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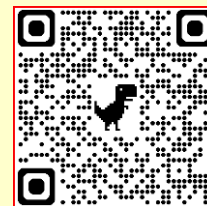
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DOUBTS ABOUT WESTERN POLICY ON Russo - Ukrainian war

Doctor (PhD) Andras Huguik

Research Fellow of the Hungarian Peacekeepers' Association

Corresponding Author: Doctor (PhD) Andras Huguik

Research Fellow of the Hungarian Peacekeepers' Association

ABSTRACT

This article aims to answer the question of why and what doubts exist about the West's policy regarding the Russia-Ukraine war. It examines various aspects of the Russian-Ukrainian war based on the approaches of the liberal and realist schools of international relations theory. The author starts from a position accepted by both schools of thought, saying that Russia has launched a war against Ukraine without a declaration of war and without any need for self-defense, which constitutes aggression under the UN Charter. Support for Ukraine is therefore a moral obligation for all democratic states, but the nature and extent of that support is a matter for each state to decide. The author finds that the EU and NATO collective support seems contrary to this position and opposite to the organizations' missions. The EU's mission is to ensure the economic development of the member states while NATO provides military protection for its members and operates on their territories. Supporting non-NATO member Ukraine with weapons, training, and intelligence in the absence of a realistic Russian military threat to Europe calls into question the legitimacy of the Alliance's policy. After a thorough analysis, the author concludes that the West's policy towards the war in Ukraine, based on all-round support for Kyiv and a constant increase in sanctions against Moscow, is not working: it is failing to bring Russia to its knees, Ukraine cannot regain its lost territories, but it is succeeding in encouraging the development of a Russia-China-Iran axis and a Russia-North Korea partnership. The author argues that the time has come for the West to focus on finding a mutually acceptable compromise for the opposing parties that ends the war and prevents the outbreak of a new one. This paper is connected to a previous research article by the author „Political and Military Lessons of the Russian Ukrainian War” published in SCIERA Journal of Sociology, Volume 7, Issue 5, October 2023. The research is based on both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

KEY WORDS: consequences, EU, NATO, policy, Ukraine, views, war.

Introduction

Examining various aspects of the Russian-Ukrainian war, based on the dominant theoretical trends in international relations, allows us to draw interesting conclusions. The two most influential trends today are liberal and realist with several sub trends. The defining element of the liberal trend is the system of ethical norms and the international institutional system guaranteeing compliance with the norm standards. Since the norms are based on moral principles, the liberal school ultimately judges international relations based on ethical norms (solidarity, common good, subsidiarity, freedom, justice).

Security and power are at the heart of realism. According to the followers of the realist trend, states and their leaders are primarily motivated by national interests and the pursuit of maximum security. Their well-known thesis is that "if distrust and fear are the dominant factors between states, this can easily lead to the outbreak of war to prevent a supposed attack by the opposing party." (Péter, 2022)

The collective West (states and organizations that also militarily support Ukraine in the Russo-Ukrainian war) advocates the liberal approach and mostly ignores the realist position.

In this article, I examine issues related to the Russo-Ukrainian War from the perspective of the two approaches.

Literature Review

The majority of professional literature does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the collective West policy toward Ukraine since they consider it legitimate and correct, as it is in line with the UN Charter and is based on a collective decision. These studies represent the position of the liberal school and their main features are as follows: - They do not deal with the history and a detailed analysis of the development of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; - They consider the overall support to Ukraine essential to force Russia to negotiate peace, including the provision of long-range military strike capabilities and the authorization of their use; - They consider Russia's retaliatory actions a bluff, and neglect the possibility of escalation of the war; - Doubts are expressed as to whether the new US President will be able to force the opposing parties to make peace

peace; - They suggest the increasing number of sanctions against Russia; - Realistic analysis and assessment of Russia's military offensive intent and capability to launch a conventional war against Europe is limited by Russophobia.

Research Objectives

- Presentation of the approaches of the liberal and realist schools of international relations theory to the outbreak, outcome, and conclusion of the Russo-Ukrainian war.
- Presentation of the positions of liberals and realists regarding the military threat posed by Russia.
- Presentation of the results of the liberal school (EU, NATO, other allies of the US) policy based on comprehensive and continuous support for Ukraine and on more and more sanctions against Russia.

Research Questions

- What are the basic tenets of the liberal and realist schools of international relations theory about the issues raised by the Russian-Ukrainian war?

- Why are there doubts about the policies of the United States and its allies concerning Russian -Ukrainian war?

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

In my research, I used both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The introduction of opinions regarding the issues raised by the Russian-Ukrainian war of the liberal and realist schools of international relations theory required mainly qualitative approaches.

