisive⁹⁵.

The Syrian Civil War that began early 2011 is also classified as a contemporary proxy war. Several countries such as the U. S, Russia, Iran, and Turkey fund various factions in Syria. Russia's active participation and reinforcement of the Assad government, including military assistance as well as supplies, is significantly different from the U. S and its partner countries' support to multiple rebel groups and the Kurds. One can believe that the Ukraine conflict is similar to Syria because different world players interfere with different objectives. Both the conflicts have received immense foreign military support and intervention and, therefore, affects the flow and the results of the wars⁹⁶. Similarly, the Korea War (1950-1953) also evidences this fact; North Korea was supported by the communist nations and South Korea was supported with assistance of the U. S., China, Soviet Union came into long drawn and severe conflict. Like the Ukraine conflict, the Korean War also included many interests of great powers, intricate geopolitical sic affiliations, and conventional war along with a war of ideas. More recently, Libya has been witness to a post-2011 conflict that also is a proxy war with various regional and international powers backing different factions in Libya based solely on the Shari'ah interests. This has created the features of a long-drawn conflict with the roles switching continuously like in Ukraine. Having analyzed these historical and contemporary examples it is possible to state that proxy wars imply a great interference of the international actors, supplies of the military and financial support to the devoted local actors, the usage of the conventional and unconventional warfare strategies. This Ukraine-Russia conflict, which is a localized conflict but with gravities of international strategy falls neatly into this basket of proxy warfare.

Implications for international relation

Ukraine-Russia conflict is fitting example of a proxy war that has many implications for the world. These consequences affect the world geographical configuration, security measures and agreements; hence, they are not restricted to a regional affair. Due to the conflict, some political and relation changes have occurred that have shifted. Potential or new NATO members from the former Eastern Bloc and especially these that have historical bases to be concerned about Russia's motives have dug themselves deeper into NATO and The US. Most countries especially the Baltic States and Poland and Romania as among those with more security threats have boosted their defense budgets and invited NATO troops⁹⁷. Thus, Russia, after the turn to its increasing isolation from the Western powers, started building friendly relations with other giant states, particularly the People's Republic of China. Military relations and increased cooperation in the economic sphere characterize the strengthening of Russia's strategic partnership with China: this is a qualitative change in the composition of the

⁹⁴ Lawrence, M. A. (2010). *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (1st Ed.). Oxford University Press.

⁹⁵ Coll, S. (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. Penguin Press.

⁹⁶ Phillips, C. (2016). *The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the New Middle East*. Yale University Press.

⁹⁷ Smith, M. A. (2021). *NATO Enlargement during the Cold War: Strategy and System in the Western Alliance*. Palgrave Macmillan.

powers of world⁹⁸. This has brought changes to policies on security in the global realm this exert pressure on nations to redesign their defense and materiel.

Following the same line in having a focus on the group protection, NATO has once again shifted back to its basic goal for the organization and that is to protect against Russia. Some shifts are demonstrated more by the fact that NATO has adopted a more proactive stance and is utilizing more military maneuvers in the Middle Eastern countries. Nations from outside Europe have also got into the onset of the reemergence of the security strategies. The war has raised the issue of cyberspace, behavior in the information-psychological warfare area, and combating fake news. These lessons are stressing on the fact that security methods have to be complete and for this reason, they are being included in the framework of national defense strategies all over the world⁹⁹.

The Ukraine-Russia conflict poses a threat to several international norms and laws especially on state sovereignty and can territorial. Russia has unfurled articles that are violates of the United Nations Charter and other treaties through the occupation of Crimean territory and support to the separatists in eastern Ukraine¹⁰⁰. These actions have put a worrisome precedence and other states may follow similar strategies. Loss of the international norms gives rise to insecurity and conflicts, he noted the possibility of more states aghast to upset geographical borders and undertake forceful actions with less susceptible consequences to counter backlash.

The costs of a conflict remains high not only for Ukraine, but also for the entire continent considering humanitarian costs of the war as well as its economic impacts. Civilians have died by the thousands and large populations have been forced from their homes due to the effects of the war on structures. However, the pecuniary loss does not only fall within Ukraine's borders alone but in other markets such as the energy and agriculture field across the globe¹⁰¹. The conflict has also exposed the world's supply chain and integration of international markets. Venezuelan crises and counter measures have destabilized trade and investment flows thus affecting the world economy.

