

The repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian war on international balances in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA)

تداعيات الحرب الروسية الاوكرانية على التوازنات الدولية والإقليمية
في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا

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أثرت الحرب الروسية الأوكرانية على أكثر من منطقة إقليمية وأدت إلى إيجاد العديد من الفرص وفرضت عليها مجموعة من التحديات على المناطق الجغرافية كافة، وكذلك على صعيد العديد من المجالات السياسية والاقتصادية والاستراتيجية. ويعني هذا أن الحرب خلفت- ولا تزال- أثارا غير محدود وأطلق عليها "الحرب غير المحدودة". ولم يقتصر التأثير على النطاق الجغرافي فقط لحدود دول الصراع بل أمتد ليشمل طبيعة التفاعلات القائمة بين القوى الإقليمية والدولية التي لديها مصالح في منطقة الشرق الأوسط كالولايات المتحدة وروسيا والصين والهند. فالتأثير ليس جغرافيا فقط بل سياسيا واستراتيجيا يعتمد أساسا على عامل المصلحة والقوة ولا سيما القوة العسكرية التقليدية وغير التقليدي، مما يعني إعادة بروز المنظور الواقعي وهيمنته مرة أخرى على العلاقات الدولية في ضوء الحرب.

واتسع نطاق التعاون أيضاً بين دول ذات اختلافات أيديولوجية وخلفيات تنافسية تصل إلى حد الصراع كالإمارات والسعودية مع إسرائيل، وإيران والسعودية، ويعكس ذلك صحة مقولات المنظور الليبرالي القائم على التعاون. ومن ثم، أوجدت الحرب فرصا وتحديات في أنماط التفاعل بين دول زادت علاقات تعاونية تارة وتنافسية أو صراعية تارة أخرى. ونجد أن كلا الدول لها مصالح في المنطقة اقتصاديا وسياسيا

واستراتيجيا سواء القوى الدولية كالولايات المتحدة وروسيا وبعض القوى الإقليمية الأخرى كإيران وتركيا وإسرائيل والسعودية ومصر .

وأُتاحت الحرب فرصة لإيجاد حلول للعديد من الأزمات بالمنطقة منها الأزمة السورية لإنشغال روسيا بالحرب، والصراع القائم في اليمن والتدخل الإيراني في الإقليم، والتقارب العربي الإسرائيلي وإن ظل الصراع قائماً ولكنه ساكن ، فوجد التعاون بين الإمارات والسعودية مع إسرائيل. فوجد التقارب السعودي الإيراني بوساطة صينية وكان من نتائجهم أه عودة سوريا لمقاعدھا بجامعة الدول العربية وحضور بشار الأسد قرر رئيس لسوريا في مؤتمر القمة العربية 2023 بالمملكة العربية السعودية.

لذا يهدف البحث للإجابة عن سؤال مفاده إلى أي مدى أثرت الحرب الروسية الأوكرانية على التفاعلات الدولية والإقليمية سواء الدول المصدرة للنفط أو الدول المستوردة للقمح والحبوب والطاقة؟ أي ماهي تداعيات الحرب على توازن القوى في منطقة الشرق الأوسط؟ وينقسم البحث إلى محورين: الأول تبعات الحرب على القوى الدولية، والثاني تبعات الحرب على القوى الإقليمية في ظل وجود فرصة وتحديات في/ وبالمناطق على العديد من القضايا استنادا إلى السيناريوهات المتوقعة للحرب وما يتمخض عنها من نسق دولي و إقليمي جديد على المستوى السياسي والاستراتيجي أم استمرار الوضع الراهن، أم سينتج عنها حرب عالمية ثالثة يتم الزج بالمنطقة بها.

فالمحددات الدولية والإقليمية للحرب على التفاعلات السياسية الإقليمية وتداعياتها على توازن القوى بالشرق الأوسط استدعت تبني المنظور الواقعي كالدفاعية والهجومية التي استخدمتها روسيا وأوكرانيا في الحرب اعتمادا على مفهوم الحرب والقوة والمصلحة، والتطرق للمنظور الليبرالي التعاوني في ظل التفاعلات الدولية والإقليمية والتقارب بين دول ذات أدبيولوجيات مختلفة وطبيعة تنافسية حيث تتقاسم وتشارك الواقعية والليبرالية الجديدة العديد من المفاهيم.

الكلمات الدالة: الشرق الأوسط، توازن القوى، الحرب غير المحدودة، الهيمنة، المصلحة، القوة

The repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian war on international balances in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA)

Abstract

The light of the first anniversary of Russo-Ukraine war has a several direct and indirect a significant impact on international and regional balances and their implications on the geopolitical and geostrategic, and the international and regional status of the regional states. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 influence not only on the Ukraine and Russia, but also on the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. The direct impacts include the impact on energy security, as Russia is one of the major energy suppliers to the region. The indirect impacts include the impact on political alliances and arms trade, as the invasion has led to a shift in the balance of power in the region. The paper evaluates the influence of the war on the MENA region for its importance geopolitical region that connects Europe, Asia, and Africa, including countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, and Syria, which are important in terms of energy security, political alliances, and arms trade. Therefore, any major geopolitical event in the region can have far-reaching consequences.

In other words, the implications of the war for the Middle East and North Africa can play can be an opportunity for the international and regional powers to have a role in the international and regional system and security, by utilizing the circumstance of war to enhance regional stability, and their international standing in the international system, since the nature of interactions between regional and international powers which have interests in the Middle East, such as the United States, Russia, China, and India. Influence is not only geographical, but also political and strategic, and depends mainly on the factor of interest and power, which means that the re-emergence of the realistic perspective and its dominance once again in the international relations in the light of war. Cooperation has also escalated in countries with ideological differences and competitive backgrounds that amount to conflict, such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia with Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, reflecting the validity of the liberal perspective based on cooperation.

The theoretical and practical perspectives of this research, explains the multi-faced repercussion and influence of the Russo-Ukraine war on the MENA region and analyzes the Russian Activism approach in the region that

has multi-layered domain: military intervention and arms sales; diplomatic mediation; a quest for energy and infrastructure projects; and the use of soft-power tools like propaganda and media as a flexible non-violent means, combining different tools and tactics to achieve various goals.

Accordingly, the research adopts multi-approaches theoretical framework in a complementary the research problem of to what extent does the Russo-Ukraine War affect international and regional interactions? What are the repercussions of the war on the balance of power in the Middle East? through the inductive and interpretive approach and the use of a realistic perspective based on force, particularly military power, and the constructive perspective in the use of soft power such as the media, and the liberal perspective in the use of agreements, and mutual cooperation. The paper uses qualitative research methodology and relies on secondary sources including scholarly articles, reports, and news articles.

Thus, the Russo- Ukraine war has created opportunities to find solutions to many crises in the region, including the Syrian crisis due to Russia's preoccupation with the war, the conflict in Yemen, the Iranian intervention in the region, and the Arab Israeli rapprochement, although the conflict remains but is static, and challenges in the patterns of interaction between states, increasing cooperative relations at times and competitive or conflictual at other times, for instance cooperation between the UAE with Israel. Ultimately, both countries have interests in the region economically, politically, and strategically, whether international powers such as the United States and Russia and after other regional powers such as Iran, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

The research is divided into two main pillars: the first is the consequences of the war on international powers, and the second is on regional powers in light of the existence of opportunity and challenges in/ and in the region on many issues based on the expected scenarios of the war and the resulting new international and regional pattern at the political and strategic level or the continuation of the status quo, or will result in a third world war that will be thrown into the region.

Subsequently, the paper aims to examine the impact of the War on the political, economic, and security situation in the MENA region. The study is divided into **three main chapters anteceded by an introduction and finalized by a conclusion.** The first chapter defines the main concepts that have a significant importance to research, the types and dimensions of wars and emphasize the long sided of the war on international and regional powers. The second chapter deals with the international and regional relations that create opportunities and challenges in the MENA region and

the interactions between them, and exploration of obstacles. The third chapter expresses lesson learned, illustrates expected potential scenarios of the war based on international and regional determinants of the war on international and regional political interactions and their repercussions on the balance of power in the Middle East that necessitated the adoption of a realistic perspective, such as the defensive and offensive ones that Russia and Ukraine used in the war, based on the concept of war, power and interest, and addressing the liberal and cooperative perspective in light of international and regional interactions and the rapprochement between countries that have different ideologies and a competitive nature since realism and liberalism share many concepts.

The paper deduces that the War had a significant impact on the region, particularly in terms of energy security, political alliances, and arms trade. In addition, the regional powers have an important role in reforming the regional and international in security and strategic imbalance by utilizing their powers, resource, and the need for Western countries -which oppose Russia's invasion- to seek support and endorsement from Middle Eastern states. However, the lack of clear end of the war, led to ambiguous image and unclear principle of relations and deficiency of overarching strategy, which make the international and regional balance vulnerable to inconsistency and potential contradictions in their actions, result in actual and potential threat and challenges and different scenarios accordingly. The paper concludes by highlighting the need for further research to fully understand the impact of the war on the MENA region.

Keywords:

Middle East, balance of power, unlimited war, hegemony, interest, power

CHAPTER ONE

Peace Talks and Pre-Conflict Relations between Russia and Ukraine

Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian war affected more than one regional region and provided many opportunities and challenges in all geographical regions, and in many political, economic, and strategic fields, which means that the war had unlimited effects "unlimited war". It has multi-dimensional effects on different spheres. The concept of an "unlimited war" refers to a type of conflict where both sides are willing to use all available means, including non-military tactics such as propaganda and cyber-attacks to achieve their goals. War is, if not common, a persistent feature of international politics, few conflicts in which intense fighting persists for years and has unlimited multidimensional effects in terms of its scope, consequence, and impacts, which I call unlimited wars, are thus responsible for a highly disproportionate amount of suffering.¹ And in terms of treaties and conventions, there are several legal framework for the prohibition of war that are relevant for this crucial matter of war prohibition and the legal provisions, acts, and agreements that enforce this prohibition:

- The United Nations Charter (1945) prohibits the use of force against another state, except in self-defense or with the approval of the UN Security Council. Russia's invasion of Ukraine violated this principle.² Article 2(4) of the Charter explicitly prohibits the threat or use of force in international relations.³ It is important to note that Russia's invasion of Ukraine violated this fundamental principle.⁴ Under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter states may neither use force in international relations, nor threaten it. As such, the UN Charter applies first and foremost as a prohibition on the use of force in international relations and also outer space.

¹ Alex Weisiger, "Logics of War: Explanations for Limited and Unlimited Conflicts", Cornell Studies in Security Affairs, Cornell University Press, 2013, pp. 54-85 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1xx5pk>

² Christine Gray, International Law and the Use of Force, 3rd ed, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

³ UN Charter, supra note 21, art 2 (4)

⁴ Bin Cheng, The Extraterrestrial Application of International Law (1965) 18 CLP 132.

In addition to the UN Charter, there are normative framework such as other international agreements and conventions that further reinforce the prohibition of war.

