

**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIOS:
MANAGERIAL, ECONOMIC,
TECHNICAL, LEGAL, ENVIRONMENTAL,
INFORMATIVE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**



**Georgian Aviation University
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and Scientists Foundation»**

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The collective monograph is the result of the generalization of the conceptual work of scientists who consider current topics from such fields of knowledge as: management, management, technical sciences, law, ecology, information sciences and psychological sciences through the prism of international security studies. Content-functional lines and the key direction of the study of psycho- and sociogenesis of personality in age and pedagogical dimensions through the prism of revitalization are highlighted by each researcher in the context of the implementation of an individual sub-theme.

For scientists, educational staff, PhD candidates, masters of educational institutions, university faculties, stakeholders, managers and employees of management bodies at various hierarchical levels, and for everyone, who is interested in current problems of management, technical sciences, law, ecology, information sciences and psychological sciences through the prism of international security studies.

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LEGAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF RUSSO- UKRAINIAN WAR

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Abstract. The Russo-Ukrainian war is a conflict that has been unfolding since 2014, creating a sense of tragedy around the world. This ongoing battle highlights both legal and psychological aspects of warfare and hopefully can serve as a valuable lesson for states in the future. On the legal front, NATO members and other countries have become involved in hopes to prevent further aggression from taking place, either by resolution or retribution against those who perpetuate military action. On the psychological level, there is an ever-present fear that comes with wartime conditions such as economic insecurity, displacement due to extreme violence, and disruption of foundations such as education systems. This fear can be long-lasting and difficult to simply 'forget'; it is a traumatic experience that needs thoughtful aid to restore hope following these turbulent times.

Introduction. The eight-year Russian-Ukrainian War has given rise to both legal and psychological complexities between the two states. On one hand, since the 2014 annexation of Crimea, Russia has been repeatedly accused by the international community of violating international law, as exemplified by multiple UN General Assembly resolutions condemning Moscow's actions. In addition to this, Ukraine has suffered greatly from the war in terms of casualties and economic disruption, intensifying feelings of resentment among the populace toward Russia. The psychological aspects of the war have been dramatic as well; Ukraine shifted its overall orientation toward Western Europe instead of Russia shortly after U.S.-backed protests toppled its pro-Russian president in 2013 (Z. Umar, Bossman, et al., 2022). This does not only indicate a change in political interests but also alludes to a distinct alteration in cultural values and norms within Ukraine that is thanks in part to pervasive anxiety surrounding Russian hegemony. Ultimately, as long as hostilities continue to exist between these two states, there will be a never-ending barrage of legal and psychological complexity acting as obstacles to peace.

Russo-Ukrainian War has been ongoing since February 2014 when Russia and Ukrainian separatists opened hostilities. During the Donbas War, Russian forces supported pro-Russian separatists fighting Ukrainian forces, and they annexed Crimea from Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity. Many characteristics characterized the first eight years of the conflict including naval incidents, cyber warfare, and political tensions(Pereira et al., 2022). The conflict reached a new level of escalation after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Globally, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine remains of great concern. For a nuanced understanding, it is essential to consider both the legal and psychological aspects of the conflict. From a legal standpoint, the war in Ukraine originates from Russia's violation of the UN Charter, which reaffirms the territorial integrity of all states. What began as a covert military operation has since evolved into full-blown warfare, with severe humanitarian consequences and immense collateral damage. From a psychological perspective, both nations remain deeply divided along ethnic lines, with each side portraying itself as a staunch defender of its identity(Z. Umar, Polat, et al., 2022). This has only exacerbated hostility and mistrust on both sides, making resolution efforts an uphill task.

Euromaidan protests grew into a Revolution of Dignity in early 2014, culminating in the ousting of Ukraine's pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich. As a result, pro-Russian violence spread across eastern and southern Ukraine, resulting in Russia sending unmarked troops into Ukraine's Crimea to seize control of strategic infrastructure and sites. An annexation referendum was held after the Russian occupation of Crimea. The Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) were declared independent states in April 2014 by pro-Russian separatists who captured Ukraine's Donbas region During his visit to Donetsk and Luhansk in February 2022, he officially recognized them as independent states. It is important to note that while Russia provided support to these separatists, Ukraine actively sought to retake the areas that they were holding.

