

RUSSIAN – UKRAINE WAR: IMPLICATIONS ON AFRICAN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

In international politics, the national interest of a nation is pertinent. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine is nothing short of that. Since the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the West has been making considerable effort to weaken Russia. Hence, allowing Ukraine to be a member of NATO is not only a threat to its national interest but also its security and economic survival. The study, therefore, seeks to examine the implications of 'The Russian-Ukraine War on African external relations.' It observes that the invasion of Ukraine by Russia has arguably been the biggest military adventure in the 21st century. It is a strong signal that Russia will not tolerate any act that is inimical to its interest. It adopts 'Games Theory' to interrogate the discourse while relying on secondary sources to gather the relevant information. The study establishes the fact that, though, Russia has lost its superpower status, it is still a world power, a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations. Given this, it argues that beyond the bilateral and systemic political implications, the war will be felt in the dynamic of foreign exchange

earnings, global crude oil price, alters economic balance, rising costs of imported food items, equipment's, and many more. It concludes that both Russia and Ukraine already suffered and still counting heavy losses in the war. Notwithstanding, it is a pointer to the rebirth of the Cold War between Russia and the West. It recommends that African states need to exert their influence and determine the basis of their relations with either of the countries for them to be able to benefit optimally and not lost from the ongoing war.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, National Interest, War, Africa, Nigeria.

Introduction

International relations is a very broad discipline, complex and dynamic field of study because the environs and profound changes continue to take place in the system and these are changes whose nature, impact and scope are not always predictable. The post – 1991 world order was founded intellectually on the premise that the absence of competing major ideologies would lead to the absence or sharp reduction of all sources of tension between states; democracy and commerce would flourish, and international political life would become both safer and much more boring as a direct consequence (Fukuyama, 1992). On February 24 – following months of warning and concern from the Biden Administration, European allies, NATO, and some Members of Congress – Russia invaded Ukraine (Shane, et al 2022). Russia claimed its invasion was to conduct a "special military operation" to protect the

civilian population and to "demilitarize " and "de - Nazify" Ukraine: many observers understood the latter term as a false pretext for overthrowing the democratically elected Ukrainian government (Audrius, 2022).

The world has been watching the Russian – Ukraine war with apprehension, dismay and fear because the attack really shaken the foundations of international peace and security system. This crisis threatened the core principle underpinning the post – World War II international peace and security order, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations – namely the prohibition of the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. The former United States ambassador to Ukraine, William B. Taylor, stated that Putin seems to conduct foreign policy where powerful nations dominated and invaded less powerful nations, where nations established spheres of influence that oppressed neighbours, leading to war and suffering (Taylor, 2020).

This ugly occurrence has caused a large humanitarian crisis and is wreaking havoc on already fragile global economy which was just managing to slowly recover from the disruption caused by the pandemic (KPMG, 2022). The conflict itself can be considered as a clash of two opposing ideologies represented by the West on one side (the EU, the UN, NATO), and Russia on the other side. The European Union along with NATO, the UN, many non – governmental organizations, as well as the United States represent the liberal democratic stance that is

perceived by Russia as a threat to its existence and the status of the world's power. The Kremlin seems to be isolated and facing the network of complex alliances attempts to minimize the influence of the Western ideology on former Soviet States, which to a large degree are still influenced by the Russian federation (Gierczaki, 2020:11).

Soviet security policy for the majority of the Cold War overall remained locked into a heavily ideological Leninist version of Clausewitz's most famous dictum – that 'war is the continuation of politics by classes and governments through forceful and coercive means' (Wardak, 1989:58). What is evident is that this war carries all the echoes of the past, especially World I and II. Rather than the Russian invasion of Ukraine, marking a post-Western international system emerging, the role of U.S and its allies is glaring by coalesce to maximize their comparative advantage to push back against Putin's attempt to reshape the current international order. Infact, the conflict has become Europe's worst security crisis since the end of the second World War. The future impact of the war not only on the EU economy but also on other economies is largely unknown, depending not least on the duration of the war and on policies adopted by countries and companies around the world to find alternative sources of energy, raw materials and food.

Essentially, we must not forget the cardinal rules of international relations that lie at the root of this conflict. They are the principles of the sanctity of the sovereign territorial integrity of nations no matter how weak or

strong, big or small. Russian's invasion of Ukraine is a flagrant violation of this principle. Its deliberate carving up of Ukrainian territory by recognizing the breakaway regions as sovereign republics is a deepening of this annoying or original violation. On the other hand, there is the countervailing principle of spheres of influence. Under that convention, Russia has a right to see Ukraine as part of its sphere of influence for historical and strategic reasons. Recognition of that sphere of influence does not permit Russia to invade Ukraine; it only allows it to act in a manner to protect that sphere. While Ukraine may have a sovereign right to join or associate with the European Union, its right to join NATO, which is a military alliance is hindered by the convention of spheres of influence. Everything in the history of Russia and the independence of Ukraine dictates that matters of military alliance and security between the two states ought to be negotiated and agreed upon without the necessity of war (Amuta, 2022:66).

