

**Arab American University
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Department of Legal Science
Master Program in International Law and Diplomacy**



**The Russian-Ukrainian War Between the Legal Aspects and the Future of
International System**

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**This Thesis Was Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Master Degree in International Law and Diplomacy**

Palestine, 2 / 2025

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Arab American University
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Department of Legal Science
Master Program in International Law and
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Thesis Approval

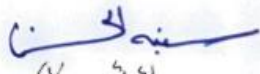
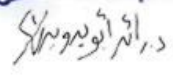
The Russian-Ukrainian War Between the Legal Aspects and The Future of International System

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Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is substantially my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the Arab American University or any other institution.

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Date of Submitting the Final Version of the Thesis: 29-6-2025

Dedication

his work is lovingly dedicated to my husband, Sufyan, whose constant support, patience, and belief in me have been a source of strength throughout this journey.

To my dear mother, whose love and prayers have always lifted me.

And to my precious children, Adam and Niveen — your smiles gave me the motivation I needed on the hardest days.

You are my inspiration and my greatest blessings.

Lina Mohammad Abuyousef

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Abstract

The current study concentrated on the Russian-Ukrainian war, where it aimed at clarifying the political and legal dimensions of such war based on the multiplicity of the parties that are taking role in this conflict. Building on great powers theory, this study endeavored to outline the effect of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the structure of international system and the international system and its balances. Furthermore, the study presented an interpretation of the underlying dynamics of the global political system, which has led to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022. To the objective raised, the researcher divided the study into two parts, where the first worked as a theoretical framework and the second was a practical framework. Thus, from the perspective of the theoretical framework, the researcher talked about the Russian-Ukrainian war, its origins and the extent to which it is subject to international law, as well as the location of the Russian crisis within the framework of Western relations. As for the practical framework, the researcher clarified the extent of the legitimacy of the Russian-Ukrainian war from the Russian point of view, then analyzed it from the Ukrainian point of view, and the extent of its impact on the possibility of a third world war. Besides, the research talked about the possibility of creating international mechanisms to prevent the illegal use of force in the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Thus, during the study, the researcher reviewed a brief historical overview of the Russian-Ukrainian relations and the reasons that resulted in the current war. Besides, the researcher assessed the legal status of the conflict in Ukraine and its impact on the international system and whether a new international establishment destabilize international stability. The researcher had also to study the legal basis of conflict, explaining the justifications that each country, i.e., Russia and Ukraine gives to justify their positions in this war.

By examining the conflict's historical, legal, and geopolitical dimensions, this study underscores the need for strengthened mechanisms to address mediate disputes, and uphold the principles of sovereignty and justice in an increasingly polarized world.

Kay words : right to Self- Defens, Preventive Defense, Great Powers Theory, veto ,economic sanctions, international system.

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1. Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian war started on February 24, 2022, when the Russian forces launched a military operation against Ukraine, claiming that Ukraine violated agreements between Russia and Ukraine. The current war between Russia and Ukraine is regarded as one of the long-standing political and military tensions between Russia and Ukraine, since Russia attempts to have an ongoing influence over Ukraine and rejects its accession to the West, especially joining the NATO. The Russia-Ukrainian war resulted in a great number of deaths and injuries and the displacement of millions of people, causing a major humanitarian crisis. In fact, this war is one of the greatest geopolitical crises of the 21st century, since its impact is seen on Europe and global security. Furthermore, the war caused severe economic sanctions against Russia by the western countries.

The war that Russia started against Ukraine is derived by different reasons made by the Russians. Thus, the Russians consider the expansion of the NATO a threat to their security and stability. Moreover, the Russians claim that the war aims to protect the Russian minorities in Ukraine. According to the Russians, these minorities in Ukraine face persecution, particularly in the Donbas region (eastern Ukraine). Hence, Russia believes that it is a duty to protect these civilians from discrimination. Additionally, Russia considers Ukraine as part of its cultural and historical sphere of influence, where this influence must not move away from Russia into the West. This comes in the light of the adherence of Ukraine to join the European Union and the NATO.

From its side, Ukraine considers that it has the right to sustain its sovereignty and choice. As such, Ukraine, being an independent country affirms that it has the right to determine its political decision and destiny without any external interference. Russia sees that joining the European Union and the NATO is a sovereign decision which shows the will of Ukrainians. Moreover, according to the Ukrainians, the war that Russia started is an aggression that is unjustified which aims to violate the sovereignty and independence of the country. Hence, Ukraine has the right to defend its territory.

2. Research Problem

The Russian-Ukrainian war started in 2022 can be due to some deteriorations between Russia and Ukraine. These two countries, which were once under the umbrella of the Soviet Union, started to have clashes due to the policy of Ukraine. Its policy that aims to be closer to the Western world and move away from its origin. In fact, the Russian war in Ukraine has proven itself to be one of the most consequential political events of our time, and one of the most confusing in the context of the interference of international forces in the Ukrainian crisis. These interventions in the Russian war in Ukraine could have some impacts on the structure of international system in different perspectives. Considering this, the study aims to answer the current problematic questions:

- To what extent can the Ukrainian crisis affect the structure of the international system, especially in terms of patterns of international interactions after the war, the balances of the existing international system and its future paths, and the possibilities of reshaping Circles and areas of influence of international units, and the formulation of regional and international security?

Out of this research question, the current research questions arises:

1. What are the repercussions of the Ukrainian-Russian crisis on the international system?

3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to clarify the political and legal dimensions of the Russian-Ukrainian war in light of the multiplicity of parties involved in the conflict. This study attempts to determine the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the structure of the international system and its impact on the international system and its balances. It also presents an interpretation of the underlying dynamics of the global political system, which has led to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022.

Where the Russian-Ukrainian war was considered, according to the decision of the United Nations General Assembly, as "aggression" and that it is unjustified and illegal, but from the point of view of the Russian vision that it adheres to its legitimate right to self-defense and the integrity of its lands, given that the western expansion of NATO and Ukraine's desire to join it constitutes a threat for the safety and security of its territory.

Accordingly, this study focuses, without standing on a specific side of the parties, to a set of important issues in international law, the first is related to the legitimate use of Russian force and the vision of President Putin that prompted Russia to wage war or, as he called it, the special military operation, and the second issue related to the illegal use "The project of force", the right to territorial integrity and the right to self-determination, on which the Ukrainian vision stands and is supported by most countries of the world .

4. Significance of the Study

The issue of maintaining international peace and security is considered one of the most important reasons for the establishment of the United Nations Organization, which is the purpose that the rules of international law and customary rules seek to organize in order to avoid the world from falling into the tragedy of the Third World War. Here, the research deals with what can be offered in order to maintain international peace and security, by achieving a balance between the state's need to maintain its internal security and its respect for the rules of international law, and the balance between the use of legitimate force and when this force becomes illegal. In this context, we must not forget that Russia is a permanent member state and a super nuclear power. Moreover, the scientific value of this research lies in its ability to address one of the most pressing issues in contemporary international relations, namely the maintenance of international peace and security within the framework of international law. It contributes to enriching academic debate by examining the delicate balance between state sovereignty, the need for internal security, and adherence to international legal standards.

5. Hypothesis of the Study

There are repercussions of the Ukrainian-Russian crisis on the international system

6. Limitations of the Study

The boundaries of the study include the time frame and the spatial frame. These are as follows:

1. Time frame: The events of this study take place between the years 2014-2023.

A. The year 2014 was chosen since in this year, Russia attempted to annex the Crimean Peninsula.

B. The year 2023AD was chosen because the events are still ongoing.

2. Spatial framework: Considering this, the study investigates Russia's political, military and legal justifications for the war. Additionally, it studies its geopolitical strategies and international reactions. Focusing on Ukraine, the thesis evaluates Ukraine's position, sovereignty, legal claims and the humanitarian impact of war. Further, the study focuses on the US strategic role in providing military tools to Ukraine and imposing sanctions on Russia. The thesis also considers China's neutral and strategic position, its potential economic partnerships with Russia, and its repercussions on the shifts of the world's power balance. Add to that, the study concentrates on the United Nations and international law bodies by focusing on their role in mediating conflicts and enforcing international legal frameworks.

7. Literature Review

First study: Russia-Ukraine War of 2022: A Descriptive Content Analysis of War News Report Framing by America's New York Post, China's Global Times and South Africa's The Citizen

This study tried to understand the 2022 Russia-Ukrainian war reporting based on Western, Asian and African media during the first two weeks of the war. Under this circumstance, the researchers used a descriptive content analysis as regards the war frames as reported online by New York Post (USA), Global Times (China) and The Citizen (South Africa). Such media channels employed various news frames in the narration of international conflict showing differences in ideological orientation of their audience. New York Post called the 'invasion' as a 'war' where crimes are committed in Ukraine. As for South African news, they framed the war less viciously, while Global Times called the invasion as a 'crisis'. By and large, the way the New York Post covers the war shows that the Ukrainians are victims and the Russians are aggressors (Akinboade, et al., 2023).

Second Study: the Russia-Ukraine war in the study of historical law and conflict of state security area

The study attempted to give an explanation as regards the history of the conflict taking place between Russia and Ukraine during the period of Vladimir Putin. For this purpose, the study

employed qualitative methods where the data were collected from different literatures. Further, the references used are literature studies on various books, newspapers, the internet, clippings and other documentations that have information as regards the conflict between Russia and Ukraine during the period of Vladimir Putin. The study concluded that the Russian President Vladimir Putin argued and confirmed that the act of sending Russian military forces to Ukraine and Crimea is a form of Russian preparedness in case of violence and other things that can hurt Russian citizens who live in Ukraine and Crimea (Sergi, 2022).

Third Study: THE 2022 RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: REASONS AND IMPACTS

Attempting at analyzing the Russia-Ukraine war in terms of reasons and implications, Russia states that it started the war to deter NATO's further expansion to include Ukraine, to annex the Donbas region to Russia as well to secure Crimean invasion forever. In fact, this war changed essential principles, norms and values that were agreed at the peace period lived post 1990s. It also resulted in a deep change to international politics in Europe. Furthermore, the war demonstrated unprecedented consequences as regards humanitarian tragedy since the second world war (Dimer, 2022).

Fourth Study: The Russia–Ukraine war and global trade reallocations

Focusing on a product-level empirical model of bilateral trade, the study investigates the global implications of the Russian war against Ukraine. The study found out that imports that come from Ukraine were 47.3% below the counterfactual between February and August 2022. Besides, the war caused a significant trade diversion for Russia, where Russia benefited in mineral oil and gas exports to Europe and Asia. Moreover, the study revealed that the trade adjustments work fundamentally via import price hikes, with notable heterogeneity across product groups and regions. These results show that the war had significant trade implications for Ukraine and Russia but only limited ones for other countries (Steinbach, 2023).

Fifth Study: Framing Russia-Ukraine War and Vladimir Putin's Image: A Content Analysis of New York Times

The current study investigated both the Russian-Ukrainian war and the image of the Russian President in The New York Times Online. In doing so, the content analysis technique was

employed focusing on the Opinion column. As such, 220 commentary articles were analyzed from 24 February 2022 to 24 December 2022. In the study, agenda setting and framing theory were employed as the theoretical basis. Results of the study show that Russia was framed as an unprovoked invader who has unmercifully onslaught Ukraine while Ukraine strives to put up an inspiring defense of its sovereignty. The image of Vladimir Putin carries a destructive character where the portrayal is conspiratorial and.

8. Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The researcher uses the analytical, descriptive research design in studying the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the international system. The study follows a qualitative approach by combining legal, historical and political analysis in order to assess the war's application. Historically, the researcher has to review the history of the Russian-Ukrainian war to contextualize the conflict. Furthermore, on the legal side, the researcher has to evaluate the legal status of the war under the international law, including treaties, the United Nations Charter and customary international law. Besides, the researcher has to examine the impact of the war on the international power dynamics and alliances. In relation to this, the researcher applies the Great Powers theory to interpret the crisis.

2. Data Collection

The current study uses different sources for data collection, to ensure a comprehensive and well-supported analysis. Thus, the primary data collection includes an interview with political analysts, diplomats and legal experts to understand the different viewpoints on the legitimacy and consequences of the war. A semi-structured interview is used. Secondary data collection were also used. This included academic literature, such as books, journal articles, previous research studies on international law, geopolitics and the Russian-Ukrainian war. The secondary data collection also included legal documents, where analysis of international treaties, UN charter and agreements was done. Further, the researcher took care of news reports and government statements (from Russia, Ukraine, NATO, and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to understand political justifications)

3. Structure of the Thesis

The study is divided into two parts: the theoretical framework, which talks about the Russian-Ukrainian war and the reasons that led to its outbreak, and then the practical framework, which talks about the impact of this war on the international future and the balance of power in the world. Accordingly, the study was divided into four sections.

The first section talks about Russian relations with the West during Putin's term, the geopolitical importance of Ukraine and the motives of the conflict with the West. Then the study talks about the motives of the Russian conflict over Ukraine, the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the international future from a legal and political standpoint.

4. Conclusion

This section outlines important topics that concern the study. It historically and contextually talked about Russia and Ukraine as being one nation in two countries. Thus, This section explains the history of Russia and Ukraine, the importance of Ukraine to Russia and the sanctions imposed by the West and the US against Russia. Furthermore, it elaborates about the reasons of the war from the perspective of Russia and Ukraine. Add to that, the chapter talks about Buffer State Theory using Russia and Ukraine as an example. Besides, the problem statement, objectives and research questions, hypothesis of the study, significance of the study and limitations of the study are presented in the chapter. Lastly, the study methodology is explained.

Chapter One :Historical and Political Context

1. Introduction

The current chapter presents the history of Russia and Ukraine, the importance of Ukraine to Russia, and the reasons of the Russia-Ukraine war, where we talk about the Russian position and the Ukrainian position also. In addition, this chapter talks about the sanctions imposed by the US and the Western countries against Russia. Besides, the American and the Soviet Union agreement about Eastern Europe countries joining the NATO is talked about. We mention about the buffer state theory by concentrating on Russia and Ukraine. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the problem statement, research questions and objectives and research hypothesis. This is in addition to research limitations and significance. At the end, we explain the research methodology.

1.1 Russia and Ukraine: A Shared History

Russia and Ukraine have had a history and culture that are shared not only during the period of the Soviet Union, which collapsed in the last century, but their relations extend for a long period of time. Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, mentioned this in his article published by the Kremlin (2021). In fact, President Putin titled his article as "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians" which indicates that these two nations have common things, share the same history along the time and nothing can separate between them. Later on in the article, Putin wrote that the walls that appeared between the unity of these two notions are due to some mistakes made during a period of time and because of some forces that attempt to undermine the unity of Russia and Ukraine. As stated by Kammer et al., (2022), Russia and Ukraine have had close cultural and historical background and relations that could be due to their geographical positions and race.