The situation concerning the Ukrainian-Russian border has been of particular concern in 2021. Reports of a Russian military buildup near Ukraine have circulated, although Russian officials deny such intentions. To the dismay of the international community, Vladimir Putin has advanced his sentiments regarding the matter; Putin not only questioned the right of Ukraine to exist but also called for its exclusion from NATO(M. Umar, Riaz, et al., 2022). Recent actions taken by President Putin have deepened the state of confusion and apprehension across Europe; During his visit to Donetsk and Luhansk in February 2022, he officially recognized them as independent states before proceeding with a "special military operation" against Ukraine three days later. This bold stance drew widespread condemnation from other nations, leading to sanctions being imposed on Russia. The future outlook for this conflict remains bleak and requires urgent attention from various parties involved to come to a successful outcome.

A strong diplomatic relationship has existed between Ukraine and Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the year of 1994, Ukraine ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as a non-nuclear state. This decision to disarm

meant any nuclear weapons assets that were formerly part of the Soviet Union had to be removed from Ukrainian soil and fully dismantled. As a security assurance, Ukraine was offered the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in 1994 by Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States which guaranteed its territorial integrity and political independence (Fiialka, 2022). Russia was also an original signatory of the Charter for European Security signed in 1999 as an authoritative reaffirmation of each member state's "inherent right" to choose or change its security arrangements.

In 2004, the Ukrainian presidential election was marred by controversy surrounding electoral fraud and a poisoning involving TCDD dioxin that had been committed against opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko. Allegations were made that votes had been rigged which resulted in Viktor Yanukovych as the prime minister. This sparked the remarkable Orange Revolution where mass protests were peacefully mobilized against the misdeeds of the incumbent government. Ultimately, due to an annulment order by the Supreme Court of Ukraine citing "widespread electoral fraud", Yulia Tymoshenko was appointed as prime minister while Yanukovych remained in opposition following a second round re-run. Yushchenko won out this time to become president and Yulia Tymoshenko was appointed president as well.

Anthony Cordesman's opinion regards the Russian military officers' views concerning color revolutions and their possible implications for the security and stability of neighboring countries. As an example, Based on Putin's statement, the main organizers of the 2011-2013 Russian protests worked as advisors to Viktor Yushchenko, thus making them attempts to bring an Orange Revolution to the country. Supportive assemblies in favor of Putin were coined as 'anti-Orange protests', thus referring precisely to the previous events of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and demonstrating Russia's opposition towards any type of similar occurrences(Gunawan et al., 2020). Additionally, Ukraine and Georgia sought membership in NATO at the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, a move that was met with divergent reactions among NATO members. President Bush opposes this notion by advocating more reciprocal relationships with the member states even though some Western European countries resisted offering Membership Action Plans (MAPs) to avoid offending Russia.

Upon announcing his intention to run for president in 2009, Viktor Yanukovych was elected president, initiating an era of closer ties with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union. There was a great deal of controversy within Ukraine over this increased partnership, especially since the Ukrainian parliament had overwhelmingly approved the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine. Consequently, November 2013 saw large protests in favor of the agreement, which ultimately led to a settlement signed by Yanukovych and the opposition leader on 21 February 2014(Mironova & Whitt, 2021). The agreement proposed early elections amid demonstrations from the Euromaidan movement, demonstrating Ukraine's commitment to closer ties with Europe despite its relationship with Russia.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet was an important presence in Crimea at the beginning of the conflict. It had 12,000 personnel stationed in various locations, including Sevastopol, Kacha, Hvardiiske, and Simferopol Raion. The Search cape

lighthouse and other beacons near Yalta were disputed in 2005 and Russia was granted permission by Ukraine to station its military personnel there. To ensure mutual respect, Russia and Ukraine agreed that the maximum number of troops at any one time would be 25,000 (Karpenko-Secombe, 2021). In addition, they also promised that they would honor Ukrainian laws and respect their sovereignty when crossing the international border; this includes displaying "military identification cards." This trust between both countries has been beneficial in maintaining a peaceful environment in Crimea.

The Russo-Ukrainian War has continued for years without a formal declaration of war. In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine was circumspectly labelled as a "special military operation", providing a possible rationale to avoid the process needed for a formalized declaration. However, Ukraine interpreted the statement as an official declaration of war and multiple international news outlets echoed their stance. The Parliament of Ukraine has decided to refer to Russia as a 'terrorist state' but there has been no formality made in terms of officially declaring war on Russia even though the violence in eastern Ukraine does suggest that the clear divide between both states is far beyond remedy.

Russian-Ukrainian War History

In February 2014, the Russian government attempted to implement de-facto control of Crimea by way of military force. Taking advantage of a lull in Ukrainian presence, Russian militants and Special Armies entered Crimea from Novorossiysk on both the 22nd and 23rd. By the 27th, their numbers had grown such that they were successful in taking over the Crimean Parliament, raising their flag, and creating an isolated presence within the peninsula (Gunawan et al., 2020). To further entrench their occupation, Russian forces seized not only a communications centre but a similarly crucial airport near the capital city of Simferopol. With these strategic maneuvers enacted on a vulnerable Ukraine government at the time, Russia was able to successfully annex Crimea in short order.

