

# *The Economic and Political Implications of Russia-Ukraine War*

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**Abstract**—The divisions and conflicts between Russians and Ukrainians have deep historical roots. Both sides refer to historical facts, or at least to events they recognize as their own historical facts. Russia, which presented a weak state profile until the 2000s, started to recover after Vladimir Putin came to power at the end of 1999. In August 2008, tensions between Georgia and Abkhazia and Ossetia escalated, and the Russian Federation became involved. Thus, Russia returned to the international arena as an actor that can mobilize its military power at any time. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, along with the support of separatist groups in regions such as Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine, further increased the tension between the two countries. On 24 February 2022, Russia attacked Ukraine and war broke out between the two countries. The Russia-Ukraine war has affected many countries of the world, especially the West, politically, socially, economically and militarily. The aim of this study is to examine the historical references of the relations between Russia and Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the reasons for the start and development of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the rebellion of the Russian special military group Wagner during the war, the effects of the war on world politics and economy, the economic indicators in Russia during the war and the aid provided by the West to Ukraine with qualitative research method and descriptive description method.

**Keywords**—Russia; Ukraine; War; Political; Economic.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The leaders of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia signed the Belavezha Accords on December 8, 1991, following a meeting in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha forest. According to Article 14 of this agreement, which declared the termination of the functionality of the institutions of the Soviet Union (USSR), it was stated, "The activity of the organs of the former republics of the Soviet Union ends on the territories of the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)." Simultaneously, the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States was also recognized through this agreement. With this agreement, the existence of the USSR officially ceased, and on December 25, 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev resigned from his post, effectively marking the end of the USSR as of December 26, 1991 [1].

When evaluating the relations between Russians and Ukrainians, it is necessary to consider the historical background. In this context, the strengthening of the Russians after the separation from the Kiev Principality and their subsequent expansion and colonization activities towards the south deepened the division and conflicts between the two peoples. Dudka emphasizes the importance of the colonization process of the Ukrainian region, referred to as the southern region of Russia, for Russia's economic and strategic objectives. He explains the colonization of Ukrainian territories as follows: The development of Ukrainian and Russian ethnic identities took place within the boundaries of the Kiev Principality. In the 13th century, as a result

of the attacks of the Golden Horde, a significant part of Russian territories, especially the region between the Dnieper and Don Rivers, was devastated and depopulated. Settlement in this region between the rivers resumed in the 16th and 17th centuries through colonization efforts by the state, monasteries, and later by large landowners or nobles. The strategic and economic interests of Russia's southern borders complemented each other, leading to the resettlement of Russian population engaged in agriculture in the region. The alignment of strategic and economic interests led both the people and the state to undertake the colonization of Russia's southern borders. Russian state leaders believed that the colonization of the Dnieper-Don steppes would provide advantages. Firstly, it provided an opportunity to create a new defensive line against Tatar forces for the people under Russian administration settling in those territories. Secondly, any advancement to the southwest provided a more effective means of resisting against Russian interests, creating a defense mechanism against Polish pressure. In the mid-16th century, Moscow accelerated its southward political policies. The subsequent stages covering the second half of the second millennium, defining the ethnic fragmentation processes (up to that point based on the Eastern Slav ethnic group, forming three similar peoples: Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) and the consolidation of new communities, are explained in the works of many indigenous historians. While respect is shown for common historical roots, new ethnic communities gradually accumulated economic and cultural differences. The rise of national identities and independence efforts among Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians increased significantly with intensive colonization processes starting from the 16th century. The deep historical roots of division and conflicts between Russians and Ukrainians exist. Despite having common historical origins, new ethnic communities began to accumulate economic and cultural differences. The pride and desire for national independence of Ukrainians and Belarusians, alongside intense colonization processes starting from the 16th century, increased. Especially from the early 18th century onwards, it can be seen that Ukrainian identity was constantly suppressed after the strengthening of the Russian Empire. During the Soviet era, labeling all Ukrainian nationalists as "banderovtsy" and the implementation of harsh measures against them, as well as the famine and hunger events known as "Holodomor" in Ukraine due to wrong policies, resulting in the loss of millions of lives, further deepened the divisions between Ukraine and Russia. In addition to these, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, numerous points of disagreement between Russia and Ukraine remained as legacies of the Soviet era [2].