Russians and Ukrainians have the same origin or they belong to the same state or place which is called Kyivan Rus (Mick, 2023). According to Ray (2015), Kyvian Rus was the first eastern country located in the current Kyiv, Ukraine. Due to the fact that the history of the Kyvian state is shared between three nations, i.e., Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, the existence of these people as distinct peoples goes back to the 12th century. This state, the Kyvian state, was dismantled in 1240. Therefore, some parts of what is known now as Ukraine were controlled by some other countries like Lithuania, Poland and Russia. This happened from 14th century up until the 18th century. Most of these Ukrainians were under the Russian control in 18th century

(Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022). This state witnessed some invasions by different countries and states. Thus, in the 20s of the 13th centuries, the Mongols invaded Eastern Europe, among them is Kyvian Rus. In this period of time, Ukraine entered into a sort of what is called a cultural division. This means that there were a Western Ukraine that included Galicia–Volhynia Principality, and an eastern Ukraine and Russia. Differences appeared between the two parts. While the Eastern part was influenced by the Mongols traditions, the Western part retained some of the Kyvian Rus’ traditions (Hosseini, 2005). Things seemed to continue with invasions. Thus, Poland invaded Galicia, which resulted in reducing Ukraine to the part of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic (Czubatyj, 1946).

In 1648, Bogdan Khmelinitsky, a Ukrainian leader, started an uprising against Poland which had some affairs with the Kyvian Rus. After some years with war but without victory, the Ukrainians decided to unify with Russia to fight against the Poles. Therefore, Ukraine and Russia signed an agreement in 1654 called “Pereiaslav Agreement” that indicates their unification. Despite the fact that there is some heated debate between Russia and Ukraine as regards the purpose of the agreement, it is important to mention that the two sides agreed that Ukraine becomes a part of Russia (Jiang, 2023).

Referring back to Kyvian Rus state which gathered Ukrainians and Russians together, the fact is that this Eastern European state adopted Christianity by Prince Vladimir the Great, where the Kyivan Rus state became the place of Orthodox Christianity in Eastern Europe, thereby culture and language are shared (Feldman, 2013). Together, Ukraine and Russia lived in the same geographical position and place for centuries; they shared the same traditions. According to Kappeler (2001), Russia has a long imperial past until the end of the Soviet Union, after which many countries declared their independence, including Ukraine. In fact, at the time of the Soviet Union, Ukraine and Ukrainians became an inseparable part of the Soviet state, society and economy. Thus, many Ukrainians migrated to Russian and many Russians migrated to Ukraine. Hence, there was a kind of interethnic ties and relations between the two peoples. This is to say that Russia and Ukraine have not only had a common history, but also a common memory (Kappeler, 2001). According to Jiang (2023), in the Soviet Union, Ukraine and Russia’s relationships were very firm, especially as regards food production, manufacturing and energy.

Since the Russians and Ukrainians have had the same history and culture for a good number of centuries, they used to speak the same language. According to Kappeler (2014), the Russian language was the dominant language in the Tsarist and Soviet empires, even though other languages, i.e., non-Russian languages were allowed to be spoken in the Soviet Union. Among these languages, the Ukrainian language has, in fact, had an equal position and even its position was enhanced during the 1920s. However, in independent Ukraine, the Russian language was abandoned, even though there are Russians living in Ukraine and they estimate 8 million of the population of Ukraine (Kappeler, 2014).

This is to say that with no doubt Russia and Ukraine's relationship is special. They are very close to each other more than other nations by their shared and common religion, i.e., Orthodoxy, and with a common East-Slavic culture and memory. For a long time, most Ukrainians were part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union that was dominated by Russia. In reality, in case the Soviet Union did not collapse, the integration of the Russians and Ukrainians which had lasted for a long time would have become higher, especially in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine. Russia, according to Morrison (1993) sees Ukraine as 'a younger brother' and as the junior shareholder that took part in the Russian empire not as an enemy or a victim.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the rules of the Russians and Ukrainians as regards their relations have changed greatly. This collapse of the Soviet Union "gave a new role to Western governments and institutions, particularly the United States, as potential mediators in the Moscow-Kiev relationship" (Morrison, 1993, p. 682). Thus, the west tried to have their games when they started their connection with the Ukrainians. Therefore, the Ukrainian tendency towards the west resulted in a feel of betrayal by the Russians since Ukraine is more connected with Russia, not the west. Russia, then, considers that deviation from the relations of it with Ukraine can be harmful to it on different levels. According to Sushko (2008), Ukraine is important to Russia and this importance is not only purely rational but also symbolic meanings. Russia, as a matter of fact, put Ukraine in a very special position. Starting from the 17th century, "Ukrainian lands were in the centre of Russian efforts to build a super-state in the conflicts with Poland and Turkey" (Sushko, 2008, p. 9). Therefore, having Ukraine besides Russian is important to the status of the Russia's imperial. In fact, this mindset is still valid for the Russians until today. As Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997) states:

"It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire."

Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet unions is deemed painful to Russia. According to Van Ham (1994), Russians find it not easy that their empire has been collapsed. Putin himself remarked this in his annual address to the parliament in 2006 when he mentioned that "The collapse of the Soviet Union was the largest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century" (Putin 2005). The loss of Ukraine is still considered one of the major components of this "catastrophe".

1.2 The Importance of Ukraine to Russian

Ukraine is deemed very important to Russia. This is attributed to different factors that Ukraine possesses. This is to say that the importance of Ukraine to Russia is thus far of imagination. Ukraine, according to Masters (2023), was a backbone of the Soviet Union after Russia. It was the second populous and powerful republic in the Soviet Union after Russia. Among the important factors why Ukraine is of paramount significance to Russia are economy, security and strategical issues. Economically, Ukraine is believed to be a vital partner for Russia, particularly because of the resources it has, the geographical location of it and since it has an agricultural capacity. In fact, Ukraine has an important role in transiting the Russian gas to Europe. In its endeavors to find alternatives, Russia attempted to build pipelines to rule out those in Ukraine, however, Ukraine is still crucial for the Russian gas exportation (Tsakiris, 2023). As Sushko (2008) remarks, Ukraine is important as regards the Russian oil and gas to the European Union. In actuality, 80% of the Russian gas which is sent to Europe passes through Ukraine. Therefore, having Ukraine in the sphere of the enemy is problematic to Russia.

Ukraine has a plenty of agricultural resources which are important for Russia. In fact, Ukraine is often described as "the breadbasket of Europe" as its soil is fertile and due to its agricultural production. Ukraine is a producers of important corps. In fact, it is considered as one of the important producers of grains, sunflower and different other corps. Such things show the importance or the economic importance of Ukraine to Russia. Hence, the agricultural markets of Russia get benefits from such exports (Deininger et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the Ukrainian and Russian industrial sectors are related and tied. They have cooperation as regards steel production, chemicals and other related industries. In addition, Russian companies run important investments in the manufacturing sector of Ukraine.

At the levels of security and strategy, Ukraine is also significant to Russia. The location of Ukraine between Russia and the NATO countries turned it into a sort of security buffer to Russia. Thus, keeping Ukraine under the umbrella of Russia is due to several important points including limiting the expansion of the NATO and giving Russia freedom in the Black Sea. Russia has for a long time considered Ukraine as part of the near abroad, thus, preserving its influence over Eastern Europe. Therefore, losing Ukraine definitely leads to weaken the geographical position of Russia in Europe (Qaisrani et al., 2023).

1.3 The Russian-Ukrainian Positions of the War

The Russians' claims concerning the war are varied. In addition, the Ukrainians' allegations are different. Other than the interests of Russia in Ukraine, a combination of military, political, security and geopolitical factors shaped the Russian position of its war against Ukraine (Pynnöniemi and Parpei, 2024). The biggest threat to Russia is the move that Ukraine took to enter in or join the NATO. This is considered a threat directed to the national security of Russia. Having the NATO near the borders of Russia is problematic. Therefore, Russia made its efforts to stop the move of Ukraine to enter the NATO (Oribets, 2022). However, being an independent country, Ukraine is free to cooperate with whom it wants. Ukraine considers that it has the right to self-determination. Thus, starting from 1995, Ukraine began to have some changes in its position as regards entering the Euro-Atlantic structures and thus showed an interest in cooperating with the NATO and EU (Khrychikov, 2000). Being close to the NATO is an additional point due to which the Russians consider the Ukrainians as those who betrayed agreements between them. Ukraine, the neighbor and younger brother of Russia, has long played an important role in international security (Master, 2023). In a non-official way, the government in Ukraine had some interests to have deeper integration with the NATO and the European Union. Important changes started to be seen after Kuchma was elected as a president. This president called for and advocated an intensive cooperation with the West (Khrychikov, 2000). As an independent country, Ukraine believes that it is free to act based on its interests, not based on the interest of Russia.

Moreover, the location of Ukraine is an important role in the motivation of Russia for a war (Pynnöniemi and Parpei, 2024). Ukraine's location is important for the security of Russia and its economy. Through Ukraine, Russia sends its gas to Europe. The location of Ukraine to Russia is also important in case of the Black Sea. Therefore, the Russians annexed Crimea in order to maintain their naval movement. Annexing Crimea gives Russia freedom to access warm water ports (Snyder, 2015). Crimea is considered a peninsula that is located at the Black Sea coast of Ukraine. It has a population estimated at 2.3 million, where the majority of them call themselves as ethnic Russians. According to Lozada et al. (2014), Crimea has been under the dominance of Russia for the past 200 years, when the region was annexed by Russia in 1783. However, it was given from Moscow to Ukraine in 1954, at the time of the Soviet Union. To be clear, since the 18th century, Crimea was part of Russia and has the name of 'the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic', under the umbrella of Russian Soviet Federative Republic. Lozada et al. (2014) claimed that statistics tell that 77% of the population of Crimea deem the Russian language as their first language and only of them consider Ukrainian language as their mother tongue. Based on the 2011 Census, the Russians are 58% of the population of Crimea, who are estimated to be 2 million people, while Ukrainians represent 24%.

Events, after the annexation of Crimea, kept going on but in the direction that is not wanted by countries, e.g., Russia and Ukraine. Therefore, on February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the start of a "special military operation in Ukraine" based on Russia's right to legitimate defense. This letter was later attached to a copy of a letter to the Security Council based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which stipulates the necessity of informing The Security Council in the event that a state uses its right to legitimate defense. Russia considered that it is its right to launch that operation since Ukraine violated some agreements between the two countries. In this context, Putin considered that Ukraine's desire to join NATO constitutes a direct threat to its internal security and represents a red line that was crossed by NATO. This is considered a kind of agreement violation. The Russians claim that the US and Western leaders promised or made verbal agreements to the Soviet Union that the NATO will not expand beyond Germany. According to the Russians, this was made in the 1990 during some discussions between the Soviet Union leaders and the Western leaders including those from the United States. Therefore, when Ukraine decided to join the NATO, the Russians considered this as a violation of the agreement, which based on the Russians was called "one inch" agreement.

However, the Ukrainians and the West together claim that this was not an agreement. According to them, these were merely verbal discussions (Baker, 1995).

According to Edinger (2023), the Russians exploited the annexation of Crimea internally to gain the public's support for the war against Ukraine. In fact, the annexation of Crimea has shaped important political supports for Putin and his government. Thus, claiming of defending Russia from the enemy, i.e., the West fueled patriotism and led to gain the support of the Russians. These can be considered pure interests of Putin to launch a war against Ukraine.

1.4 Sanctions against Russia

Taking the Russian special operation as a pretext, the Western countries and the United States launched several sanctions against Russia. These sanctions targeted several sectors including the financial sector, energy sector, and trade sector (Itskhoki and Ribakova, 2024). As such, the Russian banks encountered problems in accessing to the global financial system. In this context, the SWIFT system was banned for the Russian banks hindering the financial transactions through Russian banks.

This has had an impact of the cooperation of the Russian banks with the international financial markets.

Talking about the energy sector, it is in connection with the trade sector's sanctions. Thus, besides the sanctions that targeted some sensitive technological means that had an effect on the technological sector of Russia including the defense industry, the US and the Western countries imposed sanctions on the energy sector in Russia, especially oil and gas. Thus, the Russian crude oil, coal and refined petroleum products were banned by the US and the Western countries. Furthermore, Russian agricultural products were sanctioned. The Russian aluminum for instance was banned by the US (Lukyanova and Zeynalov, 2022).

In its role, Russia played clever. In order to reduce the impact of these sanctions against it, Russia took some effective steps. Thus, the Russians started dealing with new markets like the Chines and Indian markets. In this case, they diversified the trading partners and did not only depend on the Wester market (Klug, 2024). Besides, in its attempt to mitigate the effect of these sanctions, Russia intended to increase the use of its currency in trading with non-Western countries. With China, Russia made an agreement to trade using Ruble and Yuan and this was

effective to avoid the US dollar. Of the other steps which Russia also made in order to reduce the impact of the sanctions against it is the building of alternative financial systems. Thus, they no more use the Western SWIFT system in financial transactions. (Nolke, 2022). Hence, the Russians built their own financial system that they called SPFS. This system allowed the Russians to continue overseas transactions.

1.5 Buffer State Theory

A concept in both geopolitics and international relations, the buffer state theory is related to a country or a place that is located between or surrounded by two or more powerful countries, where this country works or is seen as a buffer or protective barrier between such powerful countries (Hafeznia et al., 2013). It is suggested that this country can have a significant role in reducing any direct confrontation between the powerful countries, through mitigating tension or other means. Strategically, the buffer state is very important because of its location. Normally, these states are neutral and do not intervene in conflicts between the powerful countries. Thus, they their best to avoid being involved in any military confrontation. The case we have, i.e., Ukraine is considered a buffer state country. Ukraine's location puts it in the list of buffer state countries. It is located between Russian and the West being Europe.

In fact, the Russian Ukrainian war may be analyzed based on the buffer state theory. Thus, the incursion of Ukraine by Russia due to tensions with the NATO that tries to extend in Eastern Europe is deemed an attempt by the Russians to restore control over what Russia sees as a crucial buffer zone against the West. In turn, Ukraine aimed for a closer relations with the West. In doing so, it reversed its role as a buffer state by trying to change the geopolitical balance.

Chapter Two: Legal Foundation of the Conflict

2.1 Legal Basis of Conflict

In an actual fact, conflicts or disputes between countries should have legal basis. These bases are the laws, regulations, principles and or contractual provisions which lay the foundation of the conflict and which lead to the resolution of such conflicts or disputes. In reality, disputes or conflicts between countries have complex interactions seen between the national sovereignty and international obligations. Followings are some of the legal bases that we are going to clarify.

2.1.1 International Treaties and Agreements

International treaties and agreements are the legal agreements between countries that clarify the rights and responsibilities between them. In the words of professor Cassese of International Law (2001, p. 126), treaties are "merger of wills of two or more international subjects for the purpose of regulating their interests by international rules". In fact, treaties are considered a key role in international law and have a crucial task to prevent and resolve conflicts (Dorbayan, 2023). One of these treaties is the Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties (1969) which is deemed an essential treaty in international law that provides the legal framework to explain how treaties are formed, interpreted and enforced. This treaty helps to resolve conflicts related to treaty violation and non-compliance (Dorbayan, 2023). Peace treaties are also important. One of the important treaties is the Treaty of Versailles (1919) which was designed to resolve wars between countries.

2.1.2 Customary International Law

This is related to practices that the countries follow as they believe that the customary international law is a legal binding, even though they are not filed in treaties. Such unwritten rules are an important part in the legal framework that conflicts take into consideration (Goldsmith and Posner, 2005). Examples on this law are the prohibition of the use of force and protection of civilians during the conflict.

2.1.3 The United Nations and the Use of Force

The United Nations Charter is a key point in relation to the regulations of conflicts. It takes into consideration peaceful conflict resolution and aims to limit the use of force (United Nations, accessed 09/12/2024). Nevertheless, this legal basis allows for self-defense and legalizes the use of force in some cases through the Security Council. This document of (1945) intends to map the peaceful resolution of disputes and the use of force. Moreover, it gives the right to the Security Council to take steps in maintaining international peace and security, which includes military intervention (UN Charter, Article 39).

