

THE WAR IN UKRAINE IS DISRUPTING THE GEOPOLITICAL ORDER BETWEEN RUSSIA AND NATO

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Abstract: About twenty years ago, Robert Kagan, Victoria Nuland's husband, published the book "Europeans act like they're from Venus, while Americans act like they're from Mars." The personification is more than clear. Venus is the symbol of love and peace, Mars is the god of war. The European dimension of NATO had a historical handicap, due to the "doctrine of agreement" according to which the Europeans "did not need to worry about interventions within the borders of the Alliance because the Americans have always been there". They designed and financed the defense of Europe. Europe successfully sheltered behind the shadow of Uncle Sam". Gradually geopolitics evolved especially after the NATO air campaign against FR Yugoslavia in 1999. Two decades later with the war in Ukraine, the world returned to the student war with serious threats of nuclear conflict. And Putin's Russia showed that it is from Mars. This encouraged NATO and EU allies to strengthen their ranks. The war in Ukraine cured NATO of apoplexy as diagnosed by Macron. The alliance also became attractive to its most indifferent allies Sweden and Finland. On the map of Europe, a big turn happened due to the NATO membership of the two neutral Scandinavian countries, Finland and Sweden. From a geopolitical point of view, Russia opposed the membership of Finland and Sweden in the Alliance, because the border with NATO was extended by two hundred kilometers. It can also be considered the biggest upheaval in Europe since 1989. On the other hand, Russia, with its invasion of Ukraine, violated the provisions of both international law and political declarations that protected the immutability of borders. "The whole project of the EU, European association and cooperation relies on such norms. The war happened and changed the perspectives of all countries, both those that are in NATO and those that have not been. The entire Western world stood on the side of the victims, on the side of the defense of the order that had maintained the stability of Europe since 1945." The war in Ukraine has disrupted the world geopolitical order. Globalization has been put in danger by the establishment of the largest sanctions against Russia. The alliance has consolidated and is looking for new allies and partners. On the other hand, Russia is also reorienting itself towards new allies, primarily China, N. Korea, Iran, the BRICS countries

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, Putin, NATO, Globalization, Deglobalization

Field: Social Sciences and Humanities

1. INTRODUCTION

Russian aggression against Ukraine marks the end of the post-Cold War era and the dream of lasting peace on the Old Continent. After the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, we are witnessing that the bloc division has once again returned to Europe. However, unlike the former East-West ideological divide, the dividing line has moved about 2,000 kilometers east of the one diagnosed by Winston Churchill on March 5, 1946, during a famous speech at the University of Fulton, Missouri. Then Churchill pointed out "From Stettin, on the Baltic, to Trieste, on the Adriatic, an iron curtain descended over Europe", pointed out the "Old Lion" who left power eight months earlier, states Mark Semo (Semo, 2022, p.7). Churchill warned of the new danger that threatened a Europe that had just triumphed over Nazism. It was the beginning of the East-West confrontation, which was at once military, political and ideological, structuring all international relations during the next forty years. The ideological war lasted until 1991 and ended with the victory of the Western bloc after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The situation created by the open conflict between the West and a Russia largely supported by China, even if the two countries are not bound by a formal military alliance, is in many ways reminiscent of the East-West confrontation of the second half of the 20th century. Just like a few decades ago, the conflict concerns the opposition between authoritarian regimes and democracies. (Black, 2023) It is in this sense that the competitive international entity "composed of state units that maintain regular relations with each other and all of which are likely to be involved in a general war" is elaborated by Raymond Aaron through the definition of the international system in his capital work "War and Peace Between Nations - of international relations ("Paix et la guerre entre les nations- des relations internationales") whose work is best explained by the renowned analyst Duroselle (Aron, 1962, 963). It is evident that the world is facing a new "cold war" otherwise the expression, which is something of an oxymoron, first appeared from the pen of George Orwell, in a very thoughtful article in the left-wing British weekly "Tribune" of October 19, 1945. In this article the author predicts that

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after the Americans, the Soviets will in turn create the A-bomb and a balance of terror will be created in a “permanent state of cold war” (Mitchel, 2023). Fear of mutual annihilation guaranteed the status quo in Europe, but wars in Asia and Africa left millions dead in Third World countries. In the case of Ukraine, for the first time since 1945, the epicenter is in Europe. “With the return of high-intensity war, the European continent is losing one of its comparative advantages in globalization, which is Europe’s strategic stability as a region at peace,” notes Thomas Gomart, director of the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI). He emphasizes that “in terms of global issues, this war seems anachronistic for those who rhyme globalization and demilitarization since 1991, i.e. fundamentally the Europeans, but it is not so for those who see the world through the balance of military power, i.e. the Russians, the Chinese and the Americans. This return to the colonial war of conquest in the shadow of nuclear power represents a major change in the geopolitical game.