Assessment of the policies of the United States and its allies towards Ukraine and Russia requested content analysis of studies by renowned authors of opposing schools, and analysis of various international documents.

Since Hungary, as part of the so-called collective West, represents a specific position close to the realist school, I also highlighted the works of Hungarian political scientists.

In examining the military component of Russian offensive potential, a comparison of NATO and Russian forces required primarily a quantitative approach, statistical source analysis, as the military threat can only be substantiated by accurate and quantified data.

The same applies to the presentation and assessment of the state of the Russian economy and the impact of Western sanctions. These are unthinkable without the use of recognised and credible international and national statistical sources.

For the sake of objectivity, I have tried to avoid using Russian and Ukrainian official sources as much as possible.

Since public opinion on the issues under study is changing extremely rapidly and opinion polls are contradictory, this article does not examine the public perception of the issues under study.

Textual Analysis

The Hungarian liberal school's position on the Russian-Ukrainian war

Ukraine has never been a threat to Russia

It is a big mistake to think that Ukraine is a threat to Russia. On the contrary, Russia threatens Ukraine's very existence. Throughout history, Russia has always tried to prevent the birth of the Ukrainian nation and the strengthening of its national consciousness. It is no wonder that in 1941, Kyiv believed Hitler to be a liberator - only to be quickly disillusioned.

The fact is that Ukraine, not formally a member of NATO, was preparing to attack with American political and military support to liberate the Russian-inhabited separatist territories. However, it has to be recognized that it is legitimate and reasonable for Ukraine to reclaim what was taken from it by an aggressor in gross violation of international law through military intervention.

The collective West does not want to defeat Russia, but to force it to retreat

Russia cannot be defeated, no one thinks they will ever put the Ukrainian flag on the Kremlin. NATO, the guardian of world peace, the democracies that support Ukraine, led by the United States and the United Kingdom, do not want to defeat Russia.

They want to force it to retreat, to convince it that it is not worth threatening with aggression or attacking any of its neighbors. This is the basic condition for peace in Europe.

The war in Ukraine must end in a Russian failure because it is

directed against the whole democratic world

Under the sanctions in the longer term, Putin's regime may be weakened or collapsed. This is the basic condition to stop the war. As long as he remains in power, there is no hope that Russia will change its current aggressive policy and end the war it is waging not only against Ukraine but against the West, against the whole democratic world. A Russia that returns to the foreign policy of the 1990s would be in the interests of the world, including, of course, Hungary. For this to happen, however, the war in Ukraine should be ended with Russia's failure.

The United States was right in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and it is right in helping Ukraine and wanting to stop Russia's expansion

The United States did a good thing in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan: preventing the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, removing Saddam, who brutally oppressed Iraqi citizens and attacked his neighbor, and playing a key role in the dismantling of the socialist world system. Now it wants to do good again, to stop Russia's expansion.

“The United States does not want to weaken Europe (the European Union), on the contrary, it wants to see it as a strong ally in the Cold War and now - against China if necessary, against Russia if necessary.” (Jeszenszky, 2003)

The Hungarian realist school's position on the Russian - Ukrainian war

Ukraine's intention to join NATO poses a security threat to Russia

To secure its role as a hegemon in the long term, the United States wants Russia to have as small a sphere of interest as possible, which is perfectly understandable from the point of view of its military-geopolitical interests. However, Russia, partly out of historical pride and partly out of fear for its present existence, does not and cannot accept this. In Russian security policy, the 'near abroad' (the former Soviet states except for the Baltic) remains a sphere of Russian interest, i.e. NATO enlargement in the region is unacceptable. However, this is not a justification for the war, as Ukraine's intention to join NATO has been on the agenda since 2008, its outcome is still uncertain and the intention itself does not yet represent a direct threat to Russia.

The West's intention is a permanent confrontation with Russia

It is hard to understand why the United States has not taken advantage of the opportunity that Putin is a pragmatic leader. A leader who is aware that he can maintain the Russian sphere of interest much more effectively through economic means, through the export of raw materials and energy, than through military force. Instead of the West using this opportunity to seek permanent peace with Russia, today's mediocre Western leaders, under pressure from the US, are permanently confronting it. The Ukrainian-Russian war is the result of this, accompanied by a good-sounding but false explanation: Ukraine is fighting its war of independence not only for itself but also for us, without this war of independence Russian soldiers would be already besieging Budapest and Paris.

World security is based on the mutual interests of the great powers

World security is based on the mutual interests of the great powers. Russia is not necessarily to be liked, but its security concerns must be understood to avoid nuclear war. A new security system must accept Moscow's realistic security interests and reinforce Europe's military strength within NATO's current eastern border. “For many decades, Europe's peace has been secured by a duality of mutual accommodation and deterrence, and maintaining this European

peace can be preserved for future generations.” (Hegy, 2024)

We should accept that the Russian economy cannot collapse under sanctions, and Vladimir Putin cannot be overthrown domestically by a 'color revolution'.