2.1.4 The Role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

In his Ph.D. thesis, Mohamed (1997) states that the International Court of Justice is the body of the United Nations that works to settle disputes that arise between countries. It does so by applying international law to determine the legality of actions made by the disputed countries. It takes into consideration the interpretation of treaties, violations of international law and other important issues.

2.1.5 The Right to Self-Defense

This is understood as a legal justification to use force under international law. A clear example is the always justification given to the Israeli occupation against the Palestinians and other Arab countries. In Article 51 of the UN Charter, it is emphasized that countries can defend themselves if they are attacked.

2.2 Russia and Ukraine: Legal Basis of Dispute from the Perspective of Russia

Any country in the state of conflict will provide its justifications in front of the world so actions are not taken against it. In the case of Russia, it recognizes its disputes especially with Ukraine on certain legal bases. Therefore, when talking about Russia and its legal claimed bases, we might mention that Russia considers its sovereignty, self-defense, protection of Russian speaking population and the idea of preserving territorial integrity (Borgen, 2023).

2.2.1 Self-Defense and Russia's Right to Defend Its Borders

Self-defense is an important legal basis that Russia claims (Schmit, 2022). According to this legal claim, countries consider that there are threats to their territorial integrity and national security. Russia argues that the NATO in Eastern Europe and Ukraine poses a direct threat to Russia. In relation to this, Russia considers Article 51 and Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter, which give the countries the right to self-defense if attacked (Schmit, 2022). This article of the UN Charter says that “nothing shall affect the inherent right of nations to defend themselves, individually or collectively, if an armed attack occurs, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.” Based on this Article, Russia may claim that it has the “right to self-defense” against what it considers as a threat from Ukraine or other states supporting Ukraine. Accordingly, Russia may claim that it is protecting “Russian minorities” in Ukraine, particularly in areas such as Donbas (which includes the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics). Russia may justify its military intervention in these areas on the grounds of protecting “Russian citizens” or “Russian speakers” from “threats” posed by the Ukrainian government. Further, Russia may claim that Ukraine’s potential accession to NATO poses a threat to Russian security. According to this logic, Russia may justify its actions on the grounds that it is defending its national security against what it sees as hostile alliance expansion (Pelliconi, 2024). Besides, in some statements, Russia believes that potential military threats on its western borders puts its security at risk. Therefore, Russia views its intervention as a defensive right (United Nations Charter). As such, the Russian’s justifications also are built based on Article 2, paragraph 4 of the United Nations Charter which states that:

"All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations." (United Nations Charter).

This principle is considered as one of the fundamental principles of international law and one of the pillars on which contemporary international relations are based. This principle means that every state has the full right to sovereignty over its territory, and that no other state may threaten or use force against this sovereignty or attempt to change borders by force. When applying this principle to the situation in Ukraine after the Russian military intervention in 2022, we find that

there is a clear violation of the principle of state sovereignty according to Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter (Kleczkowska, 2018).

2.2.1.1 Collective security and joint security agreements

Similar to other states, Russia is part of several international agreements and institutions concerned with collective security and common security, which aim to enhance regional and international security and stability. The most prominent of these agreements is the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a regional military-political alliance that aims to promote collective security and stability in the Eurasian region (Romańczuk, 2023). The organization was founded on the basis of the Collective Security Treaty signed in 1992 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This organization has gone through different stages. Thus, in 1992 it was signed by six countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These states are Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In 2002, the treaty was transformed into an international organization known as the Collective Security Treaty Organization. In 2003, the organization officially began operating, laying the foundations for military and political cooperation. According to Bordyuzha (2011), this organization has several goals. These are:

A. Mutual Defense :Any attack on one member is considered an attack on all members. Members can request military assistance if they are exposed to security threats.

B: Combating terrorism and extremism: Confronting cross-border threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime.

C: Military Cooperation: Conducting joint military exercises to enhance the readiness of the armed forces. Developing the defense capabilities of member states through technical and logistical support.

D: Regional Stability: Supporting member states in facing internal crises that may threaten regional security.

2.2.1.2 The Principle of Preventive Defense

The principle of preventive defense is a principle that considers that states have the right to use military force against potential threats or dangers, even if there has not yet been a direct attack (Murphy, 2005). Such a principle is considered if a state sees that the military threat to its territory is very imminent, and that the state believes that it cannot wait for an actual attack from the enemy to give it the opportunity to respond. Russia, in the context of its war on Ukraine, has tried to justify its military intervention in 2022 using concepts similar to preventive defense, although this argument faces many legal and political objections at the international level (Asada, 2024). Thus, Russia has presented several arguments revolving around the idea of "preventive defense" in order to justify its intervention in Ukraine. Russia claims that Ukraine poses a direct security threat to it due to its possible accession to NATO, the thing that Russia considers a strategic threat on its borders. The Russians repeatedly stated that the potential expansion of NATO into Ukraine poses a threat to Russian national security, and have made it clear that Russia will not allow NATO military expansion on its borders (Götz, 2019). In addition, Russia has used the argument of increased Ukrainian military threats, including what Russia has deemed "military provocations" by Ukraine against Russian and Russian-speaking areas in eastern Ukraine (such as the Donbas region) (Gurantz, 2024). Accordingly, Russia may see itself as having to launch a "preventive strike" against Ukraine in order to avoid what it sees as an imminent attack by Ukraine. Furthermore, Russia has stated that part of its goal is to protect Russian citizens or Russian-speaking people in Ukraine, particularly in the Donbas regions. This argument is based on the idea that Ukraine may threaten these people, and therefore the Russian attack is a "preventive defense" to protect them. Additionally, Russia has claimed that it has the right to take preventive measures to protect its internal security, with an emphasis on countering any potential threats from Ukraine or from Western allies supporting Ukraine.

Legally, the UN Charter, Article 2(4) prohibits the use of force against the sovereignty or political independence of states. However, there are exceptions to this rule:

1. Self-defense (Article 51): A state is permitted to use force if it is under armed attack, and this right lasts until the UN Security Council takes action to stop the aggression.

2. Security Council authorization (Chapter VII): If the Security Council determines that there is a threat to international peace and security, it can authorize the use of force, such as sanctions or military intervention.

The principle of preventive defense raises the question of whether a state is permitted to use force against a threat that is indirect or uncertain but may occur in the future. In fact, the principle of preemptive defense challenges fundamental principles of international law, as it contradicts the general prohibition on the use of force and raises questions about the protection of state sovereignty and the stability of the international order. While some argue that this principle may be necessary to confront new threats, many states and the international community oppose it because it could lead to legal and military chaos.

2.2.1.2.1 Russia's Justification of Self Defense

Russia has used the concept of “self-defense” to justify its military escalation against Ukraine and its overall actions in Eastern Europe (Gurantz, 2024). These justifications are based on a mix of security, historical and political concerns, as well as its protection of Russian minorities abroad, especially in the Donbas region. Russia's justifications can be summarized as follows:

A. The Ukrainian Crisis and Russia's Security Concerns

1. NATO's Eastward Expansion:

Russia considers NATO's eastward expansion since the 1990s a direct threat to its national security (Götz, 2019). In addition, the inclusion of Eastern European and Baltic states (such as Poland and Lithuania) in NATO brought the alliance closer to Russia's borders. Further, Ukraine was seeking to join NATO, which raised Russia's concerns about the possibility of missile systems and military bases on its borders.

2. Missile systems in Eastern Europe:

The deployment of US missile defense systems (such as the missile shield system) in Poland and Romania has raised concerns in Moscow. Russia believes that these systems can be used for offensive purposes, upsetting the strategic balance in the region (None, 2020). Russia considered

the deployment of these systems to be a threat to its national security, as it reduces the effectiveness of its nuclear deterrent force.

3. Russia's stability:

Russia considers any NATO military presence near its borders is destabilizing and threatening its internal security. Moscow believes that NATO has not fulfilled its commitments in the 1990s not to expand eastward (Schuette, 2023).

A. Protecting Russian minorities outside Russia

1. The Donbas issue:

Russia gives the Donbas region (which includes the Donetsk and Luhansk regions) particular importance due to the presence of a large Russian-speaking population. Moscow has alleged that the Ukrainian government has systematically repressed and discriminated against ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers in the region (Fortuin, 2022). Russia has supported separatist movements in Donbas, claiming that its military intervention was to protect the rights of these minorities.

2. Strengthening Russian identity:

Russia considers that the protection of Russian minorities as part of its historical and cultural responsibility. Russia accused Ukraine that it has been trying to eliminate Russian identity in the eastern regions by imposing hostile linguistic and cultural policies (Fortuin, 2022).

C. Color Revolutions and the Role of the West

1. Western Support for Color Revolutions:

Russia considers color revolutions (such as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and the Maidan Revolution in 2014) as Western-backed conspiracies to change political regimes in Russia's neighboring countries (Minkina, 2021). Moscow sees these revolutions as aiming to replace regimes hostile to Russia and close to the West.

2. Overthrowing the pro-Russian Ukrainian government:

The 2014 Ukrainian revolution led to the overthrow of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich. Russia considered this revolution a Western-backed coup, which posed a direct threat to its interests in Ukraine (Brands, 2024).

3. Politically besieging Russia:

Russia sees Western support for color revolutions as part of a broader strategy to besiege it politically and undermine its influence in neighboring countries (Yurchenko, 2024).

D. Regional Stability and Russia's Strategic Priority

1. Maintaining a Sphere of Influence:

Russia considers Ukraine as part of its historical and strategic sphere of influence. Therefore, Ukraine's independence and heading towards the West are seen as a threat to Russia's security and influence (Pynnöniemi, 2024).

2. Russian National Security:

Russia believes that any radical changes in the Ukrainian political system in favor of the West as a threat to its national security (Pynnöniemi, 2024). Hence, Western orientations in Ukraine make Russia see itself in a state of proactive defense to maintain its internal and regional stability.

2.2.3 The Legitimacy of the Annexation of Crimea: Causes and Consequences

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea after a referendum in the region declared its support for joining Russia. This event sparked wide controversy from an international law perspective and led to political, economic and military repercussions for Russia and Ukraine, in addition to its impact on the international order (Leonaitė and Kaszuba, 2021).

2.2.3.1 The Russian point of view:

Russia justified the annexation of Crimea on the basis that the Russian-speaking population of Crimea chose to join Russia through a referendum (Merezhko, 2015). Additionally, Moscow claimed that its intervention came to protect its strategic interests and the population of Crimea after the overthrow of the pro-Russian Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich. Furthermore, Russia considers Crimea a historical part of its territory, as it was part of the Russian Empire until 1954, when its administration was transferred to Soviet Ukraine (Makio and Fuccille, 2023).

2.2.3.2 Russian reasons for annexing Crimea

For Russia, Crimea hosts the port of Sevastopol, the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which is considered essential to Russian naval capabilities. Besides, the geographical location of Crimea gives Russia strategic superiority in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean region. Russia also considered the Ukrainian revolution that overthrew Yanukovich a threat to its national interests, especially with the possibility of Ukraine moving closer to NATO. Add to that, Moscow promoted that the Crimean population was subject to discrimination and threats, which prompted it to intervene to "protect them." Another important reason is the NATO (Makio and Fuccille, 2023). Hence, Russia sees that the annexation of Crimea prevented it from being transformed into a potential military base for NATO, which Russia considers a direct threat to its security.

2.2.3.3 Political, economic and military repercussions on Russia

1. Political: Russia faced widespread condemnation from the international community and was expelled from the Group of Eight (G8). On the other hand, the annexation helped boost Russian President Vladimir Putin's popularity domestically, as Russians saw it as a restoration of "historical land".
2. Economic: Western countries imposed severe economic sanctions on Russia, including on the energy sector, banks, and individuals linked to the Kremlin. Besides, Russia bore a significant economic cost for developing infrastructure in Crimea and supporting its struggling economy (Alcidi et al., 2023).

3. Militarily: The annexation of Crimea allowed Russia to expand its military presence in the region. In addition, the annexation led to NATO strengthening its defense capabilities in Eastern Europe.

2.2.3.4 Ukrainian perspective:

Ukraine considers the annexation of Crimea as a violation of the principle of state sovereignty, as borders were changed by force. The annexation is contrary to the principles of the UN Charter and the 1994 Budapest Treaty, which guaranteed Ukraine's sovereignty in exchange for its renunciation of nuclear weapons (Leonaitė and Kaszuba, 2021).

2.2.3.5 Political, economic and military repercussions on Ukraine

- Political: Ukraine lost control over a strategic region that is considered an essential part of its territory. However, the annexation of Crimea prompted Ukraine to strengthen its relations with the European Union and NATO.
- Economic: The loss of Crimea led to the loss of important natural resources, especially oil and gas in the Black Sea. Thus, many pro-Ukrainian Crimeans were forced to flee, which posed a humanitarian and economic burden on Kiev.
- Militarily: Ukraine lost important military infrastructure in Crimea. Moreover, the annexation of Crimea encouraged separatists in eastern Ukraine, leading to the outbreak of an armed conflict supported by Russia.

2.2.3.6 The Crimean Population

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 created deep divisions among its population between those who supported the annexation to Russia and those who opposed it and considered it a violation of international law. These divisions were reflected at the legal, political, economic and social levels, directly affecting the lives of the population (Mälksoo, 2019).

2.2.3.6.1 Pro-population view:

Right to self-determination: Russia justified the annexation of Crimea based on a referendum held in March 2014, in which a majority of the population voted to join Russia. Russia argued

that Crimeans, who are predominantly Russian-speaking, had the right to self-determination and secede from Ukraine.

2.2.3.6.2 Opposing view:

Ukraine and most of the world consider the annexation a violation of their sovereignty, as the referendum was held under heavy Russian military presence. The UN described the referendum as illegal, as it did not comply with international law.

2.2.3.6.3 Implications of annexation of Crimea for the pro-population and opposing population

Proponents expected economic improvement after joining Russia, including increased wages and pensions (Lozada et al., 2014). In addition, Russian speakers felt relieved after joining their cultural homeland, with the Russian language and culture being promoted in everyday life. Additionally, proponents saw annexation as a step to avoid political chaos after the 2014 Ukrainian revolution. As for opposing population, the Crimean Tatar population (about 12%), along with Ukrainians, rejected the annexation because of their historical and cultural ties to Ukraine. Besides, they also mention that they faced harassment and repression, including the banning of their National Council (Tatar Mejlis) and arbitrary arrests. Besides, the Ukrainian language was marginalized in education and media.

2.2.4 Legality of Annexation of Crimea

From the perspective of Russia, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 is legal since it is partially dependent on the principle of self-determination. Under international law, the right to self-determination is a crucial principle that is enshrined in some legal instruments such as the United Nations Charter of (1945), where in article 1(2) self-determination is considered as a purpose of the UN “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.”

However, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 sparked widespread legal controversy, with the move seen as a direct violation of international law, including the 1994 Budapest Convention and the 1975 Helsinki Convention, which are explained below:

2.2.4.1 The Budapest Agreement

The Budapest agreement, known as the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurance, was signed in 1994 between Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom (General Assemble Security Council, 1994). This agreement remarks that Ukraine is provided with security assurance in exchange for renunciation the nuclear weapons Ukraine has. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Ukraine became the third largest nuclear country with nearly 1.900 nuclear warheads. Ukraine, considering nuclear proliferation, agreed to relinquish its nuclear weapons and be a member in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Budapest Memorandum encompasses different important points. These are related to the commitment of the signing parties, i.e., Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom. Firstly, Ukraine was granted security assurance. Thus, the countries have to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Furthermore, those countries pledged that they would not interfere in the internal affairs of Ukraine. Besides, they decided to provide Ukraine with assistance if its sovereignty and or territorial integrity was violated. On the side of Ukraine, it has agreed to give up its nuclear weapons. Thus, Ukraine moved the nuclear warheads it had to Russia and they were dismantled (General Assemble Security Council, 1994).

Nevertheless, in relation to the Budapest agreement, Russia Violated Ukrainian sovereignty (Shymanska, 2020). In fact, Russia annexed Crimea by military force, in a clear violation of its commitments not to violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Furthermore, Russia's heavy military presence in Crimea during the referendum violates the clause prohibiting the use or threat of force. In addition, Russia did not engage in any negotiation or diplomatic process with Ukraine or other signatory states before taking its actions.

2.2.4.2 Helsinki Accords 1975

The Helsinki Accords (signed within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) aims to strengthen European cooperation and respect the principles of sovereignty and peace (Kandiah and Staerck, 2006). Among the basic principles:

A. Respect for sovereignty: States are committed not to interfere in the internal affairs of other states.

B: Not to change borders by force: Changing borders must be done through a peaceful agreement between the parties.

C. Refraining from the threat or use of force: The use of force to achieve political or regional goals is prohibited.

Based on this agreement, the annexation of Crimea through a referendum held under the presence of Russian troops is a direct violation of the principle of non-change of borders by force. Further, Russia ignored Ukrainian sovereignty and recognized Crimea as part of its territory. Besides, Russia's military presence in Crimea and its use as a political tool to achieve annexation violates the principles of the Helsinki Agreement.

2.5 Russian Justifications

Russia considers its military intervention in Ukraine a defensive measure to ensure regional stability and protect national security. Russia claims that Ukraine, after the Ukrainian revolution in 2014, began to move away from the Russians and towards the West, which prompted Moscow to intervene in order to prevent further Western influence in the region. Thus, since the start of the Russian war on Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has justified its actions using a range of legal, political and geopolitical, historical, and cultural justifications (Vark, 2022). On the legal level, Russia referred its intervention in Ukraine based on self-defense (article 51 of the UN Charter), protecting the Russians in Donbas and cooperation and joint agreements. Besides, Russia mentioned about the failure to implement the Minsk agreements stating that Ukraine did not compile with the Minsk agreements, thus the military intervention became a necessity. On the political and geopolitical level, Russia mentioned about Ukraine's attempt to join the NATO. Therefore, the Russians decided that this leads to a threat to its national security, so it must be "neutralized" militarily and politically. Furthermore, Russia claims that Ukraine is run by extremist nationalists and neo-Nazis, and considers the military operation aimed at "liberating" the country. Moreover, Moscow views Ukraine as part of its historical and vital sphere of influence and believes the West is using it to contain Russia. On the cultural and historical level, Russia considers Crimea and Donbas to be historical Russian territories that were unjustly carved out after the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the most important tools Russia has used to

justify its actions has been holding referendums in the Ukrainian regions it has partially seized, to legitimize the annexation of these areas.

2.5.1 The Referendum

Russia held a referendum in Crimea after taking military control of the region, with around 97% of the population reportedly voting in favor of joining Russia (Slomanson, 2015). This referendum was deemed illegal internationally as it was held under a heavy Russian military presence and lack of independent international oversight. More than this, in September 2022, Russia held referendums in the Ukrainian regions it partially controls (Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson). The results of the referendums showed inflated numbers in favor of joining Russia (over 90%). However, these referendums were held in the context of an armed conflict, raising doubts about their fairness. They were held without the consent of the Ukrainian government, and under direct threats to the population. As a matter of fact, there were reports of people being coerced into voting. This referendum was legally controversial, and there is widespread disagreement about its legitimacy. The UN General Assembly, in its Resolution 68/262, declared the referendum illegitimate and affirmed the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Besides, the Ukrainian Constitution stipulates that any changes to the country's borders must be made through a national referendum, not a local referendum in a given territory. Furthermore, there were no independent international observers accredited by the UN or the OSCE, which casts doubt on the integrity of the referendum. Additionally, the European Union and the United States refused to recognize the referendum and imposed sanctions on Russia due to the annexation of Crimea. Some other countries, such as China and India, remained neutral, while countries such as Syria and Venezuela supported Russia's position.

2.5.2 Protecting the Rights of the Russian Ethnic People in Ukraine

Protecting the rights of the Russians in Ukraine is considered a significant subject in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, especially after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Repeatedly, Russia claims that it aims to protect the rights of the Russians and the Russian-speaking people in Ukraine, especially those in Donetsk and Luhansk areas. Nonetheless, such a claim is legally and politically questionable based on the protection of ethnic minorities by an

external intervention (Cavandoli and Willson, 2022). Ukraine has a good number of people who are ethnically Russians and who speak Russian. According to Russia, Russians in Ukraine have the feeling of being marginalized by the Ukrainian policies that call for the only use of Ukrainian language, especially after the law that Ukraine made in 2012 that was later strengthened to increase the use of Ukrainian language in every sector in the government (Molchanov, 2015). Claiming that the policies of the Ukrainian government towards the language is a sort of discrimination, Russia justifies its operation in Ukraine to protect the rights of the Russians and the Russian- speaking people. In addition, Russia claimed that the Russians in the Donbas region declared independence from Ukraine and thus they were oppressed by the Ukrainian army. This, according to Russia, was a key point to the annexation of Crimea and Donbas. Nevertheless, the actions made by Russia are not considered legitimate based on international law.

Russia's claim to protect the rights of ethnic Russians in Ukraine, particularly in Crimea and Donbas, is based on the principle of humanitarian intervention and the protection of citizens abroad. However, these justifications are not universally accepted under international law. The UN Charter (Article 2, Paragraph 4) prohibits the use or threat of force against the territorial integrity of any sovereign state. Article 2, Paragraph 7 prohibits interference in the internal affairs of member states, except in cases of authorization by the Security Council. Russia did not receive authorization from the UN Security Council, and therefore its intervention violates international law. Additionally, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and other treaties give states the right to protect ethnic minorities within their territories, but they do not give any state the right to intervene militarily in another state for this purpose. Russian minorities in Ukraine enjoyed broad cultural and linguistic rights prior to 2014, and there was no conclusive legal evidence of collective persecution warranting military intervention.

Russia attempted to justify its intervention in Ukraine by comparing it to NATO's intervention in Kosovo (1999), which was carried out under the pretext of protecting Albanians from genocide. The fundamental difference is that NATO's intervention followed international resolutions and broader international consensus, while Russia's intervention in Ukraine was a unilateral decision and without a UN mandate.

The United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and human rights organizations have rejected Russia's justifications, describing them as a pretext for military intervention. Even countries that support Russia (such as China) have not officially endorsed the idea of using force to protect ethnic Russians in Ukraine. From a legal perspective, there is no strong international legal basis to justify Russia's military intervention under the pretext of protecting ethnic Russians.

2.5.3 Achieving regional stability away from NATO expansion

This topic is deemed a complex one. It is related to some geopolitical and historical factors. Due to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the war in Donbas in eastern Ukraine, tension has escalated between Russia and the West. This can be explained from the Russian perspective as follows.

2.5.3.1 Regional stability from Russia's perspective

Russia believes that regional stability in Ukraine is very linked to maintaining its geopolitical influence in the region and stopping the NATO from expansion near Russia's borders (Chae, 2024). Hence, Russia recognizes Ukraine as part of its traditional sphere of influence and that any endeavor by the NATO and Ukraine is a direct threat to the Russian national security (Chae, 2024).

2.5.3.2 Russian Concern Over NATO Expansion

In recent years, NATO expansion to the east, including the accession of countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Romania in the 1990s, has become a major concern for Russia. Moscow views this expansion as a direct threat to its national security, seeing NATO as a hostile military alliance. After the Ukrainian revolution in 2014, which led to the overthrow of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich and initiated Ukrainian moves toward integration into the European Union and NATO, the issue has become more urgent for Russia. Moscow considers that Ukraine's accession to NATO would mean NATO forces on its immediate border, which is an existential threat to Russian security.

2.5.3.3 The war in Ukraine as a "stabilization operation"

In numerous official speeches, Russia has emphasized that its goal of intervening in Ukraine is to protect Russian national security and maintain regional stability. Russia considers Western policies, especially NATO expansion, to be a threat to Russian strategic security (Borgen, 2024). Russia also speaks of protecting Russian minorities in Ukraine, especially in areas such as Crimea and Donbas, considering that there is a threat to the rights of these minorities from the Ukrainian government, especially after the escalation of tensions following the Ukrainian revolution in 2014.

2.6 International Position

The international community, including the European Union and the United States, has insisted that Russia's intervention in Ukraine is illegal. In March 2014, the United Nations condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea in Resolution 68/262, which affirmed Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea. The United States and the European Union responded by imposing economic sanctions on Russia, with the aim of pressuring Moscow to stop its intervention in Ukraine. These sanctions targeted sectors of the Russian economy such as energy, banking, and financial markets. NATO has affirmed its support for Ukraine's right to self-determination and its right to join NATO if it so chooses. Ukraine had already begun to strengthen its relations with NATO since 2010, which was of great concern to Russia.

2.7 Ukraine's position

Ukraine considers Russian intervention a direct aggression against its sovereignty and independence. However, it is trying to maintain its relations with the West, and is seeking political and military support from NATO and the European Union. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly emphasized Ukraine's right to make its own sovereign decisions without interference from Russia or any other powers (Brower, 2022).

2.8 Cases filed by Ukraine against Russia

Due to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia in 2014, Ukraine had filed several cases against Russia in international cases. Such cases take into consideration the violations of international law by Russia due to the war in Crimea and eastern Ukraine and breaches of international agreements and treaties. Of the prominent of these cases are those filed before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and also within the framework of the European Court of Human Rights.

2.8.1 Case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) 2017:

In 2017, Ukraine filed a case against Russia before the International Court Justice where it accused Russia of some violations of international law, especially as regards terrorism and racial discrimination in Crimea and Donbas (Malloy, 2024). In this case, Ukraine accused Russia of financing terrorism in east Ukraine, by providing the separates with weapons and military support. In addition, Ukraine accused Russia of performing ethnic discrimination against Tatars.

However, the court has not issued any decision yet. Nevertheless, in 2017 the court issued an interim ruling where it ordered Russia to stop its support for the armed militias in eastern Ukraine and to protect the Crimean Tatar community. In fact, the cases that concern terrorism and ethnic discrimination may take a long time in court, as evidence is complex to provide.

2.8.1.1 Case before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

In addition to the cases in the international course of justice, Ukraine filed numerous cases before the European Court of Human Rights (Marin and Manova, 2023). These cases took into account violation of human rights in Crimea, especially after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Some of these cases are related to protect the rights of Tatars, the Crimean people and also political activists.

In those cases, Ukraine accused Russia of performing arbitrary arrests, torture and attacks against the freedom of the people like preventing them from the freedom of press. Ukraine accused

Russian of imposing Crimean people to accept Russian citizenship and this is considered as a violation to the right of self-determination.

The European Court of Human Rights sees that the Russian annexation of Crimea is not legal. Therefore, it declared that Russia is responsible for any abuse in Crimea. In fact, the court will make a decision against Russia due to its bad treatment of Ukrainians in Crimea (Dzehtsiarou, 2024).

2.8.3 Environmental Damage in Crimea: A Case against Russia at the International Court of Justice

Furthermore, Ukraine filed a case against Russia as regards environmental damage due to the intervention of Russia in Crimea. This is particularly related to the natural environment and water resources in Crimea. Thus, due to the military actions taken by the Russian forces, Ukraine accused Russia of causing pollution to the environment in Crimea. Furthermore, Ukraine accused Russia of limiting it to access water resources. Thus, when Crimea was annexed by Russia, Ukraine lost control over some rivers and natural resources in Crimea. This has had an impact on the lives of Ukrainians in the border area.

2.9 Cases filed by Russia against Ukraine

Similarly, Russia filed some cases against Ukraine before the international court of justice and the European court of human rights. Such cases are related to supporting terrorism, performing discrimination against Russian minorities, violations of human rights.

2.9.1 The case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ): Terrorism and ethnic discrimination

Russia filed a case before the International Court of Justice against Ukraine in 2017, where it accused Ukraine of supporting terrorism and ethnic discrimination in eastern Ukraine (the Donbas region) and Crimea (Marin and Manova, 2023). In particular, Russia made accusations against Ukraine that it supports armed groups in the Donbas area, where military operations against Russia and pro-Russian forces were performed. According to Russia, Ukraine gives such

groups weapons and money. As for ethnic discrimination, Russia made accusations that state that Ukraine is involved in discrimination against Russian-speaking communities in eastern Ukraine.

As a result of the mutual accusations between Ukraine and Russia, the International Court of Justice demanded that Russia and Ukraine should provide evidence that support their allegations. Still it did not take any decision. In fact, Russia may encounter difficult challenges to legally prove that Ukraine supports terrorism, since the conflict in Donbas is deemed an internal armed conflict in Ukraine.

2.9.2 Case before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR): Discrimination against Russians in Crimea

Besides, Russia filled a case before the European Court of Human Rights against Ukraine in 2021, where it accused Ukraine of deteriorating the conditions of Russian citizens in Crimea after its annexation by Russia (Ingelevič-Citak, 2022). Hence, Russia claims that Ukraine has been practicing discriminating against Russian-speaking citizens in Crimea, especially after Ukraine implemented new laws on the Ukrainian language in education and media. Add to that, Russia has accused Ukraine of imposing restrictions on the political freedoms and civil rights of pro-Russian citizens in Crimea, where several pro-Russian political activists have been arrested, which interferes with freedom of expression and fundamental rights of individuals.

This is an important case where it focuses on violations of rights of language and civil rights. In fact, the European Court of Human Rights could be sensitive to these issues since Ukraine is a member of the Council of Europe where it should be bound by human rights standards. In reality, due to annexing Crimea by Russia, the European Court of Human Rights may consider that Ukraine bears no responsibility in such cases.

As regards the cases that each state filled against the other, it can be remarked here that many legal experts indicated that the International Court of Justice is able to handle cases filled by states against each other under international treaties and agreements that concern human rights and international law (Ogbodo, 2012)

However, other experts confirmed that the court could be in a position where it is difficult for it to face powerful countries like Russia to impose judicial orders, since the as the actual implementation of the rulings depends on political forces and international pressure (Posner, 2004).

In relation to the Ukrainian case, some experts reckon that the International Court of Justice is not the right body to judge military disputes or those cases that require implementation of political decisions. They mention that it can have a role in humanitarian issues as human rights and violation relation to international humanitarian law (Bahiru, 2022).

2.10 The impact of the issues by Russia and Ukraine on the international system

The cases made by Ukraine and Russia against each other are very important in international law and the international order in general. Such cases have a direct effect on the way the world considers the principles of national sovereignty human rights, international law and the way it should be dealt with military attacks and territorial conflicts. These impacts are explained below:

First of all, these issues may strengthen or undermine principles of international law. In relation to this, we can talk about threat to national sovereignty. In fact, the cases made by Ukraine and Russia are related to national sovereignty. For instance, the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia violates the important principles of international law which prohibit any military aggression. Thus, these cases could have an impact on the way countries apply the principle of sovereignty in the future.