With the necessity of eliminating the historical Rus-Ukraine conflict by advocating for unity in diversity and accepting differences without dispersion, explains the disagreements between Russia and Ukraine as follows: The dispute between Russians and Ukrainians is often conducted on a so-called historical level. Both sides refer to historical facts or at least events they consider as their own historical truths: institutions, social and political relationships, language, etc. For example, Ukrainians attribute historical figures such as Oleg, Svyatoslav, and Vladimir to themselves; Gruševski argues that the earliest period of Russian history is actually the "history of Ukraine-Russia," that this history is a natural extension of the history of Western Russia, that the Moscow period is not the beginning of the history of another people but of a separate history. While Ukrainians insist that Ukraine's name is older, Russians try to prove that the old name of Ukraine was Russia and that the people referred to themselves as Russian. While Ukrainians claim that Ukrainian is a separate language, an independent branch of Slavic languages, Russians argue that it is a dialect of Russian. Later, Ukrainians base their demands for separate national state existence on the aim of ending historical injustices that occurred in the 17th century. Ukraine had made an agreement to unite with Moscow, but Moscow had turned this union into a status of submission, ignoring the agreement and immediately violating it. In response, Russians argue that the situation is much more complicated, and it is necessary to ask which elements of the Ukrainian people made an agreement with Moscow and how they understood that agreement at the time. Russian researchers generally state that many things that Ukrainians currently see as committed against the rights of the Ukrainian people by Moscow were actually the demands of Moscow's own landowning aristocracy to fulfill their desires, which were considered the demands of the Ukrainian people at that time [3].

During the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia aimed to maintain control over the former Soviet Union members through the agreement of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). However, unfolding events revealed that Russia would need to exert much more effort to sustain this control. Unlike Belarus, which pursued joint policies with Moscow in the post-independence period, Ukraine preferred to turn towards the West. This situation led to tension in Russia-Ukraine relations. Russia, facing economic crises, conflicts in Chechnya, and problems such as rebuilding the system within the country, could not demonstrate the will to eliminate the tension and establish control over Ukraine. During this period, apart from a few warning shots exchanged between the two countries' fleets, there were no conflicts. In 1997, the signing of the Bolshoi Dogovor, or the Great Treaty, resulted in an agreement between the two countries regarding the Black Sea Fleet and the Crimea issue. The first

serious crisis between the two countries arose in 2003 when Russia attempted to build a dam in the Kerch Strait. The intervention of the leaders of both countries and the suspension of construction resolved the crisis [2].

Until the 2000s, Russia, preoccupied with the Chechen issue and displaying a weak state profile, began to recover with the ascent of Vladimir Putin to power on December 31, 1999. Following the conflicts in the Caucasus, Russia intervened in Abkhazia and South Ossetia with superior military force motivation. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia, leading to conflicts between Georgia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Tensions between Georgia and Abkhazia and Ossetia increased in the summer of 2008, and the Russian Federation intervened in this tension. The escalating conflicts between Georgia and South Ossetia led to a five-day war from August 8 to 12, 2008. This war ended with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the European Union on August 12, and Russian forces withdrew from Georgian territory occupied except for Abkhazia and South Ossetia in October 2008. Thus, Russia returned to the international arena as an actor capable of mobilizing its military force at any moment [4].