2. IS THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER CREATED BY THE USA IN DANGER?

Today’s international context is extremely fluid. The liberal order established and led by the United States is in danger of disruption without an alternative system emerging. At least that’s what Chinese, Russian and other leading intellectuals of BRICS think (Shigong, 2019/2023). Even if Western-dominated globalization is under attack from all sides, it remains the main economic paradigm. We are witnessing the gradual “de-universalization” of Western norms and values, but these have not been replaced by a “Chinese model” or some other normative set. Multipolarity (or “polycentrism”) is often invoked, but there is no consensus on the implications of this concept. One thing is certain, and that is that since the end of World War II, the “system” of the international order has never been so divided and disorganized. Unlike China, which thrived within the liberal world order, Russia generally saw itself as a victim of this system, feeling cruelly exploited by the West. Not surprisingly, the Putin regime has been pleased with the various turmoils the US and Europe have experienced over the past decade. While the West was punished for its supposed arrogance, Moscow became aware of the concrete benefits of weakening the West. Despite the erosion and shortcomings of the American order, Russia realized that the United States still remains the most powerful world power, both economically and geopolitically, technologically, militarily-strategically and scientifically-innovatively. Moscow’s ideal was in such a context to establish a “concert of great powers” of the 21st century, where the United States, China, Russia and a few other big players would rule the whole world. According to the interpretations of S. Karaganov, “Victory of Russia, represents a new “concert of nations”, and Russia engages in global issues, in order to realize its vision in the joint management of international affairs. However, the implementation of such a vision at a time when strength and power have become much more diffuse, where international standards of liberal democracy have experienced occasional crises and the rise of China, India, and Brazil rests on global ambitions, revives Russia’s ambition to create the most favorable geopolitical climate that will create more favorable positions for her. In recent years, we have witnessed a rise in strategic tensions between the great powers: USA/China, China/Japan, India/Pakistan, Iran/Saudi Arabia, Iran/Israel, Azerbaijan/Armenia based on geopolitical and nationalist animosity, radical alter-globalism to terrorist Islamism, xenophobic nationalism. At the same time, new forms of confrontation were asserting themselves, such as cyber-attacks and hybrid warfare. It is evident that no one respects security agreements, especially in the field of strategic arms control. “Hot spots” have multiplied and the situation in the world is more and more difficult: the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East, the South China Sea, Ukraine, etc. Therefore, the possibility of a military conflict between two great powers (or more) no longer seems as unthinkable as once thought a few years ago. The realist tradition invoked by the Kremlin is based on the idea of a classical international system inspired by the Westphalian concept of co-governance of the world by the great powers. However, the world of the 21st century transcends multiple national borders and challenges the influence of great powers. The globalization of trade, the abundance and ubiquity of information, the rapid development of high technologies, the acceleration of climate change, uncontrolled migration, the increasing pressure due to the lack of food, water and other resources, the “de-universalization” of norms and values, have made the world increasingly difficult for management. (Tisou, 2023, p.3)

3. UKRAINE AS A GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOECONOMIC STAKE

What is a current issue from a geopolitical point of view today are those 2,500 kilometers of the eastern Ukrainian front as the future lines of separation between the European Union and Russia. Russia dreams of establishing the borders, as before 1989, that is, the “thick border”, according to Sabine’s expression. Dullin, author, in particular, of the book of the same name (Depretto, 2014, 360) “Russian

leaders, from czars to Vladimir Putin, have consistently wanted to expand their borders westward, for fear of coming into direct contact with what they see as an adversary.” This role was played by popular democracies in Central and Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1989. Today, this is one of the main reasons why the Kremlin wants to regain control over Ukraine, or at least take over part of its territory that stretches from the east and southeast of this country. Observed from a historical perspective, Ukraine has always played a key economic, political and military role for Russia in its struggle with “Western empires” both during the Tsarist Empire and during the “Cold War”. The events in Ukraine go beyond the borders of this country and affect its neighbors, especially the most powerful: Russia and the EU, but also the United States. Historically, Ukraine has played a key economic, political and military role for Russia in its struggle with “Western empires” to divide spheres of influence. And that as in the time of the imperial empire, as well as during the “Cold War” and the period after the Cold War. Indeed, from an economic point of view, Ukraine has great potential for agri-food and mining production. Ukraine has two very important ports on the Black Sea: Odessa and Sevastopol. In addition, through Ukrainian territory, most of the Russian gas passed through European countries. From a military point of view, Ukraine was just as fundamental to Russian defense and security. The Russian capital is located only 480 kilometers from the Ukrainian border, which, according to the Kremlin, makes it very vulnerable to possible attacks from NATO, although neither the United States nor any other NATO member has declared that it would attack Russia. This argument is just an excuse for Moscow to keep Ukraine under its influence, as a kind of “buffer zone” with the Western countries. (Morin, 2022, p.24)