Ukraine has been experiencing pro-Russian and anti-government protests since late February 2014. The protests initially started in southern and eastern Ukraine among native Ukrainians disaffected with the new government. Despite only providing verbal support for these demonstrators, Russia soon made its presence known in a much more influential way. It launched a thoughtfully planned political and military campaign against Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin even suggested Ukraine had wrongfully regained control of the Donbas region when he uttered the phrase "New Russia" (Novorossiya). By March's end, it was estimated that roughly 30-40 thousand Russian military personnel had positioned themselves along Ukraine's border.

In April 2014, tensions between Russian-backed separatist forces and Ukraine erupted in eastern Ukraine. Various cities saw the occupation of government buildings by militants and control of strategic infrastructure was taken by separatists, who then stated Luhansk and Donetsk as people's republics. In response to the separatist expansion, the Ukrainian administration announced an "Anti-Terrorist Operation" (ATO) on 15 April. Unfortunately, the ATO was not well-prepared or positioned and consequently, it led to quick failure. Ukraine had lost control of Luhansk and Donetsk

provinces by the end of April, which triggered a “full combat alert” from the government (Mironova & Whitt, 2021).

In May 2014 the intensification of tensions between Russian and Ukrainian forces saw the Russian government employ a hybrid strategy, replete with false information campaigns and military involvement. This escalated into an armed conflict that would come to be known as the First Battle of Donetsk Airport, which took place shortly after Ukraine's presidential elections. Considerable reports indicate that at its peak this battle was largely comprised of paramilitaries from Russia, with estimations ranging from 15-80%. Furthermore, it has been reported that since June Russia has been covertly supplying arms, vehicles, and munitions to separatist rebels to maintain their footholds (Khalifaoui et al., 2022).

The misfortune of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, shot down in the region of eastern Ukraine by Russian-controlled forces on 17 July 2014, was met with an aggressive Ukrainian counterattack. As fighting continued in the conflict zone, recovery and investigation efforts began while Ukrainian forces pushed into cities at the end of that same month to cut off supply lines between Pro-Russian separatist groups and thereby isolate Donetsk. By 28 July, control had been regained of Savur-Mohyla and Debaltseve, a significant railroad junction. This operational success posed a major threat to the survival of both the LPR and DPR statelets, sparking Russian cross-border bombing against Ukrainian militants from mid-July onward (Karpenko-Seccombe, 2021).

In mid-August 2014, following military defeats and setbacks experienced by Novorossiia in Ukraine, the Russian government dispatched a “charitable convoy” of containers into the area. Though labeled as humanitarian aid, it is reported that these convoys arriving in November were composed mainly of ammunition and arms. This has been viewed as an act of invasion by Ukraine according to the National Security and Defense Council. Meanwhile, according to Igor Strelkov, who was leading the separatist forces in Donetsk until August 2014, there have been reports of servicemen from Russia on vacation coming to Donbas as early as August (Osiichuk & Shepotylo, 2020). This signifies an escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, further implying a need for international mediation or intervention before matters rise further out of hand.

The so-called Ukrainian “Anti-Terrorist Operation” saw some considerable successes by August 2014, with a shrinking of the pro-Russian controlled territory and the border area being reached. The extended setbacks for Igor Girkin’s irregular forces were attributed to their lack of experience and low recruitment from local populations. It was clear that Girkin feared that if President Vladimir Putin's designated New Russia lost this war it could be hugely damaging to both the Kremlin's power as well as denting the president's legitimacy in the eyes of his people (Heinrich & Pleines, 2021). Much hung in balance.

In late August 2014, Russia shifted gears and conclusively invaded Ukraine. On the 26th of that month, the Russian Defense Ministry stated that their operatives had crossed into Ukraine “by accident”. According to Nikolai Mitrokhin's survey data, more than twenty thousand separatists were at that time actively participating in the

ensuing conflict around Donbas; however, only a small fraction of these could be classified as local fighters. As a result, it became clear that the invasion had a degree of foreign involvement (Kolosov et al., 2022).

