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Russia Ukraine Conflict and its Impact on the Security of Europe

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Abstract

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 on the pre-text of prevention of NATO's expansion in the close vicinity. The geopolitical location of Ukraine in Europe, and internal dynamics made it an important state both for the Western World and the Russian interests. Russia used force in 2014 and annexed Crimea, and once again attacked Ukraine thus reviving geopolitical rivalry. The purpose of this research paper is to illustrate the intentions of Russian invasion of Ukraine and its consequences for the security of Europe. The research methodology used for this research paper is qualitative research by applying documentary analysis to determine results after the analysis of secondary and primary sources. This paper concludes that this conflict changed the geopolitical framework of Europe in the post-Cold War era, and this is regarded as the greatest security crisis since the fall of Berlin Wall.

Key Words: Russia, Ukraine, Conflict, Security, Europe.

Introduction

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine dates back to 2014, when the Ukrainian dignity revolution began mainly in the Crimean Peninsula and Donbas (Shveda & Park, 2016). These two parts are internationally recognized as a part of Ukraine but controlled by Russia for more than nine years now. Though the Russia attacked Ukraine on 24th February 2022, the roots of conflict are internal as well as external. The geographical location of Ukraine is in the sphere of influence of Russia and recent efforts towards eastern expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) annoyed the Russians. The emergence of this conflict affected the Europeans and they joined the United States of America (USA) to impose sanctions on Russia.

Ukraine has always played an important role in global security even if it is sometimes undervalued. This years old conflict escalated and turns into a significant point in the history of European security. Western consistent support enabled Ukraine to withstand strikes of Russia but majority of the cities are destroyed and one-fifth of the population has now taken refuge in other nearby European countries. Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia's decision to annex Crimea and destabilize Eastern Ukraine has had a significant impact on its relations with Europe. This

hostile act created fears among the Western leaders and they did not consider Putin more dependable in current circumstances.

This research paper focuses on the fundamental origin of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. This paper evaluates the military and political implications of this conflict on the security of the Europe and how much European Community is important for both the states in conflict. The research methodology used to answer these questions is qualitative content analysis. The research data has been collected through primary and secondary sources, and approach used is documentary analysis.

History of Russia and Ukraine Conflict

Both the states, Russia and Ukraine have a thousand years of history. According to the Council on Foreign Relations (2023), Ukraine, often referred to as the European breadbasket, was one of the most populous and powerful republics of the former Soviet Union until its independence in 1991 and was the center of agriculture (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). However, while Ukrainians agitated for independence with demonstrations and criticized government corruption, Russia was closely observing situation in its western neighbors. Tensions peaked in 2014 when Ukrainians expelled pro-Russian presidents. Russia occupied the Crimean territory of Ukraine with a move that was severely criticized by the international community to protect Russians and Russian speakers from the suppression of Ukraine (Shveda & Park, 2016). It is difficult to predict what will happen next, but analysts have some insight into the early stages of the conflict. They believe the war is the result of a combination of the two nations' complicated histories, Russia's persistent troubles with the NATO, and Putin's goals.

According to an article by Kirby (2022), Ukraine has consistently moved to the West, including the European Union (EU) and NATO, since the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. According to Putin, Russia's historic collapse occurred with the fall of the Soviet Union. He asserts that there is no distinction between Russians and Ukrainians. He said, ignoring Ukraine's lengthy history, that there was no meaningful national tradition in Ukraine. He persuaded Viktor Yanukovich, a pro-Russian president of Ukraine, not to sign an agreement with the European Union in 2013, which sparked a rebellion that led to Yanukovich's ouster in February 2014 (Kirby, 2023). A ceasefire and a peace accord were signed in Minsk in 2015, but nothing came out of it. Putin reneged on the ceasefire deal just before the fighting and established two tiny republics with Russian support independent of Ukraine (Kirby, 2023).