- The Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, also known as the Pact of Paris, renounces war as an instrument of national policy and commits signatory states to resolve their disputes through peaceful means and renounce the use of force in their international relations.
- Furthermore, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols provide legal protection for individuals affected by armed conflicts, ensuring the humane treatment of civilians, prisoners of war, and the wounded, establishing guidelines for the conduct of parties involved in armed conflicts.
- The Helsinki Final Act (1975) plays a significant role by establishing the principles of the territorial integrity of states and the inviolability of borders. These principles serve as important foundations for peaceful coexistence and stability among nations. Violations of these principles, as seen in Russia and Ukraine's actions', undermine the prohibition of war and threaten international peace and security.¹
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998): The Rome Statute established the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a permanent international tribunal to prosecute individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. It acts as a deterrent against the commission of war-related crimes. Regarding Russo war, the Court has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for alleged war crimes involving accusations that Russia has forcibly taken Ukrainian children. Also, it issued a warrant for Putin's commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova.²

Eventually, various legal provisions, acts, and agreements at the international level prohibit war and emphasize the importance of peaceful resolutions to conflicts. These legal scopes serve as a reminder of our collective responsibility to preserve peace and promote a more just and harmonious world.

¹ Sarah Baldwin Synder, “The helsinki process, American foreign policy, and the end of the cold war” <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/helsinki-process-american-foreign-policy-end-cold/docview/305332381/se-2>

² Alex Leff, Michele Kelemen, Charles Maynes, “ March 17, 2023, [The International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for Putin : NPR](#)

Although the term "unlimited war" has existed since ancient times of the war between Paraguay and its neighbors, which took place between 1864 and 1870 and ended with the utter destruction of Paraguay, is one of the largest unknown unlimited wars in history, the concept of "unlimited war" emerged during the Cold War era was often associated with the idea of a potential nuclear conflict as for the most destructive conflicts could occur, and no bounds to the nature of nature of scope military operations, where the United States and Soviet Union engaged in a nuclear arms race and utilized proxy wars.¹ Both sides recognized the destructive power of nuclear weapons and the potential for mutually assured destruction. As a result, they sought to develop a range of non-military tactics to gain an advantage in the ongoing ideological conflict between the two superpowers. For example, of unlimited war tactics during the Cold War era included, not limited to,

- 1- **Espionage and Counterintelligence:** Both the U.S and the Soviet Union engaged in extensive espionage operations, seeking to gather intelligence on the other side's military capabilities, political strategies, and economic policies. This included the use of spies, wiretaps, and other surveillance methods to gain access to sensitive information.

During the Cold War era, there were several high-profile espionage cases that highlighted the intense rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. One of the most notorious was the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were accused of passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. The Rosenbergs were arrested in 1950 and convicted of espionage in 1951. In 1953, they were executed.²

Another famous case was that of Aldrich Ames, a CIA officer who was convicted of spying for the Soviet Union in 1994. Ames had been passing classified information to the Soviets since the mid-1980s, and his actions were responsible for the deaths of at least ten Soviet agents who were working for the United States.³

¹ Robert C. Richardson III, "Do We Need Unlimited Forces for Limited War?", Air and Space Forces Magazine,

1 March 1959, [Do We Need Unlimited Forces for Limited War? | Air & Space Forces Magazine \(airandspaceforces.com\)](https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/do-we-need-unlimited-forces-for-limited-war/)

² Melissa Benn, Ethel Rosenberg by Anne Sebba review – a notorious cold war tragedy, The Guardian, 24 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/3VCJ30b>, see also: <https://bit.ly/3pbJ27c>

³ Ian Shapira, "Rick is a goddamn Russian spy": Does the CIA have a new Aldrich Ames on its hands?", The Washington Post, 26 January, 2018, <https://bit.ly/41e4eqd>, see also: <https://bit.ly/3HKd7B7>

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was accused of establishing a massive network of spies and agents to gather intelligence and conduct sabotage operations against its enemies. The most famous example of Soviet espionage during the Cold War was the case of the Cambridge Five, a group of British agents who were recruited by the Soviet Union and provided it with classified information from the British government.¹

In addition to these cases, there were many others in which individuals were accused of spying on one side or the other. These included the cases of George Blake, a British intelligence officer who worked for the KGB, and Robert Hanssen, an FBI agent who spied for the Soviet Union and later Russia.² The use of counterintelligence operations was also extensive during the Cold War, with both sides employing a range of tactics to uncover and disrupt the other side's espionage activities.

Both, the U.S., and the Soviet Union were also accused of engaging in counterintelligence operations during the Cold War. This involved efforts to detect and thwart enemy espionage and sabotage activities. For example, the United States established the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) in the 1950s to disrupt and neutralize communist and other left-wing political groups.³

- 2- **Propaganda:** Both sides also engaged in propaganda efforts as a tool to shape public opinion, influence political outcomes and to promote their respective ideologies and gain support from the international community. This included the dissemination of biased news stories, the use of cultural events like art exhibitions and music festivals, and the production of films and other media designed to promote a particular political ideology.

¹ Gordon Corea, "Cambridge Spies: MI5 diaries revealed", Security Correspondent, BBC, 26 October 2012, <https://bit.ly/44pbZwq>. Also: Cambridge Five spy ring members 'hopeless drunks', 7 July 2014, <https://bit.ly/3NDaxRj> , Also: Lorraine Boissoneault, "The Student and the Spy: How One Man's Life Was Changed by the Cambridge Five", Smithsonian Magazine, January 10, 2017, <https://bit.ly/42bavVg>

² Simon Kuper, "The Happy Traitor: Spies, Lies and Exile in Russia: The Extraordinary Story of George Blake", Profile Books Publisher, 4 February 2021.

³ Brian Mullgardt, "Further Harassment, & Neutralization": The FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) in Illinois, *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, (1998) Vol. 113, No. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2020), University of Illinois Press, pp. 94-120

During the Cold War, for example, in the 1950s, the U.S. government established the United States Information Agency (USIA) to promote American culture and values around the world, including through radio broadcasts and the distribution of American films and literature.¹

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union established the Committee for State Security (KGB), which was responsible for disseminating pro-Soviet propaganda and conducting covert operations to influence foreign governments. The KGB also supported left-wing political movements and provided funding to communist parties in other countries. One notable example of propaganda in action was the space race, which saw both countries competing to make advances in space technology and use the successes to bolster their own political ideologies.²

Additionally, in the U.S during the 1950s, there was a widespread fear of communism, known as the "Red Scare." This fear was fueled by politicians and media outlets who portrayed communism as a threat to American values and democracy. During the Red Scare, many Hollywood actors, writers, and directors were accused of being communist sympathizers and were blacklisted by the entertainment industry known as "Hollywood Blacklist". This had a chilling effect on free speech and expression in Hollywood. Also, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin led a campaign in the 1950s to root out suspected communists in the U.S. government and other institutions. He accused many people of being communist sympathizers, often without evidence, and ruined their reputation, known as "McCarthyism"³.

On the other side, the Soviet Union used propaganda extensively during the Cold War, portraying communism as a superior form of government and capitalism as exploitative and oppressive. Soviet propaganda was often disseminated through state-run media outlets and cultural events.

¹ Tony Shaw and Denise J. Youngblood, "Cold War Sport, Film, and Propaganda", *Journal of Cold War Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter 2017), The MIT Press, pp. 160-192.

² Ibid

³ Gerald Sussman, "Propaganda and the Cold War", *SAGE Journals*, Journalism & Communication Monographs 2021, Vol. 23(1) PP. 70-75, <https://bit.ly/417y6om>.

Not only the land planet been used in the cold war era, but also the Space became a competition Race. During the 1960s, the U.S and Soviet Union engaged in a competition to be the first to explore space. Both sides used propaganda to promote their achievements and discredit their opponent. For example, the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik in 1957 was a major propaganda victory, as it demonstrated the superiority of Soviet technology.

- 3- **Cyberwarfare:** Although computer technology was not yet widespread during the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union recognized the potential for cyber-attacks to disrupt military and economic systems. They invested heavily in developing computer networks and hacking capabilities that could be used to launch attacks on the other side's infrastructure. However, there were some instances of electronic espionage and sabotage that can be considered early examples of cyberwarfare. One example is the “Stuxnet worm”, a computer virus discovered in 2010 that was used to sabotage Iran's nuclear program. It is widely believed to have been created by the U.S and Israel. Another early example is the Russian hacking of the U.S. Democratic National Committee in 2016, which was part of a larger effort to interfere in the U.S. presidential election.

While these examples did not occur during the Cold War itself, they demonstrate the potential for cyberwarfare to be used as a tool of espionage and sabotage in modern conflicts.¹ As in the Cold War, proxy wars will likely be fought in cyberspace. Russian groups either tied to or working directly for the Kremlin were behind significant attacks such as the SolarWinds and Colonial Pipeline hacks, for example. The White House’s Executive Order on Improving the "Nation’s Cybersecurity", which calls for a coordinated public/private cyber defense, may have been timed in direct response to SolarWinds, but it addresses a much bigger threat landscape, which the war in Ukraine has brought into focus. Just two days after Russia began its invasion, the FBI and CISA issued a “Shields Up” advisory to industrial companies, warning of potential cyberattacks originating in Russia.²

¹ Matt Georgy, "Why A Second Cold War Will Likely Be Fought In Cyberspace", **Forbes Technology Council**, 19 July 2022. <https://bit.ly/413rirO>

² Ibid.

Recently in March 2023, Russia supplies Iran with Cyber Weapons after providing drones and short-range missile for Ukraine battlefield under the long-term strategic cooperation agreement.¹ Russia is helping Iran gain advanced digital-surveillance capabilities as Tehran seeks deeper cooperation on cyberwarfare, they redefine their future ties.²

- 4- **Proxy Wars:** In addition to engaging in direct military confrontations, both sides also used proxy wars to achieve their goals. This involved supporting insurgent groups in other countries who were sympathetic to their cause, providing weapons, training, and other forms of support to help them fight against their enemies.

One of the most notable examples is the Vietnam War, where the United States backed the South Vietnamese government in their fight against communist forces supported by North Vietnam who were backed by the Soviet Union and China. On the other side, the Soviet Union's support for communist forces in Afghanistan during the 1980s, which drew in the US and other Western powers in support of the Afghan resistance that led to a long and bloody conflict. The Korean War, which began in 1950 and lasted until 1953, was also a proxy war, with the United States supporting South Korea and the Soviet Union supporting North Korea.

In more recent times, proxy wars have continued to be a feature of international conflicts. In the ongoing Syrian civil war, multiple foreign powers have backed different sides in the conflict, with Russia and Iran supporting the government of Bashar al-Assad, and the US, Turkey, and Gulf states supporting various rebel groups. In Yemen, a civil war has been raging since 2015, with the government backed by a Saudi-led coalition, and the Houthi rebel group backed by Iran. The conflict has been characterized by heavy use of airstrikes and other military operations, leading to widespread civilian casualties.

