

THE GEOPOLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Avdulj-Selam Selami

Abstract: *Three years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the situation on the ground is not at all favorable for Ukraine. Russia controls 20% of Ukrainian territory, and President Trump's attempts to calm the warring parties are still very weak. Regardless of the epilogue of the meeting in Istanbul (15.05.2025), the central question: "What will be the geopolitical and geo-economic consequences of the war in Ukraine? Russian military spending now exceeds 6% of GDP, and the country circumvents Western sanctions through Turkey, China and India. But Russia is not the biggest victim of this conflict, although every day Russia spends \$ 320 million and the number of deaths on both sides exceeds 1 million victims. The first victim is of course Ukraine: 45% of its GDP was destroyed, 5 million Ukrainians emigrated, many young lives were lost, rapes and other unforeseen consequences of the horrors of war. The purpose of this analysis is to investigate what the consequences of this military conflict will be and to confirm that possible changes in the international order are in the offing in the direction of the development of multilateralism, de-globalization and a process of regional globalization. These are the main hypotheses of the paper.*

Keywords: *Ukraine-Russia War; Geopolitics; European Union; De-globalization; New International Order*

INTRODUCTION

The biggest geopolitical trends in 2025 are likely to disrupt many markets, but they will also make Europe aware that in the future it will have to take care of its own security itself. Multilateralism has fallen into a major crisis. The rise of populism and nationalism has contributed to the weakening of multilateralism. These trends have accelerated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially after the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The era of happy, inevitable globalization has thus ended. Temporarily? History is unwritten. In the meantime, trade liberalization has been replaced by its compartmentalization. The reason? Geopolitical dynamics that take precedence over economic considerations in trade decisions and strategies. Added to this increased geopolitical instability is the uncertain medium-term perspective: "What will the world be like in five years?" However, while the long-term perspective is uncertain, the short-term, especially in 2025/26, is somewhat more certain. In the coming period, the geostrategic situation will be influenced by two main factors. The first is what we call "stabilized instability." Recent trends in geopolitics and the way governments intervene in the economic sphere in Europe are likely to continue. But unless an unprecedented shock occurs – the expansion of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict to other nations, for example – this instability is unlikely to increase. The war in Ukraine, the official positions of the United States under Trump, the European Union, and China, as well as the activities of major international political and economic powers will continue to shape the global situation. The second

factor is the search for compromise in a dynamic international community. The current geostrategic situation presents a series of acute challenges for governments. In the absence of easily implementable solutions, policymakers will have to compromise on all the pressing issues of today: energy security, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals, inflation, the supply of basic resources, food insecurity... These geostrategic issues are not entirely new in 2025. Rather, they represent a continuation and intensification of some of the political risk trends that have shaped the world since 2022. The war in Ukraine was an unprecedented geopolitical shock that erupted after the end of the Cold War. In 2025, uncertainty about the war and its consequences will remain very high, with significant regional, global political and economic impacts. Russian President Vladimir Putin is unlikely to end the conflict in Ukraine until he declares some kind of victory. (Vlierden Van, G. 2025) At the same time, the Ukrainian army continues to defend its territory, but since Donald Trump came to the White House, Kiev's illusions have gradually disappeared. The rare earth mining agreements between Ukraine and the United States have revived Ukrainian hopes. This agreement, covering minerals, gas, and oil, provides for the creation of an investment fund for Ukrainian reconstruction, financed by revenues from these resources. The United States and Ukraine will share profits from mining projects, with an emphasis on using these funds for the country's reconstruction. (Wieringen van, K. 2025) I believe that for Trump's "good trade deal" to have any impact, a peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia is necessary. The Istanbul talks did not live up to Trump's hopes, and Putin's procrastination has disappointed both the EU and President Zelensky. It is unlikely that Putin, under pressure from the EU or Russian public opinion, will voluntarily withdraw from the war or from his leadership position. After all, any regime change would likely be explosive, and could even increase the risk of escalation if the hardliners prevail. The risk of NATO being drawn into the conflict could increase if Vladimir Putin finds himself under intense pressure to escalate the conflict. But, after all, is this the end of globalization? Are we witnessing a change in the old world order since World War II? Perhaps we are facing a process of de-globalization or, more precisely, regional re-globalization? Are we facing the era of multilateralism or unilateralism?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To realize the hypotheses about the possible change in the international order inherited after the Second World War and the end of the Cold War, as well as the process of de-globalization, the sociological and historical method, comparative analysis, as well as the methods of induction, deduction and content analysis will be used.

