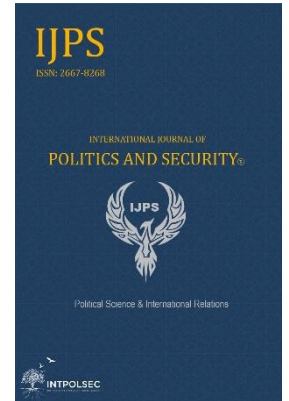


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Kievan Rus: A Tumultuous Journey Ended With War

Sanjay Kumar PRADHAN*

Abstract

Russia's "Special Military Operation" against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 can be counted as the biggest ever war in Europe since World War II. The rationale of the operation, as Russian President Vladimir Putin asserts, is that Russia even could not stay safe, prosper and survive with a NATO-leaning Ukraine. Nevertheless, the present-day war is a culmination of several factors which have set the stage for a more bitter outcome between Russia and Ukraine soon. The paper attempts at analysing how the present-day Russia-Ukraine war is a culmination of conflicting claims and interests of the two countries-Russia and Ukraine, starting from Kievan Rus, and how the west dragged Moscow into a deadly war with Kyiv. In the entire gamut of analysis, Ukraine's intertwined history and the Russian claims, NATO expansion, resurgent Russia, and oscillating Ukrainian domestic politics hinged on east-west leanings, all together have been taken into account to unfold the current crisis in a wider spectrum.

Keywords: NATO expansion, Russia, Ukraine, Russia-Ukraine War, Kievan Rus.

1. Introduction

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has raised many issues in global geopolitics and entangled Europe, America, and NATO altogether in the war. Before the war, various diplomatic channels had been open to reduce tension and stop the war, but deadlocks in various negotiations on the issue of Ukraine's possible membership in NATO brought both countries to the verge of war. The six-month war has brought far-reaching implications and immediate outcomes-starting from migration to human losses and sufferings, food supply disruption, and energy crisis. Although Ukraine's quest for NATO membership has turned into an immediate cause of war yet there have been various factors in the Russian-Ukraine relationship which have almost contributed equally to the outbreak of war that could be attributed to the bitter history of Kievan Rus, the resurgence of Russia, and divided loyalty in Ukraine. But, in most of the literature, the NATO expansion and Ukraine's urge for its membership only surface in the present-day war crisis. So the research paper will fill this gap and will highlight other crucial factors, as mentioned above, which have shaped uneasy relationships and conflicting pursuits between the two countries. Taking into account all these aspects, the paper attempts to testify to the hypothesis that the conflicting relations in past, expansion of NATO (specifically

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eastward), the rise of Russia and its quest for a global role, fragmented domestic politics, and loyalty in Ukraine, all together have culminated into the present day war between the two countries. The research has been carried out through descriptive and analytical methods with review works of secondary sources. The research also refereed primary sources of data collected online from the websites of various institutions and governments for a thorough understanding and analysis of the facts and issues which finally culminated in the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022.

2. An Intertwined History

The crux of the present crisis goes back to the first Slavic state of Kievan Rus¹ in the 9th century, where Kyiv was the capital of this empire. Further, parts of Belarus integrated into the Kievan Rus on the river banks of Dnieper. Hence, Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarussians drew their lineage from this Slavic state. About 1,100 years ago, the mighty Kievan Rus conquered a large portion of Eastern Europe under the rule of Grand Prince Volodimer who ruled the empire from 980AD to 1015AD.² But, gradually the mighty empire became susceptible to competing foreign rulers. The Mongol rulers captured eastern Kievan Rus during the 13th century, and the Polish-Lithuanian armies captured the western Kievan Rus of Ukraine in the 16th century. In the seventeenth century, a war between Polish-Lithuanian, on one hand, and Russia, on the other, brought Ukraine to the eastern part of the Dnieper river under the rule of Tsarist Russia. The eastern part of Dnieper was identified as "Left Bank Ukraine"-ruled by Tsarist Russia, and the western part of Dnieper was recognized as "Right Bank Ukraine"-ruled by Polish-Lithuania.³ But in the late 18th century, the right bank (western) of Dnieper Ukraine was recaptured by Russia. In the 19th century, Russia was the most powerful regional political unit, followed by Ukraine, in the entire Russian empire.

During the early years (1914-1915) of World War-I, the aggressiveness between Russia and Austria-Hungary forces had ramifications for the Ukrainians. As the Russian troops advanced into Galicia of western Ukraine and Southeastern Poland, the retreating Austria-Hungary soldiers executed suspected pro-Russian Ukrainians. After

¹ Kievan Rus is also called Kyivan Rus and the capital Kyiv today was called Kiev in the past.

² M. Mirovalev, "Russia and Ukraine conflict explained: What you need to know? 16.12.2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/16/what-you-should-know-about-the-conflict-between-russia-ukraine>, Access Date: 11.05.2022.

³ "The Cossacks, Right & Left Bank Ukraine", <https://www.tidridge.com>, Access Date: 04.05.2022.



capturing Galicia in 1915, the Tsarist rulers took steps for the total incorporation of Ukraine into Russia.⁴Whatsoever, during World War-I western Ukraine turned into a theatre of aggressive operations of these two powers and thus suffered great depredation. In the inter-war period, Poland-occupied Ukraine (Polish-Ukraine) had an offensive campaign against Ukraine's ruler Petlyura. But, the counter-offensive of the Soviet Bolsheviks pushed them out of Warsaw. In October 1920 Poland made a ceasefire with the Soviet government, and in March 1921 both the Polish and Soviet governments concluded the Treaty of Riga. Accordingly, Poland recognized Soviet Ukraine which was largely confined to eastern Ukraine and Poland retained western Ukraine.⁵However, the Bolshevik offensive did not end here and there was protest as well against frequent Soviet assaults on western Ukraine. The civil war in Ukraine broke out against the Russian government's full control of Ukraine. But Ukraine finally merged with Communist Soviet Union in 1922.⁶The outbreak of World War II was another painful journey for the Ukrainians where the Nazi forces caused horrific holocausts. About eight million Ukrainians lost their lives and two million Jews were executed.⁷But, after world war ii and during the cold war, Ukraine had a "boosted" status within the Soviet Union, an arch-rival of the United States, one of the founding members of the UN, and a nominal administrative unit within the Soviet Union. It had a Defence industry, largely agricultural land, and housed many Soviet arsenals. Crucially, Leonid Brezhnev, a Ukrainian, was the President of the Soviet Union from 1964 to 1982.