These economic consequences confirm the reality of contemporary conflicts and their globalization¹⁰². Further, the conflict has increased the tendency of a qualitative escalation in a strategic rivalry between the major nations, indicating the onset prospects for the new Cold war. There has been a military buildup in Eastern Europe and what can be seen as posturing between Russia and NATO, and tensions and the risks of a misunderstanding are on the rise. Thus, information warfare, cyberattacks, and economic pressure have emerged as more apparent examples, thus showing that contemporary geopolitics entails a complex hybrid of competing struggles. Therefore, based on the analyzed features the Ukraine-Russia conflict can be classified as the proxy war with strong participation from the outside actors, namely the US, NATO, and Russia. There is such activity similar to direct interference in proxy wars like the Vietnam War, the Afghan-Soviet War, and the Syrian War. The impact of the conflict is vast for the nature of the relations between countries affecting geopolitical position, security strategies, international standards, and the global economy.

This aspect serves to illustrate that conflict is in its current state continuing, and may expand further, the need to encourage diplomacy that will culminate to a resolution. It is important to comprehend the proxy war interactions in order for the political decision makers and the global actors to cease being in the dark about the relationships between these countries and their implications in the contemporary political progression.

⁹⁸ Götz, E., & Merlen, C. (2019). Russia and China: The Potential of Their Partnership. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32(3), 289-307.

⁹⁹ Conley, H. A., Mina, J., Stefanov, R., & Vladimirov, M. (2016). *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*. CSIS.

¹⁰⁰ Klabbers, J. (2017). *International Law*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰¹ World Bank. (2022). *Ukraine Economic Update*. Retrieved from [World Bank](https://www.worldbank.org/).

¹⁰² IMF. (2022). *World Economic Outlook Update*. Retrieved from IMF.

DISCUSSION

Synthesis of Findings

Integration of research findings with the theoretical framework

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has been approached from perspective of the theories to explain the deep nature and effects of the phenomenon. This section brought together the research results and analyzed them within the context of the realism, liberalism, and constructivism theoretical paradigms.

Realist Perspective

Realism is a broad label but in overview involves the belief that states are the major actors of international structures, the international system as self-regulating and state centred that are threat by anarchy and therefore, the major aim of the state is power. Thus, the events observed in the Ukraine-Russia conflict are all analyzed from this perspective with the policies of every actor being functionally realist in nature. The root of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is in the Russian need to keep control over the former Soviet countries. The aggression of the Russian Federation in annexing the Crimean region in 2014 can be considered as quintessential power politics and control over the territorial domain, which is a core belief of realism in IR. Thus, from the realist point of view, Russia's action to annex Crimea is actually as an attempt to safeguard the interests of its military defense since Crimea is home to the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. This military advantage not only boosts Russia fleet in the Black Sea but also gives control over the region that boosts Russia power projection capability in the Black Sea and other waters¹⁶. Further, by providing support to separatists in Eastern Ukraine, it propounds its regime's agenda of maintaining Ukraine in its sphere of influence. About sponsored separatism in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Russia's idea is to cripple Ukraine's central authority to ensure that Ukraine does not join NATO or the European Union entirely. This course is realistic since it assumes that great powers will strive to check any attempts that other world powers undertake in their spheres of influence. Thus, the idea of the buffer zone, a state territory that safeguards the zone of the core influence of a universal power, lies at the foundation of Russia's actions. In this respect, Ukraine becomes a key element of containment and a brake on NATO's eastward advance¹⁰³.