In addition, we may talk about the right to use force in armed conflicts. Issues similar to using force in armed conflicts like what happened in Donbas could have a profound impact on the essential rule of international law concerning the use of force; the most important of these principles in UN Charter (Chapter VII of the Charter). Thus, in case that Ukraine has the right to use force or if the claims of Russia of unlawful use of forces are established, this may lead to a legal precedent which would affect the interpretation of international rules concerning the use of force in armed conflicts. In this case, the international system encounters a challenge in implementing the principle of non-intervention and maintaining international peace.

Further, we can mention about promoting human rights in armed conflict. Violation of human rights in Crimea and eastern Ukraine leads to enhancing of human rights in armed conflicts. The international community, thus, will be forced to review the way human rights are applied in regional conflicts.

Besides, the geopolitical balance and the international security system can be mentioned about (Moritsch, 2022). The international security system can be affected, particularly in relation to the balance between major powers. Thus, as Russia is a major power and since it is a permanent member of the UN Security council, one can ask about the fairness of the international system. Russia has received sanctions a lot. Thus, due to those sanctions, the geopolitical divisions between the East and the West will be deepen.

Of the impacts are the effect on the international rules of armed conflict. This concerns the International Humanitarian Law and the Peaceful settlement of disputes. As such, cases regarding attacking civilians and ethnic discrimination could lead to revise the way the International Humanitarian Law is applied in armed conflicts. As for peaceful settlement of disputes, it is also affected, where the way of resolving these disputes peacefully under the auspices of international law is affected.

Chapter Three: The International Law and the Russian-Ukrainian War

3.1. The Russian-Ukrainian War and Its Implications on International Law

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine that started in February 2022 is deemed an important turning point in the international order, where it shows clear contradictions as regards the principles of the international law such sovereignty of states and the right of states to self-defense from one side and the principle of non-interference in affairs of other states on the other side. Such a war is considered an example of the complicated wars as regards the legal challenges that encounter the international community, especially in relation to the right of countries or states to protect their territory and security, due to threat such as the expansion of the NATO (Glynska, 2023). In fact, it has become very obvious that there is a delicate balance between the right to self-defense and the sovereignty of states. This balance is affected due to the conditions of the international system today. Russia justifies its war against Ukraine depending on legal and political arguments which reinforce its position, claiming that its goals are preventive to protect its land from the expansion of the NATO to the east (Allison, 2023).

3.1.2 NATO expansion as a threat to Russian security

Russia believes that the expansion of the NATO to the east is a direct and clear threat to its national security, in particular if the NATO gets closer to the borders of Russia. Basically, the NATO was established to work as a defensive power against the Soviet Union's threats, which collapsed in 1991. Hence, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the NATO started to expand in Easter European countries which in the past were part of the Soviet Union (Chae, 2024). The NATO's expansion to the borders of Russia included countries like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. In addition, the NATO expanded to some other countries like Bulgaria, Romani and the Baltic states. These expansions are taken very serious by Russia that deems them as a threat against its strategic borders. In addition, Russia believes that Ukraine's joining the NATO is a great threat that could be described as an existential threat (Rublovskis, 2023).

The Kremlin sees that if Ukraine joins the NATO, Russia's borders will be filled with Western military bases and this means a direct threat to the sovereignty and national security of Russia. Under this circumstance, Russia puts justifications for its military attack against Ukraine calling it a preventive measure that aims to protect its security from any future threat (Jankovic and Roeben, 2024).

According to the Russians, due to its expansion, the NATO violated the promises it made in the early 1990s. Officials in Russia including Vladimir Putin himself always state that Western officials, especially the Americans, made a promise to Russia that NATO would not expand to the east after Germany was unified. Such promises are not written, in fact. Despite that, Russia sees that the expansion of NATO is a breach of trust.

3.1.3 Russia's position: War as a preventive measure:

Russia depends on the principle of self-defense that is guaranteed by the international law. In particular, Russia exploits Article 51 of the UN Charter. This article informs that states have the right to defend themselves in case they are attacked, whether this attack is a direct one or through obvious threats. Under this circumstance, Russia sees that having Ukraine under the umbrella of the West and especially joining the NATO is a military threat to its national security. Thus, from the perspective of Russia, the military operations in Ukraine are considered preventive (Vark, 2022).

Based on this understanding, Russia believes that its attack against Ukraine is not an aggression against a sovereign country, but a preventive measure that aims to prevent any future threat which could be due to the expansion of the NATO. That is, Russia's position shows a justification in light of the framework of the concept of preventive defense, which in fact was controversial in international law, since it is not all the time considered as a legitimate motive for attack, except in some specific cases, like an imminent threat (Vark, 2022).

3.1.4 Non-interference in internal affairs:

It is a fact that the international law considers the non-interference principle in the internal affairs of states as one of its fundamental principles. This principle is recognized in the UN Charter. This principle makes it clear that the use of force against any sovereign state is prohibited. Hereabout, the contradiction between the right to self-defense and the principle of non-interference becomes clear (Milanovic, 2023).

In fact, due to the war it launched on Ukraine, Russia violated the principle of national sovereignty of Ukraine. No matter how Russia interprets its operations against Ukraine as preventive measure, the intervention of Russia in Ukraine without its agreement and the military activities made by Russia on the Ukrainian territories are deemed a violation of Ukraine's

national sovereignty and the fundamental principles of the international, in particular that of the principle of non-interference (Cavandoli and Wilson 2022).

3.1.5 Russian interpretation within the framework of international law

From a legal perspective, Russia believes that its military operations in Ukraine are made in a response to a real security challenge. Hence, Russia justifies the war as a legitimate preventive measure as it attempts to maintain its security. As explained earlier, Russia depends on the right to self-defense against what it considers a future and real threat from the NATO. In addition, Russia insists that its operations in Ukraine are in light of fighting an expected aggression.

Nevertheless, internationally interpreting such a position is still questionable. This is due to the fact that most international law experts believe that the Russian military operations in Ukraine are a sort of violating the sovereignty of Ukraine and also a breaching of international law, specifically where the UN Security Council has not authorized this intervention. In relation to the Russian veto prevented the security council to take any steps to stop the war. (Peters, 2023).

3.1.6 International position:

At the time Russia defends its preventive measure, the international community rejects it, since the attack of Russia against Ukraine is deemed an aggression which is unjustified based on the provisions of the international law (Hilpold, 2023). In fact, the war of Russia against Ukraine has led to strong criticism from the side of almost the major countries, and the international organizations like the United Nations, the European Union as well as the United States. Such states and organizations considered the Russian war in Ukraine as a major violation of the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs (Hilpold, 2023).

3.2. The contradiction between theoretical principles and practical application of international law in the Russia-Ukraine war

Regulating relations between states takes a good benefit from the international law. In fact, the international law is a crucial theoretical framework in this case. This is to say that the international law puts some basic principles such as respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and the prohibition of the use of force except for self-defense or with the authorization of the UN (Bouchan and Tsagourias, 2024). Nonetheless, it seems that there is a crucial contradiction that appears between such theoretical principles and the

applications of international law, in particular in cases of wars and conflicts where major powers are part in, such as Russian.

For instance, the Russian-Ukrainian war demonstrates how a number of basic principles of international law are being violated and contradict the legal justifications which Russia claim to legalize its military operations. The same as other wars in the region, Russia utilized arguments to justify its intervention in Ukraine, Georgia and the Balkan, like protecting minorities and imminent security threats.

3.2.1 The Russian-Ukrainian War and the Application of International Law:

In order to launch a war against Ukraine, Russia has made arguments which are similar to arguments it made in other conflicts. This includes:

A. Protecting Russian minorities: since the beginning of its war against Ukraine, Russia claimed that it intervenes in Ukraine to protect the Russian minorities in eastern Ukraine (Donbas) and Russian speakers, referring to what it described as threats of persecution by the Ukrainian government, which Russia considered a legitimate motive for carrying out a military operation in 2014 (Hilpold, 2023). Immediately after 2014, with the escalation of tensions in the Donbass region, Russia used the same argument for direct military intervention in 2022, under the pretext of defending national security and protecting Russian speakers in Ukraine, based on the concept of humanitarian protection.

B. NATO expansion: another justification that was made by Russia is the NATO expansion. According to Russia, the continued expansion of NATO to the Russians borders leads to a strategic threat to Russia. Therefore, the Russia described its military operations in Ukraine as a preventive measure that aims to protect its national security from future threats. This in fact contradicts the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states. In addition, it contradicts the principle of sovereignty.

As a matter of fact, the contradiction that appears between this position and the international principles is clear in the way Russia interprets the traditional concept of self-defense and international legitimacy. Despite the security threats pretext, Russia believes that its preventive protection to be bigger than the sovereignty of other states. This again violates the principles of

international law that made it clear that the use of force against sovereign states is prohibited except in cases of self-defense based on Article 51 of the UN Charter.

3.2.2 Other wars and the use of the same arguments

Similar to other arguments in other conflicts such as the 2008 Georgian War and the Balkan Wars, Russia used arguments that show contradictions between the theoretical principles and the application of international law.

A- Russia-Georgia War (2008):

In the Georgian War that occurred in 2008, which started due to a territorial conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia (a separatist region supported by Russia), Russia claimed that it aims to protect Russian minorities in the region to justify its military intervention. Russia demanded the protection of Russian minorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia after the escalation of violence between separatists and Georgians. As such, Russia depended on arguments that seem the same as those used to launch war on Ukraine, considering a military intervention in Georgia as necessary to protect the human rights of ethnic Russian minorities living in such regions (Janse, 2021).

An important point to note here is the mismatch between international principles of non-intervention and the real actions that Russia made in the region. Talking legally, the UN and Security Council did not authorize the military action in Georgia. Thus, Russia's intervention was considered a violation of international law, although Russia argued that its intervention was in humanitarian defense (Janse, 2021)

B. Balkan Wars (1990s):

As for the Balkan wars, in particular the Kosovo war that occurred in (1998-1999), Russia supported Serbia being its ally in its war against Kosovo that wanted to secede from Serbia (Radeljic, 2017). In relation to this, Russia utilized the argument of protecting minorities (the Serb minority in Kosovo) against what it considered as military threat from NATO, that intervened in Kosovo as part of an air campaign against Serbian forces.

Here, the contradiction was obvious in how the NATO intervened to protect human rights of the people of Kosovo against the threats made by the Serbs, whereas Russia intervention was under

the pretext of protecting the rights of Serb minorities against Kosovar who demanded independence. This apparently shows the great contradiction as regards the concept of humanitarian intervention and the principle of national sovereignty.

3.2.3 Theoretical principles and practical application Differences in Russian wars:

The fundamental contradiction between theoretical principles of international law and practical application in wars in which Russia participates lies in the following points (Štulajter, 2017).

A. The principle of national sovereignty:

In theory, international law is based on the principle of respecting the national sovereignty of states (Maftai, 2015). However, in cases where Russia intervenes in Ukraine or Georgia, this sovereignty is violated under the pretext of protecting minorities or defending national security. Russian interventions exceed the sovereign borders of other states and show selectivity in applying the principles of international law.

B. The principle of non-interference:

Under international law, interference in the internal affairs of states is prohibited (Milanovic, 2023). However, Russia has used humanitarian and security arguments to justify military interventions, which contradicts the principle of non-interference on which relations between states in the international system are based.

C. Use of force:

The use of military force in the wars waged by Russia against Ukraine and Georgia contradicts Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force in international relations except in cases of self-defense or with the authorization of the UN Security Council. Russia's military intervention in these wars is taking place without international authorization, making it a clear violation of international law.

3.3 Great Powers Theory

3.3.1 Definition of the Theory

Great Powers Theory is a concept in international relations that refers to states that possess strong global influence, whether military, economic, or political, allowing them to influence the international system and global decision-making. The focus of this theory is on the role of power

balance in shaping the world order, as great powers compete for influence and power, resulting in either stability or conflict depending on the nature of their relationship between these powers.

3.3.2 Basic Characteristics of Great Powers

There are multiple characteristics and features that distinguish great powers from other states. Here we can talk about the following characteristics.

1. Advanced military capabilities: this is related to possessing a strong army, strategic weapons, and a nuclear deterrent.
2. Immense economic power: this factor talks about large GDP, influence in international financial institutions, and control over global supply chains.
3. Extensive political and diplomatic influence: here, we talk about the ability to influence international policies through alliances, international organizations, and political interventions.
4. Possessing a global alliance network: an important idea is the effective participation in international organizations such as the United Nations and the G20, along with the presence of strategic allies.

3.3.3 Historical Development of the Theory

The concept of great powers emerged in the context of the European system following the Napoleonic Wars, when Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria were recognized as great powers. Some traditional powers, such as Germany and France, declined, while the United States and the Soviet Union rose as great powers. The international system was divided between two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, in what became known as the bipolar system. The United States became the sole superpower (unipolarity), but the rise of China and Russia revived the concept of multipolarity.

3.3.4 Great Power Theories in International Relations

A. Realism:

Realists such as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz focused on military power and strategic competition between great powers. Waltz, in his book 'Theory of International Politics' (1979), discussed how great powers influence the stability of the international system.

B. Liberalism:

The theory holds that great powers can achieve stability through international institutions and economic cooperation. Robert Keohane, in his book 'After Hegemony' (1984), explained how great powers contribute to the construction of the international system through organizations and institutions.

C. Constructivism:

This theory concentrates on how a great power is constructed through ideas, identity, and international legitimacy. Alexander Wendt, in his book 'Social Theory of International Politics' (1999), pointed to the role of discourse and national identities in shaping the position of great powers.

3.3.5 Examples of Great Powers Throughout History

- A. The British Empire (19th century – mid-20th century)
- B. The United States (from World War II to the present)
- C. The Soviet Union (1945–1991)
- D. Modern China (gradual rise since the end of the 20th century)

3.3.6 The Future of Great Powers

There is debate about whether the world is moving toward multipolarity with the rise of China and Russia, or whether the United States will continue to be the dominant superpower. Some scholars, such as John Mearsheimer in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001), believe that competition among great powers will remain the primary factor determining the future of the international order.

3.4 Challenges of International Law and States with Special Privileges

The international system grants a veto power for five permanent members of the Security Council. These are the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia. In fact, the veto power is one of the major challenges that weaken the effectiveness of international law in addressing issues related to international peace and security (Peters, 2023). Despite the fact that the veto power is part of the United Nations mechanism, it raises serious questions about its ability to achieve international justice and accountability. This power gives the five "big" states

the ability to block any decision taken within the Security Council, even if there is a majority in favor of that decision. Herewith, we outline the most prominent challenges facing international law in the face of the veto power are:

A. Obstruction of international justice:

In case of huge violations of human rights and great crimes such as a genocide or an aggression, the permanent members of the Security Council are able to use the veto to undermine international attempts that address such crimes (Wouters, 2005). As such, the veto is a tool that obstructs international justice, resulting in making it difficult to bring those responsible for these crimes to justice or take decisive action against them.

B. Political dominance:

Russia is considered one of the states with special privileges. Due to that, it can use the veto to achieve their interests, regardless of the moral or legal context. Doing that, such states influence and direct the Security Council decisions in their interests, even if those decisions conflict with human rights or the principles of international law.