The legacies of Russian rule and its socio-economic structures have well set lasting fault lines within and outside Ukraine today. As eastern Ukraine fall under Russian control much before western Ukraine, citizens in the former have stronger language and socio-cultural ties with Russia and are more likely to support Russian-leaning Ukrainian leaders. Contrary to it, the western Ukrainians have spent centuries of rule under various European powers like Polish-Lithuania and the Austro-Hungarian kingdom and as a consequence, the

⁴"Battle of Galicia", *History Central*, <https://www.historycentral.com/ww1/Galicia.html>, Access Date: 11.03.2022

⁵"History of Ukraine", <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/Ukraine-in-the-interwar-period>, Access Date: 06.05.2022.

⁶E. Conant, "Russia and Ukraine: the tangled history that connects—and divides—they", 19 2. 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/russia-and-ukraine-the-tangled-history-that-connects-and-divides-them>, Access Date: 08.03.2022.

⁷ O. Lutsevych, and J. Wallace, "Ukraine-Russia relations", 24.03.2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/11/ukraine-russia-relations>, Access Date: 07.04.2022.



western Ukrainians tended their support more for the Western and west-leaning Ukrainian political leaders. While the east Ukrainians are more of Orthodox thought and Russian-speaking, the west Ukrainians are more of Catholic thought and Ukrainian-speaking. On the ecological counts, politics is also shaped- the north and western parts are largely forest regions whereas eastern Ukraine is a highly fertile steppe region and industrialized that bore a striking resemblance in the 2004 and 2010 elections, where the electoral politics was highly polarised. Therefore, uniting the country has become a litmus test. This testifies to what Steven Pifer, the former ambassador of the US to Ukraine, said, “The sense of Ukrainian nationalism is not as deep in the east as it is in the west”.⁸The transition in Ukraine from monarchy to socialism and liberalism has been painful and chaotic, and the “biggest divide after all these factors is between those who view the Russian imperial and Soviet rule more sympathetically versus those who see them as a tragedy”.⁹A large number of Ukrainians who have been born after 1991, called as “Born Free Generation”, are much enthusiastic to drift away from the Russian influence and linkages. Russia, on the other way, and in recent years, has perceived the disintegration of the Soviet Union as the “fall of historical Russia”, and the present-day Russian and Ukrainian identities are “one people” and “a single whole” under “Russian civilization” that includes neighboring states Belarus as well, as claimed by Moscow.¹⁰It implies the views that the Putin government had long expressed for prioritizing a deep-rooted unity and integrity among the Eastern Slavs with an intention of common destiny. As a whole, Moscow has followed a policy based on its assumption that the national identities of these two countries are artificial and thus fragile.¹¹Although Belarus is well accommodated to the civilizational claims, Ukraine rejects Moscow’s claim of “Ukraine never had a stable tradition of genuine statehood”.¹²At this juncture, the west has accommodated Ukraine as a part of their

⁸“The situation of Ukraine as a crisis”, <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/The-Situation-Of-Ukraine-As-A-Crisis-F3HZ4BW3PT8X>.

⁹E. Conant, “Russia and Ukraine: the tangled history that connects—and divides—they”, 19.02.2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/russia-and-ukraine-the-tangled-history-that-connects-and-divides-them>, Access Date: 08.03.2022.

¹⁰M. Mirovalev, “Russia and Ukraine conflict explained: What you need to know? 16.12.2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/16/what-you-should-know-about-the-conflict-between-russia-ukraine>, Access Date: 11.05.2022.

¹¹A. Wilson, “Rival Versions of the East Slavic Idea in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus”, in Slatter, W. and Wilson, A. (Eds). *The Legacy of the Soviet Union*, 39-60, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

¹²V. Putin, “Ukraine never had a tradition of genuine statehood”, 21.02.2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-ukraine-never-had-a-tradition-of-genuine-statehood-1.4808469>, Access Date: 03.05.2022.



“anti-Russian plot.”¹³Criticising the role of the west in the formation of independent Ukraine, Moscow hinges, “Ukraine never had stable traditions of real statehood”.¹⁴Declaring Special Military Operation on 24 February, Vladimir Putin told to the Russian media that his target was to “demilitarise” and “de-Nazify Ukraine”.¹⁵However, this campaign of Russia, in reality, is nothing but to make a fundamental transformation that is from the present day “Ukrainify” policy of Kyiv to “Russify” identity of Moscow.

3. NATO expansion- a security challenge to Moscow:

The arguments that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)’s expansion is a “fateful error”¹⁶and Ukraine is “West’s Fault”¹⁷, as pronounced by the diplomat and realist thinker George F. Kennan and the neo-realist scholar John Joseph Mearsheimer, resounds well how the NATO had provoked Russia for a risky game in Ukraine. The sharpest criticism made by the Russian Vladimir Putin on NATO at the Munich Security Conference, 2007, well reflected the myopia of the west that was imposed on Russia- “NATO expansion and its frontline forces on our borders represent a serious provocation and we have right to ask against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?”¹⁸The decades-long warning by the leaders, diplomats, and scholars all over the world against the very existence and expansion of NATO was to no avail to the successive Presidents of the US, which finally culminated in the ugly face of the Russia-Ukraine war. All the same, the tensions between Russia and NATO have roots back in concerns raised by Mikhail Gorbachev, the former President of the Soviet Union, in the long back. Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US authorities had discussed Gorbachev only in the context of the reunification of East Germany with West Germany and

¹³ J. Mankoff, “Russia’s War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict”, 22.04.2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-war-ukraine-identity-history-and-conflict>, Access Date: 19.05.2022.

¹⁴ “Address by the President of the Russian Federation”, 21.02.2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/President/news/67828>, Access Date: 19.03.2022.

¹⁵ “Demilitarise and denazify: How Vladimir Putin justifies Russia’s invasion of Ukraine”, 24.02.2022, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/demilitarise-and-denazify-how-vladimir-putin-justifies-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-10405181.html>, Access Date: 28.03.2022.

¹⁶ G. F. Kennan, “A Fateful Error”, 5. 2. 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/05/opinion/a-fateful-error.html>, Access Date: 28.04.2022.

¹⁷ J. J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin”, 2014, <https://www.mearsheimer.com>, Access Date: 22.05.2022.