Thus, my analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the implications of the war on Africa external relations, which may still persist for a while as a result of the war in Ukraine, and how long such implications will continue, is unpredictable.

Understanding Russia/Ukraine Relations

Russia after the Soviet collapse remained both a federal multi – ethnic state, and one of the largest and most natural resource – rich countries on earth. Vladimir Putin also inherited from Boris Yeltsin a firmly presidential system of power, Russian parliamentary democracy having never

fully recovered from the bombardment of the White House on Moscow by troops acting under Yeltsin's orders in 1993. Putin then at one and the same time both accelerated this trend towards centralization during his own term in office, fostering the establishment of a nation-wide 'party of power' (Edinaia Rossia, or 'United Russia) under conditions of 'manage democracy', and simultaneously created an interesting constitutional dilemma – the appearance of the left – cited 'tandem' or 'diarchy' in Russia decision making, upon taking up the post of prime minister following completion of his second presidential term in 2008 (Marshall, 2011:179). Clearly, the Russian Federation has a long imperial history. Its sense of superiority and the need to prove it permeates much of its society. Umland (2019:38) emphasized the importance of Ukraine for Putin and noted that it led to:

... largely manufactured, yet nevertheless widespread collective agreement within large parts of Russia's population about rightfulness, justice and legitimacy of Moscow's various territorial, political, cultural and economic claims towards Ukraine.

Many links connected the two countries, creating an unbalanced relation of co-dependence and preventing Ukraine to develop an actual sense on nationality and self-determination. The country manifested more a desire of sovereignty and antipathy, especially in the west region, against Russian historic oppression, rather than a real

national ethos (Cenciarini, 2020:4). In view of this, Calamur (2014) argued that, the two countries are 'joined at the hip'. They share different cultural, economic and social characteristics: for example, Russian language is prevalent in the South West part of the country, Russian companies are largely investing in Ukraine and millions of Ukrainians work in Russia.

However, In 1991 when the USSR collapse, all these 15 countries became Independent and Ukraine gained Independence with 75% of the population being ethnically Russian and speaking Russian. Ukraine is a relatively young state. It is divided based on ethnicity with Ukrainian majority and Russian minority, Russian and Ukrainian language, religion, i.e. "Orthodox" Ukraine and "Catholic" Ukraine or differences between the Ukrainian Orthodox church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox church of the Kyivan Patriarchate" (Olzacka, 2017:25). Noticeably, Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe after Russia. Ukraine crisis is a power struggle where some parts of the country wants to join hands with European Union and some wants to join hand with Russia. It was one of the founding member of Soviet Union and played a significant role in its economic development. Ukraine is squeezed between Russia and Europe, till 1991 it was part of Soviet Union after the disintegration. Ukraine has been a democracy country with a poor economy and the foreign policy has been either pro-Russian or Pro-European.

The Ukraine crisis began in 2013 when the then president Viktor Yanukovich cancelled the deal for a greater

integration with European Union, resulting in mass protest. Russia supported Yanukovich while the U.S and Europe supported the protesters. Anti-government protests started and Yanukovich ran out of the country. Russia tried to create its lost influence back in Ukraine and annexed Crimea. The Pro-Russian rebels began seizing territory, they had shot the Malaysian Airlines Flight killing 298 people, fight between the Ukraine military and pro-Russian escalated, where the rebels were losing. In order to tackle this, Russian army invaded eastern Ukraine to support the pro-Russian (Bhattacharya, et al, 2021).

Due to its independence, first, on the Soviet Union and, now, the Russian Federation, several issues have emerged and complicated the relations between Russia and Ukraine and, how, the Russian Federation, several issues have emerged and complicated the relations between Russia and Ukraine. While almost the entire Ukraine was controlled by the Russian Empire, there was an important entity that marked its influence on the existing conflict in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. That entity was Novorossiia ("New Russia"). Novorossiia is a historical region extending from Odesa to Donetsk and up north to Dnepropetrovsk. Russian sense of identity has been developing in these areas since then. Moreover, it led to an assertion among the Russians that the historical region ought to be under their control. The ethnic and linguistic differences were intensified by Ukraine's long dependence on the Soviet Union and Russia, therefore thwarting the development of a strong sense of national identity of Ukrainians. Furthermore, having a status of a

Post – Soviet Satellite state, even after official recognition of independence, further deepened the conflicting positions regarding whether Ukraine should learn more towards the West (the European Union) or the East (the Russian Federation) (Gierczak, 2020:4).