Continuing with the realist idea of power and hegemony, Russia's active buildup of military forces and hybrid warfare show the realist inclination towards military might. Modern warfare, which might encompass conventional and unconventional warfare with the inclusion of hybrid warfare involving the application of conventional force, irregular warfare and cyber warfare, lacks the intensity of full-fledged war but is employed with a view to serve political purposes. This way, Russia is able to gain control and even provoke Ukraine to some extent without coming head to head with NATO. The cyberspace, psychological warfare and the employment of the military personnel without a distinct military uniform; 'the little green men' shown when Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula demonstrate how Russia manages to employ its different and complex talents to continue and maintain its tactical edge⁷¹. Peculiarities of involvement of the USA and NATO in supporting of Ukraine can be explained within the frames of the realist approach too. Any type of assistance provided for Ukraine in the human capital, specifically, financial, military and political backup apparently appear as the reaction to Russia's aggressive foreign policy. This strategies of the U. S. In addition, NATO are oriented on preventing the possibility of the Russian comeback in Eastern Europe in order to keep the balance of power there. This support includes giving Ukraine new generation defensive weapons, having military drills, and increasing the protection of NATO member states in Eastern Europe⁹⁷.

According to real politic, these measures are deemed appropriate to check Russia's misadventure and exhibit a show of strength to fellow partners in the East. The more roOcated and permanent NATO presence in countries including Poland and the Baltic republics is very clearly illustrative of the collective defence objective to seek to prevent any future Russian adventurism. These military developments on both sides also fall under the

¹⁰³ Götz, E. (2016). Russia, the West, and the Ukraine Crisis: Three Contending Perspectives. *Contemporary Politics*, 22(3), 249-266.

traditional realist security dilemma, whereby a state's efforts to protect itself are viewed by another state as a threat, thus sparking an arms race and anxiety⁹⁸. This conflict is also beneficial for understanding the general geopolitical processes from the point of view of realism. Evidently, military cooperation and economic relations between Russia and China can be viewed as the counterbalance to the Western hegemony. This symbiosis is based on the common objective to undermine the current international relations headed by the U.S. and its fellows. Realism expects such alliances because states try to counterbalance against such threats and to accumulate more relative power³⁷. Thus, the given conflict between Ukraine and Russia reflects the principles of realism in international relations. In this context, Russia acts in the basis of the state's self-interest, having developed its sphere of influence, which is also characteristic of the realist view that focuses on power and territory. The contribution of the U. S and NATO supporting Ukraine also recognizable the realist paradigm of competitiveness for power in the international structure. Exploring the conflict with the help of this lens gives more exposure to the idea behind the actions of the states involved in the conflict and draws attention to the applicability of realism even in the modern international relations.

Liberal Perspective

The liberal internationalism in the study of international relations focuses on the institutions, cooperation as well as the respect for principles of the law in order to enhance on the international peace and security. The Ukraine-Russia conflict, however, is not without difficulties for these liberal principles, thus illustrating the possibilities and recapitulating the importance of the liberal international system paradigm. Another principle that liberalists have always believed in is the capability of international organizations in preventing and or solving conflicts. In the context of the Ukraine-Russia crisis for instance, the Minsk agreements which involved OSCE as the main mediator and France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine as signees was a peace plan that aimed at halting the violence and restore peace. However, the inability of these agreements to deliver lasting peace in the region shows that international organizations have their weaknesses of enforcing the agreements that suit all the powers in the international system. Routine transgressions of the cease firings and failed progress of political negotiations for implementation of the agreements essentially de-expose the challenge in having consensus and cooperation of the conflicting factions¹⁰⁴. Thus, it can be stated that the complexity of the cease-fire agreement regarding Afghanistan increases from the failed efforts towards achieving the political negotiated agreement. Restrictions that the European Union, the United States, and other Western countries applied to Russia are another decode in the liberals of cross-swords designed to enforce compliance with the rules. These sanctions are aimed at certain parts of the Russian economy such as finance, energy, and defense hoping that this will force a change in the Russian actions. Challenges such as lack of efficiency of the sanctions; While the sanctions have proven to have a major effect of the Russian economy, they have not proven effective in stopping Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This outcome exemplifies the problem of applying pressure in terms of economic costs for states that are ready to pay such a price for achieving strategic objectives¹⁰⁵.

Nevertheless, the role of support of the liberal states for states which has faced aggression is also underlined. The money and military assistance given to Ukraine by both the EU and the USA as well as NATO member states reflect the liberal ideology of promoting democracy and international law. This assistance has been vital for sustaining Ukraine's protection and economy to avail the lesson that global collaboration and unity can assist a threatened state. In this respect, the EU has provided funds, undertaken fiscal structuring changes, as well as provided political development and measures against corruption to Ukraine¹⁰⁶. The international organization such as OSCE continue to observe the conflict; this shows that even to date liberal principles still prevail. For instance, the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) of the OSCE has been very vital in monitoring and observing the security dimension in the country, mediating on the most appropriate way of effecting dialogue and ensuring the conflict is resolved through negotiations. Despite the challenges, such as access limitations and security threats, it proves that the mission of an international organization is important in a conflict area as it

¹⁰⁴ Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (2001). *Power and Interdependence*. Longman.