Proxy wars can be seen as a way for larger powers to engage in conflicts without risking direct military confrontation with each other. However, they often have devastating consequences for the countries and

¹ Dov, liber and others, "Russia supplies Iran with Cyber Weapons as Military Cooperation Grows," **The Wall Street Journal**, 27 March 2023, <https://bit.ly/419FNun>

² Maria, Cerdan, "Russia, Iran and a new long-term cooperation agreement," (30 March 2023), <https://bit.ly/3pd6Vv9>

people caught in the middle. For instance, the Cold War featured a series of proxy wars of the kinetic variety, whether in Vietnam, Cuba or Afghanistan.¹

Overall, the unlimited war concept during the Cold War era was characterized by a broad range of tactics used by both sides to achieve their strategic objectives beyond traditional military operations. In recent years, the term has been applied to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as both sides have employed a wide range of tactics beyond traditional military operations.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine have been met with economic sanctions from the international community, while Ukraine has sought to build up its military capabilities and resist Russia through diplomatic means to garner support from the international community, particularly the West - which actually supports it to confront Russia, deplete its capabilities- and has attempted to modernize its military capabilities from the European States and the U.S.

In addition to annexing Crimea, Russia has used cyber-attacks and propaganda to influence the conflict which has had a significant impact on the region, with tens of thousands of people killed and many more displaced. Despite multiple attempts at ceasefire agreements, the situation remains volatile, and unresolved and the use of unlimited tactics on both sides has made a peaceful resolution difficult to achieve and remains elusive.

Historical Background:

From the onset of Russian aggression in 2014, and particularly since February 24th, 2022, the trajectory of Ukrainian-Russian negotiations has been heavily influenced by the situation on the battlefield and the larger political circumstances.

Moscow switched gears in December 2021 and presented its demands directly to the United States and NATO under the pretext of two draught accords addressing “**security guarantees**” after the disorderly Western withdrawal from Afghanistan.²: firstly, NATO should not agree to admit new members and to refrain from any form of military activity in Ukraine and other states neighboring Russia. Which means that Russia adopts the realism

¹ Matt Georgy, **Op. Cit**

² Sabine Fischer, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, November 8, 2022, [Peace Talks Between Russia and Ukraine: Mission Impossible - Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik \(swp-berlin.org\)](https://www.wissensnetzwerk-wp.org/en/peace-talks-between-russia-and-ukraine-mission-impossible)

perspective about national security and national interests, as it rejects any western intervention by any ways to intervene in Ukraine's affairs. Dramatically, the tensions escalated in 2021 when Russia massed forces on the Ukrainian border and stepped up its aggressive and imperialist rhetoric. Secondly, the alliance was also to restrict its military activities to the states that were already members in May 1997. Thirdly, the United States was to withdraw its nuclear weapons from Europe as this action threatens Russian national security.

Historical Peace Talks, mediation efforts & Pre-Conflict between Russia & Ukraine:

Several efforts and a string of mediation were made to intercede the armed conflict that erupted in 2014, but unfortunately, none of them were effective in halting the escalation. Several international and regional parties work as mediators to negotiate the situation.

The OSCE-coordinated Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), which was responsible for concrete implementation and consultation about the situation in the conflict region, was also active until early 2022. It comprised representatives of Ukraine and Russia, with the de-facto rulers of the occupied regions in Donbas participating regularly in its meetings. It's maintained a Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine, whose principal task was to observe the conflict in the east. The Mission ended their mandate on 31 March 2022 after Russian invasion.

Strengthen their policies to address the challenges and opportunities of the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty education, and to increase productive capabilities, particularly giving the situation of energy resource deficiency in the region and the impact of climate change on key sectors of member states.

1- Minsk Agreement “Normandy Format”:

The Normandy Format emerged in June 2014, for seeking a political framework for a solution until shortly before the renewed Russian invasion in 2022. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, Vladi-mir Putin, French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. met in Minsk in September 2014 and February 2015 to negotiate a cease-fire in Donbas, without any talks about Crimea, which Russia ruled out after annexing the peninsula. Moreover,

The Normandy Format produced the Minsk Agreements, which set out terms for a cease-fire and outlined steps towards a

political resolution. It states that all participants including Russia recognized the occupied regions of Donbas as belonging to the territory of the Ukrainian state. They were to be granted certain autonomy rights and returned to Kyiv's control through a political process and elections. However, the parties have never agreed on elementary status questions or the sequence of political and security-related provisions until the invasion in February 2022. Throughout that period, the implementation of the Agreements remained obstructed due to both parties: Russia and Ukraine. Russian consistent denial of its role in the conflict and consider it internal affairs and sought by all means to force Kyiv into direct talks with the Russian-sponsored de-facto rulers in Donetsk and Luhansk.

2- Granting Citizenship in 2019:

In systematic way, the Krem-lin began to be naturalizing citizens in Donbas in 2019. some political analysts have seen the process as a crass violation of the spirit of the Minsk Agreements, and a path that laid out the groundwork for Moscow's recognition of the "independence" of Donetsk and Luhansk on 21 February 2022.

3- Moscow recognition of the "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk

All opportunities for Peace Talks shattered after the recognition in February 2022, From Western point of view, the recognition was a violation step for Minsk Agreement basis and eviscerated the SMM that stated the fundamental recognition of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, however, Russians had always excluded Crimea from any multi-lateral agreements.

4- Third Party Mediation (Belarus & Turkey)

As the three main approaches a mediator can take: evaluative, transformative, and facilitative mediation. Belarus and Turkey tried to gather the two parties of the conflict on negating table. Belarus under immense Russian's military pressure. The Ukrainian side agreed to send a delegation on February 28, Belarus received a delegation from Ukraine in Gomel, further meetings were held on March 3 and 7; subsequently the talks continued online. This mediation yielded to meeting between the two foreign ministers, Dmytro Kuleba and Sergey Lavrov, met in Ankara, Turkey on 10 March.

On March 29 the delegations reconvened under Turkish mediation, the Ukrainian side responds on the Russian demands by presenting a ten-point “Istanbul Communique” outlining conditions for a cease-fire, acceptance of the neutrality status of Ukraine adding that international security guarantees must be offered, proposed clarifying the status of Crimea within fifteen years, holding their respond about the remaining points of contention were to be resolved at a meeting of the two presidents. Surprising, “Istanbul Communique” did not encompass Ukrainian demand for Russian forces to withdraw to behind the line of contact as of 23 February 2022.

Thus, the “Turkish Manifesto” represented Ukraine's position and its response to the original Russian ultimatum. Political scholars analyze the Communique as a gesture of good will by the parties and could have formed the basis for a negotiated settlement. However, the insistence of Kyiv to exclude Crimea and the occupied regions in Donbas from any security guarantees are met by rejection from Russian side. Subsequently, Kyiv altered her demands by including both regions within security guarantees.

Italy was also a mediator to contact with Putin and Zelensky to find common ground. Prime Minister Mario Draghi received categorically rejected from the Kremlin on Kyiv demands, particularly talks on Crimea, and Putin stated that the time is not yet ripe for cease-fire or a direct meeting with Zelensky.

5- The collapse of cease-fire negotiations and the flames of war escalated.

The perish of any previous and certainly upcoming will be on the security guarantees and the Status of Crimea and Donbas. As Kyiv is trying to meet the conditions of the North Atlantic Treaty under Article 5 of the collective defense, by putting under the condition for being neutral state, to receive security agreement with a group of guarantor states - excluding Russia. On the other hand, Russia persists to be a security guarantor, and to receive a security guarantee from the United States and NATO to not intervene in Ukraine.

Moreover, the Crimea is also one of the critical issues and obstacle to settle the conflict, as Ukraine offered further status talks on Crimea, but refused to legitimize Moscow's recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk in any form. Moscow receives these rejections by ignorance. Thus, those differences on both sides' views prevented any settlement.

In conclusion, Russian aggression against Ukraine has a highly complicated international background that reflects structural changes in the world order. Thus, International isolation of Russia will continue to be unachievable since countries like China, India, and Turkey will continue to gain from their close ties to Moscow. However, every topic where there are shared interests should be the focus of German and European diplomacy. This is particularly true given the threat of nuclear escalation, which is likely to worry Beijing and New Delhi as well, and Russia's imperialist aspirations to seize Ukrainian land, which present challenges for Turkey as the greatest Black Sea littoral state. It is necessary to continue discussions with Moscow regarding the threat of nuclear escalation. However, doing so does not imply caving into Russian nuclear blackmail. Instead, the West stick to its guns and allegedly to deter Russia from a spiral of escalation.

CHAPTER TWO

Assessing the Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine on the MENA Region:

Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian war affected more than one regional region and provided many opportunities and challenges in all geographical regions, and in many political, economic, and strategic fields, which means that the war had unlimited effects "unlimited war".

Russia's role on the MENA region:

Russia has had a long-standing interest in the MENA region, dating back to the Soviet era. During the Cold War, Russia was a key supplier of arms to various countries in the region, including Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Sudan and Iraq. However, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's influence in the region declined significantly.

In recent years, Russia has sought to reassert its influence in the MENA region, particularly since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in 2011.

Here are some of the ways in which Russia has played a role in the MENA region before, during and after the war on 2022 on the geopolitical, Stratego-political and socioeconomic. This chapter is unpacking the fallout and assessing the influence of Russia's war in Ukraine on the MENA Region that has domino effect which extends the Far-reaching Consequences of Russia's Actions internationally, regionally from Crimea to the Levant on various disciplines From Crimea to the Levant.

Assessing the Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine on the MENA Region:

1- Impact of energy security:

The MENA region is an important energy supplier to the world, but it also depends on imports of energy from other regions. Russia is one of the major energy suppliers to the region, particularly to Turkey, which is a major transit country for Russian gas. The invasion of Ukraine raised concerns about the reliability of Russian gas supplies to the region. This led to efforts to diversify the sources of energy in the region, particularly by increasing the use of renewable energy sources.

The invasion also led to an increase in oil prices, which had a negative impact on the economies of the MENA region, particularly the oil-importing countries.

2- Impact on political and economic alliances:

The invasion of Ukraine in 2014 led to a shift in the balance of power in the region. Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine led to the imposition of sanctions by the West. This led Russia to look for new allies, particularly in the Middle East by expanding its economic ties with the MENA region, particularly in the energy sector.

Russia has signed several agreements with countries in the region, including Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, to invest in their energy sectors. Russia has also sought to expand its economic ties with the Gulf countries, particularly in the areas of finance and trade.

A) Before the Russo-Ukraine War:

In 2015, Russia formed a military alliance with Syria, Iran, and Iraq to fight against ISIS in Syria. The alliance was called the 4+1 coalition and it marked the beginning of Russia's increased involvement in the region.

In 2017, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt cut diplomatic and economic ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism and being too close to Iran. Russia saw this as an opportunity to increase its

influence in the region and reached out to Qatar, offering to sell them arms and invest in their energy sector.

In 2019, Russia and Iran signed a defense cooperation agreement that included joint military exercises and increased military cooperation.

In 2020, Russia and Turkey signed a ceasefire agreement to end the fighting in Libya, which had become a proxy war between Turkey and Russia. The agreement allowed both countries to expand their influence in the region.

B) After the Russo-Ukraine War:

Russia's support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, which is an ally of Iran, has led to a closer relationship between Russia and Iran. This has raised concerns among the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, which sees Iran as a major rival in the region. The Gulf countries have been supporting the opposition groups in Syria and have been critical of Russia's support for the regime.