C. International deadlock:

The veto power leads to a state of deadlock in decision-making within the United Nations, preventing effective response to major crises such as wars or armed conflicts that threaten international peace.

3.4.1 Legal ways to limit the veto in cases of genocide and aggression

Because of the fact that the veto is normally used by the permanent states to block decisive actions related to international crimes like a genocide or an aggression, there should be some legal ways that limit this right (Trahan, 2019). For instance, we can talk about:

A. Removing the veto in cases of serious crimes:

The UN Charter could be amended to prohibit the use of the veto in resolutions relating to genocide or aggression, similar to how the UN deals with urgent humanitarian issues such as responding to epidemics or famines.

B. Independent Investigation Mechanism:

An impartial and independent mechanism could be established to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of crimes against humanity or genocide, thus enabling the UN General Assembly to take action even without a Security Council resolution.

C. Strengthening the role of the General Assembly:

The role of the General Assembly in decision-making could be considered in exceptional cases, where the General Assembly may take binding decisions even if a Security Council member vetoes them. Such decisions could include imposing sanctions or other measures against a particular State based on the recommendations of an independent body.

D. Amendment of the UN Charter:

The amendment could include an amendment to the UN Charter that would allow for a reduction in the use of the veto, especially in cases where there is a threat of military escalation or the occurrence of crimes against humanity. For example, the veto could be abolished in cases where urgent action is required against human rights violations in the event of genocide or an aggressive attack against another state.

E. Defining the scope of the veto:

The scope of the veto could be defined in specific areas, so that it is prohibited in cases related to major crimes, such as aggression and genocide, which are crimes considered a threat to international peace and security. A mechanism could also be imposed that prevents major powers from using the veto to protect their political interests in conflicts.

F. Defining special conditions for the use of the veto:

A clear mechanism could be provided to activate the veto only in certain contexts or under specific conditions, reducing the ability of major powers to block Security Council decisions. This amendment could be part of the necessary reforms to the Security Council to ensure its effective response to contemporary challenges.

3.4.2 Russia's right to use the veto against Western attempts to impose its agenda

Russia, as one of the permanent members of the Security Council, has repeatedly used its veto in recent years to respond to Western attempts to direct a certain political agenda against it. This

includes issues related to military interventions in the affairs of other countries, NATO expansion, and maintaining Russia's internal stability in the face of Western pressure (Peters, 2023).

Russia believes that the West seeks to change the international system in favor of its interests, ignoring the interests of other major powers. Hence, Russia's use of the veto in cases such as the Russian-Ukrainian war or other Western interventions in its traditional areas of influence can be explained. Besides, Russia sees the use of the veto as part of protecting its national sovereignty in the face of Western attempts to interfere in its internal affairs or in the affairs of areas of influence that it considers vital, such as Ukraine and Syria (Nadkarni, 2024). From this perspective, the veto is an important tool in maintaining the stability of the international system based on balances. Furthermore, Russia asserts its right to respond to Western actions that it sees as a threat to its national security or stability. According to this view, the veto is not just a means of blocking decisions that threaten its interests, but also a tool for defending the principle of national sovereignty and international balance (Nadkarni, 2024).

3.5 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter highlights the gap between international law's theoretical framework and its application, emphasizing the power struggles that shape global legal decisions. In doing so, the chapter explores the implications of the Russia-Ukraine war on international law, highlighting contradictions between legal principles and real-world application. It also talked about the Russian-Ukrainian War and Its Implications on International Law, Contradictions between Theoretical Principles and Practical Application, Great Powers Theory, and Challenges of International Law and States with Special Privileges

Chapter Four: Unipolar International System and Dominance

4.1 An Overview of Unipolar International System

In definition, a unipolar international system is the kind of international system where a single power dominates international relations, with one country controls the rest of the world at the military, economic and political levels. Such a kind was a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990s, where the United States became the only superpower (Ikenbery et al., 2009). Based on this system, other countries are unable to compete for dominance, and the United States started to impose its policies and ideologies over the world (Ikenbery et al., 2009). This does not indicate that other countries or states are absent from the scene, but the influence of the United States remains the most powerful all over the globe.

4.1.1 America's dominance over NATO:

The NATO, i.e., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance that was founded in the 1949 to face threats of the Soviet Union in the Cold War (Lindely-French and Macfarlane, 2007). When the Cold War ended, the United States dominated this alliance, where under its leadership, the NATO expanded to other countries including countries in Eastern Europe. This signals the influence of the United States to shape security and defense policies in Europe and the world. Besides, the United States was the leading country in allocating military resources and expenditures within the alliance, which strengthened its control over global security strategies (Harman, 2024). It is a fact that the United States is the fundamental power in the NATO where it is the major contributor as regards defense budget. Being led by the US, the NATO, as mentioned earlier, is dominated by the US. Thus, the US puts the military policies of the NATO and directs the alliance's defense strategies (Ringsomse and Rynning, 2009).

Furthermore, since the end of the Cold War, the US aimed to expand NATO to include new countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This expansion aimed not only to enhance the stability of these regions, but also to ensure continued American dominance over security policies in Europe (Ringsomse and Rynning, 2009). With the accession of countries such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in the 1990s, and then others such as the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) in 2004, American influence in the alliance increased.

Another important fact about the dominance of the United States over the NATO is that it sets the alliance's military agenda (Jeune, 2010). For example, in major emergencies or crises, such as the

military intervention in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) in 2001, the United States led the military operations, while European countries often had a limited role in the leadership.

4.1.2 America's dominance over the United Nations

The United Nations (UN), being an international organization, was founded in 1945, aiming at promoting international peace, human rights and other significant issues concerning the development of the people worldwide (WEISS, 2015). America has a significant role in the foundation and structure of this organization and its policies (Alger et al., 1995). It is a known fact that America is one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and has veto power that enables it to block any decision that conflicts with its interests (Alger et al., 1995). In addition, the United States is considered the mere superpower at least for a good time. Such privileges and features led the United States to control the political and security decisions worldwide. Moreover, America has a clear, significant role in funding the United Nations. This allowed the United States to set political and economic agendas of the United Nations, giving it the ability to influence many global issues, from human rights to international security (Tadjbakhsh, 2005).

One more important fact or factor that shows the dominance of the US over the UN is that the US is a major player in responding to the UN's international crisis, especially if they are major ones, such as the humanitarian disasters. An example on this is seen in cases of conflicts in countries like Iraq and Libya. In this context, America was able to shape the position of the UN when it exerted strong diplomatic pressure on member states, through the Security Council (Tadjbakhsh, 2005).

4.1.3 US Dominance of the World Bank

Founded in 1994, the World Bank is an international financial body, which endeavors to support economic development in developing countries (Talero and Gaudette, 1996). In fact, America has the largest shareholder in the World Bank. This results in the US having a great influence in determining the policies of the bank. The United States exploits the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to impose economic reforms in countries with economic problems, where it provides them with loans. Such reforms are in the favor of the US economic and political interests (Reinsberg et al., 2023).

As a matter of fact, the issue of dominating the World Bank by America is considered one of the significant issues in the global financial system (Reinsberg et al.,2023). The foundation of the World Bank was based on the Bretton Woods Agreement, aiming at reconstructing Europe after World War 2. After that, it developed to become an international financial institution to support economic development (Adelman, 2010). The US influence over the World Bank is seen in the orientations of the Bank, where the United States imposes some economic models that could not be suitable for all countries. A clear example on this is the neoliberal policies which the World Bank promotes like reducing government intervention in the economy. These policies reflect the economic ideology of the United States (Adelman, 2010)

4.1.4 Russian policies against American hegemony

Starting from the end of the Cold War, Russia started to recover its status as a superpower to encounter the American hegemony in the state of a unipolar world order. Russia used a set of policies economically, militarily, diplomatically to face the US influence. Such policies are related to (1) calling for multipolar system. Based on this, Russia wants to promote a world order that is multipolar to take the place of the unipolar system which the United States leads; (2) decreasing the influence of the US international institutions. Through this factor, Russia backed up partnerships with some powers like China and India; and (3) participating in the United Nations. Russia is a country that has the right to use the Veto as one of the five permanent countries in the UN. Due to that, Russia used the veto many times in the Security Council to go against resolutions which demonstrate the American and Western interests (Peters, 2023).

Russia has also invested in modernizing its military where it started to develop advanced weapons like hypersonic missiles and air defense systems such as the S-400 and S-500. Similar to China, Russia aimed to expand its influence in areas, which were considered from the Soviet Union, like Ukraine and Georgia. For instance, it annexed Crimea in 2014, supported separatist in eastern Ukraine and strengthened its presence in the Middle East.

Of the other important policies that Russia used to encounter the US hegemony is countering the American economic expansion. Thus, Russia reduced its dependence on the American dollar by calling for using national currencies with its trading partners like China and India. In addition, Russia countered the sanctions imposed on it by the West by promoting self-sufficiency and supporting national industries and increasing its trade and investments in Asia and Africa, to

compensate for losses resulting from Western sanctions and to expand its economic influence (Garicano et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Russia started to build alliances with China and other countries in different fields like economy, technology, and defense in order to counter the American pressure. With Iran also Russia supported Iran to face the American sanctions. Besides, Russia started to strengthen its presence in Africa and Latin America where it intensified its efforts to strengthen its cooperation with Africa and Latin America to face the influence of the United States (Garicano et al., 2022).

4.2. The Russian Ukrainian War in Light of the Great Powers Theory

Great powers like the United States and its current dominance over several things we mentioned and Russia which tries to restore its position in the world could lead to wars like the current Russian-Ukrainian war. This War stands out as one of the most significant geopolitical conflicts of the twenty-first century, showing the great powers' effort to shape the international order.

Based on the great power's theory, it is stated that nations with global influence use their military, economic, and political power to maintain their position and prevent their competitors from bolstering their influence. In this view, war is understood as part of the ongoing conflict between major powers, specifically between Russia, which is seeking to reclaim influence, and the United States and NATO, which are trying to keep Russia under control.

4.2.1 Interpretation of war according to the concepts of great power theory

First: the international system and the struggle of the world order

The structure of the international system dictates the actions of the great powers. This is based on Kenneth Waltz's explanation of the new realism in International Policy Theory (1979). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991), the international system became unipolar under American hegemony. In this case, the United States attempted to expand the NATO, since the Soviet Union is no longer a challenge. However, Russia is of the opinion that NATO's expansion to the east poses a threat to encircle and weaken its power as a superpower. Russia's response to the attempt to alter the system and transform it into a multipolar system, in which Russia would dominate alongside China and the United States, is the war.

Second: offensive realism and Russian expansion

Following Offensive Realism developed by Mearsheimer, (2001), superpowers constantly strive to enhance their power to prevent others from dominating it. Russia believes that Ukraine must remain within its geopolitical sphere of influence to prevent NATO from expanding to its borders. Russia also sees that control of Ukraine strengthens its ability to exert influence in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea. The Great Powers' strategy of strategic expansion and ensuring national security is aligned with Russian actions, which include the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the comprehensive invasion in 2022.

Third: Balance of Power and West's Response

The theory of balance of power states that superpowers strive to prevent any other force from achieving excessive dominance. The West's support for Ukraine with weapons and economic sanctions is an attempt to maintain a balance of power and prevent Russia from securing a strategic victory. Russia's economic sanctions are meant to reduce its military and economic capabilities, preventing it from becoming an influential superpower. The Western deterrence strategy involves supporting Ukraine with sophisticated weapons like HIMARS missiles, Leopard tanks, and F-16 fighters to prevent Russia from achieving its objectives easily.

4.2.2 Geopolitical and economic factors effect

a. Geopolitical dimension: Ukraine as a buffer State

Ukraine has been a key element in Russia's security strategy, serving as a buffer state between Russia and NATO. The expansion of Russia's border with the Alliance will be significant if Ukraine joins NATO, which would be a direct threat to Moscow. Russia's goal is to prevent Ukraine from becoming a hostile Western base through the war.

b. Economic factor: energy and natural resources

Russia is a major exporter of oil and gas worldwide, and these resources are employed as an economic tool against Europe. The conflict between great powers was complicated due to Europe's reliance on Russian gas. The war brought economic benefits to the United States through the export of liquefied gas to Europe and the increase in arms exports.

4. Great Powers' military and diplomatic strategies

a. Russian Strategy

Russia aimed at weakening the Ukrainian state by targeting civilian and military infrastructure. Besides, its annexation of (Crimea, Lugansk, Donetsk, Zaporugia and Jerson) is a tactic to promote geopolitical influence. Another strategy that was followed by Russia is relying on alliances with China and Iran to compensate for the West's economic and military isolation.

B. US Strategy and Education

The United States' use economic sanctions aimed at isolating Russia and massively fund the war. Of the strategies followed by the US is supplying Ukraine with modern weapons to prolong the war, most notably in the bulletins issued by the Russian Armed Forces. Furthermore, the NATO's alliance with Finland and Sweden increased pressure on Russia.

5. Future Scenarios According to the Great Power Theory

A. A Prolonged War (Proxy War Between Great Powers)

Based on this, the war could turn into a protracted Cold War-style conflict, with the great powers using Ukraine as a proxy battlefield.

B. A Russian Victory and the Imposition of a New Order

If Russia achieves a military victory, it could reshape the global order toward multipolarity, strengthening its influence. This would strengthen China's position as Russia's strategic ally against the West.

C. A Ukrainian Victory and a Weakening of Russia

If Ukraine is able to regain its territory with Western support, it could undermine Russia's status as a great power. This could lead to unrest within Russia and weaken Putin's rule.

D. A Diplomatic Settlement and the Partition of Ukraine

In this scenario, a peace agreement could be reached that would result in Ukraine being divided between areas controlled by Russia and those under Western influence.

In conclusion, the Russian-Ukrainian war is not just a local conflict; it is one manifestation of the competition between great powers to reshape the global order. From its side, Russia is trying to rebalance power in its favor, while the United States and its allies are trying to prevent it from

achieving this goal. Ultimately, the war confirms that great power competition remains the primary driver of international relations, according to great power theory.

4.3 The repercussions of war on the reshaping of the international order: Focus on tensions in US-Russian relations

Wars, similar to those conflicts like that of the Ukrainian crisis, played an important role in shaping or reshaping the international system and increasing tensions between superpowers, especially the United States and Russia. What follows are the impacts of such tensions on the international system.

4.3.1 Increasing tensions between Russia and United States

Because the Ukrainian war increased, the United States and Western countries expelled a good number of Russian diplomats due to the accusations of Russian interference in the Western countries' affairs like the cyber-attacks and the poisoning of the Russia spy Sergei Skripal (Riehle, 2024). In return, Russia expelled American and European diplomats, resulting in escalating tensions between Russia and the West. Hence, the gap was deepened between Russia and the West, especially America, where the chance of dialogue to resolve conflicts was affected.

4.3.2 The economic sanctions on Russia

The United States and European countries imposed economic sanctions on Russia due to the annexation of Crimea. These sanctions became even more after the Russian military operation in Ukraine in 2022. Such sanctions focused on targeting important fields like technology, energy and finance, as well as military industries (Itskhoki and Ribakova, 2024). Moreover, the sanctions imposed by the West against Russia led to freeze the assets of Russia institutions; this includes the reserves of the Russia Central Bank. In fact, the sanctions against Russian resulted in some impacts on Russia at different levels (Itskhoki and Ribakova, 2024). In this context, the sanctions resulted in an economic downturn and an increase in inflation in Russia. Moreover, the Russia currency, i.e., Ruble has had its value declined.