Nonetheless, many Ukrainian, especially after gaining independence in 1991, preferred to establish their own sense of Ukrainian identity free from Polish influence in the West and Russian in the East. On multiple occasions, proponents of independence Ukraine stood in opposition to Russian activities that were meant to consolidate their influence on the Ukrainian government. Such was the case with the Orange Revolution in 2004 that resulted after forged presidential elections in Ukraine. For years, the Ukrainians felt that they were denied means of satisfying their fundamental needs, i.e. food, health care, and safety due to the despotic and oligarchical control of Russia. Declaration of a pro-Russian candidate, Victor Yanukovich, as a winner of the elections, motivated those who voted for a pro-European candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, to start a series of protests in Kyiv's Independence square and other major cities.

It was a clear sign that the Ukrainians were fed up with being dependent on Russia. The European Union's mediating mission led by then President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski was successful to the extent that it provided grounds for settling the dispute within Ukraine as noted by Zwolski (2018:182-183), it was perceived by the Russians as a Polish attempt to distance itself from Russia by ridding Ukraine from its Eastern neighbour's

influence. The conflict was resolved by the Ukraine's Supreme Court, which ruled that the elections were falsified, thus revoking the Central Election Commission's results. In the repeated elections, Yushchenko won and became president whose goal was to minimize Russian influence in Ukraine and to cease the oligarchical pressures on the government and its policies (Gierczaki, 2020:5)

Without mincing words, the Ukrainian independent in 1991, achieved during the process of dissolutions of the USSR (Bebber, 2015), could not eradicate the permanence of the Russian culture and language spread over the country, especially in the South – east region. As pointed out by Lakomy (2016:282): Ukraine has been an area of increasing differences and tensions, partly inherited from difficult historical processes, and partly developed during the post – cold War era. It has become a country permeated by conflicting interests and long – lasting division.

Situating Russia - Ukraine Conflict

The foreign policy concept that followed in 2000 was both more developed, and highly pragmatic, emphasizing above all the need to achieve firm and prestigious positions in the world community, most fully consistent with the interests of the Russian Federation as a great power, as one of the most influential centres of the modern world, as (as is furthermore) necessary for the growth of (her own) political, economic, intellectual and spiritual potential (Marshall, 2011:184). This was then further articulated in a concrete desire to seek a 'multi-polar

system of international relations', whilst also noting increasing regional and sub-regional integration, and emphasizing Russia's own stance of 'consistency and predictability (founded upon) mutually advantageous pragmatism' (Gaidar, 2007). With the assumption of power by Viktor Yanukovich, Ukraine continues to pursue a foreign policy that prioritizes Europe and good relations with the U.S. but has moved decisively away from actively pursuing NATO membership.

In his visit to Brussels, President Yanukovich highlighted the elements of continuity in Ukraine's foreign policy by signaling his intent to secure Ukraine's membership of the EU and signed an association agreement to build closer trade, political and social links between the EU and Ukraine. In April 2011, Yanukovich also highlighted the importance of strengthening good relations with the US when he agreed at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington to renounce the nation's stockpile of highly enriched Uranium and reaffirmed his government's commitment to the 1008 US – Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership. Yanukovich has, however, explicitly rejected Ukraine's former policy goal of securing NATO membership. Yanukovich has instead pledge to continue cooperation with NATO while pursuing non – bloc status aimed at improving and strengthening relations with Ukraine's largest and most powerful neighbor, the Russian Federation (Sanders, 2011:191).

More particularly, since the 'Orange Revolution' at the end of 2004, Ukraine's foreign policy prioritized Euro-

Atlantic integration. The former president, Victor Yushchanko, stated that his main goal was to secure Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO and, at least in the early months of his presidency, the prospects of membership in both organizations appeared bright (The White Book, 2006). The collapse of Viktor Yanukovych's governance, highly manipulated by the Russian leader Vladimir Putin, provoked with a chain effect, two particular affects, in relation to Russia:

- (1) Russia became aware that Ukraine would have become harder, if not impossible, to control, and counter measures were formulated in order not to lose one of the connections that benefited Russia and expanded its internal influence.
- (2) The question of national belonging reopened some unsolved issues in those regions where fragile co-existence between Russian and Ukrainian ownership was still not contested. It is the case of the already discussed south – eastern regions, where things remained frozen since the end of the Cold War, and a 'neither/ or ' question was not demanded (Calamur, 2014).

On February 24, 2022, hours after Putin's televised address announcing a "special military", Russia invaded Ukraine with an air and missile attack, using precision – guided munitions (PGMs) against key targets. These early targets included logistics centers, naval installations, command and control centers, air defenses, and critical infrastructure (Isabelle, 2022). The invasion comes after a decade of deteriorating relations between Russia and

Ukraine and the West. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia, contrary to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 68 / 62 of 27 March 2014 on Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, not only raises questions on Russian fears about the possible use of Ukraine to threaten the national security of Russia, but also on why Russia has opted to defend its own national security to the detriment of whatever is the position of international law (Akinterinwa, 2022:65).