4. CULTURE AND RELIGION AS STAKES

The unity of Ukrainian historical regions is debatable, uneven and obvious. Especially since their geographical location has made it for five centuries a stake between two messianisms inspired by two Christian churches, those of Warsaw and Moscow, to say nothing of the occasional influences of Berlin, Vienna and Bucharest. Therefore, in 1991, the new state of Ukraine was in search of elements of a common identity, but from that moment, the old divisions reappeared. It is evident that there is a lack of unity factors. On the religious level, in the 1990s the country was the theater of a “war of the churches” between believers of three denominations of the same Orthodox Church, for control of places of worship. Since the Christianization in 988, the Russian Orthodox metropolitan resided in Kiev, but for security reasons, in 13 the metropolitan was moved to the north-eastern part of Russia, in the region of Vladimir. In 1326, the Russian sovereign offered property near Moscow and thus it became the center of the Orthodox Church “of all Russians”. Historically, the Patriarch of Moscow is the legitimate successor of the Metropolitan of Kyiv. During the episode of 1918-1919, the Ukrainian nationalist government created the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, recognized by Constantinople. With the victory of the Bolsheviks, this church emigrated to Canada. In 1991, the new Ukrainian government constituted the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which Constantinople did not recognize. In the same period, the exiled Church from Canada returned to Ukraine. Thus, Orthodoxy in Ukraine was divided according to three beliefs, namely the Orthodoxy of the Moscow Patriarchate and two autocephalous churches.

In 2007, 11,233 Ukrainian parishes depended on the Moscow Patriarchate, 3,963 on the Kyiv Patriarchate, 1,178 on the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church since 1918. Parallel to these church institutions, there is also a Uniate Church, or Greek Catholic, which recognizes the supremacy of the Roman Pope. It was created by the Poles in the 17th century to “gather heretics to the Holy Cross”, and is active only in western Ukraine (Natalka, Rousselet, 2004/5, p.39-50). Some of the analysts believe that one of the most significant stakes of the war in Ukraine are exactly the religious issues and the politicization and animosity between the church communities (Lutaud-Le Figaro, 2022).

5. THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE CONFLICT

In terms of language, according to the 2001 Census, 77.8% declared themselves as members of the Ukrainian nation, while 17.3% declared themselves as the Russian nation and 4.9% others. Regarding the use of the mother tongue, 68.5% of the Ukrainian population considers the Ukrainian language to be their mother tongue, while 29.6% declared that their mother tongue is Russian. The population declares its mother tongue, as a result of the long life symbiosis between Russia and Ukraine. 29.6%. A significant number of people who declare themselves to be Ukrainians consider Russian as their mother tongue (according to the population census, from 2001). The Ukrainian language was more widespread in the villages, with various dialectal forms. In 2001, almost the entire population understood Russian and switched from one language to another depending on the interlocutor, but the majority actually spoke

“surjik”, a kind of mixture of Ukrainian and Russian. All toponyms were in Russian, including the capital city of Kiev, which is now called Kyiv. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2021/02/16/en-ukraine-la-bataille-des-langues_6070135_3210.html The situation is similar with publications. Books written in Russian cover 90% of the market, and publications in Ukrainian have only a limited market. Before 2014, the Russian press was present everywhere. Three areas in the center and in the south represent a situation of relative balance between Russian and Ukrainian language vocations. In three lower Dnieper districts, the majority speak Russian, while in three upper Dnieper districts, between 9.5 and 10.3% speak Russian and the majority speak Ukrainian (89-90%). Sumy region, 16% speak Russian against 84% who speak Ukrainian. Three central districts practice Russian 6-7% and Ukrainian 92-93%. In the nine western districts, the share of Ukrainian speakers exceeds 93%, that of the Russian language is marginal (3 to 5%). In Transcarpathia, 12.7% of the population is declared to be of Hungarian nationality, while in Chernivtsi, 17.5% is declared to be of Romanian or Moldovan nationality. After Russian invasion at a video conference of NATO members, February 25, 2022. NATO thus followed the path of Sir Halford Mackinder's archaic geopolitics. Mackinder in his work *Democratic Ideas and Reality*, written as a manual for the British participants in the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, formulated the principles of the necessity of separating the Germans and the Slavs in Europe. The geopolitical goal was for the British Empire to remain intact and spared from endangering the potentially powerful economic-demographic union. Toward that image, he gave Central Europe a meaning it neither has nor can have. “He who rules central Europe rules the world,” Mackinder states. “The world” - yes, but only as long as Europe is “the world”. The same principle was applied at the end of World War II. By dividing Germany, the Soviet Union was prevented from being its master, again with the same idea: a unified Germany under the Soviets meant that the Soviets ruled the world.