It would be in the interests of Ukraine, the Ukrainian people, and Europe if Western leaders were to lead the Kyiv regime toward a compromise solution.

The United States has other motivations in its relationship with Europe than the desire to help

The US's elementary interest in preserving its hegemony and preventing the excessive strengthening of Europe. It only became a real danger with the rapprochement between Europe and Russia.

At the time of NATO's establishment, one of the main objectives of the Alliance already was to avert this rapprochement, as Lord Ismay, the organization's first Secretary General, put it: 'To keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down'. To do this, the United States is now using Ukraine. Where, if not de jure, but de facto NATO has long had a massive presence.

The consequences of Russian aggression against Ukraine

An interesting American approach

Robert Legvold, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Columbia University, in his remarkable article "The War in Ukraine in a Transitional World Order", published on 23 February 2024, summarized the effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war as follows:

1. The Russia-Ukraine war has deepened China-Russia cooperation (including military cooperation), and brought Russia closer to Iran and North Korea, foreshadowing the emergence of a Russia-China-Iran axis and a workable partnership between Russia and North Korea. At the same time, the war has brought the United States and its main allies closer than ever before. NATO was reborn. The Alliance increased its rapid-response force, expanded the deployment of its multinational battle groups in Eastern Europe, approved regional defense plans, developed a military-industrial development plan focused on increased interoperability and production capacity, and joint arms procurement, and strengthened the organization with the admission of Finland and Sweden.
2. The war in Ukraine has deepened the US-Russian cold war that has been raging since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. It has ended half a century of efforts by the United States and Russia to regulate nuclear issues. The war also challenged the assumption that nuclear deterrence would prevent a conventional war between Russia and the West. While nuclear deterrence has prevented a direct military confrontation for the time being, it has not prevented a high-intensity indirect military conflict between the two sides. The changing stance of the Russian leadership on the use of nuclear weapons highlights the risk of a shift towards the use of nuclear weapons in conventional conflicts.
3. The war sheds new light on the issue of pan-European security. The idea of a "Euro-Atlantic security community from Vancouver to Vladivostok" - was regularly voiced by Russian and Western leaders in the first two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was eroded by the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and which has given way to confrontation. The West insists that

European security must be built, but against Putin's Russia, not with it, and is convinced that there will be pan-European security with a strong security architecture, but only on the western side of Europe. At best, the two sides (Russia and the West) can choose whether to pursue military confrontation with or without limits.

4. The war undermined the principle of prohibition of occupying foreign territory by military force. *The observation of the sovereignty of any country is a fundamental rule that Russia's invasion of Ukraine violated. At the same time, since this rule has been violated several times by others, including the United States, it can hardly be regarded as the only principle for maintaining global order.* The main problem is that the Russian annexation of Crimea and the eastern provinces of Ukraine can encourage others, including China, to satisfy their territorial ambitions in the same way which can result in an upset of the international order.

The conclusions, which include elements of realism, are noteworthy because, on the one hand, the author states that the Russian war in Ukraine is essentially an indirect war between the United States and Russia, and, on the other hand, he openly states that, while the prohibition of violating the sovereignty of any country is a fundamental rule for maintaining international order, this rule has been so often violated by others, including the United States, that it can hardly be considered the only principle for maintaining global order. Rather, the United States is concerned that Russian aggression will encourage others, including China, to satisfy their territorial ambitions similarly.

International military support for Ukraine

Russia has launched a war against Ukraine without a declaration of war and without any need for self-defense, which constitutes aggression under the UN Charter and international law. Support for Ukraine is, therefore, a moral obligation for all democratic states, but the nature and extent of that support are matters for each state to decide, taking into account Ukraine's needs and the international aid it receives.

However, Clausewitz's definition that "war is the continuation of politics by other means" also applies to the Russian-Ukrainian war. Russia's security policy was aimed at preventing further NATO enlargement and Ukraine becoming a US military staging area, at settling the status of the Donetsk and Luhansk territories by the Minsk agreements, and at unconditionally retaining annexed Crimea, which Ukraine opposed and refused to compromise. Accordingly, Russian policy continued "by other means". All this does not change the qualification of the war but only makes its outbreak more understandable. Other facts worthy of note in terms of clarity: the rejection by Ukraine, Germany, and France of the Minsk agreements, proclaimed by a UN resolution, and the steady expansion of NATO toward the Russian Federation, which is difficult to reconcile with the forgotten principle of indivisible European security, according to which no one can strengthen his security at the expense of the security of others.