Retrospectively, the conflict emerged around several issues. It is a complex inter relation of ethnic, religious, political and economic interests that concerns the international observers of the conflict. Moreover, the role of the European Union in the conflict was emphasized by Mear Sheimer (2014), Lakomy (2016), and Zwolski (2018). To understand the conflict as a whole, it will be necessary to investigate the conflict issues, which can be categorized into five groups: one, Russian maintenance of Post-Soviet states; two, Ukraine's sovereignty; three, status of the Crimea, Donetsk; four, Ukraine's sense of national identity; and five, international alliances (with Ukraine being at the center of conflicting ideologies) (Gierczaki, 2020:7). Although, the Russia – Ukraine conflict can be traced back to 2015 over the ethnic Russian people who are Pro-Russia and are living in Ukraine and the Ukraine military over culture and language issues.

Ukraine is a democracy country with a poor economy and its policies are either pro-Russian and pro-Europe, half of the population wants to join EU, and half wants to be part of Russia and remain loyal to its native land. Fight

between the two countries and where by Crimea which is an important part of both the countries located near the Ukraine eastern side an autonomy country which joined hands with Russia, as it was part of Russia and followed the ethnic Russian culture and language. However, the first friction between the Ukrainian population and the Russian political pressure, was provoked by the president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, and his decisions against an association agreement toward the European Union in 2013 (Hoggins, 2014). The strong will of Ukraine citizens and political movements in favour of a nationalist approach in opposition to Russian influence, led to a period of protests against the government, whose leader (Viktor) was, then, removed from power in 2014 during the Ukrainian Revolution (Conant, 2014).

Again, the proximity of Ukraine to the EU's member states allows the financial and technical support to be provided for the Ukrainians. This is certainly perceived as a threat by the Russian government, which deems any approximation to Russia's western neighbor as possible endangerment. Before the conflict began, Russia used to supply gas to Ukraine; however, as noted by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), "beginning in 2015, Ukraine has significantly reduced its direct import of Russian natural gas and instead has received natural gas shipments from Europe". Therefore, such clear support given to Ukraine by the EU gives legitimate reasons for Putin to feel threatened by the gradual approximation of Ukraine to the EU. As the same time, however, the broader strategic context also obviously remains crucial – Russia is not a member of NATO or a member of the EU, but she

is playing a role again in a number of old and new strategic forums, amongst the United Nations Security Council (UNSC); the G-8 and G-20; the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO, Comprising Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan); the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO, comprising Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan); the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC); and the more loosely aligned BRIC states (Brazil, Russia, India and China) of rapidly developing economies. This institutional context provides Russia with a complex and interwoven set of global and regional priorities, encompassing both 'hard power' and 'soft power' security issues (Marshall, 2011:179).

Therefore, Russia's renewed invasion of neighboring Ukraine in February 2022 marked the start of Europe's deadliest armed conflict in decades. After a steady buildup of military forces along Ukraine's borders since 2021, Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, with Russia ground forces attacking from multiple directions (Bowen, 2022:1). Putin seeing the invasion of Ukraine as a personal mission to reverse the end of the Soviet Union that began on December 26, 1991, which he calls "the greatest geo-political tragedy of the 20th century" (Associated Press, 2005). Initially, Russian forces made gains along all lines of advance. However, Russian forces ran into effective and likely unexpected levels of Ukrainian resistance from the invasion's outset. In addition, many analysts and officials assess that during this first stage of the war, the Russian military performed poorly overall and was hindered by specific tactical

choices, poor logistics, ineffective communications, and command-and -control issues, the Ukrainian military, while at a quantitative and qualitative disadvantage in personnel, equipment and resources, has proven more resilient and adaptive than Russia expected over the course of the first several weeks of the war, Russian President Vladimit Putin and the Russian military had to adjust to various setbacks and other developments on the ground. With many of its advances stalled, in late March 2022, Russian defense officials announced that Russian military operations would focus oneatern Ukraine, including the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk (collective known as the Donbas, where Russian – led separatists have been fighting since 2014) and that Russia would withdraw its forces around Kyiv and Chernihiv in the north (Bowen, 2022).

Unimaginably, Moscow deployed 180,000 men at the start of its military campaign in February and is estimated to have since suffered about 80,000 deaths and injuries, according to the U.S Ukraine, which had declared full mobilization, has a total number of troops between 700,000 and 1mn (KYIV, 2022:4). During the first month of fighting, Ukrainians repelled many Russian attacks, conducted counter – offensives and liberated some areas, most significantly around the capital Kyiv. The war has left thousands of Ukrainian civilians dead and injured, and cities partially razed to the ground. According to the UNHCR, more than 5.2 million refugees, mostly women and children, have been recorded as having fled to neighbouring countries. In addition, as of 23 June, the International Organization for Migration

estimates that more than 6.2 million people have been internally displaced, despite the fact that 5.5 million internally displaced people have already returned to their homes (European Parliament, 2022).