RUSSIAN CONCEPTION-UKRAINE A STATE WITH LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY

Vladimir Putin's greatest historical idol is the Russian Tsar Peter the Great, who ruled and fought for the "Russian lands" in the 16th century. "Putin interpret-

ed his policy of conquest when Peter the Great seized the territories of Sweden as the natural right of the then Tsar: he was simply returning what belonged to Russia,” Vladimir Putin explained to students on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of Peter the Great’s birth in 2022. Accordingly, Putin, as the president of a powerful Russia, was merely imitating the expansionism of Peter the Great. “It is precisely upon us that the historical obligation has fallen to fulfill our destiny” and return the territories that belong to us. In essence, this type of geopolitical expansionism is not a great novelty in Russian political history. This was also the case during the Cold War, when J. V. Stalin dreamed of reaching the Adriatic Sea through the annexation of Yugoslavia after the condemnation of the Informburo in 1948, that is, after the intervention in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. The understanding of sovereignty within the framework of the Russian concept is based on the philosophy of the Peace of Westphalia. The Russian strategy for sovereignty is based on arguments for the military, political, economic and cultural independence of a particular state in order to obtain the imperative of a sovereign state. According to such an interpretation, none of the post-Soviet states possesses full sovereignty. This list includes Ukraine and the Baltic states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, and even Finland and Norway. Behind such ideas that persist in the post-Gorbachev era, that is, the Yeltsin era, the essence of sovereignty stems from the concept of spheres of influence between the great powers. French diplomacy called such diplomacy the “condominium of the superpowers”. Just as during the Cold War, when the great powers seemed to be playing a game of chess with numerous unpleasant surprises, through coups and military coups in the Third World, every action of the Americans was met with a rematch by the Soviets and vice versa. Each of the superpowers was burdened with expanding the sphere of influence of its great rival. Every advance of one power meant a loss for the other. It is the same today. Every new membership of the former satellites of the USSR was perceived as an expansion of the sphere of influence of the United States. However, let’s be honest, when the then USSR accepted the unification of East and West Germany, the administration of George Bush Sr. promised Yeltsin that he would not be allowed to expand NATO even a millimeter towards the borders of Russia. This agreement was not respected by Bill Clinton, who made possible the first expansions of the Alliance with the membership of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Thus, the strategic balance with the United States of America was disturbed. Russia felt defeated for the second time after Gorbachev’s reforms and the collapse of the USSR. The second aspect of Russian geopolitics was the continuous criticism of American unilateralism. The United States unilaterally intervened in several strategic places without informing the UN Security Council or seeking support from other members of the UN Security Council. Interventions took place in Somalia, the F. R. Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria... which further strengthened US unilateralism and criticism of Washington by China and Russia, which advocated multilateralism.

SEVERAL DARK AND ONE NEUTRAL SCENARIO

What is the possible epilogue of the war? Experts include a dozen possible scenarios, of which we will discuss three military-diplomatic scenarios. Russia will continue to pose a serious long-term threat to the West due to its revanchist political agenda, military power, and economic resilience. The Montaigne Institute Report highlights numerous aspects and frightening consequences. This document emphasizes that Russia is implementing a geopolitical agenda for a radical change in the international order inherited from 1945, that is, completed in 1989. After the failure in the second half of 2022, Russia has learned its lessons. Militarily, it has managed to significantly reduce Ukraine's chances of victory, despite losing 20 to 30% of its fleet in the Black Sea, suffering the loss of 41 bombers in just one day, as well as half of its tanks. In fact, notes Michel Duclos, Russia has learned the lessons of its tactical failures. Its "war capitalism" allows it to produce 120 tanks per month, as well as Iskander missiles. In the information war, it also manages to divide and intimidate Western public opinion by demonstratively playing with the idea of using nuclear weapons, contrary to its purely deterrent role during the Cold War. Possible scenarios: What are the possible scenarios for an exit from the war, if any? The Montaigne Institute believes that at least three scenarios favorable to Russia are possible. (Bourdillon, Y. 2024) a) The first suggests the collapse of the Ukrainian defense line. This scenario is similar to the Georgian scenario. Ukraine does not join NATO, but retains its independence. b) The second scenario envisages a Russian "protectorate" over Ukraine, similar to the status of Belarus. (Stezhensky, A. 2025) c) The third scenario envisages a division of Ukraine in which the western part would benefit from the so-called security guarantees, while the eastern part would fall under the control of the Kremlin. This is reminiscent of the South-North Korea scenario, according to which Ukraine does not join NATO but receives strong military assistance. None of these scenarios would ensure stability or security in Europe, the reports of the Montaigne Institute and JPMorgan Chase & Co. emphasize. Between a vassal Ukraine and an emboldened Kremlin, if Trump does not show determination, Putin and his associates, driven by obsessive hostility towards the West, could threaten the Baltic states. The Kremlin perceives any emancipation of neighboring states "as a geopolitical threat and the strategic reduction of Greater Russia." Personally, I believe that if these scenarios are realized, the Euro-Atlantic structures would be weakened and the Europeans would be "reduced to the role of puppets or bargaining chips" between Moscow and Washington. This aggression has made the EU aware that in the future it will have to deal with its own security. There remains one last scenario, this time unfavorable for Russia. It would result from a change in the balance of power on the front. It would force the Kremlin to negotiate from a weaker position. Finally, a catastrophic scenario of a frustrated Russia, which could plan its own nuclear retaliation, is possible. Putin could risk a "nuclear crisis in the style of Cuba in 1962" or even a "nuclear war" if he feels that he is on the verge of losing Crimea to an attack from the Baltics, or losing Kaliningrad. But if he loses this poker game, then he could be overthrown. The Russian economy has shown resil-