On 24 August 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine, sending in paratroopers and 250 armored vehicles, and artillery pieces to occupy Amvosiivka, followed by the occupation of Novoazovsk on the coast of the Azov Sea on 25 August. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has called this aggression the "Patriotic War of 2014". After entering Novoazovsk, Russian forces started transporting Ukrainians who were not registered residents in the town. In response to these actions, Mariupol witnessed anti-war protests from Ukrainians as many feared that Russian forces were advancing toward their city. The continuous illegal activities carried out by Russia serve as an alarming reminder of the suffering faced by people living in conflict zones around the world (Gibellato et al., 2023).

The Pskov-based 76th Guards Air Assault Division has found itself at the center of a heated international incident after allegedly entering Ukrainian territory in August and engaging in a skirmish near Luhansk. In the skirmish, at least 80 soldiers were killed, and the Ukrainian Defense Ministry claims to have seized two of the unit's armored vehicles and destroyed three tanks and two armored vehicles elsewhere. To this day, Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied that the events unfolded as reported, yet his Government awarded the 76th division with one of Russia's highest accolades - the Order of Suvorov - on 18 August, citing their bravery and success during military missions. The disputed nature of the aftermath makes it clear that matters between Europe's largest nations are far from peaceful (Aghaee & Etesami, 2023).

It is serious doubt that the Russian narrative can be supported by the fact that the speaker of Moscow's upper house of parliament and Russian state television channels have acknowledged that 'volunteers' have been entering Ukraine. This was echoed by accusations from the Russian opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported that, in early 2014, Russian military leaders paid soldiers to resign their commissions and fight in Ukraine, and then ordered them to enter the country. Russian opposition MP Lev Shlosberg adds more weight to this claim, noting that these fighters are not just volunteers but "regular Russian troops", disguised as units of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) (Kichuk & Shevchuk, 2020).

In early September 2014, the troubling reality of Russian involvement in Ukraine was made clear by Russian state-owned television and top United Russia politician Valentina Matviyenko. Russian television transmission stated on the memorials of soldiers killed, yet incorrectly identified them as "volunteers" simply struggling for the "Russian world". Furthering this manipulation, Matviyenko praised these "volunteers" and described their mission as being to fight in the "fraternal nation". Shockingly, it had become the first time that such media coverage acknowledged this type of loss even if deceitfully dressed up with the rhetoric of brotherhood and celebration.

First ceasefire after Mariupol offensive

On the 3rd of September, President Poroshenko announced a "permanent ceasefire" agreement between himself and Putin, though Russia denied any involvement; however, just two days later Andrey Kelin, a representative of the OSCE,

made a statement regarding pro-Russian separatists near Mariupol. This was further exacerbated by reports from Ukrainian forces that Russian intelligence groups had been spotted nearby, adding that volunteers may have been stationed there. The situation was made worse by the announcement on 4 September 2014 by a NATO officer that several thousand regular Russian forces were in Ukraine. With all this said, it appears the situation in Ukraine is rapidly deteriorating and tensions remain high (Roozenbeek, 2019).

There is a clear dividing line between the areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts where separatists have occupied territory since the Minsk Protocol ceasefire agreement was signed in 2014. This agreement was just one vital step on the path towards peace, but few could have foreseen the act it would take to fully restore calm. Since its inception, the Minsk Protocol has proved an effective reminder that steps must be taken toward peace if we are to see a world free from conflict and loss of life.

The end of 2014 and the Minsk II agreement

Several tanks, cannons, and trucks carrying troops were seen by NATO on the 7th and 12th of November. Adding to this, US General Philip M. Breedlove declared that there had been sightings of tanks and artillery as well as air defense systems along with combat troops. Additionally, NATO reported that the influx of military equipment from Russia had increased greatly. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs investigated further and revealed that the Russian separatists were significantly better off when compared to the Ukrainian military since the influx of innovative military equipment in 2014; anti-aircraft weapons like 'Buk' and MANPADS repressed any kind of Ukrainian airborne attacks while drones surveil intelligently. Simultaneously, it was observed that Russian secure communication intercepted by satellite also played a crucial role (Ma'arif & Maksum, 2022).

During the Donbas Conflict, the Russian side made use of sophisticated electronic warfare systems to gain an advantage. This assessment was confirmed by the Conflict Studies Research Centre, which reported on their findings of a technical advantage held by the Russian separatists. In fact, during a United Nations Security Council meeting on 12 November, the representative from the United Kingdom even went as far as accusing Russia of intentionally restricting OSCE observation missions' abilities, citing examples such as limited observation range to two kilometers at most and jamming or shooting down drones that should have expanded observation potential. It is clear that electronic warfare played a significant role in this conflict, and this factor can no longer be neglected when assessing international military conflicts.