¹⁸ T. G. Carpenter, “Did Putin’s 2007 Munich Speech Predict the Ukraine Crisis?”, 24.01.2022, <https://www.cato.org/commentary/did-putins-2007-munich-speech-predict-ukraine-crisis#>, Access Date: 28.02.2022.



its membership in NATO with one identity of Germany, and it assured Moscow that there will be no further eastwards expansion of NATO. But in the later parts of the 1990s, its expansion spread to newly independent Soviet countries-without any discussion with the Russian counterparts and concerns of Moscow. Expansion continued relentlessly, crucially in the backyard of Russia and the European nations which had once been under the Soviets Union-starting from Poland in 1999.¹⁹ Reacting to these developments and reiterating to Gorbachev, President Putin reminds the west how it assured Moscow "not an inch to the east".²⁰

Not only Russia and the global community, to a large extent, opposed NATO but also crucially a host of American strategists echoed the sentiments and concerns of the Russians over NATO. Apart from George F. Kennan and John Joseph Mearsheimer, as argued above, Strobe Talbott, the former Deputy Secretary of State of the USA during the Bill Clinton Administration, viewed, "For the Russians, NATO expansion is a vestige of the Cold War".²¹ In 1997, fifty prominent foreign policy experts of the US signed an Open Letter to President Bill Clinton calling the American effort of NATO expansion "a policy error of historic proportion".²² Reacting to the NATO expansion plan of President Bill Clinton, and President George W. Bush's Offer for Ukrainian membership in 2008, William J. Burns, the present Director of CIA, once said, "the expansion steps have been "premature at best, needlessly provocative at worst, hostility across Russia and brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite".²³ According to Robert M. Gates, the Defense Secretary during George W. Bush and Barack Obama administration, "Trying to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO is truly

¹⁹Poland was the first country of the former Soviet Union to join NATO (1999), followed by Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in 2004. The NATO included Poland with a priority as it was iconic centre of Warsaw Pact of Communist bloc. Expansion also includes the east European and central European countries-some of them are bordering to Russia or Black Sea that connects the Russian territory. If compared to Cold War (16 members), the post-cold war era (14 members) period testifies the expansion of Alliance near equal to the pre-1991 period.

²⁰K. Spohr, "Exposing the myth of Western betrayal of Russia over NATO's eastern enlargement", 02.03.2022, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/exposing-the-myth-of-western-betrayal-of-russia/>, Access Date: 12.05.2022.

²¹T. G. Carpenter, "Many predicted NATO expansion would lead to war. Those warnings were ignored", 28.02.2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/28/nato-expansion-war-russia-ukraine>, Access Date: 03.3.2022.

²²B. Dogra, "Prospects of World Peace Damaged by Eastward Expansion of NATO", 2022, <https://countercurrents.org/2022/04/prospects-of-world-peace-damaged-by-eastward-expansion-of-nato/>, Access Date: 03.05.2022.

²³R. Suny, "Ukraine war follows decades of warnings that NATO expansion into Eastern Europe could provoke Russia", 28. 2. 2022, <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-follows-decades-of-warnings-that-nato-expansion-into-eastern-europe-could-provoke-russia-177999>, Access Date: 27.03.2022.



overreaching. This move is a case of recklessly ignoring what the Russians consider their vital national interests”.²⁴In a more critical voice, Steven Pifer, the American ambassador to Ukraine during Bill Clinton, said, “The 2008 move of US was a mistake. It drove the Russians nuts, created expectations in Kyiv and Tbilisi, which then were never met, and thus made the whole situation a complicated one.”²⁵Unfortunately, the successive American Presidents turned a deaf ear to the policymakers and strategic analysts- within and outside America, and its ‘ open-door’ policy still offers an option for the nations to choose the Alliance. The intense debate on Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Ukraine in recent years provoked Kremlin more than before.

It is obvious that the 2008 plan of NATO to enroll Georgia and Ukraine posed a direct and immediate security threat to Moscow as these countries have been passing through anti-Russia and pro-Europe stances. As Russia is economically better, militarily stronger, and politically assertive today than in the 1990s and its complaints against NATO expansion have become more vociferous than before. Kremlin consistently invoked the specter of US ballistic missiles and the combat forces in its backyard-Ukraine. In 2016, NATO declared that it would position four battalions in the Eastern parts of Europe- rotating through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. In 2017, America also stationed its tank brigades in Poland to bolster NATO’s presence there. All these developments, according to Moscow, are Cold War legacies to avenge Russia by disintegrating it further.²⁶Some factors have substantiated Moscow’s concern. First, when the Cold War is over and Warsaw Pact is dismantled, then what is the rationality of continuing NATO? Second, when Russia is not a security concern to Europe, then on what rationality NATO is expanding its membership to the other European countries, which have been in the backyard of Russia? Third, when Russia is unreachable to the US on many counts, then how Russia is a potential threat to the US or even Europe? Why NATO is so much obsessed with Ukraine? Finding no convincing answer and response from the US on these issues, in December 2021, Russia handed the US and NATO its

²⁴ R. M. Gates, “Quotes”, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/6257.Robert_M_Gates, Access Date: 17.04.2022.

²⁵J. Kirby and J. Guyer, “The increasingly complicated Russia-Ukraine crisis, explained”, 23.02.2022, <https://www.vox.com/22917719/russia-ukraine-invasion-border-crisis-nato-explained>, Access Date: 25.04.2022.

²⁶Kirby, “Why has Russia invaded Ukraine and what does Putin want?”, 09.05.2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56720589>, Access Date: 22.05.2022.



list of “legally binding security guarantees” in writing, such as: First, NATO must turn back to 1997 and overturn its eastward expansion. Second, the removal of NATO’s troops and military infrastructure and establishments from its member countries which have joined it since 1997. Third, is the non-deployment of “strike weapons” near the Russian borders. Fourth, no membership for Ukraine in NATO.²⁷Crucially, the last demand was the most pivotal and immediate bargain that Moscow put forward. At this juncture, both the US and NATO, in January 2022, tried to negotiate with Russia in Geneva, but there was no positive outcome. Instead, NATO put forth a new arms control guarantee in which Russia wasn’t interested, “the US ignored its key demands and escalating with new ones”.²⁸The US and NATO further tried to convince Russia that they had not signed any deal with Ukraine, yet they failed to assure Russia that Ukraine will not be a NATO member-even in the future.