Solidarity with Ukraine has been expressed in an unprecedented united Euro-Atlantic coalition, resulting in the United States and the EU providing all-round support (political, military, economic, financial, and humanitarian) to Ukraine and imposing 20,000 sanctions against Russia. However, most of the sanctions are doing more harm to Europe than to Russia, leading to the economic decline of Europe and, at the same time, to the strengthening of the

US, and the further maintenance of US hegemony.

It should also be noted that the sanctions on sport, cultural life, the mass media, and the use by Ukraine of confiscated foreign Russian assets are not in line with international law or the EU's aims and values.

(One of the greatest values of Western democracy is the freedom of the press. Unfortunately, it has been seriously scarred over the last two years. The banning of all Russian news sources, the drastic, sometimes criminal, crackdown on pro-Russian expression and the isolation of Russian culture are incompatible with the requirement of impartial and objective analysis and information and contradict the EU values laid out in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (see Article 11 / Freedom of expression and information / 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. 2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.

The aims of the European Union within its borders are: promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens, offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders, achieve sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability and a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress, protect and improve the quality of the environment, promote scientific and technological progress.

The aims of the EU within the wider world are:

uphold and promote its values and interests, contribute to peace and security and the sustainable development of the Earth, contribute to solidarity and mutual respect among people, the protection of human rights and strict observance of international law. (Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty))

Unprecedented Euro-Atlantic unity can rightly be seen as a guarantee of European security against a future Russian threat. Against a future possible threat because, at present, no such threat exists.

The generally accepted definition of a threat is a difference of opinion between states based on divergent interests, coupled with the existence of offensive capabilities (population, economic, military, and technological potential) and aggressive intent.

The war in Ukraine is not a manifestation of the glorious Russian military tradition.

After almost three years of fighting, it has not been possible to fully 'liberate' the breakaway republics with Russian populations. Given this, even with the existence of a Russian intention to attack NATO, it would be impossible to realize this attack with success. It is clear for each nation even for Russia.

According to the liberal school, Russia's offensive capabilities will inevitably diminish in the long term, above all its economic potential

In mid-2022, EU member states took a "political" decision to radically reduce their purchases of Russian gas because of the unpredictable price, potential supply blackmail and the switch to green energy. (The blowing up of the Nord Stream pipeline from Russia to Germany in September 2022 indicated that the decision had become final.)

This loss of revenue cannot be made up for by oil sales to India or China, and the fall in gas exports is so severe that Gazprom has been virtually bankrupt for two years. In addition, China has refused to

take more Russian gas than planned, as it has moved towards renewables, even faster than Europe. For Russia, greening, and decarbonization, means the devaluation of its exports of natural gas and oil, the drying up of the main source of income that is the basis of its economy, future economic problems, and the weakening of Russia's position in the world economy.

Political scientists of the realist school consider that the Russian economy has successfully undergone a historically significant transformation over the past year and a half, shifting much of its economic relations from the West to the East.

Realists argue that in today's world, where much of the technology, innovation, and know-how is now in Asia, a Western sanctions policy against Moscow is unlikely to succeed, given Russia's good relations with India and China.

The failure of the sanctions policy is also demonstrated by the fact that, as an unintended consequence of the sanctions, by September 2023 the Russian elite had repatriated some \$50 billion of its assets held abroad and in the first nine months of 2023 alone some 250 Russian companies registered offshore abroad had repatriated.

According to the realists, the Russian economy is performing well despite the war and sanctions:

- The Russian government's budget reserve fund, the so-called Russian National Welfare Fund, will cover the Russian budget deficit for several years without borrowing;
- The level of external debt is low and is steadily decreasing (40.1 percent of GDP in 2016, 17.65 percent of GDP in 2023).
- Although oil and gas revenues fell by 23.9 percent in 2023 compared to the 2022 base, non-oil and gas revenues increased by 25 percent.
- The performance of the Russian natural gas industry improved spectacularly in the first three quarters of 2024. The domestic market appears to have partially compensated for the fall in foreign demand. (Portfolió editorial, 2024)
- Russia has managed to redirect its crude oil exports to other countries. Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said "Russia's 2023 oil exports were almost entirely directed to China and India. Russian production this year remains at the previous year's level, averaging 10.6 million barrels per day" (SRita, 2024).
- Russian crude oil exports do not seem to be a problem for the foreseeable future. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), oil consumption growth in India could be the highest in the next five years expected to be around 8 million barrels per day by 2030, while oil consumption in China will be 14 million barrels per day.