In January 2014, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia intensified significantly. Luhansk, Donetsk, and Mariupol signified the trio of key battlefronts in the conflict. Ukrainian leader Petro Poroshenko expressed great concern over the situation after reports reached him of additional 200 tanks, 2,000 Russian troops, and armed militant carriers entering his country. This was seen as a dangerous escalation and forced Poroshenko to abbreviate his appearance to the World Economic Forum due to his worries about what was occurring back home. It was here that he pledged to tackle a potential full-scale invasion against his state (Laurukhin, 2022).

The conflict concerning the Donbas war began in April 2014 and continued till the agreement of Minsk II on 15 February 2015. This package of measures proposed an end to the conflict; however high-intensity battle action persisted for another week when Ukrainian forces withdrew from Debaltseve. According to a report by the United Nations Human Rights Office in September 2015, 8,000 casualties occurred due to this war. These events demonstrate that despite attempts for a ceasefire, hostilities, and violence persisted until 2022 (Shkaruba & Skryhan, 2019).

Stable conflict lines (2015-2021)

After the passing of the Minsk agreements and the construction of a border of contact, hostilities between the two borders in the conflict never truly ceased. Instead, they were channeled into Special Forces operations, artillery duels, and trench warfare, intensifying as both sides began to build fortifications to strengthen their resolve. Despite several attempts at enacting ceasefires, fighting always resumed at some point or another and hostilities continued to rage along the line of contact (Nikolopoulou et al., 2022). In particular, after Debaltseve fell several skirmishes occurred but these did not result in any meaningful changes to either side's territorial control. The conflict had become a type of "frozen" war; however, even this title is an oversimplification as fighting was still present albeit at a low level.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has raised several legal issues concerning international law and conventions due to the comprehensive nature of the armed conflict. The right to self-determination is one of the most contentious legal aspects of this war, as both Russia and Ukraine have the right to the autonomy promised by that fundamental principle. In addition, the application of human rights law in the background of this conflict has proven problematic, as all parties have been accused of failing to meet their obligations according to international conventions. The developing status quo requiring an acceptable balance between security and political autonomy needs careful consideration if a resolution is to be achieved through legal means (Sauvageot, 2020).

From 2014-2022, there were a reported 29 ceasefires in Eastern Ukraine, straddled by Russia and the United States. All were declared to last indefinitely, yet none of them persisted for more than two weeks. This high turnover was indicative of the tumultuous nature of the region and the power struggle between both global superpowers. U.S. and international sources have claimed that Russian military forces have been actively present in Ukraine, based on numbers as well as presumed influence over separatist militias in debatable areas like Debaltseve. Estimates ranged from 8,500-10,000 soldiers anywhere up to 20,000 distributed on both sides with Ukrainian forces claiming the most substantial grounding at 40,000 fighters. This vast disparity presents clear implications for political instability and a lack of lasting peace agreements in this ongoing conflict (Aloui et al., 2023).

Fighting in the Donbas province of Ukraine has taken a heavy toll on Ukrainian soldiers, with reports indicating that an average of one soldier dies every three days due to combat-related causes. With thousands of Russian troops and more than forty thousand separatist fighters in the area, the conflict has persisted for years. Local media in Russia has highlighted news of both slaughtered and injured Russian

militaries, many of whom were recruited for service in the Donbas amenable through veteran and paramilitary organizations. Vladimir Yefimov, captain of the paramilitary organization, outlined the recruitment procedure based in the Ural region whereby people with military backgrounds including former army personnel, police officers, and firefighters were called upon to serve.

The estimated charge of training one volunteer in Russia remained at 350,000 rubles (\$6500) plus salary. This practice would continue onto the conflict zone, with recruits receiving weapons once they were already there rather than before their arrival. Adding further complications, some Russian troops traveled under the disguise of Red Cross personnel with such activities being strongly condemned by Igor Trunov, the Head of the Russian Red Cross in Moscow. This continued refusal to permit the monitoring body OSCE to expand its task outside two limit passages ultimately garnered a negative reputation and outlook among many world leaders and organizations alike (Furuoka et al., 2023).

The events of August 2016, when the Ukrainian intelligence agency issued revealing phone interrupts of Russian officials, marked a definitive moment in the Russian Civil War. The documents revealed that several top-ranking Russian officials had been covertly funding pro-Russian activists and occupation efforts in Eastern Ukraine. This, accompanied by their limited volunteers stating that their participation solely consisted of providing humanitarian aid to avoid being deemed a mercenary under the country's anti-mercenary legislation, shows how those in power were attempting to circumvent the law and incite unrest for purposes counter to those of the Russian Federation. In this way, these documents drastically altered the landscape of the civil war and brought an air of suspicion toward Russia's involvement in deeper matters of influence and governance across Europe (Aloui et al., 2023).