Ukraine today has turned into an informal constituent of the NATO alliance without being a formal member. In 2018, the US Congress approved delivery of anti-tank ammunition to Kyiv-the first supply of deadly weaponry to the country since the Russia-Ukraine skirmish in 2014. Further, in 2018 Ukraine joined the US and seven other NATO countries, although not under the banner of NATO, for a large-scale air exercise in western Ukraine.²⁹In January 2021, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky urged American President Joe Biden to “let Ukraine join NATO”³⁰and in September 2021, NATO conducted a joint military exercise with Kyiv code-named “RAPID TRIDENT-2021”.³¹The bilateral security relations between NATO’s leading country the USA and NATO aspirant Ukraine have also been intensified. In 2021, Kyiv turned into the fourth largest recipient of US military funding, and US-Ukraine intelligence sharing has been multiplied-keeping an eagle

²⁷ Roth, A. Russia issues list of demands it says must be met to lower tensions in Europe”, 17.12.2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/17/russia-issues-list-demands-tensions-europe-ukraine-nato>, Access Date: 19.04.2022.

²⁸ Kirby, “Why has Russia invaded Ukraine and what does Putin want?”, 09.05.2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56720589>, Access Date: 22.05.2022.

²⁹ M. Levin, “Conflict in Ukraine. Center for Preventive Action, 6. 5. 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine>, Access Date: 17.05.2022.

³⁰ “Why Did Russia Invade Ukraine? The Conflict Explained in 10 Points”, 25.02.2022, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/why-did-russia-invade-ukraine-the-conflict-explained-in-5-points-2786200>, Access Date: 14.03.2022.

³¹ “Ukraine holds military drills with U.S. forces, NATO allies”, 20.09.2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/ukraine-holds-military-drills-with-us-forces-nato-allies-2021-09-20/>, Access Date: 02.04.2022.



eye on Russian activities across the region.³²All of these implied that one day Ukraine might join NATO. The US, somehow, tried to convince Moscow, as Biden said, “likelihood of Ukraine joining NATO in the near term is not very likely” although did not rule out its membership in the future.³³The reality is that the membership of Ukraine at any time will pose a severe security threat to Moscow as Russia and Ukraine have territorial, political, and security issues, where Ukraine may be used by NATO to provoke Russia into a war or Ukraine may get embroiled with Russia that will invite NATO for a war against Moscow, which will be devastating for Russian sovereignty. This is evident from the fact that Article- 5 of NATO asserts that “any attack against one member of NATO is an attack against all, and thus a collective response to the aggression”.³⁴Taking into account these concerns and justifying military operation in Ukraine, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, said, "There was no other way of explaining to the west that dragging Ukraine into NATO was a criminal act."³⁵ It is an obvious fact that the Ukraine war followed decades of forewarnings, within and outside the US, on NATO expansion.³⁶

4. Resurgent Russia-a Global Power to Reckon With!

In the initial days of Post-Soviet Russia, Moscow was not in confrontation with the west. Even discussion underwent on the possibility of Russian membership in NATO.³⁷ But, the “Colour Revolutions”³⁸ in the late 1990s and early 2010s went contrary to their enhanced

³² “Ukraine holds military drills with U.S. forces, NATO allies”, 20.09.2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/ukraine-holds-military-drills-with-us-forces-nato-allies-2021-09-20/>, Access Date: 02.04.2022.

³³ “Biden says likelihood of Ukraine joining NATO in near term is ‘not very likely’”, 20.01.2022, <https://globalnews.ca/video/8524725/biden-says-likelihood-of-ukraine-joining-nato-in-near-term-is-not-very-likely>, Access Date: 13.05.2022.

³⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. “NATO on the Map”, <https://www.nato.int/nato-on-the-map/#lat=11.574241956228606&lon=82.84423190180028&zoom=-1&layer=1>, Access Date: 18. 4. 2022.

³⁵ Rosenberg, S. “Lavrov: Russia is not squeaky clean and not ashamed”, 17.06.2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61825525>, Access Date: 07.07. 2022.

³⁶Suny, R., “Ukraine war follows decades of warnings that NATO expansion into Eastern Europe could provoke Russia”, 28. 2. 2022, <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-follows-decades-of-warnings-that-nato-expansion-into-eastern-europe-could-provoke-russia-177999>, Access Date: 27.03.2022.

³⁷ D. Bechev, “Resurgent Russia: Myth and reality”, 17.02.2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/2/17/resurgent-russia-myth-and-reality>, AccessDate: 12.03.2022

³⁸ “Colour Revolution” implies the revolutions that occurred in the post-communist central and eastern Europe and central Asian countries against the “corrupt” and “authoritarian” governments for restoration and promotion of democracy. During these protests and revolutions all adopted a specific colour or flower as their symbol. These incidents happened in Yugoslavia (especially Serbia’s Bulldozer Revolution, 2000), Georgia (Rose Revolution, 2003), Ukraine (Orange revolution, 2004) and Kyrgyzstan (Tulip Revolution, 2005)., Ukraine (Orange revolution, 2004) and Kyrgyzstan (Tulip Revolution, 2005). Moscow alleged that all these revolution had been engineered by



relationship. The Colour Revolutions had overthrown the Pro-Soviet or Pro-Russian governments in central Asia and eastern and central Europe.³⁹ Reacting to the western role in various Colour Revolutions, Vladimir Putin at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 unleashed a scathing outburst against the west, mainly the US, for trying to enforce its dictates in global politics. "Unilateral, often illegitimate, actions haven't solved a single problem; they have generated new human tragedies and sources of tension".⁴⁰ The speech drew an instant comparison to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's "Shoe-banging" incident at the UN in 1960 which saw Khrushchev's aggressive outburst against western imperialism and the "puppet" role of the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in protecting western interests.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Vladimir Putin flexed his muscle on NATO's membership offer to Georgia and Ukraine. Russia sent its troops to South Ossetia to flush out Georgian troops as US-backed Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili wanted to end the autonomy of this breakaway territory- where the Russian troops had already been stationed as a peacekeeping force under a mandate.⁴² Simultaneously, Russia opened up a new front in Georgia by backing pro-Russian separatist rebels in Abkhazia. Likewise, in Ukraine, Russia conducted a military offensive in Crimea in 2014 and integrated the territory with Russia through a referendum, and backed pro-Russian rebels in Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine that reminded the strategies that the Kremlin had resorted against Georgia by backing the rebels of Abkhazia. So, Russia which considered the US, EU, and NATO difficult partners in the past, counted them as full-fledged adversaries.⁴³ Reacting to Russia's potential and emerging role vis-a-vis the west in the Georgian and Ukrainian incidents, former American President Barack Obama had a cautious role not to enrage Kremlin "These are the examples where we have to be very clear about what constitutes our core interest

anti-Russian plots of CIA, acting through so-called "democracy promoting" NGOs of the west and thus export of revolution, in, S. K. Pradhan, "Russia-US Relationship in the Post Cold War Era: Can it be reset? *Journal of Peace Studies* 18, no. 3 & 4, (2011): 27-30.