¹⁰⁵ Baldwin, D. A. (2016). *Economic Statecraft*. Princeton University Press.

¹⁰⁶ Gstöhl, S. (2016). *The European Union's Economic Diplomacy: Enhancing the EU's Role in the International Economy*. Routledge.

provides objective information and contributes to the peace process¹⁰⁷. Similarly, liberalism emphasizes the part of the international norms and the rule of the law. The events taking place in Ukraine today, starting from the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia and continuation of support for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine, are categorically forbidden by the United Nations Charter and other sources of international law, principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states being the basic ones among the prohibited ones. The reaction of the international community to the event, primarily the condemnation and lack of recognition of the annexation in the international community indicate such norms. This position is required for upholding expression of rules on the international level whereas applying these norms to the Great Powers remains a problem to this date¹⁰⁸.

Constructivist Perspective

Constructivism as an approach to international relations focuses on the importance of ideas and social constructed identities and categorizations to the actions of actors. The case of the Ukraine-Russia conflict is useful to explain how historical memories, nationalisms and social constructs withstand the relations between countries and encourage their behaviors. The debating of the situation in Ukraine and Russia is fundamentally based on historical and national constructs. According to the Constructivism theory, it is possible to explain Russia's behavior such as capturing the Crimea and supporting separatist in the Eastern Ukraine. First, as it has already been mentioned, Russia has definite historical and cultural claims to Ukraine. This perception occurs based on the historical relationship and cultural similarities that are historicizing back to the medieval state of Kievan Rus'. Both of them consider this state as their historical and cultural antecedent¹⁰⁹. Russian authorities have continually presented Ukrainian shift to Western influence as a major loss to their nation's identity and history. Such constructivist interpretation sheds light on why Russia has been willing to endure prominent economic and diplomatic risks to regulate the Ukrainian affairs. It will be precise to state that both, the Ukrainian national identity and its desire for self-determination and erotization, belong to key factors that caused the conflict. The protests in Ukraine that started in the late 2013 and culminated in February 2014 and the ouster of the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich were largely motivated by Ukrainians' wants for distancing from Russia and identifying with Europe. These protests and the consequent political changes envision a different Ukrainian nation that is different from Russia, with a strong focus on the democratic values and the European Union¹¹⁰. Here, the constructivist approach underscores how these identity factors define the choices and behaviors of Ukraine's political actors and people on the street.

Thus, the Euromaidan movement has also demonstrated that social construction and collective meanings and references play an important role in the organisation of Politics. Pursuant to constructivism, social reality including the concept of national identity therefore is constructed. These actions were the expression of a new Ukrainian self-identity of statehood, democracy and European, instead of a Russian vector. This was not merely an ascribed identity grounded in historical interactions with the other side and transnational structures but was a performative identity that was done diplomatically, in media and performances⁶². Like it was observed that the international actors can give the understanding of the conflict, similarly the constructivism also can give the understanding to the conflict. The countries of the West, especially the members of the EU and the USA, have stood for and still support Ukraine politically and/or financially. This support cannot be on mere liberation of normative interests, but on democracy, and the sovereignty of nations. Therefore, intervention of the international community, including sanctions against Russia and for Ukraine, can be discussed within the framework of constructivist commitment to encouraging and supporting internationally recognized norms and the Ukrainian nation and state's particular individuality and independence. Besides, the fabric of the imaginary created by the Russian authorities about the events in Ukraine is also one of the factors in the confrontation.

¹⁰⁷ OSCE. (2020). OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

¹⁰⁸ Klabbers, J. (2017). International Law. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰⁹ Checkel, J. T. (1998). The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory. *World Politics*, 50(2), 324-348.

¹¹⁰ Haukkala, H. (2015). The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations. Routledge.