6. WHAT IS NATO TO THE EUROPEAN UNION?

The end of the Cold War marked the definitive end of the Versailles system, which was built at the expense of three countries: Germany, Russia and China. Therefore efforts were made to find the only remaining way to emerge their truncated remains and that was the “open door policy of NATO” through the expansion of the Alliance. It was NATO that was supposed to prevent German-Slavic unification, as prescribed by Mackinder. Hence, Central Europe was perceived as a “sanitary cordon” and a rampart through which Russia must not pass to the West under any circumstances. Some aspects of Russia's positions towards the US and NATO became more transparent at the NATO Security Conference in Munich. In the presence of, among others, the Secretary of Defense of the United States, Robert Gates, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a strong speech on the foreign relations of The Security Conference in Munich, Germany (2007). He used the occasion to denounce the interventionism of the United States outside its territory, to denounce the fact that it is at the heart of a “unipolar” world and to express his concern about what he sees as the expansionism of the Alliance. The tone was so heavy-handed that some observers see the speech as threatening a return to the Cold War between the United States and Russia. In 2008 at the Bucharest Summit, the George W. Bush administration failed in its attempt to convince the rest of the European allies to accept Ukraine's membership in NATO in order to gain candidate status with the Membership Action Plan. After the invasion of Crimea (2014), relations between NATO and Russia cooled. The alliance's and Ukraine's ambitions to institutionalize relations have met with fierce resistance in Russia's political elites. In 2014, Russia occupied the strategic peninsula of Crimea, considering that President Khrushchev made a big mistake when he decided to hand it over to Ukraine in 1955. Putin heard the worrying news, which strengthened his intention to do what he announced, at the last Munich Security Conference. Putin believed that: - Since 2014, Russia has been an enemy of the West; - the expansion of NATO in the future is directed against Russia; - Russian demands for security guarantees will not be accepted (although German Chancellor Scholz was ready to negotiate); - in the event of a war in Ukraine, Russia will be cut off from economic ties with the West, which should destroy the Russian economy; - The West will seriously limit the purchase of gas from Russia; - Ukraine will be immediately admitted to the European Union; - The European Union will expand to the countries of the Western Balkans (but not as urgently as Ukraine and without any time perspective); - NATO will not weaken, but will strengthen the military presence on the borders with Russia; - the world order should continue to be built on universal liberal values; - The West should use the current crisis to close its ranks. From here, even before the Russian intervention in Ukraine began, it follows that there was no way to resolve the Russia-NATO conflict. It is unlikely that any event will change Putin's mood and decision to commit to the language of force as “the only one that the West takes seriously and understands,” as Medvedev reiterated.