³⁹ S. K. Pradhan, "Russia-US Relationship in the Post Cold War Era: Can it be reset? *Journal of Peace Studies*, December, 18, no. 3 & 4, (2011): 27-30.

⁴⁰ G. Feifer, "Overview: Moscow Flexes Political Muscle", 05.03.2007, <https://www.npr.org/2007/03/05/7697684/overview-moscow-flexes-political-muscle>, Access Date: 20.05.2022.

⁴¹ G. Feifer, "Overview: Moscow Flexes Political Muscle", 05.03.2007, <https://www.npr.org/2007/03/05/7697684/overview-moscow-flexes-political-muscle>, Access Date: 20.05.2022.

⁴² Another objective of Moscow was to sketch a strategic line that NATO drawn in Kosovo in the 1990s.

⁴³ D. Bechev, "Resurgent Russia: Myth and reality", 17.02.2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/2/17/resurgent-russia-myth-and-reality>, AccessDate: 12.03.2022



today”.⁴⁴ However, the moderate approach of Obama and the friendly gesture of Donald Trump were not in tune with George W. Bush in past and Joe Biden today who has not gone into depth about the repercussions. Nevertheless, the west and NATO promise and assure the non-NATO countries for their side; but in reality, it is not able to take a confrontation with mighty Russia.

The economic boom of Russia, especially during Putin, has provided teeth to Moscow’s global ambitions. Russia before the Ukraine war was a powerful economy characterized by an oil boom; possessed the third largest foreign currency reserves in the world; had a stabilized fund worth of 160 billion dollars; an economic growth rate of 7 to 8 percent; and Europe's biggest market.⁴⁵ Russia has graduated from bystander to leading “power broker” in regional and global politics. Moscow recently hosted Turkey and Iran for a roadmap (Astana Process) to the American decision to pull its troops out of Syria.⁴⁶ Further, Russia has benefited by flexing its role and bringing the conflicts to a low level in west Asia by effectively cooperating and coordinating with mutually antagonistic players. The continuation of Nicolas Maduro's government in power in Venezuela with the major support of Russia is an indication of Russia’s rising power beyond Asia and Europe. The oil and natural gas have endowed Russia with geopolitical mileage. Europe consumes more than 40 percent of Russian energy in its total energy imports; of which Germany is the largest buyer.⁴⁷ Not only in Europe but the entire world Russian energy is taking a headway and its most recent “Asia Pivot” approach has many takers in Asia-including major energy trading partners India and China.⁴⁸ In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, the western nations have imposed sanctions on Russia on various counts but no visible sanctions on the Russian oil and Natural gas sectors because they realize well that Russian energy is vital to run their economy. The OPEC+ is led by Russia which brings the OPEC domination to an edge. Russia is both an energy player and an energy power. As an energy player, it is one of the core countries to shape the energy market, and as

⁴⁴ A. S. Weiss and E. Rumer, “Reckoning With a Resurgent Russia”, 09.09.2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/09/09/reckoning-with-resurgent-russia-pub-82505>, Access Date: 18.06.2022.

⁴⁵ P. Stobdan, “Resurgence of Russia”, 27.08.2008, <https://idsa.in/event/theResurgenceofRussia>, Access Date: 14. 4. 2022.

⁴⁶ “Syria: the Astana peace process”, 05.09.2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20180905-syria-astana-peace-process>, Access Date: 25.04.2022.

⁴⁷ D. Bechev, “Resurgent Russia: Myth and reality”, 17.02.2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/2/17/resurgent-russia-myth-and-reality>, AccessDate: 12.03.2022

⁴⁸ S. K. Pradhan, “Indo-Russian Energy Cooperation: Geopolitics in a Fluid Matrix”, *Economic & Political Weekly* LIII, no. 6, (2018): 53-59



an energy power, it uses oil as a tool to punish the adversary (Ukraine in past, and mostly Europe today) and reward the strategic partners (India and China). Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) seem to harbingers a new global order where emergent and non-western power centers are set for a new global order based on economic and security considerations. The BRICS Bank has proved as a non-western financial alternative. Russia's latest move toward Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) which was established in 2014 is an attempt to decrease Europe's influences in its backyard. While the US attempts at shaping the Black Sea region, Russia has emerged as Black Sea Power. While the US and most of the NATO members have been lagging on the Arctic security front, Russia has kept its Arctic Command operational.⁴⁹ Russia also well knows that the future maritime trade route between North Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean is the North West Passage which will largely pass through the vast stretch of northern Russian territory in the Arctic. Hence Russia is setting the tune beforehand to have maximum leverage on this potential and future trade route that will broadly and effectively connect Europe, the USA, and their allies.⁵⁰

Assertive Vladimir Putin has well-illustrated disintegration of the Soviet Union as the “greatest catastrophe” of the 20th century that deprived Russia of its legitimate claims in global politics.⁵¹ He was shocked to see that one-third of Soviet territory and a half of the population have been lost due to its collapse. Disintegration and a poor economy in the 1990s made Russia more susceptible to rival powers. So America and its NATO allies well exploited the situation in the 1990s expanded NATO and reshaped the world order without consulting and considering Russia's core interests. But buoyed by the economic boom and the determined leadership, Moscow once again has flexed its muscles and turned assertive in global geopolitics to regain its lost glory. The Russian strategic policymakers largely believe- “Russia is back and Putin is in charge”.⁵² His radical nationalist policy and explicit goals after assuming power in 2000 have been how to enhance the Russian economy and reversal of west's leverage.⁵³ Former Russian

⁴⁹ S. K. Pradhan, *India's Quest for Energy through Oil and Natural Gas: Trade and Investment, Geopolitics, and Security*, (Singapore: Springer, 2020).

⁵⁰ S. K. Pradhan, *India's Quest for Energy through Oil and Natural Gas: Trade and Investment, Geopolitics, and Security*, (Singapore: Springer, 2020).

⁵¹ D. Bilefsky, R. Pérez-Peña and E. Nagourney, “The Roots of the Ukraine War: How the Crisis Developed”, 21. 4. 022, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-europe.html>, Access Date: 28.04.2022

⁵² McAllister, J. F. O. “Russia's New World Order”, *Time* 168, no. 2, (2007): 17-25

⁵³ M. Hofmann, “US foreign policy towards the Russian Federation: The Constrained Empire”, 2006, <https://www.grin.com>, Access Date: 09.05. 2022.