Fitzgerald (2023) illustrated in an article that, in a presidential election, famous comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy defeated pro-Russian President Petro Poroshenko by a margin. Furthermore, for the first time in Ukraine's history, Zelensky's party gained a majority of seats in the legislature (Fitzgerald & Jr., 2023). One of Zelenskyy's main policies is to end the war with Russia and to clean up the Ukrainian government of corruption. Early in 2021, Zelenskyy retaliated against millionaires in Ukraine who supported Russia, notably Viktor Medvedchuk, a close friend of Vladimir Putin. In response, Putin increased the number of troops stationed at the Ukrainian border and said that Russia and Ukraine were "one people" (Fitzgerald & Jr., 2023).

In December, thousands of Russian soldiers were posted at the nation's borders, which prompted Putin to make demands on NATO and the US. One of these demands was that Ukraine never be admitted to NATO, which the Biden administration refused. In 2014, Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts left Ukraine, led by Russian-backed terrorists, according to Ukrainian officials. After the deterioration of NATO's relations with the Western nations in late February, Putin declared these areas independent and sent troops to "maintain peace.". Only a few days after recognizing the breakaway region, Russia started an aggressive invasion of Ukraine. Donbas region in eastern Ukraine is where the invasion started. Zelenskyy declared martial law in Ukraine and severed diplomatic ties with Russia.

According to the Masters (2020), Ukraine has always played a crucial, though occasionally underappreciated, role in global security. According to many observers, the nation is currently in the heart of a great power confrontation that will have an impact on international affairs for many years to come. In recent elections, Ukrainians made it clear that they had a plan for their future in Europe, but the nation still faces significant corruption and important spatial disparities, which might impede their development. Meanwhile, the worst security crisis to hit Europe since the Cold War has been caused by Russia's engagement in Ukraine. Over the course of the seven-year conflict, the US and its allies have taken a variety of punitive actions against Russia, but have made little headway in restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity, fueling concerns that Moscow is preparing an all-out invasion of the neighboring nation (Master, 2023).

Although Ukraine and Russia have long-standing business ties, such ties have significantly worsened in recent years. China has surpassed Russia in trade with Ukraine. Russia wanted Ukraine to join the Eurasian Economic Union, a single market, before annexing Crimea. The Eurasian Economic Union is composed of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan as suggested by Russia. Russian gas has been transported to consumers in central Russia and Eastern Europe for decades via the Ukrainian pipeline, for which Moscow has paid Kiev billions of dollars. Midway through 2021, Russia will have completed the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that runs beneath the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany. Critics in the US and Europe believe that Nord Stream would allow Russia to bypass Ukrainian pipelines if it so preferred, giving it greater geopolitical clout in the area despite Russia's pledge to maintain gas transit via Ukraine for a number of more years (Master, 2023).

Khatu (2022) highlighted in an article that, since the conflict broke out on the Russia-Ukraine border in 2014, then by giving more than 17 billion euros in funding, the EU has assisted Ukraine in reducing its economic reliance on its adversarial neighbor Russia. Following the signing of the EU-Ukraine Union Agreement in 2014, the EU surpassed Russia as Ukraine's top commercial partner. However, the EU-Russia economic equation has affected the budding friendship between the EU and Ukraine. With 37.3% of Russia's total merchandise trade in 2020, the EU is the country's most important trading partner (Khatu, 2022). As a result, the coalition has sought to use economic sanctions as a tool to prevent Russia from further escaping in and around Ukraine. As a result, the EU threatened to impose even tougher sanctions in response, reminding Russia that "aggressive action has a price". Critics, including Ukraine, have criticized the EU's "Russian appeasement policies" for

failing to articulate this "cost". The EU's reliance on Russia for energy has grown in recent years, and the Kremlin is attempting to profit on Brussels' energy insecurity.

The EU is struggling to exert influence in neighboring crisis areas. EUAM Ukraine, a private sector support mission, was launched in December 2014 with the goal of "reforming law enforcement and the rule of law." Given that the situation is largely military, Ukraine has called for NATO's assistance from the eastern border in case an attempted invasion from the eastern border is attempted and a strong message of support to Kyiv. This happened on January 10, 2022, just before the start of a series of security negotiations between Russia and the United States, NATO and the OSCE. The EU has expressed serious concern about its exclusion from ongoing discussions on Europe's security architecture and its image as a "neutral observer." "Europe's security debate must be combined with EU involvement," Borrell said. "Because what happened in that neighborhood affects the security of the EU and its member states" (Khatu, 2022).