Mr. Putin has had difficulty understanding that his invasion of Ukraine has gone badly. As it turns out, his plans and projections were disastrous. His troops have been vastly decimated as they have lost territory they had previously occupied in the early stages of war that was planned to last less than a few days. Months have rolled by and Russian casualties, including high ranking generals, have mounted. His troops are on the run as territory previously overrun has fallen under a Ukrainian counter offensive – vast amounts of equipment and gear have been abandoned by fleeing Russian troops. Fields of human remains that loudly testify to serious war crimes have been uncovered. Domestic opinion against the war and indeed the Putin regime has begun to mount and has recently graduated into street protests (Amuta, 2022:68).

Clearly, observers continue to speculate about Russia's initial objectives and plans in launching its offensive against Ukraine. Many analysts believe Russia's expectations were based on faulty assumptions that undermined Russia's conduct of the invasion (Detsch & Mackinnon, 2022). If this is the case, these incorrect political assumptions possibly determined and imposed unrealistic objectives and timetables onto the Russian military. This in turn may partially, but not entirely, explain the Russian military's unpreparedness and poor performance (Chotiner, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Political scientists have long analyzed political conflict, especially international relations, in terms of a series of games played by rational players in order to understand and predict events. The classic game played by game theorists is the prisoner's dilemma. As a result of the most irrational outcome that usually happens, with an overall score for the game of minus 10, the theory is highly imperative in understanding the international system. Game theorists claim that this dilemma explains many of the irrational outcomes of supposedly rational but selfish decision-making we find all around us (Mann, 2007:173). This dilemma has been applied to international conflict, specifically to the nuclear balance of terror between the US and the USSR during the Cold War. The Americans and Russians were like two scorpions in a bottle: each could literally wipe out in one day most of the other's military forces and major cities with the thousands of nuclear – armed rockets and atomic bombs in their arsenals, with the potential side effect of destroying the planet in the process (Mann, 2007:174).

Borrowing from economics, game theory and rational choice theory became popular for explaining the choices and optimizing behaviour of self-interested states in an anarchical international system as well as a means for interpreting the actions of their foreign policy decision makers. Given the dangers and unpredictability of such a system, theory building was motivated by the desire to control and predict (Wattz, 1979:6). The search for systematic inquiry could, hopefully, contribute to the effort of diminishing the likelihood of future conflict. Broadly defined as positivist, this turn to science

represents a view of the creation of knowledge based on four assumptions: first, a belief in the unity of science that is, the same methodologies can apply in the natural and social worlds; second, that there is a distinction between facts and values, with facts being neutral between theories; third, that the social world has regularities like natural world; and fourth, that the way to determine the truth of statements is by appeal to neutral facts or an empiricist epistemology (Smith, 1997:168).

Applications of game – theoretic models have themselves become more sophisticated and more complex. Prisoner’s dilemma and related 2 X 2 games were useful for the analysis of simple strategic situations, but the move to extensive-form games, particularly sequential games with incomplete information, marks a profound theoretical advance. The greater realism of the new models has contributed to a strong revival of interest in game – theoretic approaches in recent years. These games incorporate the uncertainty that decision-makers routinely face, the sequence of choices and counter-choices that generally characterize the outbreak of war, the problem of the credibility of commitments in an anarchic world, and the dynamics of signaling (Levy, 1998:160).

In the context of this discourse, there is no gainsaying in the fact that, the on-going conflict between Russia and Ukraine is a clear reflection and manifestation of politics of survival in contemporary reality of global politics. Based on this, the 'Games Theory' is considered absolutely relevant to the study.

Exploring Western Conspiracy in Russia – Ukraine Conflict

The Russian – Ukrainian war is interesting from various perspectives. First, is it a war? If it is, which type of war? Is it a lawful war? Is it not a war of attrition? Western countries call it a Russian invasion while the Russians say it is a 'Special Military Intervention'. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) calls it an aggression. Whether it is an invasion, a special military intervention, or aggression, they all have the same devastating effects. Second, the war raises the nexus between technocratic advice and decisions of policy makers. For instance, US foreign policy technocrats have been warning and on a serious note, that the United States should not encourage the membership expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to Eastern Europe, warning that the implications could be more deleterious. The political decision makers listened to the advice but never accepted it. Thirdly, the Russian – Ukrainian war has divided, more than it has united the European Union. Several policy decisions taken by the European Union as sanctionary measures against Russia also have negative impact of some of the EU Member states. This has been to the extent that such members have been asking for exemptions. Fourthly, the war not only raises the issue of membership of countries like Sweden and Switzerland, of the NATO, and also of the security protection of such countries in Europe. In this regard, is neutrality in international relations coming to an end in the event of Sweden and Switzerland acceding to the NATO agreement? (Akinterinwa, 2022:54).