Indian Oil Demand Set to Keep Growing While China Stalls

Chinese oil demand could peak in the middle of the decade, Citi estimates

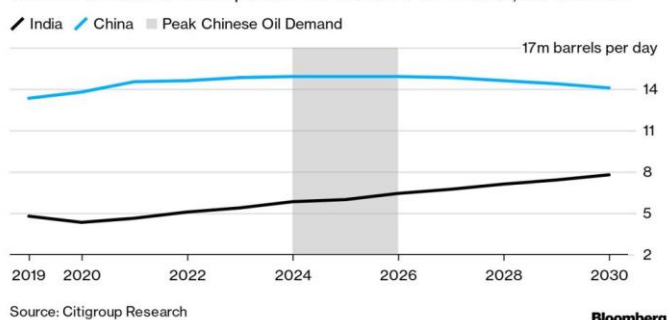


Figure 1.

Source: Economist Intelligence Update on 12 April 2024, See reference 15

Regardless of which school of international relations theory you belong to, most experts acknowledge that the West's economic war and sanctions policy against Russia seems to have failed so far

The West based the effectiveness of its sanctions policy against Russia solely on Russia's low GDP (according to the International Monetary Fund, Russia's share of world GDP in 2019 was only 1.9%). This GDP approach was supposed to bring the Russian economy to its knees within weeks (later months, later years). The warning of some well-known economists that ignoring other facts and data could lead to a misinterpretation of economic capacity was neglected (Matus, 2024). The simple GDP statistic has led the West to a false sense of security. Based on GDP, Western economies are dominants so their capacity to sanction is correspondingly high.

However, in certain situations, the dependence of Western economies on service sectors, and the relative weakness of manufacturing, mining, and agriculture, leads to critical vulnerabilities in commodity production and supply chains

Germany's manufacturing sector accounts for 25.6% of its GDP, while Russia's manufacturing sector now accounts for 25.9% and China's for 35.7%.

In times of deglobalization, geopolitical competition, and armed conflicts between states these vulnerabilities are important and may have serious implications.

Only a state that can produce more military equipment than its opponent and can meet the needs of providing all aspects of military activity can win a war. A large industrial base is a major advantage and in this respect and Russia is in a better position than Germany.

When judging the resilience of the Russian economy, the West has not taken into account manufacturing capacity and exports of key products

The economic data of Russia and China dwarf that of the G7 countries, but if we look only at their manufacturing capacity, we find that China boasts the strongest industrial capacity in the world and Russia the most productive in Europe. The Soviet Union's emphasis on industrial development throughout its existence means that Russia's manufacturing capacity today is huge.

The war in Ukraine is now in its third year and the EU Member States and the US cannot keep up with Russia in the production of military goods. Only the German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall has significantly increased its production in Europe. (For example, the company now produces far more 155 mm artillery shells than the US defense industry combined. Sticking to artillery shells, before the war the United States produced 1,000 155 mm shells a month, which has now doubled, Russia produced 10,000 a month before the war and now produces over 150,000 a month, with the possibility of increasing production in the future.)

When looking at the economic strength of a country, we have to consider the exports of key products as well. In the case of Russia, key products are raw materials, which are so abundant that, despite the war and sanctions, they make Russia an inescapable factor in global trade. Russia is one of the world's largest producers of oil, gas, and special metals (titanium, palladium). Add to this uranium production and a whole nuclear industry, similar to the latter not existing in the world. Russia can influence world trade prices by reducing or restricting the extraction of key raw materials, but it can also slow down the development of certain priority areas.

This is strong market power which the West is well aware of. It is no coincidence that the West does not sanction the Russian nuclear industry, despite President Zelensky's pleas. (Révész, 2023)

However, *when assessing the impact of sanctions, it is important to point out that the Western sanctions are preventing Russia from developing high-tech, which is a permanent handicap*

Russia remains heavily dependent on Western technology, among others, in the precision tooling sector, for example. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country has missed out on two revolutions in machine tools (China, by contrast, has invested heavily in R&D and is catching up rapidly with the West).

Regardless of what has been said, Russia cannot sustain its current highly accelerated military production in the medium term

On the one hand, it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain certain raw materials and advanced technology that can only be provided by imports, and on the other hand, the war has created a severe labor shortage in the Russian defense industry.

If, however, Russian losses in Ukraine are significantly reduced, the Russian military industry could reach a level where it can continuously make up for losses and the Russia-Ukraine war could become sustainable in the long term. At the same time, it cannot ensure that another war will be fought. Russia cannot compete with the economically advanced European states and does not have the sustainable economic and military potential for a war against NATO.

The other component of offensive capabilities is the military potential

Its elements (mobilization capability, new military industry) still exist. However, the military potential is incomplete because of the losses of ground forces. The navy, the ground-based strategic missile forces, and the combat air forces are intact and can be used to attack but to occupy and hold countries and territories, you need ground troops and an opponent, which can be defeated. But NATO is not like that (Art of War editorial, 2022).