Ischinger (2015) described that, Russia's military approach in eastern Ukraine, the so-called "hybrid war", combines local troops, extreme propaganda, and other means to formally deny military involvement. Is the first rigorous application of war without declaration of war using. In the century, the Ukrainian conflict further paralyzed the UN Security Council, whose authority has already been significantly weakened. Its collective decision-making ability is declining, which is very worrisome. If the deadlock continues, Germany, India and other countries could one day become permanent members of the Security Council, which will soon become useless. The case also reveals something about the dysfunction of the international order. Global and regional systems are collapsing in front of us, and the international community has no power to stop or deal with the resulting disasters. There are no global policemen or effective management in major countries to tackle these issues. Now that the world has become so complex and more needed than ever, the international ability to deal with difficulties is embarrassingly small.

Ischinger (2015) further elaborated that, in recent decades, European security has made the continent a relatively peaceful place. The long-standing belief by many in Western Europe that NATO and EU countries no longer face the challenge of territorial integrity has proven to be wrong. The invasion of the Crimean Peninsula and the ongoing covert operations in eastern Ukraine has unilaterally pushed the history of European security into a more confrontational chapter. The Ukrainian crisis is the greatest possible awakening call for European military operations. Finding a long-term solution to this situation requires a lot of effort in every aspect. Therefore, seeking a ceasefire agreement as the first step in crisis diplomacy was the right decision (Ischinger, 2015).

According to the European Union Committee Sixth Report of Session 2014-15, relations between the EU and Russia are at a critical crossroads as a result of the ongoing situation in Ukraine and need to be fundamentally evaluated by the EU and its member states. Russia has left Europe in recent years. Russia's domestic political changes are contributing to a different political and economic worldview from that of the EU. As a result, the EU is unable to put in place an institutional framework that may support stronger partnerships, and Member States will not be able to provide the political oversight necessary for the Commission's trade negotiations was. Disagreements over "common neighborhoods" turn into actual hostility and

competition for political power, and the creation of a new political economy, the Eurasian Union, can have a significant impact.

Impact of Russia Ukraine Conflict on European Security

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has potentially changed the Europe's security outlook. Much of the public discussion around the crisis has depicted European governments as disorganized, weak, and unresponsive. However, a Pan-European study performed by the European Council on Foreign Relations towards the end of January 2022 discovered a startling level of agreement among European residents on the problem. It is no longer viable to assume that Europeans believe conflict is unavoidable and take peace for granted. What is remarkable is that the prospect of a Russian invasion has sparked Cold War concerns in the West. It also disproves the prevalent belief that Eastern Europeans are prepared to ignore the EU on security issues because they consider the United States as their only trusted ally.

Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Sweden are among the nations studied by Krastev (2022). Which together account for more than two-thirds of the European Union's population. This demonstrates that Russian President Vladimir Putin has managed in bringing up the issue of Europe's network security. To the amazement of many analysts – and most likely Putin himself – this has prompted a geopolitical awakening among Europeans. The findings of the survey point to four key conclusions: conflict in Europe is no longer a daft idea; we must respond to Russian aggression; the biggest fear among Europeans about the issue differs by nation; and European governments must prepare for greater unrest to lessen the strain on normal citizens (Krastev & Leonard, 2022).

The West's strategy for preventing another Russian invasion of any other state is to make such an intervention costlier for Russia. This includes a combination of military deterrence in Eastern Europe, soldier deployments to strengthen the Ukrainian army, and the planning of a series of sanctions in particular areas. Any sanctions-based policy's success will be determined by Europeans' willingness to make economic sacrifices. The war in Ukraine has the potential to be a major turning point in European security. Although there has been much debate about European governments' divisions in the midst of the crisis, European citizens appear to be particularly unified behind primary principles that this problem poses serious threat not only for Ukraine but also for Europe's security. The Poles, Romanians and Swedes are far more willing to make sacrifices than the French and Germans when it comes to take serious action. The risks associated with the crisis and the price their countries will have to pay to defend Ukraine. The crisis will certainly test the ability of Europeans to preserve the European security system (Krastev & Leonard, 2022).