From the early 2005, the European Union shifted its focus outside the European border, moving towards the eastern countries, planning on new agreements and alliances. The idea was to avoid direct 'assimilation' proposals inside the union; but, instead, building strong partnerships and closer political ties (Macfarlane & Menon, 2014). Ukraine has been a strategic stronghold, in relation to western countries and for its position in the Black Sea (Menkiszak, 2016). Specifically, Mearsheimer (2014:79-80) pointed out that the: "West's final tool for peeling Kyiv away from Moscow has been its efforts to spread Western values and promote democracy in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, a plan that often entails funding pro-Western individuals and organization". From the Eastern side, an alliance of Ukraine with the EU was incompatible with the programme of Russia to build a Russia – led economic space between close countries, geographically and historically, called custom union. The refusal to sign the Association Agreement proposed by EU to Ukraine in 2013, widely supported by the Western part of the country, marked an official statement regarding its position between the European Union and Russia (Havik, 2014).

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions meant very little or nothing to Russia which underscores her national security. Russia strategic focus is to prevent the establishment of any NATO military base in any of the former Soviet States, particularly Ukraine. And, foreign policy wise, Russia wants a Russo – American joint strategy in managing global insecurity while the United States is wrapped up in the glory of its

superiority, it does not want joint leadership, and is vehemently opposed to anyone having the capacity to challenge its global leadership. This conflict in foreign policy positions of the two countries explains why the United States has been consciously expanding the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) contrary to bilateral agreements reached with Russia and why Russia has also reactively been opposed to such an agenda. Russia is vehemently opposed to the nearness of NATO operations in its contiguous environment. It is opposed to Ukraine's membership of NATO. This is the main background to the dispute and the ongoing war in Ukraine. The war is first between Russia and NATO before it was between Russia and Ukraine (Akinterinwa, 2022:65).

Though, as at the time North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded in 1949, its primary mission was to protect Western Europe from any possible Soviet Union aggression. It achieved its mission in this respect. The whole of Eastern Europe fell to the mighty Soviet Union. But NATO was a powerful military shield that Moscow could not penetrate. After the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1989, NATO has been increasing in number. Meanwhile, the WARSAW Pact is now defunct and Russia is now bereft of any concrete military alliance comparable to NATO. But then, NATO is grossly limited where the primary interest of Russia is at stake. On 2 March, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution reaffirming Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity with a broad majority. With Russian consistent attack on Ukraine, many western

countries have out sanction on Russian economy especially US, UK and NATO. It is no more part of G8, which has now become G7. US and Russian relations have been worsened due to Ukraine crisis with most western countries like Germany, Britain providing assistance to Ukraine.

The EU and its allies, within and beyond NATO, have adopted hard – hitting sanctions aimed at causing severe damage to the Russian economy. In an unprecedented move, the EU mobilized resources under the European Peace Facility to provide military assistance, including lethal equipment, to Ukraine. On the humanitarian front, the EU is providing aid, including through the EU Civil Protection mechanism, and has activated the Temporary Protection Directive. Humanitarian aid mobilized by the European Commission consist of £348 million of humanitarian funding in response to the war in Ukraine, of which £335 million for Ukraine and £13million for Moldova (European Parliament, 2022).The Russo-Ukrainian war is strategically a struggle for the maintenance of the Euro-American drive global hegemony. As such, the war is not simply between Russia and Ukraine. The war is in three layers: Russo-Ukrainian, Euro-Ukrainian, and Russo-American dominated NATO. At the first level of Russia and Ukraine, the question of Ukraine's membership of the NATO is a very critical issue. Ukraine is being encouraged, if not being pressured, to join the NATO. Russia is vehemently opposed to such membership, considering the security implications. For Russia, considering the recidivist de-Russification in various manners, and based on Europe's subtle

militarisation of Ukraine, Russia wants to completely neutralize Ukraine and remove whatever the country stands for and that makes her attractive to NATO countries.

In the absence of any relevant Ukraine, the NATO would have been weakened At the second level of Euro-Ukrainian strategy, the support for Ukraine is preventive defence. The EU does not want the extension of the Ukrainian shooting war to come nearer the borders of the EU countries, hence the need to help Ukrainians to fight their battle at home, and to make it more difficult and more costly for Russia to win the war. Besides, there is the need to also ensure the sustenance of cordial ties with Ukraine, considered the most important ally of the EU in the context of the Union' s Eastern partnerships and the European Neighbourhood Policy. And true enough, the EU and Ukraine have been making efforts to go beyond relationships of partnership to efforts at politico-economic integration. This ultimate objective requires cautionary policies that can present much destruction and sustain Ukraine (Akinterinwa, 2022: 54).

