

## AN EXPLANATORY NOTE ON RUSSIA'S CAMPAIGN IN UKRAINE

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### **Abstract**

*The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has intensified, with Russian President Vladimir Putin showing no signs of backing down until his security demands are met. Supported by China, Putin aims to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine, further complicating the resolution of the crisis. The war has resulted in a significant number of refugees, with approximately 2.8 million Ukrainians seeking refuge in neighboring countries, particularly in Poland. The refugee crisis poses social challenges for host nations, leading to growing resentment. Casualties on both sides have been reported, with conflicting numbers provided by Kiev and Moscow. Putin has warned other nations against involvement in the conflict, which former USSR republics are not independent but artificial states propped up by the West. This battle in Ukraine represents a struggle for a new world order, which is the ambition of past Russian leaders like Lenin and Stalin, who sought to challenge the US-imposed global order. Western leaders and media heavily criticize Putin, which portrays him as paranoid and deranged. Despite ongoing negotiations in Belarus, a breakthrough in resolving the conflict is yet to be achieved. The conflict in Ukraine reflects a larger geopolitical struggle with far-reaching implications for global stability and the future world order.*

**Key words:** *Negotiations, Order, Global, Conflict, Refugee*

### **Аннотация**

Продолжающийся конфликт между Россией и Украиной усилился, и президент России Владимир Путин не проявляет намерения отступить, пока его требования

в области безопасности не будут удовлетворены. Поддерживаемый Китаем, Путин стремится демилитаризовать и денацифицировать Украину, что дополнительно усложняет разрешение этого кризиса. Война привела к значительному числу беженцев, и около 2,8 миллионов украинцев ищут убежище в соседних странах, особенно в Польше. Кризис с беженцами создает социальные проблемы для стран-хозяев, что приводит к растущей неприязни. Сообщается о потерях с обеих сторон, с противоречивой информацией, предоставленной Киевом и Москвой. Путин предупреждает другие страны от вмешательства в конфликт, считая бывшие республики бывшего СССР несамостоятельными, а искусственно созданными государствами, поддерживаемыми Западом. Эта битва в Украине представляет собой борьбу за новый мировой порядок, что является амбицией прошлых российских лидеров, таких как Ленин и Сталин, которые стремились бросить вызов установленному США глобальному порядку. Западные лидеры и СМИ критикуют Путина, что изображает его как параноика и сумасшедшего. Несмотря на продолжающиеся переговоры в Беларуси, прорыв в разрешении конфликта до сих пор не был достигнут. Конфликт в Украине отражает более широкую геополитическую борьбу с далеко идущими последствиями для глобальной стабильности и будущего мирового порядка.

Главные слова: Переговоры, Порядок, Мировой, Конфликт, Убежинщи .

### **Introduction**

Up to January 1, 1991, the Soviet Union was the largest country in the world, covering some 8,650,000 square miles (22,400,000 square km), nearly one-sixth of Earth's land surface. Its population numbered more than 290 million, and 100 distinct nationalities lived within its borders. It also boasted an arsenal of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons, and its sphere of influence, exerted through such mechanisms as the Warsaw Pact, extended throughout eastern Europe (Ray, M. 2018). Within a year, the Soviet Union had ceased to exist. It is not exactly possible to pinpoint a single cause for an event as complex and far-reaching as the dissolution of a global superpower, a number of internal and external factors were certainly responsible for the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

The first was the political factor. Mikhail Gorbachev, the general

secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) initial attempts at reform failed to yield significant results. He instituted the policies of glasnost (“openness”) and perestroika (“restructuring”). The former was intended to foster dialogue, while the latter introduced quasi free market policies to government-run industries. Rather than sparking a renaissance in Communist thought, glasnost opened the floodgates to criticism of the entire Soviet apparatus. The state lost control of both the media and the public sphere. Perestroika exhibited the worst of the capitalist and communist systems: price controls were lifted in some markets, but existing bureaucratic structures were left in place, meaning that Communist officials were able to push back against those policies that did not benefit them personally. On September 28, 1968 *Pravda* published an article outlining how the USSR considered the sovereignty of the satellite states to be limited. It was dubbed “Brezhnev Doctrine” by Western commentators. The “Brezhnev Doctrine” was used to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In the end, Gorbachev’s reforms and his abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine hastened the demise of the Soviet empire (Ray, M. 2018). His decision to allow elections with a multi-party system and create a presidency for the Soviet Union began a slow process of democratization that eventually destabilized Communist control and contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Secondly, there was the economic factor. By some measures, the Soviet economy was the world’s second largest in 1990, however, economic stagnation had hobbled the country for years, and the perestroika reforms only served to aggravate the problem. Wage hikes were supported by printing money, fueling an inflationary spiral. Mismanagement of fiscal policy made the country vulnerable to external factors, and a sharp drop in the price of oil sent the Soviet economy into a tailspin. Throughout the 1970s-’80s, the Soviet Union ranked as one of the world’s top producers of energy resources such as oil and natural gas, and exports of those commodities played a vital role in shoring up the world’s largest command economy. When oil plunged from \$120 a barrel in 1980 to \$24

a barrel in March 1986, this vital lifeline to external capital dried up. The price of oil temporarily spiked in the wake of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, but by that point the collapse of the Soviet Union was well under way (Ray, M. 2018).