Russia made its best to withstand these sanctions. Under this circumstance, Russia started to restructure its economy. Thus, Russia started to strengthen local economic sectors to decrease their dependence on Western imports. Moreover, Russia started a policy of self-sufficiency as regards food and industry where it started initiatives to support local products. Furthermore,

Russia opened new markets and directed its exports to Asia, especially to China and India. In spite of the sanctions, Russia continued to export oil and gas to Europe for a long period after the sanctions were imposed, as European countries were heavily dependent on Russian supplies.

Financially, Russia established an alternative system to 'SWIFT' in order to enable international financial exchanges (Cipriani, et al.,2023). Add to that, Russia reinforced the use of the Ruble in international trade and strengthened its gold reserves and worked to de-peg it from the dollar.

These tensions between Russia and America have their impact on the international system. Thus, the tension or conflict, in fact, between Russia and America led to end the unipolar hegemony, resulting in strengthening a multipolar system including countries such as China and India, which started to be major players in the international system (Cipriani, et al.,2023). Such tensions also have had impacts on international alliances. Thus, new alliances have appeared such as the Russian, Chinese cooperation and the BRICS group (Wang and Long, 2024).

4.3.3 Exploitation of the Russian-Ukrainian war by China

The Russian-Ukrainian war has led to great changes in the international system and provided China with a strategic opportunity to enhance its influence on the world stage. On the other hand, this war has brought Moscow and Beijing closer together, increasing the possibility of the emergence of a strong Russian-Chinese axis capable of confronting American hegemony. The following points explain the Chinese' exploitation of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

A. Strengthening Its Economic Position

China is very clever in exploiting tensions and conflicts between countries. In the case of Russia, China bought Russian gas and oil at a discounted price, where this helped it to boost its economy. Furthermore, as a result of the Western companies withdrawing from Russia, China expanded its emergence in the Russian market, particularly in technology, cars and electronics. An example on this is related to the Chinese companies like Xiaomi and Huawei which became major alternative to Western products in Russia (Kluge, 2024).

B. Strengthening Its Role as a Diplomatic Mediator

China has been careful to take a balanced position on the Russia-Ukraine war. It has not directly supported Russia publicly, but at the same time has criticized Western sanctions and supported

Moscow's narrative about NATO expansion (Feng and He, 2024). In addition, China has exploited the war to enhance its image as a peace-loving country. It has put forward initiatives to resolve the conflict, which has helped it improve its image in the international community, especially among the countries of the Global South.

C. Strengthening its role in Asia and Europe

China has taken advantage of the preoccupation of the United States and European countries with the war to push its initiatives in Asia, such as strengthening its influence in the South China Sea and expanding the Belt and Road Initiative. Additionally, China has supported the idea of a multipolar world order as an alternative to the unipolar order led by the United States, with an emphasis on cooperation with Russia and the countries of the Global South (Turner, 2009).

4.2.4. Russian-Chinese rapprochement and the emergence of an anti-American hegemonic axis

The Russian-Chinese rapprochement is very clear in nowadays. They have built a kind of strategic partnership at different levels. Thus, at the economic level, China is now the largest trading partner for Russia. The two countries expanded their cooperation in energy projects like gas pipelines. At the level of technology, China supported technology transfer to Russia in areas like electronics and artificial intelligence (Turner, 2009). Additionally, at the military level, Russia and China intensified their joint military exercises, which includes exercises in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, proving their defense cooperation (Turner, 2009). What important in this level is their confronting of the NATO. Thus, the Russian and Chinese military cooperation demonstrates a common understanding to face the NATO military influence (Kluge, 2024). Politically, the two countries are seen in the same line. These two countries share common opposition to economic sanctions imposed by Western countries as a tool of political pressure. Besides, they work together to provide support to countries in the Global South and undermine American influence in international institutions (Kluge, 2024).

4.4. The impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the transformation of the international system into a multipolar one

The Russian-Ukrainian affected international relations and resulted in fostering the transition from a unipolar system dominated by the United States to a multipolar system. The war directly affected the strengthening of new regional and international alliances, such as the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization and the BRICS group, and gave impetus to the demands of developing countries to reform the international system to become more inclusive and pluralistic (Behr and Jokela, 2011). Thus, there are impacts of the war on the multipolar international system. To start with, the American hegemony started to be weak. Thus, the Western sanctions which were aimed at Russia led many countries to search for alternatives as regards the US-led system. In fact, due to the US failure in imposing global consensus as regards the sanctions against Russia showed that its influence is limited on the international stage (Korhonen, 2019). Additionally, alternative axes started to emerge and be strong. For instance, the Russian and Chinese axis strengthen the strategic partnership between Russia and China. Further, Russia and China's cooperation increased in areas like trade, energy, and technology (Korhonen, 2019). Another impact is the appearance of regional powers. In this context, Turkey, India and the Gulf States are seen as regional powers that aim to achieve their interests outside of traditional alignments. This war led to strengthen new regional and international alliances, in fact. In relation to this, some organizations have appeared. Of these organizations are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS group.

As for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it was established to strengthen security and economic cooperation. This organization includes countries like Russia, China and other Central Asia countries. These countries aim to strengthen their role to confront Western hegemony (Korhonen, 2019). This organization concentrates on security issues like countering terrorism and creating ways to resolve regional conflicts without Western intervention. In addition, it focuses on economic cooperation between the members of it to promote trade and financial exchanges using domestic currencies instead of the US dollar (Behr and Jokela, 2011).

Another important group is the BRICS. This group aimed at strengthening economic and political interests of the members that include Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The Russian-Ukrainian war showed the significance of BRICS in developing an alternative financial system to that controlled by the United States. Many projects were proposed by this group such as launching a common currency and strengthening the use of national currencies in trade (Behr and Jokela, 2011). Furthermore, the group became a center for the reformation of international institutions like the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, making them more representative of developing countries. The group has played a role in promoting trade among its

members and providing alternatives to markets affected by Western sanctions (Rasoulinezhad and Jabalameli 2018).

4.3.1 The Role of the Developing Countries in a Multipolar System

The developing countries demand a multipolar international system. In this context, a lot of the developing countries refused to join Western sanctions against Russia, demonstrating the desire of these countries to have independent policies (Zhongping et al., 2009). As such, India, Brazil and South Africa and some other countries back up the idea of a multipolar system in order to avoid the pressure of the West and enhance their economic and political sovereignty. These developing countries demand an increase in the UN security council for their presence in order to change the global balance of power. Additionally, these countries call and concentrate on decreasing their dependence on the US dollar and using their national currencies in trading. By doing this, the developing countries aim to decrease the control of the Western financial bodies like the World Bank. Moreover, some developing countries like India and Turkey are considered key players in mediating between Russia and Ukraine, showing their aim to be influential peacemakers (Zhongping et al., 2009).

4.5. President Putin's Personality and Role in Challenging the Unipolar Order

Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, is one of the most prominent global leaders who challenges the unipolar international order led by the United States since the end of the Cold War. His political vision is rooted in his understanding of Russia's role as a great power, his deep impact on the collapse of the Soviet Union, and his belief in the importance of restoring Russia's global standing. Putin has played a crucial role in trying to change the rules of the international game and reshape the international order in ways that reduce Western dominance (Lamy, 2023).

According to Putin, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century" (Lamy, 2023). Therefore, such an event shaped the way Putin view the world, since he considers that Russia has lost its status as a great power and was humiliated on the international stage. The impact of the collapse on his political thinking made him determined to restore Russia's global standing, believing that the post-Cold War world order weakens Russia and exploits its weakness (Lamy, 2023).

Furthermore, Putin considers that Russia is son of the Soviet Union, and believes that it has a historical role in shaping the international order. He attempted to strengthen Russian national identity and project military and diplomatic power as part of restoring Russia's glory. In this case, Putin reckons that the world must be multipolar, and that Russia should be one of those poles being a nuclear power with its natural resources, and cultural and political influence. Additionally, Putin believes remarks that the international system which is controlled by the US is unfair and unsustainable. As such, he calls for the idea of multipolar world order as a substitute that bestows sovereign countries the ability to make their decisions without the interference of external powers (Kurowska, 2014).

The role that Putin played in strengthening the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS group as mechanisms to counter Western influence is a major one. Putin supported the establishment of alternative financial systems that decrease the dependence on the American dollar in international trade (Kurowska, 2014). Hence, Putin demanded to make a reformation for the United Nations and the Security Council as to make the Western dominance reduced and make the organization more representative of developing countries. Putin showed that there is a need to respect the sovereignty of states and prevent interference in their internal affairs, criticizing the United States' use of the Security Council to justify its military interventions (Kurowska, 2014).

In relation to the Western sanctions against Russia and other countries, Putin considered them as a tool of political and economic blackmail. In this case, he remarked that the dollar is a means used by the United States to impose its hegemony over the global economy, and called for reducing dependence on it (Lawrence, 2022). Thus, according to Putin the use of the dollar as a global reserve currency gives the United States an unfair influence over the global economy. Therefore, he pushed for the promotion of the use of local currencies in bilateral trade between Russia and its partners, especially with China and India (Lawrence, 2022).

Having all of such ideas, Putin's leadership made Russia support the idea of creating a new global financial system that includes banks and investment funds independent of Western hegemony. As such, Russia contributed to the establishment of new financial institutions such as the BRICS Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Kurowska, 2014). President Putin criticized Western sanctions against Russia, calling them illegal and contrary to the principles of free trade.

He worked to strengthen economic relations with Asian and African countries to compensate for the losses resulting from Western sanctions (Lawrence, 2022).

In order to restore Russia as an effective power, Putin has modernized the Russian military by investing heavily in developing military technology. Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and Syria reflects his determination to restore Russia as an effective military power (Lawrence, 2022).

Putin has challenged the West on many issues, from NATO expansion to the intervention in Ukraine, where he considered NATO expansion a direct threat to Russia's security. Russia has strengthened its role as a state confronting American policies, enhancing Russia's image as a defender of countries facing Western pressure (Lamy, 2023).

Putin has strengthened the strategic partnership with China as a means of countering the United States. This includes cooperation in energy, trade, and technology. The Russia-China alliance reflects Putin's vision of a multipolar world order, where Russia and China are able to challenge the United States.

Putin has used military intervention in Syria to enhance Russia's influence in the region and project it as a power that cannot be ignored. Strong relations with countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia have made Russia a major player in energy markets and regional politics.

4.5.1 Putin's Global Vision Methods

The Russian President considers a number of methods to achieve his vision of restoring Russia to its position as a great power in the international system. These methods include the use of soft power, promoting international propaganda through Russian media, enhancing Russia's image as a protector of traditional values, as well as economic tools such as reducing dependence on the dollar and expanding financial cooperation with friendly countries. These strategies work to enhance Russia's image globally and undermine Western hegemony.

4.5.2 Soft Power and International Propaganda

Putin uses Russian media like RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik to exert his influence on the international public opinion (Lamy, 2023). Such media channels depended upon by Putin provide counter-narrative to Western media where they focus on showing the Western double standards in relation to international politics (Lawrence, 2022). Such channels support the values and

policies of Russia and show Russia as a counterweight to Western Hegemony (Wilson, 2017). Moreover, these channels reinforce the Russian narrative on issues such as Ukraine, Western sanctions, and American interference in other countries' affairs.

4.5.3 Promoting a Multipolar System:

The pro-Russian media promote the idea that tells that the world needs an international system which is free from American hegemony. For Putin, Russia is a country that defends Christian and traditional values in the face of the "moral decay" attributed to the Western system. In different interview, Putin confirmed that Russia is a "Christian country" that refuses to support policies such as same-sex marriage or promote what he considers foreign Western values (Wilson, 2017). This strategy aims to win the support of conservative populations at home and abroad, especially in countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

4.5.4 Challenges Facing Putin to Achieve His Global Vision

4.5.4.1 External Challenges

The Russian President encounters different challenges that hinder the realization of his vision of Russia as a great power in a multipolar world order. These challenges fall into two main categories: Western challenges that include economic, political, and military pressures, and internal challenges related to the Russian economy, social stability, and political resistance within Russia (Lamy, 2023). These challenges represent major obstacles to achieving his goals and strengthening Russia's position on the international stage.

Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, the West has imposed economic sanctions on Russia. The sanctions aimed at vital sectors such as energy, banking, technology, and military products. They restricted access to Western financial markets, affecting foreign investment and Russian economic growth (Wilson, 2017).

Sanctions led to a decline in the value of the ruble and increased inflation, affecting the standard of living of Russian citizens. Despite Russia's attempts to bypass sanctions through partnerships with countries such as China and India, their impact still represents a major challenge.

The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) increased their military spending, putting pressure on Russia to keep up with this race. Russian intervention in Ukraine has led to the strengthening of NATO's presence in Eastern Europe, which poses a direct threat to

Russia. The Russian-Ukrainian war has become draining for Russia economically and militarily. The extensive Western support for Ukraine, both through arms and financial support, has made it difficult for Russia to achieve its military objectives quickly.

4.5.4.2 Internal Challenges

In fact, the Russian economy depends so much on oil and gas exports. Therefore, any fluctuation in global energy prices affects the Russian economy in a direct way (Sun et al., 2024). The sanctions which the western countries imposed on Russian oil and gas, forced Russia to start looking for new markets, such as Asia. As a matter of fact, Russia encounters problems in diversifying its economy away from natural resources, making it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations (Sun et al., 2014). The economic slowdown and the increasing cost of living affect the level of satisfaction of the Russian people, which may threaten internal stability.

Moreover, Putin is in front of internal opposition from some political and societal forces that object to his policies. Despite the government's severe repression of the opposition, such as arresting opponents and closing non-governmental organizations, there is growing internal discontent as a result of economic and political pressures. Russia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state, and some regions suffer from internal tensions, especially in areas such as the North Caucasus.

It is important to state that the new generation of Russians, who grew up in a period of globalization, tends to be more open to the world and less attached to Putin's traditional ideas. This generation may object to Putin's nationalist and isolationist policies.

The corruption seen in the Russian state institutions is a major challenge to economic and administrative reforms. Hence, weak administrative efficiency in some sectors hinders the implementation of Putin's ambitious policies.

4.6. Possible scenarios of the international system after the Russian-Ukrainian War

4.6.1 Scenario 1: Continued US hegemony (unipolarity)

This scenario states that the United States and its Western allies are able to maintain their control over the international system, strengthening their position as the world's dominant power. This scenario depends on several interconnected factors and implications.

4.6.1.1 Imposing more sanctions on Russia

In reality, the sanctions of the west against Russia weaken its economy, where they put Russia in a problem as regards financing its military and political efforts (Ahmadi, 2022). Moreover, working on tightening the noose on Russia financially and technologically leads to problematize the ability of Russia to develop vital industries and innovation (Ahmadi, 2022). The United States succeeds in reducing Russia's influence by isolating it from global markets and strengthening alliances with countries opposed to Moscow.

4.6.1.2 Control over international institutions

In fact, international bodies such as the United Nations and the World Bank are controlled by the west where the United States is using them to promote its political and economic agenda. The West continues to exploit the Security Council as a tool of pressure on Russia and China through Western veto and institutional alliances. NATO is showing greater cohesion with increased defense spending and a stronger military presence in Eastern Europe (Kunertova and Schmitt 2024).