Putin's government has adopted the theme of defending the rights of the Russian-speaking and Russians in Ukraine against the Kiev authorities and the West, with whom Ukrainian nationalism is associated. It has also been used to rally domestic support for Russia's actions and policies as well as to explain its foreign policy¹¹¹. However, to comprehend how such stories are narrated and deployed in a bid to navigate domestic and international publics, one must acquaint oneself with constructivism.

Addressing the research questions

This section answers the research questions posed in the study by integrating the outcomes of the analysis of the Ukraine-Russia conflict. At first, what are the main drivers of the Ukraine-Russia conflict? In the case of the Ukraine-Russian conflict, the most significant factors are geopolitical, historical, and identity. On geopolitics, pro-Russian separatists want to retain Russia's control over its region and to stop NATO from extending its frontier into Ukraine is a reason. Traditionally, the historical relations between Russia and Ukraine that traced back to Kievan Rus are useful in explaining the conflict¹¹². The other category that is pertinent is identity-related variables. Two last phenomena that escalated the conflict are Ukraine's shift towards the European Union and the process of Ukrainian nationalization that influenced on Russian historical and cultural bond with Ukraine. The conflict is thus caused by the struggle for power, historical events as well explanations based on nationalistic sentiments. Secondly, how does the conflict in Ukraine reflect the characteristics of a proxy war? The confrontation between Ukraine and Russia shows several features of the proxy war. Thus, supplying the separatist forces with equipment, training and personnel, Russia reproduces the dynamics of historical proxy wars in Eastern Ukraine. The direct interference of The United States and NATO in supporting Ukraine also supports the proxy war theory because the latter aims at deposing and limiting the power of Russia⁷¹. The conflict can also be classified as containing aspects of hybrid warfare since Russia uses a combination of conventional and irregular warfare as well as employing cyber warfare, information warfare, and economic warfare. These methods correspond with the approaches employed in other proxy wars whereby the main belligerents do not directly fight to attain their strategic goals. Third, what are the global implications of the Ukraine-Russia conflict? The global impact of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia can be discussed in many aspects. In geopolitical terms the change of side has dramatically affected international alignments and gains to sum up the result of the war was the change of side thus altering the balance of power. Russia in the meantime has consolidated cooperation with China and other countries that does not belong to the western alliance map and eastern European countries on the other hand have entrenched their cooperation with NATO and United States²². The conflict has also questioned the principles of the international relations and cooperation, and state and international law, with references to sovereignty and non-integration. Moscow's actions in Ukraine are a blatant violation of UN Charter and other documents; although, Klabbers noted that this is a somewhat predictable move that may predict future aggressive conduct¹⁰⁰. As it stands, economically, the adversarial conflict has pulled the plug on global economy especially the energy and agricultural sectors. The application of sanctions and counter-sanctions have affected trade and investments and thus globalization. This conflict brings out the frailty of supply chain across the world and the integration of global markets.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This paper posits that in order to adequately address conflict situations like the Ukraine-Russia crisis, there is a need to reinforce the roles of international law and international institutions in global relations. Governments and other decision-makers together with international partners should provide more funds to international organizations such as UN and OSCE to better enforce the norms accepted worldwide. Developing these institutions may eliminate assertive state practice and foster the usage of diplomacy to solve conflicts. This reinforcement therefore is not a mere theoretical approach to the question of how to avoid future wars since there is sufficient and elaborate international law. Finally, regarding the military side, it is critical for NATO and the Western partners to further build up Ukraine's defenses. Building up of military threat entails arming Ukraine with better equipment, technology and spy services. This strategy provides Moscow with the signal that certain

¹¹¹ Toal, G. (2017). *Near Abroad: Putin, the West, and the Contest Over Ukraine and the Caucasus*. Oxford University Press.

¹¹² Sakwa, R. (2015). *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. I.B. Tauris.

actions will come with upright repercussions. Thus, effective deterrence can deter additional actions from Russia by demonstrating to Moscow that the price of aggression is too high. Other measures that are indispensable include the economic sanctions and diplomatic outcomes. Therefore, continuation and escalation are called for given the Russian aggression, especially in energy, finance, and military-related sanctions. Measures undermine Russia economically and diplomatically making it rethink its actions. Sanctions should be complemented by the process of giving a diplomatic isolation to Russia that is going to decrease an influence of this country on the world scene¹⁶.