Russia's support for the Houthi rebels in Yemen has also raised concerns among the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. The Gulf countries have been supporting the Yemeni government in its fight against the Houthi rebels.

The war of Ukraine also led to a closer relationship between Russia and Egypt. Egypt, which is a major military power in the region, has been seeking to diversify its sources of arms, and Russia has been a major supplier of arms to Egypt. Russia's growing relationship with Egypt has also led to an increase in arms sales to Egypt. This has raised concerns among the Gulf countries about the growing influence of Russia in the region. This has led to concerns among the Gulf countries about the growing influence of Russia in the region.

3- Impact on Arms Trade / Arms Sales

The invasion of Ukraine had a significant impact on the arms trade in the region. Russia, which is one of the major arms suppliers to the region, has been under pressure from the West to reduce its arms sales, this has led Russia to look for new markets, particularly in MENA region.

A) Before the Russo-Ukraine War:

In 2015, Russia lifted a ban on the sale of S-300 missile defense systems to Iran. The sale was seen as a sign of Russia's growing influence in the region and raised concerns among the Gulf countries.

In 2017, Russia signed an agreement with Egypt to sell them advanced fighter jets and other military equipment. The deal was worth \$3.5 billion and was the largest ever between the two countries.

In 2018, Russia signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia to sell them the S-400 missile defense system. The deal was worth \$2 billion and marked the first time that a Gulf country had purchased the system.

In 2020, Russia signed an agreement with the UAE to sell them the Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jet. The deal was worth \$2.5 billion and marked the first time that the UAE had purchased Russian military equipment.

B) After the Russo-Ukraine War:

In 2021, Russia signed a \$2 billion deal to supply Egypt with fighter jets, and it has also provided arms to Syria and Iran. These arms sales have been a key component of Russia's efforts to establish itself as a major player in the region.

Russia's support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria has led to an increase in arms sales to Syria. This has raised concerns among the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabi. The Gulf countries have been supporting the opposition groups in Syria and have been critical of Russia's support for the regime.

Russia's growing relationship with Egypt has also led to an increase in arms sales to Egypt. This has raised concerns among the Gulf countries about the growing influence of Russia in the region.

4- Impact on Security & Regional Conflicts:

The invasion of Ukraine had a significant impact on the security situation in the region. The annexation of Crimea and the support for separatists in eastern Ukraine has led to an increase in tensions between Russia and the West. This has led to an increase in military activity in the region. In other words, it led to increase the tensions between Russia and the West, which spilled over into the MENA region.

The Syrian conflict, which began in 2011, attracted fighters from around the world, including from the MENA region. Russia's support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria led to an increase in military activity in the region and raised concerns about the spread of terrorism and the impact on the security situation in the region.

In 2015, Russia began a military intervention in Syria, which included the deployment of troops and the use of air power. The intervention was seen as a direct challenge to the US-led coalition that was fighting against ISIS in Syria.

In 2019, Russia signed a security cooperation agreement with the UAE that included joint military exercises and intelligence sharing. The agreement was seen as a sign of Russia's growing influence in the region.

5- Impact on Diplomacy and Negotiations:

Russia has played an active role in diplomacy in the MENA region, particularly in the Syrian conflict. Russia has sought to broker peace talks between the Assad regime and the opposition, and it has also played a key role in negotiations for the de-escalation zones in Syria. Russia has also sought to expand its diplomatic ties with other countries in the region, including Egypt, Turkey, and Iran.

Russia plays a pivotal negotiator and mediator for many crises that involve conflicting factions and sects in the Middle East. In Lebanon and Gaza, Russia has gained traction as a mediator between opposing factions, underscoring its ability to engage with groups like Hizballah and Hamas that are off-limits to the West.

Challenges and Consequences:

1- Refugee Crisis:

The conflict in Syria, which began in 2011, had already caused a massive refugee crisis in the MENA region. The invasion of Ukraine in 2014 further exacerbated the crisis, with more people fleeing the conflict zones in Ukraine and seeking refuge in neighboring countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were more than 6 million registered Syrian refugees and 1.4 million registered Ukrainian refugees in the MENA region as of 2021.

2- Proxy Wars:

In more recent times, proxy wars have continued to be a feature of international conflicts. In the ongoing Syrian civil war, multiple foreign powers have backed different sides in the conflict, with Russia and Iran supporting the government of Bashar al-Assad, and the US, Turkey, and Gulf states supporting various rebel groups. Thus, Russia's intervention in Syria in 2015 led to the involvement of other regional powers in the conflict, turning it into a proxy war. Iran and its proxies, including Hezbollah, have provided support to the Assad regime, while Turkey and the Gulf countries have supported various opposition groups. The conflict has also become a battleground for global powers, with the US, Russia, and Europe all having a stake in the outcome.

3- Economic Ties between Russia and MENA region:

The economic ties between Russia and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region have a long history dating back to the Soviet era. However, the relations have evolved over the years, and both parties have sought to strengthen their economic ties in recent times.

The imposition of suffocating economic sanctions and embargoes against Russia by the West after the invasion of Ukraine in 2014 led Russia to seek new economic partners in the MENA region. Russia has signed several economic agreements with countries in the region, including Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. These agreements have led to increased trade and investment between Russia and the MENA region.

The range of various aspects of the economic cooperation between Russia and the MENA regions can be examined by including the drivers of the cooperation, the key areas of collaboration, and the challenges that both parties face.

The drivers of Cooperation of the economic ties between Russia and the MENA region are driven by several factors, including the need for economic diversification, geopolitical interests, and the pursuit of strategic partnerships. For Russia, the MENA region represents a significant market for its energy exports, with the region being a major consumer of Russian oil and gas. Additionally, Russia seeks to expand its presence in the region, with a view to countering Western influence and gaining strategic leverage.¹

On the other hand, MENA countries seek to diversify their economies by partnering with Russia, which is a major supplier of oil and gas. By collaborating with Russia, MENA countries prospect to reduce their dependence on Western powers, which have historically been their major trading partners. Moreover, the MENA region is a potential market for Russian goods and services, and hence a source of revenue for Russia.

Several key areas of collaboration between Russia and the MENA region include energy, trade, investment, and defense. The energy sector is the most significant area of cooperation, with Russia being a major supplier of oil and gas to the MENA region. Russia's state-owned gas company, Gazprom, has signed several agreements with MENA countries, including Iran, Egypt, and Algeria, for the supply of gas.

In addition to the energy sector, Russia and MENA countries have collaborated in trade and investment. Russia has signed trade agreements with several MENA countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt, to promote bilateral trade.

Furthermore, Russia has invested heavily in MENA countries, particularly in the real estate sector. For instance, the Russian Direct Investment Fund

¹ Wehery, Frederic, "The impact of flushes invasions of Ukraine in the Middle East and North Africa," Testimony: House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 19 May 2022, <https://bit.ly/3AVYQO8>

(RDIF) has partnered with the Saudi Arabian Public Investment Fund to invest in various sectors, including healthcare, technology, and agriculture.

Defense is another area of collaboration between Russia and the MENA region. Russia has sold arms to several MENA countries, including Egypt, Syria, and Algeria. Additionally, Russia has provided military support to the Syrian government in the ongoing civil war, further cementing its position in the region.

However, despite the numerous benefits of economic cooperation between Russia and the MENA region, both parties face several challenges. One of the main challenges is the geopolitical tensions in the region, particularly the conflict in Syria, which has strained Russia's relations with several MENA countries. Additionally, the imposition of economic sanctions by Western powers on Russia has made it difficult for Russia to access financial markets and invest in MENA countries.

Moreover, the MENA region is prone to political instability, which creates a risk for Russian businesses operating in the region. For instance, the ongoing conflict in Yemen has affected Russian businesses operating in the country, and the instability in Libya has led to the loss of Russian investments in the country.

In conclusion, the economic ties between Russia and the MENA region are multifaceted, with both parties seeking to benefit from each other's resources and expertise. Cooperation has been driven by the need for economic diversification, geopolitical interests, and the pursuit of strategic partnerships. The energy sector is the most significant area of cooperation, followed by trade, investment, and defense. However, cooperation faces several challenges, including geopolitical tensions, economic sanctions, and political instability.

4- Political Tensions:

Russia's increased involvement in the region has led to tensions with the West and its allies in the MENA region. In particular, the conflict in Syria has strained relations between Russia and the US, Europe, and the Gulf countries. Also, the assassination of Russian ambassador to Turkey Andrey Karlov in 2016 further heightened tensions between Russia and Turkey. Some examples of the sources of tension:

Syria: Russia's military intervention in Syria in support of the government of Bashar al-Assad has been a major source of tension with Western countries and their regional allies. Russian military intervention played a crucial role in 2015 during the Syrian civil war was decisive in rescuing the Al-Assad regime and securing air bases and ports for Russian forces. The West and its

allies have accused Russia of propping up a brutal regime and of committing war crimes. They have also criticized Russia for blocking international efforts to bring an end to the conflict.

Libya: Russia has been accused of supporting the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar who controls much of the country's east, which has been fighting the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). Moscow has provided Haftar with weapons, mercenaries, and diplomatic cover, and has sought to portray itself as a mediator in the Libyan conflict. At the same time, Russia has cultivated ties with other Libyan factions, including the Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli, to ensure that it has a seat at the table in any negotiations over the country's future.

Western countries and their allies have accused Russia of trying to undermine the UN-led peace process in Libya and of violating a UN arms embargo. Accordingly, from 2019 to 2020, the city of Libya was targeted by a Russian military attack involving hundreds of mercenaries from the Kremlin-affiliated "Wagner Group" and regular Russian military personnel. Their aim was to support Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar's attempt to overthrow the internationally recognized Libyan government. The Wagner forces, in collaboration with armed drones controlled by a U.S. security ally, the United Arab Emirates, indiscriminately bombed civilian neighborhoods, displaying little concern for human life. Despite the failure of the Russian-backed campaign, it caused the loss of thousands of lives and deepened political divisions in Libya, which have yet to be resolved. Additionally, it significantly curtailed Libya's sovereignty, as thousands of Wagner forces and hundreds of tons of advanced Russian military equipment were stationed at air bases and oil facilities across the country.

Ukraine: The Russo-Ukraine War itself has led to tension between Russia and Western countries, including the United States and European Union member states. Western countries have imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea and its support for separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Iranian nuclear program: Russia has also been involved in negotiations over the Iranian nuclear program, which have been a source of tension with the United States and other Western countries. The United States has accused Russia of supporting Iran's nuclear program and of violating sanctions imposed on Iran by the UN Security Council.

Overall, Russia's increased involvement in the MENA region has led to tension with the West and its allies, particularly over issues related to Syria, Libya, Ukraine, and Iran's nuclear program. These tensions have contributed

to a broader geopolitical rift between Russia and the West, which has implications for regional security and stability.

5- Military Presence and Defense Cooperation Agreements:

After the Russo-Ukraine War, Russia has sought to strengthen and deepen its defense cooperation relations with countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by establishing a military presence through signing defense cooperation agreements with MENA countries.