Offensive potential component	NATO	RUSSIA
Population	941 million	146 million
Defence budget	\$1.3 trillion	\$65.1 billion
Number of airports	17 766	1 218
Total number of troops	6 032 497	3 048 628
Active	3 375 000	1 043 628
Reserve	2 609 000	2 000 000
Nuclear weapons	6 700	6 300
Tanks	20 741	22 700
Armored Personnel Carriers	109 712	19 721
Artillery pieces	13 519	11 981
Fighters	3 890	921
Strategic bomber aircraft	175	135

AWACS	96	56
Combat helicopters	1 851	621
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles	12 000	4 000
Transport aircraft	1 959	471
Aerial refuelling aircraft	697	19
Naval vessels	2 103	621
Aircraft carriers	17	1
Submarines	165	62

Table 1. Comparison of NATO and Russian forces: NATO has significant superiority in all components except tanks

Source: Art of WAR, 06 January 2022 (See reference 12)

In light of the above, the often-heard Western view that Ukraine is not only fighting for its independence but also defending Western democracies and that if Ukraine does not stop Russia, the defeat of Ukraine will be followed by a Russian invasion of the Baltic and Central-Eastern European NATO member states, does not seem to be justified.

The West's military support for Ukraine is intended to weaken Russia's war potential, deter Moscow from similar future aggressions, and put Kyiv in a favorable position to start peace negotiations.

The reduction of Russian offensive capabilities can only be reached through the continued transfer of long-range advanced missiles for Ukraine and NATO support of their use (training, handling, transmission of reconnaissance data, troubleshooting, maintenance), which implies a gradual and deepening involvement of NATO in the planning and execution of military operations. This could lead to world war and the use of nuclear weapons by Russia.

Deterring Moscow from similar future aggressions can only be achieved if its security needs are met.

Unfortunately, it seems to be impossible. The admission of Finland and Sweden to NATO shows that the military alliance has opted for confrontation with Russia.

As for peace talks, there can be no favorable or unfavorable Ukrainian position in the peace talks that will be launched sooner or later

On the one hand, they will not even start until Ukrainian troops leave the Kursk region, on the other hand, the occupied Ukrainian territories are now the legal entities of the Russian Federation and their return to Ukraine is unthinkable. Probably, the collective military support of the West will not achieve its stated objectives, the consequence will be a continuation of the war, or at best a freezing of the conflict.

The unprecedented close US-Western-European cooperation over the Russia-Ukraine war, the new Russian foreign policy ambitions, and the rise of BRICS have brought the debate on the functioning of the international relations system and the emergence of a new world order back to the surface. NATO's and the EU's policy on the Russia-Ukraine war is also worth examining from this perspective.

The most popular ideas about the emergence of a new world order are:

- According to the American economic historian Charles Kindleberger, stability in the world economy and global politics requires a hegemonic state that is willing to bear the military and financial costs of maintaining order, provide key currencies, and act as a creditor of last resort - without this, chaos and destructive rivalry between regional powers will ensue. On this basis, the United States and its allies proclaim the maintenance of US/Western hegemony.

- American political scientist Stephen Walt, a leading figure in the paradigm of defensive realism, believes that the period of American hegemony was not perfect for the United States. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the costly and failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan launched in response, the 2008 crisis that pushed US domestic politics in a populist direction, and the rise of China, which the mistakes of US foreign policy have helped, are testimony to this. Consequently, two realistic options emerge: either a new Cold War bipolar world with US and Chinese-led camps; or an unequal multipolar order where the US loses its hegemonic role but remains first among not quite equal powers (China, India, Russia, and others).

- Oxford professor Timothy Garton Ash, Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev, and Mark Leonard, head of the Berlin think tank of the Council on Foreign Relations in Europe hold an opinion that a multipolar world order is emerging, with more than two centers of power governing international politics and the global economy. The future will not be the "East versus West" or "autocracies versus democracies" type opposition, but emerging of middle powers such as India, Turkey, or Brazil, which, as autonomous actors pursuing their interests, are willing to cooperate with the Western world on certain issues and situations but not on others. These emerging countries do not form a coherent group in the world, they do not share a common ideology and their interests are often at odds with each other.

- Indian analysts formulate similar ideas under the "asymmetric multipolarity" theory and argue that the emerging world will not form a coherent group due to conflicts of interest with China. The power of the Western world will remain inescapable, at the same time, the Western-centricity of world politics will diminish. (Mészáros, 2023)

For the United States, the most important goal is to maintain hegemony, which any scenario will provide, but with different hypothetical consequences.

The most dangerous scenario seems to be the emergence of a new bipolar world with US and Chinese-led camps, with the possibility of another Cold War. Because of the identical offensive capabilities of the opposing sides, this will differ from the previous US-Soviet confrontation in that there will be no peaceful solution and the Cold War will most likely turn into a real war.