President Dmitry Medvedev's statement in 2009 sent a clear signal to the west that Russia has a "Zone of Privileged Influence", and warned that any pursuance of pro-western policy in its backyard was "dangerous".⁵⁴ While addressing the Russian public, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, sent a blunt warning to his American counterpart Condoleezza Rice, "the American deployment of missiles in Europe could turn the continent into a Powder Keg". Reiterating Lavrov, Putin sent a clear message in 2010, "we may set our missiles on the moon, but before we get to that we would not lose a chance for agreement because you implementing your plans and imposing on us".⁵⁵ Further, the Russian leaders also have well-cultured Russian public opinion and used propaganda to garner national and international support for Russia's foreign policy objectives. Most Russians feel antipathy and humiliation caused by the new global order set by the west. Therefore, Russians out rightly support Putin in dealing with the west, including Ukraine.⁵⁶ Not only President Putin and the Russian public, but even the sharpest critics of Putin in Russia have also considered NATO expansion towards Ukraine as a direct challenge to their national security and survival. Most Russian policymakers and citizens don't envision an old empire, but see the zone of ex-Soviet republics as vital to their interests, and perceive heavily militarised Europe as a potential risk to Russian security and sovereignty.⁵⁷

5. Domestic politics-"Orange Revolution" to "Euromaidan" and beyond:

Till 1995, the Russia-Ukraine relationship was very cordial to its extent, and a landmark step was taken in 1994 that is well known as the "Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances"- signed by Russia, Ukraine, and the western stakeholders. But in 1996, Kyiv's support to the Georgian government against the South Ossetia and Abkhazia rebels enraged Russia as the rebels were pro-Russians. Moscow raised concern over Kyiv's involvement in its backyard as its role went contrary to Russian claims of "special privileged status" over the newly independent Soviet states. Kyiv's leading role in the following year that led to the

⁵⁴ A. Cohen, "Russia and Eurasia: A Realistic Policy Agenda for the Obama Administration", 27. 3. 2009, *The Heritage Foundation*, <https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/russia-and-eurasia-realistic-policy-agenda-the-obama-administration>, Access Date: 04.04. 2022.

⁵⁵ S. K. Pradhan, "Russia-US Relationship in the Post Cold War Era: Can it be reset? *Journal of Peace Studies*, December, 18, no. 3 & 4, (2011): 27-30.

⁵⁶ R. Suny, "Ukraine war follows decades of warnings that NATO expansion into Eastern Europe could provoke Russia", 28. 2. 2022, <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-follows-decades-of-warnings-that-nato-expansion-into-eastern-europe-could-provoke-russia-177999>, Access Date: 27.03.2022.

⁵⁷ "From Hegemony to New Geopolitical Competition", 09.10.2008, <https://www.fiia.fi/en/event/from-hegemony-to-new-geopolitical-competition>, Access Date: 12.05.2022.



establishment of GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, a pro-west organization, further raised serious concerns for Russia since the newly independent countries had been titling towards the west.⁵⁸ The foreign politics of Ukraine are also entrenched in domestic politics. In the 2004 Presidential elections, Ukrainian politics oscillated between pro-Russia and pro-west campaigns. Viktor Yanukovich, the pro-Russian leader won the elections but there was an allegation of large-scale irregularities in the election process. Hence, public protest erupted. In the meanwhile, Viktor Andriyovich Yushchenko, the defeated pro-western opposition candidate, was poisoned, where Moscow's role was suspected.⁵⁹ The Ukrainians took to the street wearing orange-colored clothes, flags, and badges the color that was Yushchenko's political campaign color. As a consequence of severe protest, re-voting was conducted and Yushchenko won the presidential race. While the protestors and Yushchenko fingered the Russian plot in the electoral politics, Moscow suspected its western hand in the entire crisis, to keep Russia's relationship with Ukraine at abeyance. After getting elected, Yushchenko (2005-2010) paid renewed attention to the Ukrainian language, culture, and practices, and pushed for international recognition of the past famine 'Holodomor'⁶⁰ as an "Anti-Ukrainian Genocide".⁶¹ He also showed his interest, which the former Ukrainian Presidents had ignored, that is MAP from NATO. Although Yushchenko's period was not a success in his political intentions yet he had won significant sympathy and support from the west- with their depiction of Ukraine as a nation of Europeans that had undergone Russian oppression for a long.

⁵⁸ The GUAM, established in 1997, is an organization of the post-Soviet states of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Russia sees it as an attempt of both Ukraine and west to reduce Moscow's influence in these states. Crucially, all these four countries have separatist rebels and their de facto controlled-territories and which have shown their adherence towards Russia. These territories include South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, and Transnistria in Moldova.

⁵⁹ M. Fitzgerald, "Russia Invades Ukraine: A Timeline of the Crisis", 25.02.2022, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/slideshows/a-timeline-of-the-russia-ukraine-conflict>, Access Date: 15.03.2022.

⁶⁰ In the 1930s, President Joseph Stalin pressurised peasants to join for collective farming. But this move caused famine, starvation and death of about 7 million Ukrainians. The incident is known as 'Holodomor' -means "death by hunger". Later, Stalin pushed a huge number of Russian and Soviet citizens to repopulate the deserted eastern Ukraine-caused by 'Holodomor', in, O. Lutsevych, and J. Wallace, "Ukraine-Russia relations", 24.03.2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/11/ukraine-russia-relations>, Access Date: 07.04. 2022.

⁶¹ "Holodomor Basic Facts", HREC, <https://holodomor.ca/resource/holodomor-basic-facts/>, Access Date: 05.05.2022.