## II. FROM INSTABILITY TO RUSSIA'S ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

Crimea, which had been under Ottoman rule since 1475, was transferred to Russia through the Treaty of Jassy in 1792. During Khrushchev's era (September 7, 1953 - October 14, 1964), Crimea was transferred to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by a decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on February 19, 1954, and this decision was enacted by a law of the USSR on April 26. In the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Crimea was left to Ukraine in accordance with previous treaties. With the Great Treaty signed between Russia and Ukraine in 1997, the boundaries of Crimea, as well as issues such as the naval fleet stationed there, were fully resolved. Particularly after the Orange Revolution in 2004, nationalism became a rising value in Ukraine, and various laws began to be passed towards the construction of Ukrainian national identity. One of these was the "Foundations of the State Language Policy" Law adopted on August 12, 2012. The adoption of this law marked the official beginning of a process aimed at restricting the use of Russian in the future. The population of Russians was high on the Crimean Peninsula, and Russian was the most commonly spoken language. During the Euromaidan protests that began on November 21, 2013, statements, protests, and declarations were made against the presence of Russians in Ukraine and against Russia. One of the main demands of the protesters was the resignation of the pro-Russian President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich. Therefore, the Russian government perceived the developing events, especially with the Euromaidan protests turning into conflicts, as a major threat in terms of its policies and future plans in the region, and particularly the military and special forces were put on alert. Recent information suggests that as of February 20, 2014, the Russian government had already begun operations to take Crimea. Also, in December 2013, some Ukrainian parliamentarians spoke about Russia's potential invasion of Crimea following exercises by the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the region [5].

As of February 20, 2014, it is understood that groups from battalions of Russian special forces (Spetsnaz) and Airborne Troops (Vozdushno-Desantnye Voyska) began to depart, and they were being transferred through the strait separating Russia and Crimea. On February 24, soldiers without insignia, referred to as "little green men," from the 810th Marine Battalion, arrived in Simferopol, violating previous agreements, seized the city square, and took control of government buildings. They seized control of the local administration and appointed a Russian citizen as the head of the local government. Russia did not make any official statement during this process regarding the ownership of these uniformed but unmarked military forces in the region. On February 25, an Alligator-class landing ship carrying 200 Russian special forces soldiers arrived in Sevastopol. On February 26, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a sudden exercise involving 150,000 military personnel. Such a large-scale exercise was not unusual. The new defense minister, Sergey Shoygu, had been conducting large-scale preparations and simultaneous exercises since 2013. However, it was later understood that these exercises were a cover for the military operation Russia was conducting in the region. On February 27, Russian special forces units seized the Crimean Parliament and raised the Russian flag over the building. Subsequently, the Russian army amassed a large force in Crimea by sea, land, and air. All vehicles and ammunition belonging to the Ukrainian army in Crimea were seized. In short, Ukraine lost all command and control over its units in the peninsula within about a week of Russia's operation in Crimea. Russia, having completely gained control in the region, brought forward the planned referendum scheduled for May 25 and had the Crimean Parliament decide to hold the referendum on March 16, 2014. It is also claimed that Russia frequently activated its nuclear weapons during the annexation process of Crimea [6].

After the referendum held on March 16, 2014, which was claimed to have been illegitimately conducted by the international community, with the majority of the population in Crimea voting in favor of joining Russia, the independent Republic of Crimea was declared, and the next day, the Crimean Parliament conveyed its request to join Russia. Upon this, Russia formally annexed Crimea on March 17, 2014. However, this referendum was not widely recognized by the international community and was deemed illegal by Ukraine and many other countries. Russia's occupation of Crimea was condemned by many countries. Countries that did not accept the occupation-imposed sanctions on Russia, particularly creating economic pressure. Moreover, the annexation of Crimea was considered contrary to international law in the United Nations General Assembly. Russia's annexation of Crimea still remains a serious point of contention and discomfort in the international community. Ukraine maintains that Crimea was occupied and illegally annexed, while Russia believes it was done through a legitimate referendum. This situation has led to political tensions both regionally and globally and has resulted in numerous effects on international relations [2].