Since Donald Trump's first term in office, the United States has fundamentally changed its relationship with China. He has moved from cooperation in selected areas to strategic rivalry with China. The Biden administration has only increased this rivalry. Not only has the Biden administration failed to end its tariff war with China, which Trump started in 2018, but it has recently stepped it up with additional tariffs: 25 percent on steel, 50 percent on solar panels and semiconductors, and 100 percent on Chinese electric cars. In addition, two factors have intensified and accelerated this rivalry. The first is the pandemic when the world realized its high dependence on supply chains from China. The second factor is Putin's invasion of Ukraine. And as long as the war on Ukrainian

territory does not end in a peaceful solution, the West and China will be on opposite sides of the barricade.

After the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the collective West's fear of a Chinese military attack on Taiwan is palpable. The last XX Congress of the Communist Party of China at the end of 2022 gave General Secretary Xi Jinping a lifetime mandate to complete the unification of Chinese land, presumably by 2035. However, China's military intervention in Taiwan seems to be only a last resort. China will use every possible method to resolve the issue in another way: either by introducing a 'fifth column' or by trying to exhaust Taiwanese society, which is relatively easy to achieve as Taiwan is an island without raw materials. Nevertheless, a violent solution cannot be ruled out.

China has created an innovation ecosystem of its own. It has an alternative internet and an alternative GPS. The Chinese search for rare earths and minerals in space, without which technological progress will be impossible. If a peaceful takeover of Taiwan's TSMC, the largest manufacturer of advanced semiconductors happens, a society with new quality would be created. The Americans are aware of this and will not let it happen. It is widely believed that the US response to a possible Chinese military action against the island would not be limited only to verbal statements and sanctions.

Since the policy based on all-round support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia has not achieved its stated goals on the part of the West, but has deepened China-Russia cooperation, brought Russia closer to Iran and North Korea, foreshadowing the emergence of a Russia-China-Iran axis, and a workable partnership between Russia and North Korea, we must now wonder whether the policy of the collective West (NATO, the EU and other states supporting Ukraine) is the right one concerning the Russia-Ukraine war

The question arises: would it not be more appropriate to concentrate the combined and united energies of the collective West on ending the war and working out a mutually acceptable compromise?

Such a basic compromise could be if: - Ukraine was to give up the Russian-occupied territories; - Ukraine was to gain rapid admission to the EU; - Ukraine was not to become a NATO member but was to conclude security agreements with the United States and/or other countries guaranteeing the sovereignty of its remaining territory; - Foreign military forces and assets were not to be deployed in Ukraine; - A significant part of the sanctions against Russia were lifted; - Multilateral negotiations were to begin, with external mediation, to draw up a comprehensive peace treaty.

Findings

The West's economic war and sanctions policy against Russia did not result in a reduction in Russia's war potential, partly because the success of the sanctions policy was assumed based on Russia's low GDP and because it did not take into account the manufacturing capacity and exports of key products when assessing the Russian economy's carrying capacity. French economist André Sapir, a renowned expert on the Russian economy, says that "if we look only at manufacturing activity, the Russian economy is ahead of the German economy and more than twice as strong as the French." (Borsányi A, 2024)

- However, the effectiveness of the sanctions policy is undoubtedly evident in the high-tech sector. This is the biggest problem, even though Russia can more or less manage to replace the Western technology it needs.

- The Russian economy is struggling with several problems (inflationary pressures, high base interest rate, energy revenues still account for a third of budget revenues) and will certainly not grow at the pace of the Asian tigers in the coming years (the Russian government has projected growth of only 2.3 percent in 2024 and forecasts Russian GDP growth of between 2 and 3 percent in 2025-2026). It is reasonable to say that Russia's economic potential is not sufficient to fight a conventional war against NATO.
- In terms of military capabilities, Russia has an effective mobilization capability and a newly established defense industry, but its military potential is incomplete due to significant losses. Indeed, the navy, the land-based strategic missile forces, and the combat air force are intact, but the ground forces have suffered heavy losses. However, land troops are needed to occupy and hold countries and territories. It is also evident that NATO outclasses Russia in almost every weapons category. It is clear from what has been said that Russia cannot launch a conventional war against NATO in the hope of success.
- NATO is clearly confused about the Russian military threat. Although point 8 of NATO's new Strategic Concept states that the Russian Federation poses the most significant and immediate threat to the security of the Allies and to the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, Germany is taking a more cautious approach: Bruno Kahl, head of the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND), stated on November 27, 2024, at an event in Berlin of the German Foreign Policy Association think tank, that "a military confrontation would be a possible course of action for the Kremlin. We should not expect a large-scale attack on European NATO member states, but, for example, a short attack on Spitsbergen in Norway or a limited intervention in the Baltics to protect Russian minorities. At present, however, there are no signs of Russia's specific war plans."
- At the Washington Summit to mark the 75th anniversary of NATO's founding, the leaders of the 32 member states agreed that, contrary to previous practice, NATO should be the main organizer of military support and training assistance to Ukraine, rather than ad hoc coalitions led by the US. This position ignores the fact that NATO's objective is to protect the freedom and security of its members and that military support for Ukraine as a third country in the absence of a specific Russian threat is contrary to the objective of the Alliance and also contradicts the much-stated argument in favor of NATO enlargement, namely that NATO is exclusively a defensive alliance.