4.6.1.3 Weakness of the Russian-Chinese alliance

China and Russia face difficulties in building a strong strategic alliance due to their different political and economic priorities. China is focused on strengthening its global economic influence, while Russia is interested in rebuilding its military and geopolitical influence.

4.6.1.4 Consequences of Continued American Hegemony

International institutions remain tied to Western values such as democracy, human rights, and free economy. In addition, Western alliances are strengthened to ensure control over conflict zones and influence global markets. On the other hand, Russia is isolated politically and economically, reducing its ability to play a major role in the international system. Additionally, China is forced to adopt more open policies toward the West to avoid economic isolation, limiting its geopolitical ambitions (Buzna et al., 2024). As for the United States, it remains the dominant global power, especially in the technological, military, and economic fields. Add to that, the dominance of the dollar as the global reserve currency is strengthened and reliance on American technology in all sectors is seen.

4.6.2 Scenario 2: A Multipolar World

According to this scenario, the international system is gradually moving toward a multipolar system, with Russia and China leading new alliances to challenge U.S. and Western hegemony (Vlados et al., 2022). These alliances are reinforced by economic, political, and military partnerships with developing countries, diminishing U.S. and Western influence on the international stage. There are factors that support the emergence of this scenario.

4.6.2.1. Russia and China lead new alliances

There could be an expansion of the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) to enhance economic and trade cooperation among its members, with a focus on reducing reliance on the US dollar in trade transactions. In addition, there could be initiatives such as the New Development Bank (NDB) to enhance financial cooperation among BRICS countries and reduce Western dominance over the global financial system (Vlados et al., 2022).

Russia and China are working to expand the role of the Shanghai Organization as a political and security alliance to counter Western influence in Asia. This is in addition to enhancing military and security cooperation among member states to confront common threats, such as terrorism and Western military influence. In reality, Russia and China are strengthening their economic partnership through joint projects, such as energy pipelines and local currency trade agreements (Vlados et al., 2022).

4.6.2.2 Developing countries shifting towards this camp

Developing countries, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, see the Russian-Chinese camp as a partner that provides alternative options away from Western conditions related to democracy and human rights. These countries seek greater independence from Western financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) enhances Chinese influence in developing countries through infrastructure projects and massive investments. Russia presents itself as a reliable ally in the face of Western pressure, especially for countries suffering from Western sanctions or interference.

4.6.2.3 Declining Western influence

It is a true fact that tensions between the United States and its European allies over policies such as economic sanctions or engagement with China could weaken Western unity. The high costs of maintaining global hegemony, such as military interventions and support for allies, could prompt the United States to reduce its international engagement.

4.6.2.4 Implications of the shift towards a multipolar world

1. Declining dominance of the US dollar

The use of local currencies in trade between BRICS countries and developing countries reduces the dominance of the dollar as a global reserve currency. Besides, the development of alternative payment systems, such as the Russian payment system "Mir" or its Chinese counterpart reduces the impact of Western sanctions (Kluge, 2024).

2. Shifting international power balances

Instead of US dominance, the world is witnessing the emergence of multiple powers that are shaping the international system. The increasing influence of developing countries in determining global policies as a result of the support of Russia and China (Kluge, 2024).

3. Changing the rules of the international game

In actuality, Western values such as democracy and human rights are losing their power as global standards, with the rise of values of national sovereignty and respect for national interests (Kluge, 2024). As such, the international system is becoming more diverse and less centralized, with multiple major players.

4.6.2.5 Challenges facing this scenario

1. Tensions between Russia and China:

Despite the strong partnership, differences may arise between Russia and China due to competition for influence in Central Asia or global markets. China may see itself as a leader, while Russia seeks to avoid being a secondary partner.

2. Strong Western resistance:

The United States and its allies may strengthen their alliances and develop new tools to contain Russian-Chinese influence. They may impose more economic sanctions and new technologies such as artificial intelligence and digital technology to enhance Western superiority.

3. Weakness of developing countries:

Many developing countries face internal problems such as corruption, conflicts, and debt, which may limit their ability to play an effective role in the new international order.

4. Regional conflicts:

Competition between major powers may lead to regional proxy conflicts, threatening the stability of the multipolar international order.

4.5.3 Scenario 3: A Chaotic International System

Based on this scenario, the Russia-Ukraine conflict exhausts all parties without achieving a decisive victory, leading to the collapse of the existing international order and the disintegration of traditional alliances. The world becomes more turbulent, as regional conflicts increase and international institutions lose their influence, forcing countries to focus on achieving their interests individually (Hoehn, 2017). Factors leading to a chaotic international order include:

1. Everyone is exhausted without a clear winner

The war could turn into a long-term conflict that results in exhausting the capabilities of both Russia and the West. None of the parties is able to impose its terms to end the war, leading to a continued military stalemate. Furthermore, Western sanctions on Russia are harming the global economy, including the Western economies themselves. Besides, rising energy and food prices could exacerbate economic crises in developing and developed countries alike (Ozili, 2024).

2. Escalation of regional conflicts

The United Nations and other international organizations may lose their ability to resolve conflicts or enforce international law. The Security Council is becoming incapable of dealing with crises due to disagreements between its permanent members. Additionally, major powers support opposing sides in regional conflicts to achieve their interests, leading to escalation of violence in regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Besides, regional

tensions between countries such as India and Pakistan, China and Taiwan, and Iran and the Gulf States may escalate without effective international intervention (Ozili, 2024).

3. National interests prevail over international cooperation

Alliances such as NATO and the European Union could face internal challenges due to political and economic divisions. It can be mentioned that each country shifts to focus on protecting its national interests rather than adhering to alliance commitments.

4.6.3.1 Implications of the anarchic international system

1. Deterioration of global security

With the loss of trust between states, a global arms race is emerging that includes conventional and nuclear weapons. This in addition to increasing likelihood of using force to resolve conflicts due to the absence of effective international deterrence (Sauer, 2024).

2. Global economic crises

The global financial and trade system may disintegrate with the increase in economic barriers and the imposition of mutual sanctions. There also could be decline in trade and investment between countries due to instability (Sauer, 2024).

3. Weakness of international institutions

The United Nations may turn unable to impose solutions to major conflicts that makes it irrelevant to the new reality. Major countries may ignore the decisions of international institutions and act based on their interests.

4. Worsening humanitarian crises

In fact, increasing conflicts and wars would lead to huge waves of refugees and illegal migration. Host countries will suffer from increasing economic and social burdens due to these crises. The developing countries would suffer from a lack of funding and international aid due to the preoccupation of major countries with their internal crises.

4.6.3.2 Challenges facing this scenario

1. Collapse of the global economic system:

There would be some loss of confidence in international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This is in addition an increase in dependence on regional economic systems, leading to the disintegration of economic globalization.

2. Rise of chaotic regional powers:

Countries such as Turkey, Iran, and India may exploit chaos to achieve regional gains at the expense of the stability of the global system. Add to that, local conflicts may turn into regional crises that affect international stability.

4.5.4 Scenario 4: China's rise as a dominant power

This scenario says that China will exploit the fallout from the Russia-Ukraine war to expand its economic and political influence globally. Through its economic and diplomatic strategies, China seeks to build a new world order centered around it with the participation of countries such as Russia, Asian countries, and Africa, thus strengthening its position as the most powerful global pole. Factors supporting China's rise as a dominant power (Solomentseva, 2014)

1. Exploiting war to expand influence

In fact, China is taking advantage of Western sanctions on Russia by boosting bilateral trade, especially in the energy sector. Moreover, China is filling the void left by the West in Russian markets, becoming Russia's largest trading partner. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is gaining strength, as China invests in infrastructure for developing countries seeking an alternative to Western financing. Using the "digital yuan" as a means of international trade reduces the dominance of the dollar (Solomentseva, 2014).

2. Building a new world order with the participation of Russia and countries of the Global South

China will strengthen its partnership with Russia as a political and military partner to balance American influence. Additionally, African and Asian countries are drawn to China thanks to its unconditional investments and soft loans.

3. China Becomes the World's Most Powerful Pole

In fact, China's continued investment in advanced technology sectors such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and clean energy gives it a global advantage. Thanks to a huge production base and a wide trade network, China is becoming the world's largest economic

power. Besides, transforming economic relations into political influence enables China to influence the decisions of other countries (Solomentseva, 2014).

4.6.4.1 Potential Implications of China's Rise as a Hegemonic Power

1. Changing the Rules of the International Game

Chinese values and principles, such as respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, are becoming the new norm of the international order. Accordingly, Western influence in shaping international laws and trade rules is declining.

2. A multi-coalition system led by China

China is creating new international blocs focused on economic and political cooperation away from US influence. In this way, developing countries are finding new opportunities for development away from Western constraints, increasing their orientation toward China (Solomentseva, 2014).

3. Economic and political marginalization of the West

In fact, Western economies are finding it difficult to compete with China due to its massive production structure. It is obvious that divisions will grow within the Western camp as some European countries move toward improving relations with China (Cole, 2020).

4.6.5 Scenario 5: Diplomatic solution to the conflict

In this scenario, the Russian-Ukrainian war ends through a comprehensive diplomatic solution sponsored by major international powers such as China or India. A face-saving settlement is reached for all parties, restoring stability to the international system and reducing geopolitical tensions. Factors supporting a diplomatic solution

1. Mediation by major powers

China may exploit its position as a relatively neutral power to offer diplomatic initiatives acceptable to both parties. There would be some initiatives such as a ceasefire and prisoner exchange as initial steps to rebuild trust. Additionally, as a rising power with good relations with both Russia and the West, India presents itself as a reliable mediator to find a peaceful solution (Åtland, 2024).

2. War fatigue

Russia and Ukraine are facing economic and military crises that make the continuation of the war very costly. Western countries will face increasing popular pressure to end the war due to its economic and political costs.

3. International and regional pressure to end the war

Developing countries that have been affected by the repercussions of the war, such as food and energy shortages, may exert pressure on major powers to reach a solution. International organizations, such as the United Nations, may call for comprehensive peace negotiations.

4.6.5.1 Potential implications of a diplomatic solution

1. Easing geopolitical tensions

In fact, ending the war restores stability to Eastern Europe and reduces the risk of direct confrontation between Russia and NATO. Besides, it allows the parties to the conflict to focus on other issues, such as economic development and climate change.

2. Restoring the role of international institutions

Successful international mediation will enhance the credibility of institutions such as the United Nations in resolving major conflicts. Furthermore, it prompts reform of the international system to ensure that such wars are prevented in the future (Ozili, 2024).

3. A new geopolitical map

A solution may lead to redrawing borders or providing new security guarantees for Ukraine and Russia. This solution may enhance the political influence of mediating powers such as China and India in the international system (Ozili, 2024).

Conclusion

The Russian war on Ukraine which was launched in 2022 is considered one of the most important geopolitical conflicts of this century. Throughout this thesis, we tried to examine the legal and political dimensions of this war and its implication for the international system. As such, we outlined how this war demonstrates the complex interplay between state sovereignty,

the right to self-determination and international law, with highlighting the general implications on global geopolitics and international relations.

Historically, the roots of the relationships between Russia and Ukraine set a foundation to understand the cultural, political and strategic ties that are found between the two nations. Considering Ukraine as a buffer state underscores its opposition to Ukraine's alignment with Western entities like the NATO and the European Union. Russia considers the expansion of the NATO is a direct threat, which is made bigger with the aspiration of Ukraine to join the NATO. As for Ukraine, it confirms on its sovereignty and right to self-determination since it is an independent country. Thus, its attempts to join the West shows its aim to leave Russia's influence and be with democratic and economic structures that may lead to prosperity and more security.

The Russians consider their invasion of Ukraine, including Crimea annexation as measures to self-defense, based on Article 51 of the UN Charter. Hence, Russia claims that such steps implemented by it are important to protect its national security, prevent the expansion of the NATO, and defend the Russian speaking minorities in Ukraine, especially in Donbas and Crimea.

Nevertheless, Ukraine believes that such actions are violations of its sovereignty and integrity, referring back to international agreements like the Budapest Memorandum and the UN Charter. This is to say that the annexation of Crimea and the military aggression are illegal, contrary to principles of international law.

This war has important impacts as the international system. It is seen as a challenge to the effectiveness of international bodies like the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. This conflict led to intensifying geopolitical polarization, where it divided the world into with and anti-Russian blocs. Furthermore, the sanctions made by the West against Russia, together with the strategic partnerships of Russia with China and India reshaped the global trade.

The war highlights the evolving nature of warfare, characterized by great poerts tactics that combine several steps and strategies. This shift necessitates the development of new international mechanisms to address such challenges and uphold the principles of sovereignty and justice.

Recommendations

After completing this study, we would recommend the followings:

1. More studies should address the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on global security and stability
2. Other studies must investigate the idea of great powers and why the dominance of superpowers should be called of.
3. Researchers could investigate impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on world politics .

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الحرب الروسية الأوكرانية بين الجوانب القانونية ومستقبل النظام الدولي

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ملخص

ركزت الدراسة الحالية على الحرب الروسية-الأوكرانية، حيث هدفت إلى توضيح الأبعاد السياسية والقانونية لهذه الحرب استنادًا إلى تعدد الأطراف المشاركة في هذا الصراع. وعليه، سعت الدراسة إلى تحديد تأثير الحرب الروسية-الأوكرانية على هيكل النظام الدولي وتوازناته. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، قدمت الدراسة تفسيرًا للديناميكيات الكامنة في النظام السياسي العالمي التي أدت إلى غزو روسيا لأوكرانيا في فبراير 2022.

ولتلبية الأهداف المطروحة، قسّم الباحث الدراسة إلى جزأين: الأول إطار نظري، والثاني إطار عملي. ومن منظور الإطار النظري، تناول الباحث الحرب الروسية-الأوكرانية، أصولها ومدى خضوعها للقانون الدولي، بالإضافة إلى موقع الأزمة الروسية ضمن إطار العلاقات الغربية. أما في الإطار العملي، فقد وضح الباحث مدى شرعية الحرب الروسية-الأوكرانية من وجهة النظر الروسية، ثم قام بتحليلها من وجهة النظر الأوكرانية ومدى تأثيرها على احتمالية نشوب حرب عالمية ثالثة. كما ناقشت الدراسة إمكانية إنشاء آليات دولية لمنع الاستخدام غير القانوني للقوة في الحرب الروسية-الأوكرانية.

وفي سياق الدراسة، استعرض الباحث لمحة تاريخية موجزة عن العلاقات الروسية-الأوكرانية والأسباب التي أدت إلى الحرب الحالية. كما قيّم الوضع القانوني للصراع في أوكرانيا ومدى إمكانية وصفه بالحرب الهجينة"، وكذلك تأثيره على النظام الدولي، وما إذا كان يمكن لنظام دولي جديد أن يزعزع الاستقرار العالمي. كذلك درس الباحث الأساس القانوني للصراع، موضحةً المبررات التي قدمتها كل من روسيا وأوكرانيا لتبرير مواقفهما في هذه الحرب.

من خلال فحص الأبعاد التاريخية والقانونية والجيوسياسية للصراع، تؤكد هذه الدراسة على الحاجة إلى تعزيز الآليات لمعالجة الحروب الهجينة، وتسوية النزاعات، ودعم مبادئ السيادة والعدالة في عالم يزداد استقطابًا

الكلمات المفتاحية: حق الدفاع عن النفس، الدفاع الوقائي، نظرية القوى العظمى، حق النقض، العقوبات الاقتصادية، النظام الدولي.