ience, but it is not capable of development. Russia has managed to establish itself as a global player, compensating for the decline in its revenues from hydrocarbons, coal, metals, grain and fertilizers. Russia's military spending now exceeds 6% of GDP, and the country is blithely evading Western sanctions through Turkey, China, and India. However, this is probably unsustainable in the long term. The balance of payments surplus has fallen from 10% to 1% of GDP, the brain drain is massive, the abandonment of Western technologies is widespread, and the demographic decline is irreversible. The outlook for the Russian economy is therefore "twilight," impoverishment without collapse.

CONCLUSION

1. The Russian invasion of Ukraine represents a historical geopolitical and geo-strategic shock that disrupts the international order imposed since the end of World War II, and later supplemented by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the USSR. In this analysis, we have tried to offer a historical X-ray of the traditional geopolitical ambitions of the USSR, and then of Russia, in order to better understand the Russian invasion and the role played by Vladimir Putin.

2. Europe for the first time since World War II has grown into a space of military confrontation. Regardless of the fact that the great geopolitician Mackinder, as the region of Eurasia (Heartland), was long considered a territory outside Europe, today we are becoming aware of the geopolitical danger of this war. Let us not forget that NATO countries, China and North Korea are indirectly involved in this conflict and that any escalation of this conflict could cause a conflict that could be called World War III. This evolution towards total war could be a catastrophic scenario for our planet, as nuclear powers are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict.

3. The war in Ukraine and the positions of the West and NATO towards this conflict have brought Russia closer to China. Thus, what generations of American geopoliticians feared, about a possible alliance between Beijing and Moscow, is beginning to be realized. Is that Mackinder knocking on the door and saying "whoever controls the Heartland can control the entire planet". Mackinder's theory was written more than 100 years ago, but the Trump administration is trying to block the Russian-Chinese hostility and bring Russia closer to the United States. (Lenglet, F., 2025)

4. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has caused military-technical assistance from Western countries and imposed the harshest sanctions against Russia. International trade chains have been disrupted, which has caused a shortage of raw materials in the countries that imposed sanctions, as well as a shortage of Western products in Russia and Belarus. Is this a low blow to the globalization process? Yes!, but Russia has started exporting to the BRICS countries and looking for alternative export routes to the countries that have imposed sanctions.

5. The fact that globalization is being called into question may activate the process of de-globalization and its restructuring towards regional globalization.

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ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКИТЕ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ОТ ВОЙНАТА В УКРАИНА

Резюме: Три години след руската инвазия в Украйна ситуацията на място никак не е благоприятна за Украйна. Русия контролира 20% от украинската територия, а опитите на президента Тръмп да успокои враждуващите страни, са все още много слаби. Независимо от епилога на срещата в Истанбул (15.05.2025 г.), централният въпрос: „Какви ще бъдат геополитическите и геоикономическите последици от войната в Украйна?“ Руските военни разходи сега надхвърлят 6% от БВП, а страната заобикаля западните санкции чрез Турция, Китай и Индия. Но Русия не е най-голямата жертва на този конфликт, въпреки че всеки ден Русия харчи 320 милиона долара, а броят на смъртните случаи от двете страни надхвърля 1 милион жертви. Първата жертва е, разбира се, Украйна: 45% от нейния БВП е унищожен, 5 милиона украинци емигрираха, много млади животи бяха загубени, има изнасилвания и други непредвидени последици от ужасите на войната. Целта на този анализ е да се изследва какви ще бъдат последиците от този военен конфликт, и да се потвърди, че предстоят възможни промени в международния ред в посока на развитие на мултилатерализма, деглобализацията и процес на регионална глобализация. Това са основните хипотези на разработката.

Ключови думи: украинско-руска война; геополитика; Европейски съюз; деглобализация; нов международен ред

Avdulj-Selam Selami

Independent Researcher

E-mail: Avduljselam.Selami@gmail.com