On the other way, the 2010 election victory of Viktor Yanukovich offered an opportunity for Russia to recuperate from the setbacks of the 2004 incidents and the Yushchenko era. In reality, despite his interest in establishing close relations with Moscow, Yanukovich favored signing an “Association Agreement” with the European Union (EU). This is in congruence with the increasing public demand for closer integration and association with the EU that had advocated for establishing a “Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area” which would enhance Ukraine’s greater access to the European market. However, the signing of an “Association Agreement” with the EU was incompatible with Moscow’s call for establishing a “Eurasian Union” that would be “a powerful supranational association capable of deepening Moscow’s political and economic influence across the former Soviet Union republics”.⁶² Yet, Yanukovich rejected Eurasian Union membership. So Moscow exercised the carrots and sticks policy. Moscow pressurized Yanukovich through various trade sanctions, banned the import of goods, disallowed Kyiv to use its territory as a transit route, backed rebels in eastern Ukraine, claimed Crimea, and pressurized Kyiv to reject the proposed “New Association and Trade Agreement” with the European Union, that was being negotiated for seven years.⁶³ Therefore, Yanukovich twisted his approach which proved pro-Russia. He postponed the agreement with the European Union; instead, signed a bail-out package worth \$15 billion from Russia. These reversals led to public outrage, well known as the “Euromaidan”⁶⁴ incident where the demonstrators gathered at Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) of Kyiv in late 2013, asking Yanukovich to sign the deal with the EU. Waving the Ukrainian and European Union flags, they advocated for a west-oriented Ukraine, while rejecting Russian influence. Moscow criticized the Euromaidan incident as a “west-sponsored” and “west-backed coup”.⁶⁵ Congruently and unlike the 2004 election fiasco, there were so many official statements from the US in support of the protesters and even American public officials were present in Ukraine to express their solidarity for the revolution in 2013-2014. Putin's

⁶² J. Mankoff, “Russia’s War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict”, 22. 4. 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-war-ukraine-identity-history-and-conflict>, Access Date: 19. 5. 2022.

⁶³ O. Lutsevych and J. Wallace, “Ukraine - Russia relations”, 24.03.2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/11/ukraine-russia-relations>, Access Date: 07.04.2022.

⁶⁴ “Euromaidan”, in later part, culminated to “Revolution for Dignity or Maidan Revolution” in 2013-2014 with the extent of pro-west and anti-Russian stances.

⁶⁵ Z. Beauchamp, “9 big questions about Russia’s war in Ukraine, answered”, 30.03.2022, <https://www.vox.com/22989379/russia-ukraine-war-putin-zelenskyy-us-nato-explainer-questions>, Access date: 08.03.2022.



government also shared evidence that how the U.S. embassy was involved in providing “a million US dollars per day” to conduct and continue the protest.⁶⁶Nevertheless, Yanukovich failed to survive his rule and finally left for Moscow in 2014.

This political turmoil and anti-Russian wave prompted Moscow to annex Crimea and back the separatists in the southeastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk (Donbas region). Crimea, where more than 90 percent population speaks the Russian language and Russian ethnicity, also voted for integration with Russia. Although the voting was criticized on the ground of the presence of Russian troops during the referendum process yet the outcome of the referendum legitimized Russian interest in Crimea. Under these pressing situations, the new President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko signed the Minsk Agreement (Minsk-I) in September 2014. But the agreement collapsed quickly because of non-compliance by both sides. Yet another attempt was made at Minsk in February 2015 (Minsk-II) where the delegations of Russia, Ukraine, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the leaders of the separatist-held regions signed a 13-Point Agreement. The leaders of France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine gathered in Minsk to mark the occasion and issued a “Declaration of Support”. However, Moscow and Kyiv construed the agreement in their way which led to the “Minsk conundrum”.⁶⁷Ukraine saw the 2015 agreement as a tool to retain its stakes in the rebel-held territories that will ensure a ceasefire, a secured border between Russia and Ukraine, elections in Donetsk and Luhansk, and a controlled devolution of power.⁶⁸Russia, on the other, viewed the agreement that Ukraine should ensure a “comprehensive autonomy” to these regions and the presence of their representatives in the central government so that Russia will have veto power indirectly over Kyiv’s foreign policy options in these two regions.⁶⁹Further, the agreement will bring Russia back to the border and intervene in the

⁶⁶ V. Putin, “Ukraine never had a tradition of genuine statehood”, 21. 2. 2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-ukraine-never-had-a-tradition-of-genuine-statehood-1.4808469>, Access Date: 3. 5. 2022.

⁶⁷ S. Ghosh, “Explained : What is the Minsk Agreement?”, 4. 3. 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-what-is-the-minsk-agreement/article65187598.ece>, Access Date: 27. 4. 2022.

⁶⁸ “Ukraine - Russia crisis: What is the Minsk agreement? 09.02.2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/what-is-the-minsk-agreement-and-why-is-it-relevant-now>, Access Date: 13.03.2022.

⁶⁹J. Thakur, “Explained: What are Minsk Agreements and why are they in discussion? 22.02.2022, <https://www.indiatimes.com/explainers/news/minsk-agreements-ukraine-crisis-562733.html>, Access Date: 18.05.2022.



Donbas region (Donetsk and Luhansk) if further hostility erupts between Kyiv and the Donbas. Nevertheless, neither the past nor the present government of Ukraine made serious efforts to execute the provisions of Minsk-II that required the Ukrainian legislature to introduce laws on special status for these two regions and adopt a constitutional provision for decentralization. Further, President Volodymyr Zelensky, elected in 2019, advocated for a harder stance on Minsk-II. In December 2021, he also suggested that Kyiv should look for modification or abandonment of the agreement if the negotiations do not make headway. Both Kyiv and Moscow well understand that the Minsk agreement would ensure a legal presence of Russian-backed rebels at the national and federal structures, thus limiting Ukrainian sovereignty and increasing Moscow's stake in making Ukrainian foreign policy.

Meanwhile, the policies and acts of pro-Euromaidan and pro-west President Poroshenko turned Russia-Ukraine relations further into a precarious situation. Poroshenko's signing of the "Association Agreement" with the EU clogged the door of Ukraine's membership in the EEU.⁷⁰The language law of 2019 on education, mass media, and administration attempted Ukraine to "Ukrainify" the socio-economic and political structure of the country- the move that went contrary to his predecessor Yanukovich who had favored for pro-Russian media, language, and culture. Poroshenko further made the provisions for the "use of Ukrainian language as the primary language, ordering middle schools that taught in Russian and other minority languages to make the switch".⁷¹All the media outlets were required to print in the Ukrainian language compulsorily while opting for publications in other languages. While there was an exception for English, European official languages, and certain minority languages, the Russian language got deprived of this privilege.⁷²The Poroshenko government justified this under the pretext of Ukrainians' European ambitions. All these acts and discriminations, along with high-handedness against the rebels in Donbas, have been designated by Putin as "smells

⁷⁰ O. Potemkina, 2018. "European Union – Eurasian Economic Union: Cooperation or Competition? Scientific and Analytical Herald of IE RAS 1, no. 4, 6-10, Egmont: *The Royal Institute for International Relations, and Institute of Europe Russian Academy of Sciences*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328534223_european_union_urasian_economic_union_cooperation_or_competition, Access Date: 03.03.2022.