Conclusion

Even with extensive Western support and nearly 20,000 sanctions against Moscow, Kyiv has not been able to achieve its goal of regaining its occupied territories. On the contrary, it has only lost more territory. Russia is also far from reaching its goals (total military victory, demilitarisation of Ukraine, ending the foreign military presence there; withdrawal of the Ukrainian request for NATO membership and forcing Ukraine to return to neutrality; ending the extremist nationalist, grossly anti-Russian state policy; 'liberating' the eastern territories populated mainly by Russians). Both sides are determined to continue the war until the objectives

are achieved.

The characteristics of the current combat activity can be summarized as follows: On the Ukrainian side, the destruction of Russia's military infrastructure with long-range Western missiles cannot fundamentally affect the course of the war, as they are expensive and insufficient in quantity to destroy a large number of Russian targets, while the increasingly powerful Russian retaliatory strikes will only further destroy Ukraine's energy infrastructure, 80% of which has already been destroyed. Nor does it make sense to occupy more Russian territory, as it would not take Russian troops off the front line, and the necessary reinforcement would certainly be provided by North Korean forces (whose presence is acceptable under the Russian-North Korean military cooperation agreement as long as they remain on Russian territory.) The Russians will certainly drive the Ukrainians out of the Kursk region shortly and fully occupy the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, but their further advance must be stopped with the help of the collective West, otherwise, Ukraine's military defeat will be inevitable.

Unjustified military attacks against any country must be condemned as a violation of the principle of collective security and the aggressor must be held accountable.

Since other countries including the United States, also committed aggression many times the protection of sovereignty can hardly be considered the sole and exclusive principle of maintaining global order.

The United States' selfless, consistent, and large-scale support for Ukraine is also aimed at weakening Russia, driving it out of Europe, and, ultimately, preserving American hegemony in Europe, which the European states do not reject. No one has yet refuted the findings of Zbigniew Brzezinski's "The Grand Chessboard" regarding Ukraine and Russia: "Russia without Ukraine can still strive for imperial status, but it would then become a predominantly Asian imperial state..... An empire without Ukraine would eventually mean a Russia that would become more "Asianized" and more remote from Europe. The key point to bear in mind is that Russia cannot be in Europe without Ukraine also being in Europe, whereas Ukraine can be in Europe without Russia being in Europe."

At the same time experience so far shows that Western policy, based on increasing sanctions against Russia and a steady increase in military aid to Ukraine, is not forcing Russia to withdraw from Ukraine and ultimately it could result in a Russia-China-Iran axis contributing to the emergence of a new bipolar world order led by the United States and China. As for the outcome of the fight between bipolar actors, this new world order will differ from the previous world order based on the opposition between the socialist and capitalist systems because the opposition between the United States and China is unlikely to be resolved peacefully.

To provide objective analysis and evaluation, let us assume that the collective Western policy will be successful in the long run. It means that Russia will be significantly weakened economically and militarily, Russian forces will be forced to withdraw from Ukraine and Ukraine will regain its lost territory. Such a development could lead to the downfall of the current Russian leadership, a Russian economic crisis, the intensification of disintegration processes, the disintegration of the federation, international competition to influence the successor states, the loss of unified control and command over Russian nuclear weapons, the rise of organized crime, and the intensification of Russian migration to Europe, the consequences of which are difficult to assess.

In this situation the only way out may be to impose a compromise peace agreement on the opposing parties that not only stops hostilities but also prevents the outbreak of another Russo-Ukrainian war. In my view, such a compromise could be reached if Ukraine recognizes the annexation of the occupied territories to Russia, temporarily renounces NATO membership, but concludes a security agreement with the United States and/or other countries guaranteeing the sovereignty of its remaining territory without the deployment of foreign military forces and assets in Ukraine, and gains rapid admission to the EU. At the same time, Western sanctions against Russia will be lifted.

Let's hope that, if not this compromise solution, something similar will happen and that common sense will become the guiding principle of international relations schools of thought, rather than moral norms and interests.

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