Following the annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, at a ceremony held in the Kremlin, Russian President Vladimir Putin attempted to demonstrate the connection between Crimea and Russia by frequently referring to historical, religious, and ethnic references. He mentioned Prince Vladimir being baptized in Kherson, the annexation of Crimea in 1783, the graves of dozens of soldiers who died in that war, the establishment of the legendary Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, and the sacredness of many places there for Russians. In his speech, Putin acknowledged the collapse of the Soviet Union as a tragedy for Russians and considered the loss of Crimea as a plundering of Russia. He stated, "... In people's minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia and it will remain so... It's unbelievable but true. The Soviet Union collapsed. The events unfolded so quickly that few people realized the dramatic proportions and consequences of what was happening at the time. Many people in Russia, Ukraine, and other republics hoped that the Commonwealth of Independent States that emerged at that time would become a new form of joint state. After all, they were promised a common currency, a common economic area, and common armed forces, but all of this remained just promises, and there was no longer a great country. And when Crimea suddenly found itself in another territory, Russia realized that it was not only being stripped, but also plundered." Through this speech, Putin also expressed the real purpose of the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States and emphasized that Russia is now much stronger than before, that difficult times are behind, and that, learning from the past, there is a will to reclaim the plundered legacy of Russia [7]

When we look at history, we see that language, ethnic elements or minorities, and religion are among the main instruments of Russian power. Putin's statement in his speech (2014), "Millions of Russians, Russian-speaking citizens, live and will live in Ukraine, and Russia will always protect their interests through political, diplomatic, and legal means," also reveals the basic reason for the conflicts in eastern regions of Ukraine such as Lugansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson, where Russians are densely populated. In conclusion, the ongoing political instability, protests, and demonstrations in Ukraine culminated in Russia's annexation of Crimea on March 17, 2014 [8].

### III. FROM PROTESTS IN DONETSK AND LUGANSK REGION TO SEPARATIST CONFLICTS

During the annexation of Crimea, Ukraine and former Soviet countries still harbored concerns about Russia's enduring power entrenched in the memories of the Soviet era. For them, facing Russia's completely destructive and overwhelming military force was alarming. The annexation of Crimea by Russia on March 17, 2014, also marked a clear red alert for the United States and the West. For the US and the West, the annexation of Crimea represented the most explicit example of Russia's return to expansionist policies. Following the Euromaidan events, as the state governance fell into a void and Crimea was annexed, mass protest demonstrations began in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, where the Russian population was dense, for various rights demands and in reaction to the new authorities. These soon turned into separatist demonstrations, and civilian militia groups were formed. Administrative buildings in cities such as Kharkiv, Donetsk, Mariupol, and Lugansk were seized by separatist groups. Ukraine's interim president, Oleksandr Turchynov, set up a crisis management headquarters. However, effective measures could not be implemented. Local clashes between the Ukrainian army and Russian nationalist separatist formations, along with militia groups organized by Igor Girkin, escalated into large-scale conflicts [6].

On April 7, 2014, the People's Council declared the sovereignty of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). On April 27, at a rally in Lugansk, the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) was declared. On May 11, 2014, referendums were held in the region

regarding the status of these self-proclaimed republics. In Donetsk, 89.7% of voters, and in Lugansk, 96.2%, voted to establish their own administrations. On May 12, the sovereignty of these self-proclaimed republics was declared, the constitution of the DPR was adopted on May 14, and the LPR constitution on May 18. The conflicts in eastern Ukraine, which had been ongoing for over two months, and the government's unsuccessful attempts to resolve the situation, deepened dissatisfaction in society and increased reactions against the government. However, Moscow practically accepted the results of the referendums in Donetsk and Lugansk regions. On May 12, the Kremlin press service announced that Moscow respected the referendum results and the people's choices. In Russia, a new era began to be discussed around the term Novorossiya. The leadership of the self-proclaimed republics was assumed by individuals whose identities were not disclosed but claimed to be Russian citizens. During this period, Russian officials stated that Russia had no involvement in the events and described it as a civil or internal war [2].