Predictably, Mr. Putin has played the dictator' s game. He has threatened the world with a nuclear holocaust if the war in Ukraine continue to go against his wish. He carefully chose the eve of the 77th United Nations General Assembly to broadcast this grave threat. To indicate that he may not be bluffing, he disclosed the obvious fact that Russia is armed to the teeth with all classes of nuclear weapons both strategic and tactical. In addition, he unveiled hasty plan to call up a reservist force of an

additional 300,000 men to join his army of mostly conscripts in the Ukraine operation. It did not matter to him that additional force will need to be mobilized, trained, equipped and motivated to go into a war that many realize has entered an attrition stage. Worse still, Putin revealed a microwave plan to hold referenda in the Donbass and Luhansk regions of Ukraine which it had previously occupied and colonized (Amuta, 2022:68). On the face of it, Putins belligerent rhetoric addressed to the United Nations is not unprecedented. Since its formation, the United Nations has always been confronted with the urgency of managing the dissenting voices of non-conformist leaders in a world that has remained divided either along ideological or temperamental lines. There is, in fact, an unwritten code that what has sustained the United Nations as a multinational platform is the freshness of dissenting voices and uncommon leadership types that it has had to deal with over the years. Leaders with divergent ideas, viewpoints and orientations have come to New York in previous years to hawk ideas an perspective that do not necessarily conform to universally accepted norms.

In view of the foregoing analysis, it needs to be perfectly understood that, while Russian expansion (or aggression) is perceived as a threat to the balance of power established after World War II, the approximation of the European Union and the United States to Russia by extending their spheres of influence in Ukraine can be perceived as a threat to Russian security. As pointed out by Mearsheimer (2014:80):

[W]hen Russian leaders look at Western social engineering in Ukraine, they worry that their country might be next .

Undoubtedly, while each of their interests seem legitimate, there will be some degree of consensus required to reach in this conflict. A lot of people had died since the beginning of the crisis. It is necessary to bring the conflict to peace.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Implications on African External Relations

The Russian Federation and Ukraine are among the most important producers of agricultural commodities in the world. Both countries are net exporters of agricultural products, and they both play leading supply roles in global market of foodstuffs and fertilizers, where exportable supplies are often concentrated in a handful of countries. This concentration could expose these markets to increased vulnerability to shocks and volatility. Combined, the two countries, on average, accounted for 19, 14 and 4 percent, respectively, of global output of barley, wheat and maize between 2016/17 and 2020/21. in the oil seed complex, their contribution to global production was particularly important for sunflower oil, with just over half of world output originating, on average, in the two countries during this period. In 2021, either the Russian Federation or Ukraine (or both) ranked amongst the top three global exporters of wheat, maize, rapeseed, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil, while the Russian Federation also stood as the world's top exporter of

nitrogen fertilizers, the second leading supplier of potassium fertilizers and the third largest exporter of phosphorous fertilizer (Council, 2022:3). Apparently, the war in Ukraine has already caused extensive damage and loss of life in key population centres, spread across rural areas and sparked massive displacement. Many countries that are highly dependent on imported foodstuffs and fertilizers, including numerous that belong to the Least Developed Country (LDC) and Low-Income Food-Deficit Country (LIFDC) groups, rely on Ukrainian and Russian food supplies to meet their consumption needs (Council, 2022:4).

A war in Ukraine will trigger a massive negative supply shock in a global economy (Roubini, 2022). The price shocks will have global consequences. There will be supply and commodity price shocks with wide ranging long-term consequences. Production, consumption, and trade in commodities will change as countries move towards greater self-sufficiency, creating opportunities for new suppliers. The war is leading to costlier trading patterns and a major diversion in energy trade, and the outlook for commodity markets is highly dependent on the length of the war and the disruption it causes in supply chains (World Bank, 2022). The impact on countries' economies will be heterogeneous and asymmetric and will also differ greatly depending on the economies' gas intensity (IMF, 2022).

As of the beginning of May, only Lim et al (2022) have stated that the war in Ukraine could have a negative impact on business through limited access to funds,

reduced purchasing power, an increasing inflation rate, and a threat to sustainable growth and restrictions on trade as a result of sanctions. Between 26th May and 4th April, the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), Mr. Antonio Guterres, undertook a lightning trip to five countries in Eastern Europe and West Africa. He was in Russia and Ukraine for a first-hand assessment of and possible but late mediation in the war raging on Ukrainian soil. Then, he crossed over to Senegal, Niger and Nigeria where he highlighted, among others, the enormous impact of the war in Europe on a region far from the battle fields and already burdened with terrorism, climate change, and other developmental challenges. "This war is aggravating a triple crisis: food, energy, and financial, for the region and well beyond," Guterres said in Senegal (Adio, 2022).

Thus, African countries have not only shown uncoordinated and uncommon approach to the Russo-Ukrainian war, but also an attitudinal non-alignment. And the reasons cannot be far-fetched. A country like Egypt that wheat importations from Russia and Ukraine were to the tune of 45% cannot be expected to take side. Infact, the United States Institute of Peace has it that there is an impending food scarcity in Africa, based on the consideration that in 2020 alone, Africa \$ 4bn and \$ 2.9bn worth of agricultural products respectively from Russia and Ukraine. And with the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, prices of corn, wheat and soybeans have surged. And more disturbingly, the institute also says that about 20m people in the Sahel and West Africa do not have access to sufficient food. This is apart from the impact on oil exploration activities by Lukoil and Tatneft

Oil Companies, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea (Cameroon, Congo Kinshasa, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria) which are likely to be suspected (Akinterinwa, 2022:54).