It signed with Egypt on November 19, 2014, a military cooperation agreement that included provisions for joint military exercises and the sale of Russian weapons to Egypt. This agreement was seen as a way for Egypt to diversify its sources of military equipment, as it had traditionally relied on the United States for this. In 2020, Russia and Egypt signed a new military agreement that provided for the use of each other's airspace and airfields. The agreement also includes provisions for the training of Egyptian pilots by Russian specialists and for joint military exercises.

In addition, Russia has established a military presence in Syria, with a naval base in Tartus and an airbase in Latakia, including the deployment of troops and the use of air power. Russia's military intervention in Syria has allowed it to establish itself as a key player in the conflict and to support its ally, the Assad regime. In September 2015, Russia began conducting airstrikes in Syria against opposition groups, which helped to turn the tide of the war in favor of the Syrian government. As Russia has had a long-standing military cooperation agreement with Syria, which was signed in 1980. However, after the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Russia increased its military support to the Syrian government, including providing weapons, military advisors, and air support. In addition to military aid, Russia has also provided humanitarian aid to Syrians affected by the war.

This has raised concerns about Russia's long-term intentions in the region and its potential to challenge US influence. As Russia has also signed several defense cooperation agreements with countries in the region, including Iran and the UAE. These agreements have been aimed at expanding Russia's military presence in the region and strengthening its diplomatic ties with these countries. There are several examples, for instance and not limited to- for Russia Defense Cooperation Agreements in the MENA and North Africa region.

In 2015, “Russia-Iran Defense Cooperation Agreement” that was signed in the context of the ongoing conflict in Syria, where Russia and Iran have supported the Assad regime, that included provisions for joint military exercises and the sale of Russian weapons to Iran. The agreement aimed to

enhance military and technical cooperation between the two countries and to strengthen their strategic partnership. Under the agreement Russia has allowed to expand its military presence in Iran, including the use of Iranian airbases for its military operations in Syria. It has also facilitated the transfer of advanced military technology and equipment from Russia to Iran. The agreement has strengthened the military ties between Russia and Iran and provided a counterbalance to US influence in the region. This has included the delivery of S-300 air defense systems and the sale of Su-30 fighter jets to Iran.¹ Also, enhance Iran's positions in negotiations regarding its nuclear program. Ultimately, the agreement has strengthened the military ties between Russia and Iran and has provided a counterbalance to US influence in the region. It has also raised concerns among US allies in the region, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia, who view Iran as a regional threat. The use of Iranian airbases by Russia has also caused tensions between Iran and some of its own hardline factions, who see the agreement as a violation of Iran's sovereignty.

In return, the agreement was seen as a way for Iran to modernize its military, as it had been under international sanctions that limited its ability to purchase weapons, and to enhance its regional power, and reinforce its role in Syrian's conflict as a main actor. Thus, in 2016, Russia used the Hamadan airbase in Iran to launch airstrikes against targets in Syria. This marked the first time that a foreign power had used an Iranian military base since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, that why the agreement illustrates the significance relations between the two States. The use of the airbase allowed Russia to conduct airstrikes against targets in Syria more efficiently, without having to rely solely on its own bases in Syria. Iran continues to have a close military relationship, with Russia providing Iran with advanced military hardware, including the S-400 missile defense system. In 2021, the two countries held joint naval exercises in the Persian Gulf.

- **UAE:**

- In 2019, Russia-UAE Defense Cooperation Agreement was signed during a visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to the UAE. It aimed to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries and to enhance their military and technical cooperation. This has allowed Russia to expand its military presence in the UAE and to deepen its economic ties with the country. It has also facilitated the transfer of advanced military technology and equipment from Russia to the UAE, as UAE has been seeking to diversify its defense partnerships, in part due to concerns about the reliability of US

¹ Russian, Iran Discuss Arms Deal, **Arms Control Association**, <https://bit.ly/3AVEOTK>

support in the region. The agreement has provided a counterbalance to US influence in the region and strengthened Russia's position as a key player in the Gulf.

- Under the agreement, Russia has been able to expand its military presence in the UAE, including the use of the port of Jebel Ali for its naval operations. The agreement has also facilitated the transfer of advanced military technology and equipment from Russia to the UAE. This has included the delivery of the S-400 air defense system and the sale of Su-35 fighter jets to the UAE. In 2021, Russia and the UAE conducted joint military exercises to demonstrate their military capabilities and to deepen their military ties, which involved the use of Russian military hardware, including Su-35 fighter jets and BM-30 Smerch rocket launchers.
- **Algeria:** In March 2016, Russia and Algeria signed a military cooperation agreement that included provisions for joint military exercises and the sale of Russian weapons to Algeria. This agreement was seen as a way for Algeria to modernize its military, as it had been facing security challenges from terrorist groups in the region. Russia have continued to deepen their military cooperation, by providing Algeria with advanced military equipment and technology. In 2020, the two countries signed an agreement to expand cooperation in the field of military education.
Based on European efforts to mend ties with MENA states and avoid negative impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Algeria is taking action to address a significant gas supply gap to Europe that emerged after the War.
- **Turkey:** Russia and Turkey have had a complicated relationship with tensions arising over issues such as the conflict in Syria and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, particularly after the downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkish forces in November 2015. However, the two countries have continued to cooperate in certain areas, such as the joint operation of the Turk Stream gas pipeline, and in August 2019, Russia and Turkey signed a military cooperation agreement that included provisions for joint military patrols in Syria and the sale of Russian weapons to Turkey.

Overall, the causes of these defense cooperation agreements vary from one to another, but some common factors include a desire by these countries to modernize their militaries, reduce their dependence on the United States for military equipment, and build closer ties with Russia.

Moreover, the defense cooperation agreements have provided a counterbalance to US influence in the region and have strengthened Russia's position as a key player in regional politics. It has also allowed the UAE to diversify its defense partnerships and reduce its dependence on the US. However, they have also raised concerns about the potential for destabilization and conflict in the region, particularly given the ongoing tensions between Iran and the US. However, the consequences of these agreements are also varied for some countries, such as Syria and Iran, Russia's military support has helped them to maintain their hold on power and defeat opposition groups. But for other countries, such as Egypt and Algeria, the agreements have provided them with access to advanced Russian weapons and technology that they may not have been able to acquire from other sources. Nevertheless, the agreements have also led to concerns about Russia's growing influence in the region, particularly given its involvement in the Syrian Civil War. The agreements have also strained Russia's relations with some Western countries, particularly the United States, which sees Russia's actions in the region as destabilizing.

Ultimately, the defense cooperation agreements between Russia and countries in the MENA region continue to shape the regional geopolitical landscape, with Russia seeking to deepen its influence in the region through these agreements. However, these agreements also pose challenges for regional stability, particularly given Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict and its tensions with other regional powers such as Turkey.

6- Energy Security:

The MENA region is a key supplier of oil and gas to the global market, and Russia has sought to increase its influence in the region through energy cooperation agreements. In 2017, Russia signed an agreement with Egypt to build a nuclear power plant, and it has also signed agreements with other countries in the region to invest in their energy sectors.

7- Sectarianism:

The conflict in Syria has taken on sectarian dimensions, with the Assad regime being predominantly Alawite and the opposition being largely Sunni. Iran, which is predominantly Shia, has provided support to the Assad regime,

while Sunni Gulf countries have supported the opposition. This has further fueled sectarian tensions in the region and created a sectarian fault line.

8- Terrorism:

The conflict in Syria has provided a breeding ground for extremist groups, including ISIS and al-Qaeda. These groups have carried out attacks in the MENA region and beyond, posing a threat to regional and global security. Russia's intervention in Syria has also raised concerns about the potential for retaliatory attacks by these groups.

9- Diplomatic Relations:

The conflict in Syria has strained diplomatic relations between Russia and several countries in the region. The downing of a Russian military jet by Turkey in 2015, for example, led to a diplomatic crisis between the two countries. Russia's support for the Assad regime has also led to tensions with countries that support the opposition, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

10- Regional Politics:

The Russo-Ukraine War has had significant geopolitical repercussions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Russia has sought to position itself as a counterweight to the US and its allies in the MENA region. Some of the key political developments in the region that have taken place since the start of the conflict such as Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabi, Egypt, Israel, and Qatar.

- a) ***Increased Russian influence:*** Russia has sought to strengthen its relationships with countries in the MENA region as a way to counterbalance Western influence in the region. This has included deepening military cooperation agreements with countries such as Syria, Iran, Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey, which has helped Russia to expand its influence in the region.
- b) ***Regional conflicts:***
 - The conflict in Syria has continued to have ripple effects throughout the region, with various countries supporting different sides in the conflict. This has contributed to tensions between regional powers, such as Turkey and Iran, and has exacerbated existing conflicts, such as the conflict in Yemen. Russia's support for the Assad regime in Syria has put it at odds with the US and its allies, who have supported the opposition.
 - Russia has also sought to expand its influence in other countries in the region, including Libya, where it has supported the Libyan National Army led by Khalifa Haftar.

- c) **Shifting alliances:** The conflict has also led to shifting alliances and partnerships in the region. For example, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been increasingly aligned with the United States and Israel, while countries such as Qatar and Turkey have taken a more independent stance.
- d) **Rise of non-state actors:** The conflict in Syria has also led to the rise of non-state actors such as ISIS and other extremist groups. These groups have carried out attacks in various countries in the region and have contributed to instability and insecurity.
- e) **Humanitarian crisis**
- **“refugees”:** The conflict in Syria has led to a humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. The crisis has also had spillover effects in neighboring countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan.
 - **Civilian Victims and death:** The situation along the line depicted as a calamity with regular cease-fire violations claiming victims among the civilian population. As 14,000 deaths caused by Russia’s war against Ukraine before 24 February 2022, consider-ably more than half fell after conclusion of the Minsk Agreements in February 2015. The crimes against the civilian population are huge outrage in Ukraine and internationally.
 - **Exchange of prisoner and death:** Up till now contacts between the parties were not broken off entirely, channel of communication remains open to this day for dis-cussing humanitarian matters, especially the exchange of prisoners and remains of the dead according to previous Minsk Agreements on September 5, 2014, signed by Ukraine, Russia, and the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Previously, before the recent war between Russia and Ukraine, Normandy Format Summit on December 9, 2019, had been signed between Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France that agreed to exchange prisoners before the end of the same year, as part of a package of measures aimed at ending the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. As per this agreement, both states exchanged deceased and imprisoned individuals such as, Ukraine and Russia exchanged prisoners in April 16, 2020: including Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov and 24 Ukrainian sailors who were detained by Russia in 2018. Recently, the warring countries have announced that more than 200 Russian and Ukrainian soldiers have returned home in a prisoner swap, Russia's Defense Ministry

said on Monday 16 of April 2023 that 106 Russian soldiers were released from Ukrainian custody as part of an agreement with Ukraine.