Sergei Glazyev has been linked to the Ukrainian conflict since its beginning in 2014. As early as February of that year, he was seen giving direct instructions to numerous pro-Russian organizations on ways to successfully take over the local administrative office and how they should go about making and formulating their demands afterward. Moreover, he promised assistance from Russia in this process, including extending them an offer of 'sending our guys'. His influence was instrumental in galvanizing pro-Russian forces at the start of this eventful period in Ukrainian history.

The Kerch Strait incident of 2018

In 2014, Russia gained de facto control of the Kerch Strait, a strategic waterway connecting the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and lying between Crimea and mainland Ukraine. This gave Russia influence within the region, however, in 2017, Ukraine appealed to a court of arbitration regarding disputed access rights within the strait. In response, Russia continued to hinder Ukrainian access by building a bridge over the strait in 2018 which limited the size of vessels that could pass through it and imposed regulations barring vessels from traveling between ports within Ukraine. This was further undermined when Russian warships seized three Ukrainian boats on 25 November 2018 and detained 24 sailors, leading to an escalation of tension and an

overwhelming majority vote in parliament summoning martial law to be declared along coastal regions bordering Russia (Varghese, 2020).

The 2019–2020 conflict

In 2019, the conflict in Ukraine caused more than 110 casualties of Ukrainian soldiers. In response, newly elected President Volodymyr Zelenskyy promised to end the war upon assuming office in May of that year. He made some progress towards fulfilling that promise at the end of December 2019 with a prisoner exchange between Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists, which saw around 200 people released from captivity on both sides. Despite this small step forward, however, 2020 has already seen 50 Ukrainian military deaths in combat-related matters. Additionally, reports indicate that Russia has issued more than 650,000 internal passports to Ukrainians since the beginning of 2019; a trajectory that appears to be accelerating as further negotiations and peace meetings continue.

Russian military buildup around Ukraine (2021–2022)

Russia's preparations near the borderline at the beginning of 2021 and again between October 2021 and February 2022 caused serious concern. The Russian administration opposed it had strategies to attack Ukraine, however, the US released intelligence in December 2021 suggesting otherwise. This included snapshots from satellites, the Russian militants, and armor near the boundary as well as a detail of important sites and personalities to be murdered or nullified. Astonishingly, the US was able to accurately anticipate the invasion plans – reports that have been hard to impossible to ignore (Burkhardt et al., 2022).

Indictments and demands from Russia

In November 2021, in the lead-up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russian officials became increasingly adamant in their accusations of Ukraine. They blamed it for fomenting tensions between Russia and other nations, inciting Russophobia, and oppressing its Russian-speaking citizens. They also laid out safety indictments requiring NATO, Ukraine, and other EU countries to conform to their terms. On 9 December 2021, Vladimir Putin publicly issued a statement affirming that "Russophobia is a first step towards genocide", suggesting an ominous agenda directed at Ukraine and those who supported it. This bold proclamation was almost immediately discharged by the worldwide public: arbitrary allegations of killing were repudiated as unfounded and without substantiation (Steiner et al., 2022). It marked yet another pivotal moment when heightened international tensions could have boiled over -- however, the unified response from diplomatic representatives eventually forced Russia to back down and forgo its menacing intentions.

In a speech delivered on the 21st of February, President Putin made several inaccurate claims about Ukraine's statehood and its relationship with Russia. He erroneously claimed that Vladimir Lenin had formed Ukraine when, in fact, it was a successor Soviet Republic to the Ukrainian People's Republic declared in 1917. Furthermore, he asserted that Nikita Khrushchev had "taken Crimea away from Russia for some reason and given it to Ukraine" in 1954. This is misleading; yet this would not be complete without noting that the territory mentioned was not ceded but

exchanged solely between the Ukrainian SSR and the Russian SFSR. Though this detail did not feature in President Putin's speech, it is an important one nonetheless.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's claims of Ukrainian neo-Nazism invoke dark memories of the country's collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II. This revisionist approach of casting Russian Christians as the actual sufferers of Nazi Germany also represents a persistent anti-Semitic conspiracy theory. Despite this, it must be noted that although Ukraine has a far-right fringe that includes violent extremist groups such as the Azov Battalion and Right Sector, these elements cannot be said to dominate either Ukrainian society or the government. Moreover, their influence has been limited by the Ukrainian government and by civil society organizations.