Since the end of the Cold War, the current situation in Ukraine has generated the most significant crisis between Russia and the West. It jeopardized Europe's security, cast doubt on NATO's future, and put a stop to one of the most ambitious ambitions in US foreign policy: establishing cooperation with Russia. It may also sabotage US diplomatic efforts on terrorism and nuclear proliferation, among other issues of its interests. In the absence of ongoing discussion, both sides depend on political and economic pressures to make the other flinch first.

The Crimean annexation challenges two basic assumptions that have guided the United States strategy for post-Cold War Europe. First, Europe is largely safe and secure, allowing the United States to devote more resources to other regions, especially Asia and the Middle East, and secondly, Russia's emergence as a partner rather than an enemy. With the acquisition of Crimea, both of these assumptions need to be reconsidered. As a result, the United States needs to strike a new balance between the trade-offs of Europe, the Middle East and Asia. After annexing Crimea and conducting military operations to destabilize eastern Ukraine, Russia is rarely considered a partner. The United States seeks to adapt to its more patriotic and aggressive response to Russia, it needs to rethink the underlying foundations on which its Russia's policies are framed.

The Consequences of Russian Invasion on Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought the United States full attention to Europe. The crisis in Ukraine has a direct impact on Europe's security, but the consequences will be felt throughout the Indo-Pacific. It is unlikely that China will follow Russia's example and attack neighboring countries in the near future. But as Asian authorities decide to increase defense spending, seek security from the United States, or join a multilateral security alliance, Russia's determination to wage an unbelievable open war with Ukraine until yesterday.

Scholars advocating an "US 'military- first 'approach" to the region, and the greater economic elements of the Indo-Pacific strategy, suddenly compete with demands for improved defense and deterrence in countries like Taiwan (Jackson, 2022). Cannons and military planes bombing Ukraine, the candidate's attitude towards military and security concerns could have a serious impact on the minds of voters of any nation, where elections will be expected to take place in near future. As the situation in Ukraine continues, the Indo-Pacific strategy may be retrofitted. Nevertheless, following China's aggression and claims of sovereignty in Asia, the European crisis will affect how Asian politicians feel about their own security.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine will have a significant long-term negative impact on the country's top economic production of oil and gas. Analysts have long been concerned that gas weapons could be used during the Soviet era, when Western Europe became increasingly dependent on imported gas. In reality, the supply is constant and the prices are almost affordable. It was believed that Russian exporters and Western importers had a firm and common interest in reliable supply. The current situation in Ukraine is the latest and clearest evidence that all these old beliefs are wrong. Of course, as the reform of the energy system progresses slowly, it will take time to remove Russian gas from Europe.

Putin, on the other hand, has achieved something that no other Western leader has ever achieved. He put together the West with sanctions. Indeed, over the time sanctions will be fragmented and special benefits will sometimes appear to reduce the impact. But the most important result is to send a message to Western companies that Russia's future is politically and legally toxic and dangerous. This threat will not go away soon. Russia's weaknesses are the need for technology and markets, especially for profitable LNG exports. Russia's tax policy has already urged state-owned enterprises to reduce their reliance on Western technology, but their efforts are limited. Quarantine will become a new norm, and stricter penalties such as antitrust laws against Russian gas producers will exacerbate the problem.

Ukraine has been fighting Russia's attempts to further destabilize the country and escalate tensions in Eastern Europe since early 2021. In particular, the military buildup at the Ukrainian border has been repeated. Russia's recent menacing military operations, coupled with its intolerable security demands, have prompted a unified response from Western nations. In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine's land, the EU and its institutions, especially the European Parliament, responded clearly. The EU has not acknowledged the illegal annexation of Crimea and has repeatedly called on Russia to escalate and withdraw its troops and Russian-backed eastern Ukraine rebels in order to respect the ceasefire agreement (Przetacznik & Tothova, 2022).

The European Union (EU) declares its support for Ukraine's reforms, as well as the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, all of which are threatened by Russia's ongoing War against the country, including, among others, accumulating multiple times, pro-separatism, disinformation, and cyber threats. Similarly, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) reaffirmed its support for Ukraine's sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders, and called on all States and international organizations do not recognize territorial violations as legal (Przetacznik & Tothova, 2022).