- f) **Maritime Zone, Ports, and Coastal water:** The maritime zones recognized under international law include internal waters, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), A State exercises almost complete sovereignty in its territorial sea, similar to that which it possesses over its land, internal waters, and vessels. These exercises of jurisdiction are derived from principles which are recognized as customary international law. The exercise of jurisdiction in each instance is also recognized under the Law of the Sea Convention (LOSC). The Black Sea is the body of water borders between Russia and Ukraine, it is located at the southeastern extremity of Europe. It is bordered and bounded by Ukraine to the north, Russia to the northeast, Georgia to the east, Turkey to the south, and Bulgaria and Romania to the west. The Black Sea is supplied by major rivers, principally the Danube, Dnieper, and Don. Consequently, while six countries have a coastline on the sea, its drainage basin includes parts of 24 countries in Europe. Russia has 4 sea ports , Vladivostok is the largest ports in Russian Federation. Also, Russia has four ports on the Baltic Sea- St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Primorsk, and Ust-Luga. Kaliningrad handles 2.7 million tons of freight annually. Ukraine also has Port of Odessa. The seaport of Odessa is the largest in Ukraine, situated on the Northwestern black sea coastline, at the southwestern end of the Odesskiy Gulf. So, the Black Sea is very significant for both states and others: as Ukraine is bordered by Belarus to the north, Russia to the east, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea to the south, Moldova and Romania to the southwest, and Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland to the west.

Ultimately, Russia did not lift its military blockade of the Ukrainian ports, nor was Ukraine willing to demine its coastal waters. Thus, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan mediated negotiations to open blocked Ukrainian Black Sea ports for shipping urgently needed Ukrainian grain, although the parties agreed is a highly complex and fragile mechanism to ensure that the vessels do not transport arms to Ukraine: Ukrainian pilots should navigate commercial freighters through mined coastal waters, while a Joint Coordination Centre in Istanbul, staffed by Turkish, United Nations, Ukrainian, and Russian personnel. Accordingly, Lloyd's of London

established the "Marine Cargo and War Facility" to insure high-risk operations. The UN also committed to ensuring transparent, unimpeded access of Russian food and fertilizers to global markets. Subsequently, on 22 July 2022 the so-called grain deal enabled the export of Ukrainian grain from the Ukrainian Black Sea ports of Odesa, Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi.

Obviously, the fragility of the agreement displayed as both parties refuse to sign a joint document reflects, instead each side signed its own agreement with the mediators.

g) **Nuclear Power Plants:** The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station (ZNPS) in southeastern Ukraine is the largest nuclear power plant in Europe and among the 10 largest in the world. The ZNPS has become the center of an ongoing nuclear safety crisis, this led the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to send inspectors. However, Russia initially blocked the delegation entering via Ukraine and insisting on the delegation entering via Russian territory. Later, the delegation eventually arrived via Kyiv in August 2022, thereby observing Ukraine's sovereignty over the occupied territories. However, Putin's speech declared on 30 September 2022 that Russia was no longer willing to negotiate the status the annexation of the occupied territories in eastern and southern Ukraine, which mean that Russia expanded its red line on Crimea to include the newly annexed territories too. That implies that the Russian sovereignty over the ZNPS as it became Russian territorial.

In summary, the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war on the MENA region have been far-reaching, including the exacerbation of the refugee crisis, the escalation of proxy wars, strained diplomatic relations, and increased sectarian tensions, the establishment of a Russian military presence, and increased economic and energy cooperation between Russia and the region and raised concerns about the potential for terrorism. Overall, the Russo-Ukraine War has had significant political and security implications for the MENA region, with various countries seeking to protect their interests and exert influence in a changing regional landscape. The conflict in Syria has been a key driver of these developments, exacerbating regional tensions and contributing to a humanitarian crisis that continues to have far-reaching consequences. The consequences of this complicated unresolved conflict that turn to war will likely have had significant implications for regional and global security and will likely continue to shape the geopolitical landscape of the MENA region for years to come.

Conclusion:

The Russian-Ukraine war in 2014, had a significant impact on the MENA region, as Russia has played an increasingly active role in the MENA region in recent years, seeking to reassert its influence and position itself as a key player in regional politics.

Russia's military intervention in Syria has allowed it to establish a military presence in the region and support its ally, the Assad regime. Russia has also sought to expand its economic ties with the region, as well as its diplomatic and military ties.

Accordingly, the Russo-Ukraine war led to a shift in the balance of power in the region and had a significant impact on energy security, political alliances, and arms trade. It also had an impact on the security situation in the region, specifically as the existence of the ongoing conflict in Syria and other regional tensions are likely to continue to shape Russia's role in the MENA region in the coming years.

CHAPTER THREE

International and Regional

Perspective, obstacles, and Potential Scenarios

Introduction:

In many respects, Russia's increased involvement in the Middle East showcases its renewed engagement in the region and lasting support for Arab political systems. This approach encompasses military intervention, arms sales, diplomatic mediation, pursuit of energy and infrastructure projects, and soft-power tactics such as propaganda and media.

Russia's Invasion has a ripple effect on the Middle East and North Africa. The Russia's war has spawned. a competition between the great powers “Great Power rivalry”, to assert their presence and relations with the countries of the Middle East for several reasons.

Russia’s Perspectives

Opportunities:

Russia is known for its negotiating capabilities as a mediator between warring and opposing factions in the MENA region, including Hezbollah and Hamas. Its significant military intervention in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza in 2015 reflected its balanced strategy in the region, which has paid dividends. Russia also supports Arab positions and visions on international issues such

as security, disarmament, human rights, and racism against Palestinians in international forums. Its ideological vision for the region shares a similar Arab ideological vision about regional order— an order that emphasizes pluralism.

Russia not only be an arms provider for Middle Eastern states and as a compelling alternative to the U.S. but also becomes involve military in Syria, Libya, cooperation with Egypt, Iran, and Gulf States is indeed part of its broader strategy of increasing its influence in MENA region. Moscow sees the MENA as a critical geopolitical arena where it can challenge the United States and other Western powers and advance its own interests as well as positioning itself as a major player in global affairs. Moscow has also been active in Syria, where it has provided military support to the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and in Egypt, where it has sold weapons and signed a strategic partnership agreement. Russia has also sought to deepen its ties with other countries in the region, including Turkey and Iran, and has played a role in mediating conflicts such as the one between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russia exploits the conditionality that the U.S. sometimes attaches to its arms sales, and has concluded various arms deliveries are faster, free from restrictions related to human rights, and unencumbered by concerns about domestic blowback.

To this end, Russia seeks to approach the countries of the region to win the support and to neutralize countries in the region and coordinate their positions on issues related to the Russian-Ukrainian war such as energy, gas, wheat, and other security-related matters, as well as political and food-related aspects.

Challenges.

Russia is encountering substantial challenges with regards to resupply, logistics, battlefield costs, and attrition due to the impact of Western sanctions and embargoes that have been imposed against it as a result of the Ukraine war, as well as existing U.S. penalties, such as the 2017 Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). All of this will have enormous and deleterious effects on Russia's ability to keep pace as the U.S and other States competitive power in the region.

Additionally, Russia's relatively modest economy, especially after its declined due to the war, may benefit from the Arab countries' sympathy and rapprochement. Since the region's natural resources and disturbances, particularly in the oil-producing countries in the Middle East and North Africa, could be used. These countries require various sustainable

development projects in various sectors, such as energy and gas, and profitable mineral extraction. They also need to develop their nuclear programs for peaceful uses.

Yet despite Russia has made significant and splashy progress in the region, its capacity to influence outcomes in the long term, rather than just securing immediate benefits and disrupting Western policies, is constrained by its limited set of tools for instance the meager economic clout and scrawny financial aids that pales in comparison to that of the United States, the European Union, and China. Thus, Russia tends to engage in situations where it perceives that local actors or states have the financial means to compensate for its aid or where there are opportunities to extract valuable natural resources, such as oil or minerals.

American Perspectives

Opportunities:

US security strategic allies Saudi Arabia and the UAE have collaborated with Russia in the Gulf by signing oil and arms agreements and aligning their foreign policies on several regional affairs, particularly in Libya. They have provided financial and military support to the Libyan militia leader Khalifa Haftar, who also received support from Russia. Despite their threats to shun America, these states ultimately recognize that Russia has neither the will nor the capacity to serve as their primary security patron.

In addition, as the Russian product and services could not be compared by the American ones, for the inferior quality, absence of sustained service and follow-up, and problems of integration and interoperability. The U.S can minimize restrictions imposed upon exporting and sale of weapons and technologies.

The U.S. strategy may involve enticing Arab states back into its sphere of influence by offering more American weaponry to compete with Russian offers. Alternatively, it could fulfill requests from Gulf Arab states for more formal defense assurances, show more flexibility in its policy towards regional issues, especially nuclear disarmament, human rights, and women's rights, and reduce its biased policy towards Israeli policies.

Accordingly, the U.S. have to re-shapes their strategy in MENA to gain Middle Eastern supports and fill the power vacuums after its missteps in the region, in Iraq, their positions from Arab States during 2011 by providing security guarantees or sustainable development to gain their alliance. Therefore, the U.S. should ply Arab security partners with greater military support simply to avoid their turn to Russia or China. Furthermore, the US ought to offer significant and effective defensive assistance not only to

counter missile strikes from Iran or its proxies in the Arab Gulf but also to defend against potential attacks from Israel.

Challenges:

One of the greatest challenges that the U.S. may face is the increasing presence and influence of China in the Middle East region to replace the declining Russian influence due to its economic resource shortages resulting from the sanctions imposed on Russia, especially the preexisting U.S. penalties: namely, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) of 2017.

Moreover, the increasing Russian defense partnership with Middle Eastern states, remarkably Iran that can mobilize other Arab Gulf States to reinforce deeply their military ties with Russia. Thus, the US warns of expanding Iran, Russia defense 'partnership'. Washington accuses Moscow of offering Tehran 'an unprecedented level of comprehensive strategic military cooperation agreements'.¹ Thus, these cooperation agreements could enable Iran to attain favorable terms over its oil and gas sectors in exchange for larger discounts for Russia.

Accordingly, the U.S. can either fill the Russian gap in the MENA or encourage European states as they considered U.S. allies.

Western Perspective:

Opportunities:

European States see Russian involvement as a deviated and dispersed in the MENA region rather than constituting a well-planned or principle-driven strategy. They have seen Russian engagement is largely opportunistic as seizes on instability and power vacuums in the region, missteps by the United States and their European partners.

European States can provide security guarantees or sustainable development a quest for energy and infrastructure projects to MENA region. Since lack of investment in infrastructure, conflict, political alliances, and sanctions are among the reasons the MENA region may not be able to come to Europe's rescue in energy, and gas.²

Challenges:

In 2021 as you see in Figure 1, the EU imported 83% of its natural gas, mainly from Russia, Saudi Arabia makes up around 7.8% of the EU's

¹ Nigar, Bayramli, "Iran, Russia to Finalize Draft on Strategic Cooperation Deal" ,31 March 2023, <https://bit.ly/3pcAgpu>

² [The Middle East won't rescue Europe if it turns off Russian oil | CNN Business](https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/15/europe/russia-oil/index.html)

crude oil import, followed by Iraq at 6.6%. The main MENA partners for natural gas are Algeria (7.2%) and Qatar (4.09%).¹ Consequently, the European states need a measured and judicious strategy to face the critical challenges of lack of energy, gas to end their dependence on Russian hydrocarbons and other areas in the past. Accordingly, they seek a partnership with MENA states in various fields in order to be suppliers and exporters in energy, oil, and gas to deny Moscow from humiliating western states by cutting off its energy and gas export.² Consequently, they mind ties with Algeria which considered the Africa’s biggest gas exporter with direct pipelines to Spain and Italy.³ European States like France needs the MENA states like

Algeria,
Tunisia to
increase gas
production.