Another important recommendation is support of Ukraine political and economic transformations. Foreign partners should support Ukraine focusing on the issues concerning the improvement of the governing system, fighting with corruption, and economic advancement. The IMF and EU can become the vital agents of such changes, as well as the support for Ukraine against other threats. Stabilizing Ukraine from within also creates a buffer to Putin and has the effect of less influence on Ukraine's internal affairs. On this basis, humanitarian aid is necessary for the consequences of the conflict for civilians. Thus, the health care or food aid and humanitarian assistance should be delivered to Internally Displaced Persons by the International organizations and NGOs. As they are humanitarian based they also help in averting the further decline of humanitarian situation in the affected region and thus they also partake in the general cause of supporting peace by relieving the suffering of the citizens. As a result, diplomatic style should be encouraged and brought back to its fundamental practice of conflict solving. Thus, it is crucial to attempt to return to the Minsk process or open new tracks for a negotiation process. Interestingly, only the treaty making multilateral negotiations of the representatives of Ukraine, Russia EU and the US do long term good. Maintaining interactions through diplomacy is important in regulating and in fact reduces the degree of hostility²⁴. Various peace supporting operations carried out by the UN or OSCE can also turn into impressive coordination. In general, international mediation can make the disputants address each other and thus decrease hostility and while, peacekeeping forces can report that the cease-fire has been complied with and can discourage the parties from continued belligerence. They also help in the fulfilling of agreements also do set in place the environment required for sustainable peace. This implies that, some awareness programs that will assist in the passing of information concerning the security frameworks in Eastern Europe will also assist in the prevention as well as management of conflicts. The programs such as the Black Sea Cooperation and the Eastern Partnership provide initiation of political dialogue, integration and stabilization of the region. They enhance cooperation on the social threats in matters concerning, for instance, organized crime, and terrorism to enhance the stability of the area. In other words, a powerful reinforcement of the international law along with the inclusion of the military force, economic sanctions, internal reforms, humanitarian aid, diplomacy, and regional security approaches would be quite a beneficial number of measures for the Ukraine-Russia conflict and for none merging of the new cold war. All of these strategies to build an approach to multiple and diversity of geopolitical threats and issues is important.

CONCLUSION

The conflict in Ukraine Russia is a strategic issue that cannot be put in a simple category since its effect is felt across in the region at large as well as across the world. By analyzing and synthesizing historical feelings of injustice as well as cultural and political related issues in addition to the stakeholders' self-interests, the conflict can be seen as multi-faceted. The analysis of the theoretical viewpoints based on realism, liberalism, and constructivism provides the picture of the possible processes and motives influencing the actions of Ukraine and Russia. The realist theory can be applied to the explanation of the self-interests that Russia had on taking over Crimea and support to rebellion in Eastern Ukraine. Thus, the key focus from the liberal viewpoint is made of the international organization, the sanctions, diplomatic means, and all other things connected with their participation. Hence, from the constructivism perspective, one is able to understand the roles of national identity, history, and cultural frames of the participants. Such measures as expenditures on the military and the effects of the war on the economy provide more numerical ratings and proofs of the extensive preparations and costs of the war. The imaginary regression carried out to predict the impact of such parameters as military aid on the conflict intensity revealed that interventions might be conducive to the growth of hostility or help reduce tendencies toward it. On the strategies for policy makers, it is underlined that they should focus on a solid mixture of military threat, economic sanctions, political and economic changes in Ukraine, and diplomatic activities. For sustainability in international criminal justice, following measures should be taken: augmenting the character

and influence of the international law and the international organizations, advocating humanitarian aid and, at the same time, dealing with the causes of the conflict in question. Therefore, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia are very informative when it comes to examining the modern post-Cold War geopolitics and it can be observed that there are some tendencies that may indicate the new Cold War era. Therefore, the findings of this research are beneficial for the international actors and policymakers, especially in identifying conflict and understanding how best to address it and achieve diplomatic relations. Appreciation and management of these factors of conflict is crucial in achievement of the goal of sustainable and desired stability and peace in the region and other places.