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Viktor Jakupec

Dynamics of the Ukraine War

Diplomatic Challenges and
Geopolitical Uncertainties



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Preface

Overview

It is precarious to write a book in the middle of the Russo-Ukraine war—a war with no end in sight, especially when the Western Alliance maintains that they will support Ukraine for as long as it takes. The author has taken this risk because it is essential to discuss, critique, and analyse the war’s background, consequences, and events as they unfold. Unsurprisingly, the Russo-Ukraine war is a divisive topic in which competing camps and actors grapple to control the narrative. However, more disturbing is that the Russo-Ukraine war may push European and North American countries into political and economic uncertainty and that there is no winner in sight.

Despite the divisive nature of the Russo-Ukraine war and the looming political and economic uncertainty it may bring to European and North American countries, this book delves into explanatory discussions framed by the spirit of the times of the first 20 months of the conflict to shed light on the interconnected political sanctions and propaganda wars that have unfolded. This is encapsulated in explanatory discussions. The political war provides a broad-based background of the Russo-Ukraine conflict, encompassing diplomatic failures, Russia’s denazification and demilitarisation claims, and Western discontent with the war in NATO countries (Goldgeier & Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, 2023). The economic war discussion through the imposition of sanctions focuses on the controversies surrounding the financial and commercial effects of the war. Finally, the propaganda war brings to the fore the failure of the Fourth Estate and the manipulation of the mainstream media on both sides of the conflict.

Approach

Against these explanatory discussions, this volume proceeds with an in-depth analysis of the Russo-Ukraine war triggered by the Russian invasion, which has ignited an unparalleled political, economic, and humanitarian crisis, reaching a catastrophic magnitude unseen in Europe since World War II. The war has pitted two nuclear superpowers, Russia and the USA, against each other, though with some level of restraint, at least for now. While there is a full-scale war occurring between the armed forces of Ukraine and Russia, the USA and its Western allies are engaged in a proxy war against Russia (DeYoung, 2023). Senator Lindsay Graham (cited in Blumenthal, 2023) boldly claimed that the USA's military and financial support for Ukraine is worth every penny and even declared the readiness to fight this war until the last Ukrainian. Such cynical statements echo throughout Western political circles, promising unwavering support for Ukraine as long as necessary (Irish & Pollard, 2023). At the same time, the Russo-Ukraine war has divided the world, creating a discord between the Global North and the Global South.

Regarding the Russo-Ukraine war, there is discord between the G7 representing the Global North and G20 member countries representing the Global South countries to a large extent. Western Alliance countries advocated a strong condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine, but Russia thwarted the censure. As a result, the declaration regarding Ukraine recognised different viewpoints and assessments of the Russo-Ukraine war (Miglani, 2023). In other words, most Global South countries expressed a cautious opposition to the stance taken by the Global North. This opposition forms a basis for challenging the existing USA-led world order and a proposition of the rise of a new world order (Ullah, 2023; Qingqing, 2023).

Throughout the discussion, the USA-led Western Alliance's decision to support Ukraine through the provision of weapons, military training, economic sanctions on Russia, humanitarian assistance, and financial aid concerning the endgame of the war is canvassed. It is stipulated that both sides, the Western allies and Russia, have entered this conflict without a clear vision of the military and diplomatic endgame. Simultaneously, Russia has expanded the goals of its special military operations to include territorial claims in addition to the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine. Against this lack of clarity, an in-depth analysis of the war politics suggests that neither Russia nor Ukraine may emerge as clear victors. It is shown that this ambiguity arises from the differing interpretations of what constitutes victory. Ukraine seeks the withdrawal of all Russian troops to pre-2014 borders, the establishment of an international tribunal for Russia's alleged war crimes, and reparation for war damages.

In contrast, Russia views victory as achieving denazification and demilitarisation of Ukraine. The ambiguity in Russia's definition of victory is compounded by its evolving demands, including Ukraine's acceptance of neutrality. The Western Alliance, led by the USA, is pursuing a proxy war aimed at weakening Russia militarily and economically, potentially diminishing Russia's global power status and granting Western access to Russia's natural resources.

It is claimed that the war's objectives are further complicated by the fact that Ukraine is effectively fighting a proxy war for the USA-led Western Alliance, which exerts influence, if not control, over Ukraine's war efforts. With neither Russia nor Ukraine showing an inclination for a negotiated peace or armistice in the first 20 months of conflict, the prospects for a diplomatic solution appear bleak. So far, attempts by countries outside the Western Alliance, such as China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia, have failed to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table. This diplomatic stalemate contributes to the perpetuation of military actions on all sides.

Analysing the current situation and the views presented by military experts, political critics, and academics, a recurring theme emerges: Russia may not lose the war, but it may not win it. Claims that Ukraine will lose the war are also questionable. This ambiguity prompts the question addressed in the discussion: What constitutes winning the war? Several options are canvassed, such as a military victory by Ukraine, which in turn could potentially trigger Russia to exercise its nuclear option, which would likely lead to a swift end to the conflict. Such a nuclear escalation would have devastating consequences for Europe, compelling Western political leaders to avoid an all-out war with Russia. Despite the importance of Ukraine's status, including proposed NATO and EU membership, it could be sacrificed to preserve Europe and the Western world (Eichler, 2021).