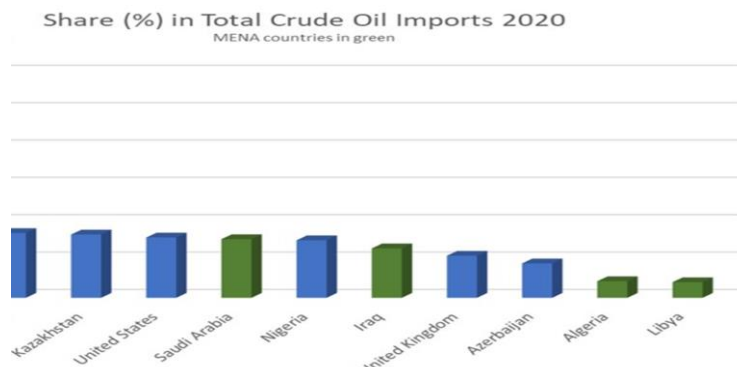


Figure 1: Source: Eurostat

¹ Vasileios Chronas, Christian Hanelt, “The EU and The Middle East: Exploring alternatives to Russian Energy”, Bertelsmann Stiftung, New Perspectives on Global European Dynamics, 15 March 2022, <https://bit.ly/42IMZEM> . Also see: Stefan Meister, EU- Russia Relations After the War in Ukraine, Carnegie Europe project European Policy toward Eastern Europe and Russia, 29 Nov 2022, <https://bit.ly/42qqC0L>

² John Pinder & Simon Usherwood, "The European Union: A Very Short Introduction" Oxford University Press, 2019, P 98.

³ [On Algeria visit, Macron says 'painful' shared past 'prevents us from looking to the future' \(france24.com\)](https://france24.com)

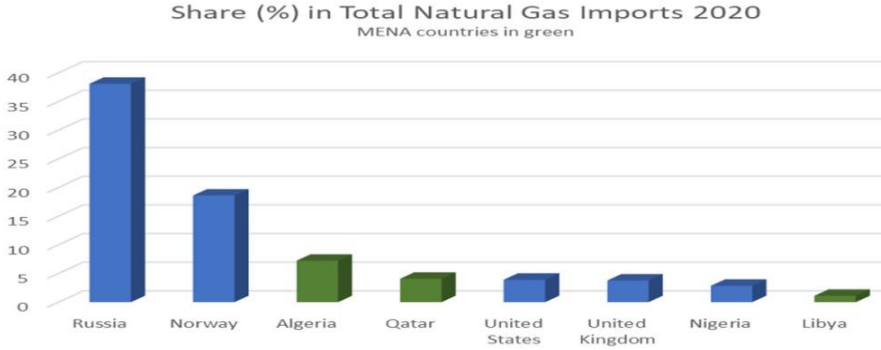


Figure 2: Source: Eurostat

For that, they use a durable and appropriate strategy with MENA countries. France has several visits to Algeria for seeking “Renewed partnership to fill a vast shortfall in gas supplies to Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.” On Thursday August 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron second visit to Algeria reiterated a commitment to building a better bilateral future and to establish trust and re-energize cooperation, announcing a joint committee to study the colonial period.¹

Middle Eastern Perspective:

Opportunities:

Indeed, Russian relations with Arab state based on resource-dependency, in particular Gulf states, illustrates an important and oft-overlooked facet, which is the role of those Arab States can play in changing the nature international and regional powers and system. Many of these states, especially those flush with cash, exert far more agency and discretion in determining the depth and breadth of Russian influence in the region than is often recognized. As well as margining or reducing the U. S's role in the region and the strategic support to Israel. In fact, many of them, including traditional security allies of the United States, have become skilled at leveraging Russian military assistance to influence American policies towards them. This is often used to negotiate favorable and leniency terms, such as lucrative arms agreements, and to exert pressure on the US regarding domestic governance issues.

Arab leaders can capitalize on the West's concerns about Russia's growing presence in the Middle East and North Africa by supporting their

¹ Ibid

policies and leveraging this to maintain long-term American support. They can also express their discontent with the US-imposed conditions on arms sales and its perceived bias towards Israel's policies towards Palestine, their harsh position to transfer nuclear technology for peaceful uses to support Arab States.

Russian challenges present opportunities for Arab and North African countries, where Russia's economic capabilities is restricted and limited compared to the negotiations of the United States and the West, plus the imposed sanctions. Therefore, Russia's influence in the region is hampered and hindered by its relatively weak economy. It is possible for the countries of the region, especially oil-producing countries, to benefit from their financial and economic resources to take advantage of Russian technological advancements and advantages in extracting natural resources such as oil and precious metals. Additionally, they can benefit from them in several areas such as clean energy such as nuclear energy and other fields that characterize Russia.

Challenges

Arab countries face core challenge by reapproaching Russia's policies and shun the U.S. as a primary security patron for various factors, due the lack of will and capacity of Russia to substitute the U.S. role, particularly economically.¹ Therefore, Russia will not replace but rather add to the security role played by the U.S. However, Arab states can either do mutual collaboration with Russia to substitute its economic laciness or utilizing from Russian rapprochement in visons particularly limiting American influence in the region and diversifying the source of armament. Acquiring Russian support in some security issues related to the region, which the United States' stances towards issues such as disarmament and implementing Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is characterized by stagnation, such as the Middle East Resolution to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

China's Perspectives:

The relations between China-Taiwan are tense and considers as pre-war conflict. Since the democratization of Taiwan, the question regarding the political and legal status of Taiwan has shifted focus to the choice between political unification with mainland People Republic of China (PRC) or de jure Taiwanese independence. Taiwan has been governed independently of China since 1949, but Beijing views the island as part of its territory. · Cross-strait tensions have escalated since the election of Taiwanese President Tsai

¹ Frederic, Wehrey, **Op.Cit.**

Ing-wen in 2016. Tsai has refused to accept a formula that her predecessor, Ma Ying-jeou, endorsed to allow for increased cross-strait ties. Meanwhile, Beijing has taken increasingly defensive security aggressive actions, including flying fighter jets near the island.

The PRC remains hostile to any formal declaration of independence and maintains its claim over Taiwan. Thus, differences over Taiwan's status have fueled rising tensions between the island and the mainland.

China rejects Taiwan's participation as a member in UN agencies and other international organizations that limit membership to states. Taipei regularly protests its exclusion; the United States also pushes for Taiwan's meaningful participation in such organizations. However, it does hold member status in more than forty organizations, most of them regional, such as the Asian Development Bank and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, as well as in the World Trade Organization. It holds observer or other status on several other bodies. does, however, hold member status in more than forty organizations, most of them regional, such as the Asian Development Bank and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, as well as in the World Trade Organization. It holds observer or other status on several other bodies. The U.S. administrations approached Taiwan by arms sales trade.

The eruption of Russo-Ukraine war reignited the strategic debate about China and Taiwan. Some scholars are seen Moscow's moves could embolden Beijing to similarly invade Taiwan, and others saying that Beijing could become more cautious after witnessing Russia's challenges.

Opportunities:

Russia's economic and military shortcomings due to the War create opportunities for China to expand its presence in MENA markets for arms, energy, food, drones, missiles, armor, and ships and other sectors.

China is taking note of both the pros and cons lessons learned from the Russian war. Russia's actions won't influence China's willingness to use force if Taiwan be used as Western means to threat Chinese national security and survival, but that Chinese leaders will examine Russia's failures and adapt their operational plans to avoid making similar mistakes.

In a 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense reported that China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), is "likely preparing for a contingency to unify Taiwan with the PRC by force, while simultaneously deterring, delaying, or denying any third-party intervention, such as the United States." In addition, Taiwan likely doesn't have the capabilities to defend against a Chinese attack without external support, analysts say. Even

though Tsai and the DPP have prioritized increasing defense spending, with a record budget of over \$19 billion for 2023, China's defense spending is still estimated to be around twelve times Taiwan's.¹

In addition, although Russia's military intervention in Ukraine has presented China with a delicate predicament, however, it gives Beijing diverse opportunities to enhance the relations with all Parties.² While Beijing does not want to sour its relationship with Moscow, it also aims to maintain its ties with Western countries, including the United States and Europe. As a result, China has been hesitant to take a clear stance on the issue, with its foreign minister calling for peace but avoiding condemnation of Russia or demanding the withdrawal of its troops.

Moreover, China has notably refrained from voting on any UN Security Council resolutions pertaining to Russia's invasion. Chinese President Xi Jinping is believed to have urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to delay any military action until after the Olympics.

Challenges:

Russia's invasion poses other difficulties for China both in terms of running counter to Beijing's long espoused principles in foreign affairs and its adverse impact on China's national interests in Ukraine. Russia's recent actions contradict the fundamental foreign policy principles of China, which include non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations and upholding territorial integrity. And in terms of economics and trade,

Additionally, China has sizable significant economic investments in Ukraine, and a significant customer of Ukraine's armaments industry. In 2020, the two countries signed a cooperation agreement as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), strengthening their economic ties and signaling Ukraine's importance as a partner in China's foreign policy and economic initiatives.³

Another challenge to China is the Taiwan critical situation. In 2022, Taiwan was named the world's tenth-most-democratic country, outranking its Asian neighbors such as Japan (sixteenth), and South Korea (twenty-fourth),

¹ Gabriel Dominguez, "Is Taiwan the next Ukraine? It's more complicated", the Independent voice in Asia, Asia Pacific: Analysis , 19 Feb 2023, <https://bit.ly/3VyNBVf>

² Elizabeth Wishnick, "China's Belt and Road Loses a Notch and Gains a Bump" , 9 May 2022, In Depth: A Blog by Log By CNA Experts On Important Issues Facing the Nation and the World. <https://bit.ly/3LBnAQs>

³ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on February 24, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3NIUIIF>

and even the United States (thirtieth). This has raised concerns among U.S. analysts that any potential Chinese attack on Taiwan could draw the United States into a war with China.¹ Moreover, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine adds to the potential risk of a third world war. Although Taiwan operates as a de facto separate self-governing entity, China considers it as a province or special administrative region under the one country, two systems framework, similar to Hong Kong and Macau.²

The fact that Ukraine is not a member of NATO played a decisive role in Putin's decision to invade Ukraine in 2014, as he knew that his military forces would not have to face any other foreign military in the region. However, the Biden administration has taken steps to reinforce NATO allies in Eastern Europe and support Ukraine militarily but has made it clear that the US will not send military forces to help defend Ukraine.