Thirdly and lastly, the nuclear factor which is our focus on this article. In 1986, a reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant exploded, emitting a burst of radiation that could be felt throughout Europe. What was so disappointing was not just the disaster itself, which was a result of substandard equipment and inefficiently trained personnel, but the fact that the Soviet government attempted to cover up. Gorbachev characterized the incident at Chernobyl as a "misfortune" and pilloried Western media coverage as a "highly immoral campaign" of "malicious lies". They even allowed the May Day parades in Kyiv to go ahead, despite the danger, to avoid drawing suspicion. But the game was up when a nuclear plant all the way in Sweden detected increased radiation levels (radioactive fallout remains an issue in Sweden even today, especially for farmers). Pressure from the Swedish government forced the Soviets to admit an accident had occurred (Flax, M. 2022). Still, it was only when they began evacuating the entire area that the world realised the scale of the catastrophe. Whatever trust remained in the Soviet system had been shattered. Decades later, Gorbachev marked the anniversary of the disaster by stating, "even more than my launch of perestroika, [Chernobyl] was perhaps the real cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union five years later".

After the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R) in December 1991, there were 15 independent countries that emerged from the collapsed USSR: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, with Russia as the surviving country. There was, however, some regretful nostalgia for the USSR as VC noted, "Russia needs to reinvent itself as a modern state and

stop clinging to the idea of the reconstruction of the Soviet Union. It's already gone", (cnbc.com, Jan. 19, 2022). "Russian President Vladimir Putin has made no bones about the fact that he thinks the breakup of the Soviet Union was a catastrophe for Russia, once describing it as the 'greatest geopolitical tragedy' of the 20th century". Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, and openly declared that it would regain control of the other Ukrainian provinces that have common borders with them — as it felt justified to by "elections" where pro-Russian Ukrainians' (and possibly others coerced) expressed willingness to be controlled by Russia. Military attacks and interchanges since January 2022 have blown the conflict into a full war in Ukraine, killing thousands of soldiers and civilians, and razing property to the ground (Ray, M. 2018).

### **Polarization in Eastern Europe: Russia and Ukraine**

The Ukrainian dilemma is basically a security problem for the newly independent state. It is a question of how to best guarantee the national security of Ukraine against a historically confirmed and contemporarily perceived Russian threat and concurrently foster and maintain good relations with the west which feels threatened and alienated by the prospect of Ukraine as a nuclear weapon state. It seems to be a dilemma for the international community, as well, whose policy choices have consequences in Ukraine, and thereby implications for international security.

Russia taking-over Ukrainian territories actually started in 2014 after its invasion and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, with the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (an oblast is a form of administrative division similar to a province) taken over by the mostly unrecognized Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, established by Russia during the War in Donbas. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked a dramatic escalation of the eight-year-old conflict that began with Russia's annexation of Crimea and signified a historic turning point for European

security. A year after the fighting began, many defense and foreign policy analysts cast the war as a major strategic blunder by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Many observers see little prospect for a quick diplomatic resolution and instead acknowledge the potential for a dangerous escalation, which could include Russia's use of a nuclear weapon. The war has hastened Ukraine's push to join Western political blocs, including the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Much about Putin's fury with Ukraine is in Ukraine's expectant clinging to Western sympathy and support (mainly the US, and secondly the EU), despite Putin's objections. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Joe Biden (then head of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee) successfully urged NATO to accept Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as member states in the late 1990s. In 2004, seven Eastern European countries joined the alliance, and in 2008, US President George W. Bush pushed NATO to issue a declaration that Ukraine and Georgia would become members in the future. The new alliances threateningly pushed NATO to Russia's borders. Thus, Ukraine's common borders with Russia are the first targets for Russian territorial and political take-over.

### **Russia's Broad Interests In Ukraine**

Russia and Ukraine have deep cultural, economic, and political bonds, and in many ways Ukraine is central to Russia's identity and vision for itself in the world. In the article "Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia" by Jonathan, M. (2014) were highlighted Russia's interest in Ukraine.

1) Family ties. Russia and Ukraine have strong familial bonds that go back centuries. Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, is sometimes referred to as "the mother of Russian cities", on par in terms of cultural influence with Moscow and St. Petersburg. It was in Kyiv in the eighth and ninth

centuries that Christianity was brought from Byzantium to the Slavic peoples. And it was Christianity that served as the anchor for Kievan Rus, the early Slavic state from which modern Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarussians draw their lineage.