Under the guise of the Anti-Terrorist Operation in Ukraine, intervention against separatist forces in the region began. The failure of operations and the increase in civilian casualties exacerbated public discontent and opposition to the government among the population in Donbas. A chaotic clash occurred on May 9, 2014, in Mariupol, where surrounding civilians were killed. The unsuccessful operation had a decisive impact on increasing negative opinions in the public. As a result, the government focused on restricting the movement of militants by blocking main roads. After Petro Poroshenko was elected as the President of Ukraine on May 25, 2014 (serving from June 7, 2014, to May 20, 2019), interventions against separatist forces became more organized and effective. In June, the Ukrainian Armed Forces launched counter-offensives on all conflict fronts. By early August, areas controlled by pro-Russian separatist forces were reduced fourfold, and Donetsk and Lugansk were practically besieged. However, due to the significant weapons and military support provided by Russia to separatist forces in the region, the Ukrainian army could not achieve a decisive breakthrough. On September 5, 2014, the Minsk Agreement was reached between Petro Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin to stop the conflicts in the region. However, the clashes resumed shortly after. In 2015, separatist groups launched a large-scale operation again. As a result of this operation, the Minsk 2 Agreement was reached on February 12, 2015. However, this agreement was not complied with, and the conflicts continued with varying intensity until 2022. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Administration's report in 2022, around 15,000 people lost their lives in the conflicts from both sides [5].

Volunteer armed forces, paramilitary groups (guerrillas, volunteer detachments, or professional mercenaries), are integral parts of most wars. This situation can also be seen in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, where the first stage of active hostilities in Donetsk and Lugansk regions was implemented by mobilizing volunteers representing both sides of the conflict - pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian volunteers. Pro-Ukrainian volunteer military units organized in response to the weakness of the regular army and the inability of the state to protect its citizens. While Russia provided support to the conflict in the region, it denied actively supporting the separatists. However, the separatist forces in Donbas consisted of both local residents and those sent to the region by Russia [8].

#### **IV. RUSSIA DECLARES WAR ON UKRAINE**

In the fall of 2021, conflicts intensified in the Donbass region. Western countries, at the request of Kiev, began increasing military aid to Ukraine. Leaders of the separatist administrations in Donetsk and Lugansk regions also requested assistance from Russia. Subsequently, on February 15, 2022, the State Duma of the Russian Federation, led by the Communist Party faction, conveyed a request to Russian President Vladimir Putin for the recognition of the independence of these so-called administrations and the necessary legislative arrangements in the parliament. Meanwhile, on February 17, 2022, the Donetsk and Lugansk regions were actively bombarded by the Ukrainian Armed Forces [9].

In 2021, Russia intermittently deployed approximately 100,000 troops and a large amount of military equipment to the Ukrainian border under the pretext of military exercises. On February 21, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin officially declared the independence of the separatist Lugansk and Donetsk regions. Vladimir Putin also signed decrees recognizing the independence of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions on September 29, 2022. On September 30, in the Kremlin, Putin signed agreements with representatives of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, as well as with representatives of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, regarding their inclusion into Russia.

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation army launched missile attacks on the independent country of Ukraine and then

began advancing military units into Ukrainian territory. As a result of Russia's large-scale attacks on Ukraine, significant casualties occurred. According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as of September 10, 2023, 9,614 people lost their lives, and 17,535 were injured. Additionally, it is estimated that the number of casualties among civilians and armed individuals far exceeds this figure [10].