As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU's security and defense policies needed to be reconsidered. For the eastern member states of the EU, the current measures have been postponed for a long time. The events of February 24, 2022 have significantly changed the European Union's perception of Russia and its role in European security. Indeed, substantive EU aid to Ukraine, including military relocations and unprecedented penalties for invaders, means that Ukraine is ultimately establishing itself as a true security entity.

EU security and defense policies since the 1990s have aimed to address foreign crises. Since 2016, the Union has been working hard to improve its defense capabilities. The European concept of strategic autonomy has played an important but divisive role in this process (Raik, 2022). Disagreements between EU member states stem mainly from concerns about the consequences of "autonomy" of transatlantic relations. They want to ensure that the United States has a strong presence in Europe. Meanwhile, EU defense policy reforms are doing nothing to address the EU's basic security concerns, which have always been Russia.

After Russia annexed the Crimean in 2014, member states' perceptions of Russia's threat levels have dramatically converged. However, there were still significant differences when it came to dealing with risks and the role of unions. Discussions on EU defense and EU-Russia relations took place in two different ways. Defense efforts include several projects essential to the defense of eastern member states, such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and coordinated annual defense reviews, especially the PESCO project on military mobility (Raik, 2022). However, the EU's military support for the security of these countries was mostly indirect and small. They partially blamed it. Eastern European member states curb EU defense efforts rather than seeking ways to provide security to Eastern Europe, fearing that EU defense policies could duplicate or undermine NATO.

In addition, the EU has acted cautiously on the security of Eastern members. The EU tried to move away from the Russian-Ukraine war by refusing to intervene in the defense of Ukraine. Democratization and European integration of the former Soviet Republic, especially Ukraine, infuriated and threatened Russia. These countries are becoming increasingly vulnerable as a result of the EU's failure to support these processes and the failure to take significant steps to resist Russia's influence and aggression. The sooner or later EU emerged as a major player in the fight against the Russian threat. The EU reassessed its policy tools, including supplying Ukraine with weapons.

Some scholars believe that Russia's invasion of Ukraine have profound implications for future regional stability and European security and lead to human misery. The crisis is testing the EU's ability to maintain Europe's security system in the post-Cold War era. Much of the public debate about the crisis has portrayed European governments as fragmentary, weak and ambiguous. However, the war could act as a catalyst to rekindle the EU defense and security debate, forcing Europeans to move from a security system shaped by soft power to a system ruled by hard power that is truly brutal.

Coordination among EU Member States and the consensus of all leaders on stronger sanctions is essential to creating a unified European policy on Ukraine. Conflict would put more pressure on governments to readjust their military spending, as well as cause Europeans to reconsider their long-held assumption that after more than thirty years of peace, war no longer a European reality. As a result, recent EU defense capacity development programs such as the European Defense Fund will certainly become more attractive. In times of economic austerity, this shift in mentality will give new impetus to EU cooperation capacity initiatives and programs. More importantly, the crisis heralds a reorganization of NATO as the political-military alliance responsible for collective defense. In the midst of these rapid developments, NATO's most important obligation was reaffirmed: to defend and defend NATO territory and people against aggression and new threats, and to respond to all challenges facing NATO with Euro-Atlantic security.

Conclusion

This research paper highlighted the root cause of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. This conflict not only disturbed the security arrangement among the European nations and the entire post-Cold War European geopolitical framework but also affect the policies of USA. As USA was intended to focus on other parts of the world, its basic assumptions about security of Europe become apprehensions. This war escalated and spread in mostly Eastern Ukraine, the Russian forces are still unable to control and isolate Kyiv, the capital of Europe. The objectives of Russian aggression cannot be declared achievable as they are engaged despite of fighting for more than eighteen months. The challenges of war for the Europeans are significant, they took some time to coordinate and take decisive action. Although the coordinated effort from the USA and European Union are identified in three areas. One, Russia's economic and political isolation, two, military aid to Ukraine and three, activation and readiness of military of NATO.

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