In this context, the discussion and analysis point towards a situation where Russia is unlikely to lose the war. Nevertheless, the conditions for ending the war on Russia's terms remain uncertain. Thus, the most plausible scenario is that the war will ultimately conclude through diplomacy. If this holds, the revision of critical diplomatic agreements, such as the Budapest Memorandum, the Bucharest Summit Declaration, and the Minsk Agreements 1 and 2, which have played pivotal roles in shaping the conflict's trajectory, will be integral to the discussion and understanding of a path forward.

A Realist Perspective on Power Dynamics

Much of the content discussed in this book, including the viewpoints, analyses, and commentaries presented, remains open to further discussions. The analysis presented here is based on thoroughly examining reports, discussions, news, opinions, policies, and information from public sources. An analysis informs the discussions of the causes of the war, the status quo after some 20 months of war, including events related to the counter-offensive, and the trajectory of the Russo-Ukraine war. These analyses are primarily driven by the propositions that the current circumstances do not lend themselves to a peace agreement acceptable to either party, and a resolution may only be achievable at some point in the future, following an armistice and establishing a frozen conflict. In other words, the prospects for a short-term resolution appear highly unlikely. The reason for this assertion is that over time, Russia may expand its control over additional parts of Ukraine in addition to the currently annexed and occupied territories. Without a ceasefire followed by

peace negotiations, Ukraine risks becoming a dysfunctional rump state, incapable of functioning effectively.

The above broad-based issues are discussed and analysed in detail through a discursive political introduction of the war and reframing the discourse within a Realist IR framework. This is followed by unpacking the political precursors to the Russo-Ukrainian war and the current aspects of international discontent. Subsequently, analysis and discussion on the sanctions war regarding the impacts and consequences of the propaganda war and the failure of the Fourth Estate are provided. Two additional aspects of the consequences of the Russo-Ukraine war are examined from a future-oriented perspective, namely financing the war and rebuilding Ukraine, and the notions of a *Zeitenwende*, NATO's Renaissance and a potential rise of a New World Order.

As a final note, the theoretical locus of the book is couched in the Realist international relation (IR) theory (Mearsheimer, 2019), emphasising that states primarily prioritise power structures. Realism, as a prominent theoretical framework in international relations, posits that the fundamental concern of states lies in the equilibrium of power, particularly among the world's 'great powers.' Great powers, the central actors in the realist perspective, are primarily preoccupied with assessing their power relative to other great powers, driven by an inherent fear of losing their status as such. This apprehension emanates from the perception that weaker states in the international arena are vulnerable to exploitation by their more powerful counterparts.

Crucially, Realism adopts an impartial stance, refraining from discriminating between different types of states, such as democracies, non-democracies, liberal states, fascist states, or communist states. Instead, Realism treats all states as 'black boxes,' essentially regarding them as self-contained entities driven by a common objective: maximising their relative power. This perspective underlines the universality of state behaviour in pursuit of power, irrespective of the nature of their domestic political order.

This central tenet of Realism often invokes strong reactions from Western liberal democracies. These democracies tend to morally categorise themselves as 'good,' while authoritarian states, communist regimes, and similar entities are often cast as the 'bad' actors on the global stage. However, Realism contends that such value-based distinctions are irrelevant to its analysis. In the realist view, there are neither inherently 'good' nor 'bad' states; all states are rational actors engaged in a competitive struggle for power due to their inherent concern for survival.

In essence, Realism can be summarised as a theory that simplifies the complex landscape of international relations by emphasising the pursuit of power as the paramount objective of all states, transcending normative judgements and characterisations of states as 'good' or 'bad.'

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About the Book

The book delves into one of our time's most critical geopolitical conflicts, the Russo-Ukraine War. It offers insightful analyses of the complexities and dynamics of the war, exploring frozen diplomatic solutions, navigating geopolitical uncertainties, and discussing the propaganda-Fourth Estate war.

The content goes beyond surface-level analysis, providing an in-depth and timely examination of the effects of diplomacy, diverse political perspectives, Western support strategies, and the intricate geopolitical and geo-economic challenges inherent in the conflict. It critically analyses the political precursors to the war and the Russian and Western Alliance's justifications for it.

Against this background, the manuscript examines the existential threats perceived by the warring parties. It provides a thought-provoking discussion concerning pragmatic issues such as financing the war, post-war rebuilding agendas, and a scrutiny of the emerging notion of *Zeitenwende* that could shape the Global North and pave the way for a potential 'new' multipolar world order. In conclusion, the book articulates the layers of this multifaceted Russo-Ukraine conflict, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that shape the emerging geopolitical landscape.