Despite ongoing wars in many countries, Russia's military operation undoubtedly met with great astonishment in the modern world. At the heart of this astonishment was the disbelief that Vladimir Putin could make such bold decisions as to attack Ukraine, risking alienating the entire world. It was evaluated that such a decision would bring economic and political devastation to Russia. However, even considering the emergence of a new Russian threat at the borders of Europe was a serious cause of concern for Western nations. Prior to February 24, US President Joe Biden repeatedly stated that Russia would wage war on Ukraine and urged everyone to be prepared. Nevertheless, the majority of international analysts did not consider this a possibility. Similar to the statements made by Vladimir Putin and Sergei Lavrov regarding the military buildup on the Ukrainian borders, Lavrov also made a statement after the annexation of Crimea on March 17, 2014, claiming that Russia had no intention of violating Ukraine's borders. Furthermore, Peskov had denied allegations that Russia was continuously increasing the number of Russian military units deployed on the Ukrainian borders during the annexation of Crimea [7].

Towards the end of 2021, as Russian military buildup on the Ukrainian border increased and conflicts in eastern Ukraine intensified, some analysts argued that Putin was bluffing, while others suggested that Joe Biden was acting prejudicially, and Russia entering into a war would present an invaluable opportunity for weakening Russia for the US. Ultimately, on February 24, 2022, Russia declared war on Ukraine under the name "Special Military Operation". One of the goals of this military operation, initiated by Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin, was not the removal of Volodymyr Zelensky from power but rather the installation of a pro-Russian figure to gain control over Ukraine. Furthermore, following the transformation of separatist movements in the eastern regions of the country into armed conflicts after the occupation of Crimea, the majority of the Ukrainian population had positioned itself on the nationalist front. Putin described them as *banderovtsy* and fascists, while Peskov expressed that Ukraine would be saved and cleansed from fascist Nazis. However, it can also be argued that this invasion was a step towards the realization of the Neo-Eurasianism ideology [3].

Based on historical references, evaluations began to be made that the Russia-Ukraine war started with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the support given to separatists in the Donbas region, and that cold war relations between Russia and the West were returning. It is observed that Russia uses the rhetoric of protecting Russian minorities and Russian speakers as a pretext for invading and annexing foreign territories. Moreover, many assessments in the West compare Putin's policies to Nazi Germany policies on the eve of World War II. Following the separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia with Russia's intervention in the East, the annexation of Crimea actually constitutes an effective example of forcibly seizing territory in Europe since the end of World War II. In the 1990s, conflicts began in Yugoslavia using the minority card. It is noted that Putin has actively started to use this card recently [11].

A year after the start of the war, in February 2023, leaked US intelligence documents revealed that Ukraine's plans to regain the territories lost in counterattacks were far behind expectations and that they would not be successful against Russia. Despite very serious aid provided by the US and Europe, it does not seem realistic to make a realist assessment that Ukraine will achieve an overwhelming victory against Russia when considering the developments so far and the capacities of the parties involved. However, the Ukrainian army has continued to resist the Russian army. "There are three main reasons for the success of the Ukrainian army. Firstly, the justified reasons of the soldiers defending their country and the motivation it provides; secondly, the advanced and effective weapons provided by NATO; and thirdly, the radical changes in the military doctrine of the Ukrainian forces. Before the events in Crimea in 2014, the Ukrainian army consisted of ordinary officers who avoided making decisions and blamed responsibility on others. However, thanks to the training provided by NATO representatives, the Ukrainian army adopted the principle that any decision, even if wrong, is better than not making a decision. These changes strengthened the Ukrainian forces and turned them into an effective force [12].

In recent times, it is seen that Russia is inclined towards some initiatives to end the war. However, it is understood that it is not willing to return the regions it has taken from Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated in a press conference after the 78th session of the UN General Assembly on September 24, 2023, that Russia respects Ukraine's integrity according to the 1991 declaration. However, one of the main points for us in the Independence Declaration was that Ukraine would be a non-aligned country and would not enter into any military alliances. Therefore, he stated that one of the conditions for peace is that

Ukraine should not be a part of any military alliance. However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had previously mentioned in his statements about the plans to restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine within the 1991 borders. He also stated that peace cannot be achieved by conceding territories from Ukrainian regions. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, as well as the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, were declared as part of the country, and it was stated that conceding them was not possible [8].