In contrast, the US-Taiwan relationship has strengthened in recent years, with the US sending an unofficial delegation to Taiwan in February 2021 as a sign of commitment to support Taiwan against Chinese aggression.³ Although there is no formal military alliance between the United States and Taiwan, successive US administrations have publicly committed to support Taiwan and regularly sold arms to Taiwan's military.⁴ The US military is widely considered to be the world's most capable and would be expected to intervene if China invaded Taiwan, but there is no explicit commitment in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to come to Taiwan's defense in the event of an attack.⁵

¹ Pavel K. Baev, "Taiwan is feeling the pressure from Russian and Chinese autocracy", Brookings, 16 March 2023, <https://bit.ly/42ua9sp>

² Richard C. Bush, A One-China Policy Primer, The Brookings Institution's , Center of East Asia Policy Studies, explains the United States' One-China policy , March 2017, <https://bit.ly/41c6XjY>

³ Robert D. Blackwill and Philip Zelikow , "The United States, China, and Taiwan: A Strategy to Prevent War", U.S. Foreign Policy Program, Council on Foreign Relations, Feb 2021. <https://bit.ly/428fypr> (In this Council Special Report, CFR's Robert D. Blackwill and University of Virginia's Philip Zelikow examine how the United States could change its strategy to prevent war over Taiwan).

⁴ CFR's Richard Haass and David Sacks, "American Support for Taiwan Must Be Unambiguous: To Keep the Peace, Make Clear to China That Force Won't Stand", argue in Foreign Affairs that the United States should end its policy of strategic ambiguity toward Taiwan. Foreign Affairs Journal, 2 Sep 2020, <https://bit.ly/44w4ILs>

⁵ Andrew Scobell, and Lucy Stevenson Yang, "China is not Russia. Taiwan is not Ukraine," 4th March, 2022, bit.ly/3B1ccs5.

At last, we can say that Taiwan and Ukraine are different countries with dissimilar geopolitical circumstances. Under Putin's leadership, Russia has deployed its armed forces to various countries such as Georgia, Syria, Ukraine, and most recently Kazakhstan, while also conducting major military interventions against other states, such as Syria. In contrast, China has not engaged in large-scale interventions or invasions of other countries since its invasion of Vietnam in 1979. Instead, China's post-Cold War military deployments have mainly focused on UN peacekeeping missions. While Russia has established more than 20 military installations beyond its borders, China currently only has one official military base in Djibouti, established in 2017, and a few other undisclosed facilities.

Potential Scenarios

Up till now, President Putin proclaimed his “willing to talk” but under conditions that preserve Russian national Security. His demands for ceasefire, submit on negotiating table can be classified into parts for Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk, and Ukraine. Regarding Putin’s demands are: to recognize Crimea as Russian, to confess the people’s republics of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent and to “de-Nazify” and “demilitarize”, Ukraine must disarm and relinquish its weapons, abandon any intention to join NATO, renounce the western subsidies and interventions, accept a status of permanent neutrality.

From the Western point of views, these conditions for ending the war were tantamount to total capitulation and dissolution of the Ukrainian state. In other words, the condition was to undergo regime change to Moscow’s liking and not to be allied with the west and the U.S.

Kyiv turned these Russian conditions down and made immediate direct talks conditional on a cease-fire. However, Kiev is seeking support from the US and the West to confront Russia, which exacerbates the situation and fuels the scope of the war.

A) Peace Talk:

The war which starts in February 2022 has been escalated when President Vladimir Putin intensified the conflict in September 2022, and repeated in March 2023 by declaring a partial mobilization and restating his threat warning for potential deployment of nuclear weapons. For that, scholars and peacemakers call the opportunity for start negotiation and peace talk scenarios “Mission Impossible”, particularly after the act of annexing the

Ukrainian regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Cherson was officially declared.¹

In addition, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, signed a decree reject any direct talk or direct communication. On 17 May Ukraine and Russia officially withdrew from the cease-fire talks.

B) Internationalize Inter-state War turned to unlimited scope war:

From the Western perspectives, Russia has been accused of violating international law and the UN Charter, Chapter II, in light of images from Bucha, Irpin, the battle for Mariupol which international efforts failed to establish humanitarian corridors for the civilian population and Ukrainian soldiers in the besieged Azov steel, and elsewhere. The West has attempted to accuse Russia of committing war crimes and genocide, although these allegations have not been proven. This has turned the war from a conflict between two neighboring states to an implicit war between the West and the US on one side, and Russia and its allies on the other.

During the same time frame, Ukraine received its first major arms deliveries from Western countries. At the Ramstein Conference Air Base, Germany – which has been home of NATO Air Power headquarters since 1974- held on April 26th, 2022, Western allies and other nations reached an agreement to provide systematic military support to Kyiv and convince their conviction that they could be repelled Russia militarily.

This shift in the Western stance represented a response to their hostility to Russian political system and punish any states or individual, support explicitly or implicitly the Russian regime. Accordingly, the European and American provide endless ad unprecedented support to Ukraine against Russia politically, economically, and militarily. Thus, these that closing any route for peace and negotiation as it proven obviously the threat to Russia from Ukraine. In return, Putin has threatened to respond to any further attacks on Russian territory with reprisals up to and including nuclear weapons.

Ultimately, diplomatic resolution is extremely unlikely for the foreseeable future. Although, the political and military context must be taken into account in any evaluation of entering peace negotiations, but it is clear that Kiev is seeking American Western support to continue confronting Russia. Thus, Russia cannot be solely blamed for the failure or obstruction of the peace talks. Thus, Russia repeatedly accused Ukraine of cutting off the talks or deviating from the essence of the Istanbul statement and cutoff any peaceful resolution.

¹ Sabine Fischer, “Peace Talks between Russia and Ukraine: Mission Impossible,” German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 08 November 2022. ([bit.ly/3n9XFXS](https://www.giias.de/en/peace-talks-between-russia-and-ukraine-mission-impossible))

Recently, the Pre-Trial Chamber International Criminal Court in 17th March 2023 issued arrested warrants against Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the office of the Russian’s President, Maria Alekseyevna in the context of situation in Ukraine.¹

Hence, there is a growing belief among researchers that the likelihood of a third world war (WWIII) is increasing, especially after the ratification of Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO on April 4th, 2023. With Finland becoming the 31st member of NATO and the NATO PA, the organization is now monitoring and encouraging a larger portion of the world's military and geopolitical landscape.

Additionally, the top concern among analysts due to the rise tension between China and Taiwan. China’s growing military capabilities and assertiveness, as well as the declining in cross-strait relations between her and Taiwan, such as China's increasing naval presence in the South China Sea, its militarization of artificial islands, and its disregard for international maritime law, could spark a conflict that turn to be a war like Russia-Ukraine war. This concern has been exacerbated by recent events, as China repeatedly asserting its claims over the island and Taiwan increasing its defense capabilities by the assistance of the West and the U.S. Such a conflict has the potential to lead to the confrontation between the U.S. and its allies from one side and from the other side China, Russia and their allies. Analysts could not predict the exact timeline for such a conflict in the near future but ensuring that this conflict can wide the scope of limited war to be unlimited war or Third World War (WWIII) as long as negotiations on the conflict are deadlocked.

Epilogue

These convergences underscore that Arab regimes' warming to Russia is not simply a matter of hedging against the perceived U.S. "retreat" from the Middle East but rather because they share with Russia a similar ideological vision about changing both the international system - a system that longstanding classified as unipolar system dominated by the U.S., and enshrines autocracy in the form of double standards international treaties, and discriminatory international organizations, as well as the regional order— an order that preserves the status quo by Israel's security superiority and not pluralism.

¹ [Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova | International Criminal Court \(icc-cpi.int\)](#) .

Regarding the international balances in the MENA regions, despite the lack of will and capacity of Russia to substitute the U.S. role in the Middle East to serve as their primary security patron for various factors, particularly economically. Russia will supplement, rather than supplant, the U.S. security role.

Upon first glance of Russian war, it appears that Russia is embracing the ideas of realistic thought through both its offensive and defensive tactics, as well as through hegemony theory or what we entitled of "restoring hegemony," by demanding nothing less than the division of Europe into Russian and American spheres of influence. Its strategy aims to defend its security and national interests, while also protecting its survival from Western-American interference in Ukrainian affairs and their efforts to bring Ukraine into NATO, as from Russia's perspective the resolution of the Ukraine question should be resolved by Ukrainians.

Hence, the Russian diplomatic offensive was logically directed above all towards Washington, and the European NATO allies. Various contained proposals for consultation mechanisms, confidence-building, and arms control to address the maximal strategic demands for involved parties. Despite intense diplomacy between the Western capitals and Moscow in January and February 2022 the Western side as well as Putin was not prepared to negotiate on individual aspects. The United States responded positively to some of the Russian proposals, but Moscow insisted on the whole package as it related its national security and survival, both parties have stayed its course to rupture any potential peace rapprochement.

We liken the Russian-Ukrainian war to the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 due to the obvious similarities. Like US President Kennedy, who saw the deployment of Russian missiles in Cuba as a direct threat to US territory and national security, the West - led by the United States - is attempting to integrate Ukraine into NATO and station Western missiles on Ukrainian territory, which Russia perceives it as a threat to its national security and survival. It was expected that the Cuban missile crisis would end with an unlimited-range nuclear war between the two powers, had it not been for the direct talks between the US and Russian presidents at that time.

Likewise, in the Ukrainian case, the risk of a catastrophic conflict can be mitigated through diplomatic efforts and direct communication between the parties involved with accepting Russian demands that reflect security threats to its territorial. The response of Western countries, including the United States, to Russia's demands for increased security measures in the region has been varied. While some have acknowledged the legitimacy of these demands, others have expressed concern about the implications for

regional stability. Specifically, Russia has called for limitations on NATO expansion and increased control over the Black Sea region.

In the context of these demands, Ukraine's bid for NATO membership has been a contentious issue. While Ukraine has sought entry into the alliance for several years, some Western countries have expressed reservations about the potential consequences of such a move. These concerns include the risk of further provoking Russia - which happened in 2022- as well as uncertainty about Ukraine's ability to meet the necessary criteria for NATO membership.

Eventually, the rejection of Ukraine's entry into NATO has been driven by a combination of these factors, most importantly from the political and security level as well as broader geopolitical considerations."

Russia-Ukraine and China-Thailand share similarities in terms of their experiences with Western powers who view their actions as threats to international stability and their concerns about national security. Russia and China have been accused by the West of violating human rights and undermining democratic values, leading to tensions and concerns about Western intervention. In response, both countries have strengthened their relationships with other nations and increased their military capabilities to safeguard their sovereignty. Similarly, Ukraine and Thailand have faced political instability and conflicts, and have pursued balanced relationships with the West to protect their national interests. However, Ukraine has been used by the West to counter Russia's expansionist policies, threatening Russian security and hindering its attempts to restore its position as a great power.

Ultimately, the risk of a third world war is increasing due to potential conflicts involving China and Taiwan, and indirect Western intervention in Taiwan that make the situation got worse by having the west reinforce their intervention and support to Taiwan. The deteriorating relations between China and Taiwan, combined with China's growing military capabilities and assertiveness, have raised concerns about the potential for conflict. If the US declares support for Taiwan, it could threaten China's national security and survival, possibly leading to a US-China confrontation. Similarly, if Russia is backed by China in its current conflict and the US and its allies intervene, it could escalate into a larger-scale global conflict.

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