2) Russian diaspora. Approximately eight million ethnic Russians were living in Ukraine as of 2001, according to a census taken that year, mostly in the south and east. Moscow claimed a duty to protect these people as a pretext for its actions in Crimea and the Donbas in 2014.

3) Superpower image. After the Soviet Union collapse, many Russian politicians viewed the divorce with Ukraine as a mistake of history and a threat to Russia's standing as a great power. Losing a permanent hold on Ukraine, and letting it fall into the Western orbit, would be seen by many as a major blow to Russia's international prestige. In 2022, Putin cast the escalating war with Ukraine as a part of a broader struggle against Western powers he says are intent on destroying Russia.

4) Crimea. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 to strengthen the "brotherly ties between the Ukrainian and Russian peoples." However, since the fall of the union, many Russian nationalists in both Russia and Crimea longed for a return of the peninsula. The city of Sevastopol is home port for Russia's Black Sea Fleet, the dominant maritime force in the region.

5) Trade. Russia was for a long time Ukraine's largest trading partner, although this link withered dramatically in recent years. China eventually surpassed Russia in trade with Ukraine. Prior to its invasion of Crimea, Russia had hoped to pull Ukraine into its single market, the Eurasian Economic Union, which today includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

6) Energy. Moscow relied on Ukrainian pipelines to pump its gas to

customers in Central and Eastern Europe for decades, and it paid Kyiv billions of dollars per year in transit fees. The flow of Russian gas through Ukraine continued in early 2023 despite the hostilities between the two countries, but volumes were reduced and the pipelines remained in serious jeopardy.

7) Political sway. Russia was keen to preserve its political influence in Ukraine and throughout the former Soviet Union, particularly after its preferred candidate for Ukrainian president in 2004, Viktor Yanukovich, lost to a reformist competitor as part of the Orange Revolution popular movement. This shock to Russia's interests in Ukraine came after a similar electoral defeat for the Kremlin in Georgia in 2003, known as the Rose Revolution, and was followed by another—the Tulip Revolution—in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Yanukovich later became president of Ukraine, in 2010, amid voter discontent with the Orange government.

### **The East and the West: A Clash of the Tritans**

The US-NATO launched the first wave of eastward expansion by taking Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic into the fold of NATO in 1999. In the second wave in 2004, the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Litva were made members of NATO thereby threatening the eastern border of Russia. The membership of NATO jumped from 12 to 16 and then to 28. Most of the former Soviet Republics eagerly helped the US and NATO in encircling Russia. Poland and Romania agreed to deploy American nuclear-tipped missiles, and Ukraine was all set to become a member of NATO. This particular membership was disastrous for Russia and hence impelled Putin to take the offensive action before it was too late. Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky, on the bid to become a member of NATO, allowed the US to establish 25-30 bio-chemical weapons labs in Kiev, Kharkov and Odessa.

Moscow has repeatedly told US-NATO not to expand eastwards into East Europe. They were advised to abandon their Cold War approach and



to respect the sovereignty of other countries and interests, but the proud US-NATO paid no heed to Russia's security concerns and its core demands were out rightly rejected. Putin sought peace instead of taking physical action to block the NATO encroachment. He adopted a conciliatory policy with the west, even collaborated with the US in its war on terror and didn't object to the growing influence in Central Asia. He and Trump were comfortable with each other and the latter was accused by the Democrats of seeking help from Russia to win the 2016 elections. Once Vladimir Putin assessed that the aggressors were not prepared to halt their expansion and to remove the strike weapons deployed close to Russia's borders, and Ukraine which was its strategic depth, was about to be made a member of NATO, he ordered the already mobilized and deployed Russian on all sides of Ukraine to invade the country on Feb 24, 2022 from three directions coupled with air assaults.

### **Conclusion**

Russia is not stopping the war and Putin is determined to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine. He has no plan to pull out his forces until and unless his security demands are met. He has the support of China which is also a victim of the US belligerence.

About 2.8 million Ukrainians and others have fled and have become refugees in neighboring states with the bulk in Poland. The Refugee issue will blow up further and would create social problems for the host countries. Their love for the white refugees would gradually turn into resentment. Some signs are already seen in the UK. One of the reasons why the UK left the EU was the heavy influx of East Europeans in the 1990s and 2000s. Both sides have suffered casualties. Kiev is claiming to have killed 12000 Russian troops while Moscow gives a number of 498. 636 civilians have been killed and 1300 Ukrainian soldiers lost their lives. Putin has given a stern warning to the neighboring republics to stay out of the conflict. In Putin's view, all the former USSR Republics are not sovereign independent states but are artificial states propped up by the west. Battle in Ukraine is the one for the new world order. Like Lenin

and Stalin, Putin is seeking to overthrow the US imposed world order which in his view is selfish and unjust and has outlived its utility. Western leaders and media are critically condemning Putin and are painting him a paranoia, deranged and an evil monster. Parleys are taking place between Ukraine and Russia at Belarus but so far no breakthrough has been achieved.

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