7. UKRAINE IN NATO

Putin asked for nothing but what Zbigniew Brzezinski proposed in 2015. "Russia must be given assurances that a free, democratic Ukraine will not aspire to NATO membership," Brzezinski said in Poland. Already in 2014, he proposed a "constructive compromise" according to which Ukraine will become a country whose internal and foreign policy resembles Finland, Sweden or Austria. During 2021, Putin was completely burdened with Ukraine. After Ukraine adopted a new security doctrine in March 2021 in which it was clear that Russia was its main enemy, it became clear that there was no word on the fulfillment of the "Minsk 2" agreement. In July 2021, Putin published an extensive article about the unity of Russians and Ukrainians, from which it was clear that Russia would never allow Ukraine to become a member of NATO from where they could launch missiles that could reach Moscow in four minutes. Kiev's political elite read Putin's message as a signal that the Kremlin was on its way to scrapping the 1994 Budapest accord that guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity in exchange for giving up its nuclear weapons. The first step in the direction of the new policy was announced by Putin on November 18, 2021 at the session of the expanded collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "NATO destroyed all dialogue mechanisms on its own initiative. Of course, we will respond to the military activity of NATO members along all Russian borders," Putin said at the time. Constructive destruction Putin's decision to take military action against Ukraine has come at a high price. No one, not even the author of this text, justifies the invasion of Russia, which caused over 500,000 casualties of civilians and soldiers on both sides. According to international law, Russia has violated the principles of the UN Charter. For now, it seems that Russia is willing to pay that price, and even higher than what is now being demanded. It is undeniable that after the war in Ukraine, if it ends according to Moscow's plans, almost all relations between Russia and the West will be impossible. Not even Stalin had such a radical break in relations with the West. Stalin had no relations with the West, but he loved them. Future Russia will not have them and will not want them. This is announced by the strategic affairs of Russian experts closely connected with the Kremlin. They state that in 2021 Russia started a new phase in its foreign policy. They call that phase the "constructive destruction" of the previous model of relations with the West. Elements of this line have been accumulating for a decade and a half - tentatively since Vladimir Putin's famous speech in Munich in 2007. But the prevailing trends in policy and rhetoric were residual attempts at integration into the Western system against a backdrop of defensive sentiment. At the end of 2021, with Russia's ultimatum to the US and NATO to stop building military infrastructure near Russia's borders, the bloc's eastward expansion marked the beginning of that "constructive destruction." The task is not only to stop the diminishing and, nevertheless, extremely dangerous inertia of the Western geostrategic offensive, but also to seriously approach laying the foundations for changing the relations that developed between Russia and the conditional West in the 1990s. "Fortress Russia" should come out of this process. The alliance between China and Russia aims at the destruction of globalism and the US dollar, the expulsion of America from Europe, the strengthening of multilateralism against US unilateralism. Although they have little faith in these ambitions, the BRICS states and those from Africa and Asia who have similar desires to remove Western dominance and superiority should not be underestimated: For Russia, which managed to realize economic progress despite the sanctions, the most natural and promising direction is development and the strengthening of relations with China. It will greatly improve the capabilities of both countries. If the West continues to be bitterly hostile, Russia will enter into the first provisional defense alliance with China, delayed by five years. This Russia deviates from every historical pattern by deciding that it "must help Peking in every possible way, to prevent it from being even temporarily defeated in the war launched against it, because that defeat will weaken Russia as well." It is clear that Eastern policy should not be directed at China. In world politics, economics and culture, the East and the South are rising, including "thanks to our undermining the military superiority of the West, on which its hegemony has been based for the last five centuries". When it comes to building a new European security system to replace the dangerously outdated old one, it must be built within a large Eurasian project.

8. CONCLUSION: THE LOGIC OF THE WINNERS OF THE COLD WAR

The current crisis is connected with the continued refusal of Western capitals to integrate Russia into a single system of collective security in Europe. At the end of the Cold War, it seemed that the time had come to realize the concept of the "Great West" that would unite the transatlantic alliance of America and Europe, better known as the "Western Hemisphere" and the giant Eurasian continental plate. , "Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok" Russia was supposed to be that "new West" that would become an almost universal covering of the globe. Instead, something completely different happened. No one

particularly hides the motives for such stubbornness in the West. The West does not allow anyone to doubt the “victory in the Cold War” Henry Kissinger’s chief adviser at his company “Kissinger Associates” Thomas Graham wrote that the whole thing is that Moscow “does not recognize its defeat in the Cold War”, because of which “victory “ in the West cannot be complete.(T.Graham,1992) “Russia wants to be considered a world power instead of admitting defeat,” writes the American newspaper. The Berlin Wall, November 11, 1989. The father of “perestroika” Alexander Yakovlev claimed that Gorbachev’s coming to power marked the end of the Cold War, because he decided to end it, and dissolved the Warsaw Pact. (A.Yakovlev, 2020) Following the triumphalist logic of the self-proclaimed “world of the victor”, the United States, one might say, followed the then safe path of military logic: you withdraw - we occupy. In other words, the Soviet army withdrew and the American army arrived in its place. Thus, a regional security system centered on NATO was born. He divided European countries into those covered by the collective defense guarantees of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and those forced to fend for themselves and survive as best they could. This is especially true for Russia. Hence the current crisis. The preservation of the old institutions that embodied the policy of containment inevitably led to the preservation of the same policy in new conditions. This policy was also opposed by her official father, George Kennan, who, as soon as the discussion on NATO expansion began, warned that it would be a “fatal mistake”.

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