The African Union is not united to the extent of adopted a United front via-a-vis the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Infact, the disunity, is not only manifestly continentally, but also at the national level. The pattern of African at the United Nations voting on condemnation of the Russian invasion is another reflection of the non-coordinated approach to the conflict. On 2nd March, 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution which condemned 'Russia's aggression against Ukraine'. It was voted by 141 out of the 193 members states of the organization. 35 countries abstained from voting. Of the 35 abstaining countries, 17 of them were from Africa, Eritrea was the only African country that voted against the resolution. A total of 93 countries voted in favour of suspension, 58 countries abstained while 24 countries voted against Algeria, Burundi, CAR, Congo, Eritea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Mali, and Zimbabwe voted against the suspension. Apart from Nigeria, Eswatini, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Togo and Uganda abstaining from voting (Akinterinwa, 2022:54).

Towards Russia or more precisely the old Soviet Union, some elites nostalgia still exists in some African countries. Many of the first and second generation African elite in the days of the Cold War studied in the USSR. Ideological nostalgia towards the 'evil empire' is strongest in places

like Mozambique, Angola,, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa where political parties that pioneered the independence and anti-racist struggles were backed by the old Soviet Union (Amuta, 2022:66). And, perhaps, most interestingly, the issue of non-alignment is also necessarily raised at the level of Africa's attitudinal disposition towards the conflict. The Ukrainian president has been strenuously courting Africa's support. So has Western diplomacy tried to do, but Africa is already sharply divided on the matter. Apart from the division at the continental level, the division is also deep within some countries because of the growing effects in various dimensions in many countries of Africa. What has been and what should be Africa's approach to the conflict? What is the place of non-alignment policy in this regard? How will Africa be affected by the Russo-NATO quest for global hegemony? How will Africa be shaped again in the emerging new world order (Akinterinwa, 2022:54).

Summary and Conclusion

The Russo-Ukrainian war, as it has been shown throughout this analysis, is complex. A variety of interrelated causes, a long history that ties together but also divides the society, strong spheres of influence from countries with opposing ideologies, a broad network of influential groups and individuals with a variety of interests contribute to the complexity of the conflict. Conflict has a set of complex underlying causes and long-lasting grievances. Conflicts that have a long history and are fueled by strong ideologies require meticulous approach to their resolution with an emphasis on changing the attributes of the parties involved.No doubt, Mr. Putin

miscalculated his chances in the Ukraine mission. He probably underestimated the extent to which Ukrainians detest and even hate the Russians. For, it is difficult to sustain a massive military campaign in a terrain where the occupying force is so despised. Also, Mr. Putin never estimated the grounds well of international opposition that his invasion of Ukraine would attract. More tragically, he probably did not calculate the character of Russia's post war relations with the European states and former Soviet republics that Russia has to live with in perpetuity.

However, the irrational attitude of Mr. Putin has clearly demonstrated the fact that, the 'Might is Right'. Aggressive tendencies is peculiar with all the world powers. Hence, the world still needs a powerful stable Russia as a bulwark against the excesses of the West just as much as we need a wealthy Europe and the US to demonstrate the relative advantages of liberal democracy and the power of the free market. For those who are desirous or anxious about how this war will end, there are few certainties. First, Russia can neither crush nor annihilate Ukraine. Second, Russia will not be able to prevail against a coalition of the US, NATO and the rest of the free world. Third, the coalition of pro-Ukrainian forces will not be able to defect Russia and exclude it from the international system. A humiliated Russia is an unlikely historical oddity (Amuta, 2022:68). It is doubtful if the two parallel lines will meet somewhere in a bombed out Ukraine. Putin would probably find more satisfaction in being a party and also a guarantor of the kind of peace he desires.

Russia's permanent membership in U.N Security Council and the Veto Power along with the status of a nuclear power puts Russia in an advantageous position compared to Ukraine, which is not militarily supported and does not enjoy the international status anywhere similar to that of Russia. Moreover, in order to try and eradicate Putin's Neo-Soviet ideology from Eastern Europe, it would be necessary to hold him responsible for political crimes. Unfortunately, no one can predict how long the conflict will last and how soon we can return to an acceptable level of stability. As wartime leader Winston Churchill reminds us:

Never, never, never believe any way will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.

Notwithstanding, the uncertainty, some of the key signposts to watch for include: the effectiveness of the coordinated sanctions, the marginal changes in diplomatic position of the parties involved in the conflict and the progress (or lack thereof) of the negotiations, the military situation on the ground and the effectiveness of Ukraine's resistance. Above all, the desire for peace to prevail can and should be unequivocally communicated by all those who have a voice (KPMG, 2022).

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