⁷¹"New law stokes Ukraine language-tensions", 01.04.2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210401-new-law-stokes-ukraine-language-tensions>, Access Date: 16.04.2022.

⁷²R. Denber, "New Language Requirement Raises Concerns in Ukraine", 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/19/new-language-requirement-raises-concerns-ukraine>, Access Date: 03.03.2022.



of genocide”, perpetrated by the government.⁷³ After him, President Zelensky also followed in his footsteps. Although Zelensky had campaigned to “reboot” the peace process and directly talk to Moscow, in reality, he did not show his sincerity. Instead, after assuming power he started to cut off Russian socio-cultural influence. He closed pro-Russian television and radio networks and imprisoned oligarchs such as Viktor Medvedchuk, who had funded these channels and designated them as “Kremlin’s main proxy”, on treason charges.⁷⁴ Zelensky reformed the security services to remove Russian sympathizers who were accused of the Russian takeover of Crimea and derailed the investigation process that fingered at Moscow’s controversial role in its referendum process.

6. Conclusion

Today’s unstable Kyiv was once the powerhouse of Kievan Rus. After a span of foreign rule, aggression, and Soviet administration Ukraine finally got independence in 1991. So it is wrong not to accept Ukraine’s nation-state identity and its own civilizational identity. Ukraine had been oscillating between the west and Russia. Western countries, especially America, want to see Ukraine in NATO and the European Union, whereas Russia favors Kyiv maintaining a safe distance from the US, NATO, and the EU, and its closer integration with Russia. As a consequence, domestic politics is polarised in Ukraine. However, there are some goals and objectives that most Ukrainians sought. First, a Ukrainian independent identity that is free from Russian “dictates”. Second, redefining its identity in Europe. Thirdly, full freedom on foreign policy choices. However, in its journey since 1991 Kyiv has failed to have a well-measured foreign policy- balancing both Russia and the west. From the perspective of Moscow, it is a pertinent fact that highly armed Europe could be a potential threat to Russian security and integrity-as the country has been invaded about five times by the European powers such as Polish-Lithuania (1610-1612), Sweden (1708-1709), France (1812) and Germany (1914-18, and 1941). In each case, the very essence of the Russian state was under threat. So suspicion

⁷³ “Smells of genocide: How Putin justifies Russia’s war in Ukraine”, 9. 3. 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/9/smells-of-genocide-how-putin-justifies-russias-war-in-ukraine>, Access Date: 17.04.2022.

⁷⁴ P. Dickinson, “Putin’s key Ukraine ally charged with treason”, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-key-ukraine-ally-charged-with-treason/>, Access Date: 18.04.2022.



and fear of the west have been deep-rooted in Russia, and thus it perceives Europe and Europe-dominated and the US-led NATO as the tools of American imperialism.

While Russia has been gripped by an endless sense of insecurity, America and NATO or the west have sleepwalked into a risky confrontation with Moscow, where Kyiv has fallen to dangerous outcomes of war. Ukraine did not underscore the security concerns of Russia and America ignored Russia's privileged sphere of influence and interest. In doing so, the west and Ukraine have failed to underscore the potential of resurgent Russia and the mighty Kremlin. Both the west and Russia want to maximize their relative gains in the given situation and timeframe. While America along with NATO intends to continue the existing pro-west global balance of power, Russia reappears to offset it. The thriving economy, unmatched nuclear capability, and determined leaderships are the strengths that Russia has today to give a tough check to NATO expansion and the ambitious projects of the west. Most Russians feel that Kremlin doesn't want to escalate tensions, but it is not clear whether Kremlin is capable of preventing itself if such a situation pervades. Congruent to it, Georgia in past, and Ukraine today, have surfaced to the Russian wrath. NATO ensures security to member countries but fails to guarantee security for the NATO aspirant countries when crises surfaced. Further, the European countries must go through critical introspection as if the NATO expansion has enhanced the security of European or made them extremely vulnerable. One of the root causes of present-day war is the culmination of sheer differences in the interests and outlooks between America and Russia. While America wants to protect and promote its interests through the realist stance of expansion of 'power', Russia wants fulfillment of its interest by resorting to the neo-realist sense of 'security' and 'survival'. Therefore, Ukraine has become the obsession of the west and the target of Russia, where the very survival and identity of Kyiv seem unstable.

The Tumultuous Journey of Kievan Rus has ended with a terrible war and dangerous consequences. Yet, to stop the war now certain steps are necessary to follow on an immediate and priority basis. First, the immediate solution to halt war is to resume the Minsk peace initiatives. Second, Ukraine may join the European Union but not the military alliance under the banner of NATO. Third, credible security guarantees to Moscow and transparent acts of NATO need to be ensured, so that the Russians will feel that NATO is in no way going to threaten their territorial integrity and sovereignty. Fourth, Ukraine instead of looking for NATO



should develop its defense sector and develop its deterrence capability. Fifth, Ukraine, as an independent country, has the right to pursue its independent foreign policy, but while doing so it should be careful that there are limitations too because the acts of the country should not risk Russian security. Sixth, As the tension is brewing up for separation in Donetsk and Luhansk, various stakeholders of these regions should take up the matter to such a level to find out a durable solution. Seventh, although there are some controversies on the Crimean referendum process yet the matter needs to be addressed and resolved amicably which may take more time.

On the other way, if the existing situation turns worst, Ukraine surrenders or parts of its territories are captured by Russia or the war continues for a longer period then there will be some probable outcomes. First, Ukraine will leave its claims on Crimea and recognize it as a part of Russia. Second, Kyiv will recognize Luhansk and Donetsk as two independent states. Third, it will sign a deal with Moscow not to join NATO. Fourth, sign a trade deal with Russia and the Eurasian Union and relinquish its intention of joining the European Union. If this situation develops then it is imminent that Russia will get back Ukraine partially or completely that it had till 1991. These outcomes may happen, provided NATO and Russia do not come to a confrontation and Russia doesn't retreat. On the other way round, although mighty Russia is determined yet to take stock of Ukrainian's strong counteroffensive, along with the backing of the west, the war seems to continue for a longer period and the outcome may not be on the expected lines of Moscow. Nevertheless, the Russia-Ukraine war has created a new trajectory in the Russia-Ukraine relationship, that had started with the establishment of the Slavic state Kievan Rus, and further, the present situation has all set the ground for a new global order that will largely redefine and reset Russia-West power calculus.

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