Invasion preparatory to a full invasion

The conflict in Donbas, once seemingly dormant and cold, erupted anew on 17 February 2022 when fighting between the Ukrainian side and pro-Russian separatists escalated to alarming levels. Both sides accused the other of initiating attacks, but it quickly became apparent that the Russian-led militants had stepped up their artillery shelling and seemed intent on provoking the Ukrainian military or providing a cause for a full attack. Fearing the situation was getting out of hand and that civilian casualties could be high, both pro-Russian Luhansk and Donetsk people's states announced compulsory emergency departures from their main cities. Unfortunately, anyone familiar with such a process will know that full evacuations can take months so any reprieve is likely to be temporary at best (Qureshi et al., 2022).

The Russian government has recently come under fire for its intensifying disinformation campaign, using its state media outlets to spread disconcertingly large numbers of false flag videos. Such videos depict unsubstantiated Ukrainian attacks on Russia and are designed to foster mutual distrust between the two nations. This tactic is particularly concerning due to the professionalism of such propaganda films -- although evidence suggests that many of the videos are crudely staged by Russia, their presence does not make it clear that this is the case. Russia's blatant disregard for the truth has placed tensions between itself and Ukraine at an all-time high and it remains to be seen if the situation can ever be rectified.

On February 21st at 22:35 (UTC+3), Russian Leader Vladimir Putin made the explosive announcement that the administration would diplomatically recognize the Luhansk and Donetsk people's republics, in defiance of Ukraine's leadership. This was followed quickly by an exercise of military force, when Russian troops were authorized to deploy into Donbas, under the guise of a "peacekeeping mission". President Zelenskyy of Ukraine responded immediately, ordering conscription for army reservists, with parliament subsequently declaring a 30-day statewide emergency and further mobilizing the already conscripted reservists. Simultaneously, Russia began a process of evacuation from Kyiv. Both nations have braced themselves against escalating international tensions due to their respective positions on this matter (Dalsjö et al., 2022).

On February 23rd, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sent a strong message to the residents of Russia to thwart any potential conflict between the two

nations. In his speech, he flatly rejected the Kremlin's claims that neo-Nazis were involved in Ukraine's revolution and made clear his stance against attacking Donbas. However, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov issued a statement on the same day reporting that Luhansk and Donetsk separatist commanders had sent Vladimir Putin a letter in which they pleaded for military assistance due to Ukraine shelling that resulted in civilian deaths. It is undetermined what will follow from these events, but hopefully, both sides can agree long before armed conflict arises.

Invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation (2022-2023)

On February 24th, 2022, the Russian Federation tossed a complete attack on Ukraine. Russian Leader Vladimir Putin started a "special military procedure" to "de-militarize and denazify" Ukraine. Within minutes of this announcement, missiles and airstrikes began to bombard Ukrainian cities and towns, including their capital Kyiv. Then, Russian forces began to rapidly advance along multiple fronts with overwhelming force. In reply, Ukrainian Leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced paramilitary law within his country and conscribed all male citizens aged 18-60 into a compelled defense of the nation; they were also forbidden from traveling abroad to ensure the nation's readiness against its invaders. It remains to be seen how this conflict will end, or what the conclusion of the consequences it has wrought will bring in its wake (Manullang et al., 2022).

A full-scale invasion of Ukraine was launched by the Russian Federation on February 24th, 2022. Russian Leader Vladimir Putin stated a "special military procedure" to "de-militarize and denazify" Ukraine. Within minutes of this announcement, missiles and airstrikes began to bombard Ukrainian cities and towns, including their capital Kyiv. Then, Russian forces began to rapidly advance along multiple fronts with overwhelming force. In response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced martial law within his country and conscribed all male citizens aged 18-60 into a compelled defense of the nation; they were also forbidden from traveling abroad to ensure the nation's readiness against its invaders. It remains to be seen how this conflict will end, or what the conclusion of the consequences it has wrought will bring in its wake.

Violation of human rights

Since 2014, there has been a growing sign of widespread destruction of human rights in the conflict zone. There have been nearly 3,000 civilian casualties throughout the war, with an especially high number happening between 2014 and 2015. The right of movement for residents in the area was heavily restricted by both sides while arbitrary detention practices were tolerated in the early years but eventually tapered off on government-held grounds. Investigations into atrocities such as torture carried out by either side saw little progress, and according to OHCHR, even freedom of expression suffered a blow when three TV channels were shut down due to oppressive conditions. As we move forward with this conflict, justice must be served and human rights are respected for all citizens.

The Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) was created to protect human rights and dignity from violations. With this purpose in mind, OHCHR has been monitoring the situation in Ukraine since 2014. They have recorded

conflicts related to sexual violence; however, they believe these cases were not used as means of tactical or strategic ends by either military forces or equipped groups in Ukraine's eastern areas. OHCHR evaluates that about 4,000 potential prisoners were imperiled to suffering and ill-treatment during this time frame, with around 1,500 by governmental artists and 2,500 by separatist networks. Unfortunately, among these 4,000 individuals, approximately 340 victims were additionally exposed to sexual violence. More must be done to prevent such atrocities and protect human rights.

Views of the Ukraine public

Approximately one week after the Russian Armed Forces' invasion of Ukraine began, Lord Ashcroft's polls revealed surprising results. Even though 82% of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine do not believe any part of Ukraine belongs to Russia, 97% of ethnic Russians also believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin has an unfavorable view of them. The President's decision to send troops into Ukraine was therefore not supported by many ethnic Russians living in Ukraine. The polls also found that 94% of Ukrainians had an unfavorable opinion of the Russian Military Forces; this widespread aversion to Russia and its forces made it difficult for tensions to de-escalate without negotiation and compromise on both sides.

Views of the Russian public

The Levada Centre's April 2022 survey found that an impressive 74 percent of Russians backed the "special military procedure" in Ukraine, presenting a stark contrast to the public opinion in 2014. It has been suggested that this huge leap in Russia's political outlook is comprised of both intentional and unintentional causes. On one hand, some point to Russian propaganda and disinformation as having likely altered some responders' perspectives on the issue. Additionally, observers point out that many respondents may not have provided truthful replies due to fears of retribution or other negative consequences. Regardless, the survey results undoubtedly paint a very different picture of Russian public opinion now than it did eight years ago. The recent poll conducted in Russia paints an interesting picture of the opinions of citizens in the country and their views on the military intervention currently taking place in Ukraine. While the most popular answer suggested that forces were deployed to protect and defend civilians, ethnic Russians, or Russian speakers (43%), a quarter of respondents attributed the reason for the operation to prevention purposes, wanting to preempt any potential attack on their nation. In addition, 21% thought it rational for intervention to combat Ukrainian nationalists and denazify their country; while a mere 3% looked towards the incorporation of certain regions as justification for intervention. A variety of motivations exist concerning these operations which are being discussed by citizens within Russia.

The United States' role in international affairs

On April 28th, 2022, United States Leader Joe Biden placed a request to the United States Parliament for an extra \$33 billion in economic aid toward Ukraine. A substantial portion of this – \$20 billion – was designated to providing weapons to Ukraine to combat Russia's invasion on 24 February of the same year. The legislation received overwhelming support from Congress and on 21 May, was passed in the provision of \$40 billion worth of financial aid — both military and humanitarian — for

Ukraine, marking it as one of the largest commitments in United States foreign aid history. Shortly following the official passing of Congress' decision, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced that Western nations had already contributed more than \$12 billion in weapons and funds since the beginning of Russian aggression. This incredible support from around the world holds great promise for Ukraine's prospects.

The Russian military supply chain

The Russian Federation has increased its military presence through a broad range of armaments over the past few months. These included combat drones, loitering munitions, tanks, and armored vehicles from Iran and Belarus respectively. In addition to these powerful items, further reports suggest that Russia was actively seeking trades for artillery ammunition with North Korea and ballistic missiles from Iran. With such a dramatic arsenal of heavy arms at their disposal, it is clear that the Russian Federation is forging ahead to build up its formidable military capabilities.

Conclusion. The Russian-Ukrainian war is a matter of great concern for those who care about international law and conventions. This conflict, plus its comprehensive nature and scope, has caused numerous issues with abiding by accepted protocols. Not only are there questions over which belligerents are permitted to use military force, but there are further questions on whether the rules of warfare and humanitarian law have been sufficiently followed throughout the conflict. For example, incriminating evidence of potential war crimes rises continually, prompting strong calls for impartial investigations and an honest look at the many facets of what is truly going on in this volatile situation. Ultimately, it appears that finding a viable resolution to this war will heavily hinge upon both sides embracing international norms set out to protect civilians in armed conflicts. By receiving light tanks from France, US, and Germany, the author asks how Ukraine's defense against Russia will be strengthened. As part of its analysis, the report summarizes some pathways and instruments that the West can use to help Ukraine with its defense and revival based on three strategies: modification, adaptation, and innovation. In addition to military and contingency support, macro-financial assistance, humanitarian assistance, and technical assistance, modernization, and reconstruction should be included in these programs.

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