According to Ukraine expert Serhii Plokyh, in the end, Russia will have no choice but to part ways with its imperialist past. Russian writer Sergey Lebedev also made a similar assessment in an article published in the Financial Times: "If Russia has a future, it will have to become another country." Considering the data during the war process and Russia's state tradition, it is very difficult to make an assessment that such a change, as Plokyh and Lebedev said, could happen soon. Or it can be expressed as a possibility that such a transformation could only occur in the long term by bringing together many factors [13].

In 2014, with the annexation of Crimea by Russia, separatist uprisings began in eastern regions of Ukraine. The escalation of violence in these uprisings, the failure to resolve these separatist movements in time, and the escalation of the crisis day by day further strained relations between Russia and Ukraine. The conflicts continued until 2022, resulting in the Russia-Ukraine war. Plokyh also interprets this process as follows: "I saw the signs but probably, like most Ukrainians, I did not want to see them. So, I saw, but I repeatedly denied the inevitability of war. ...This war is actually a continuation of the collapse of the Russian empire. Not only the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also the collapse of the Russian Empire that began during the First World War. ...Putin's ideology and the justification for the war were based entirely on imperial narrative and mindset. The existence of Ukraine as a state, its institutions, its independence, and the existence of the Ukrainian nation began to be questioned in 2014 and with the onset of this large-scale aggression in 2022. ...The processes of forming the Ukrainian identity, unlike the Russian and post-Soviet identity, accelerated with the start of the war." Plokyh states that 2022 was a turning point, saying that the second Cold War had already begun, the alliance between the US, Europe, and Eastern Europe had been revived, the rapprochement between Russia and China had increased, and gray areas had disappeared, indicating that the war would also strengthen the division in Europe [14].

Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, it has become evident that Russia has not been able to modernize its army and military power after the Soviet Union. Currently, Russia's most deterrent force consists of its nuclear weapons, and Putin is well aware of this, as frequent threats of nuclear weapon use are often cited. The revelation that the Russian army's reserves are poorly planned, military equipment is not modernized, there is a lack of adequate and necessary ammunition, the dimensions of corruption within the army are understood, the need for assistance from private military forces like Wagner has emerged, vulnerabilities in controlling these private military forces, and the flight of those obligated to serve from Russia upon mobilization have all seriously damaged the image of the Russian army, state, and military power. Ukraine, with the support it received from the West and the USA in the annexation of Crimea and conflicts in the eastern regions, has relatively modernized its army, military doctrines, and weapons. Nevertheless, assessments highlight that Ukraine has waged a successful struggle against Russia. Plokyh (2023) evaluates Russia's annexation of Crimea as a return of imperial mindset, while likening Russia's attack on Ukraine to the Cold War period that began after World War II and Russia's resurgence. In this context, he considers the alignment of events as a historical turnaround. Yes, the war is now continuing with all its realities, and undoubtedly the most important question now is how this struggle will end [6].

### V. RIOTS IN RUSSIAN HISTORY AND THE VAGNER REBELLION

Throughout Russian history, numerous riots have occurred. Among the most notable are the Salt Riot (June 1, 1648), Copper Riot (July 25, 1662), Stenka Razin's Rebellion (April 1670), Strelets' (Archer's) Uprising (May 5, 1682), 2nd Strelets' Uprising (May 27, 1698), Plague (Chuma) Riot (September 15, 1771), Pugachev's Rebellion (September 17, 1773), Decembrist Uprising (December 14, 1825), Potato Riot (1840-1844), Serfdom Abolition Disturbances (February 19, 1861), and the Knyaz Potemkin-Tavrisheskiy Battleship Uprising (June 14, 1905). The most recent rebellion is the Vagner Rebellion [15].

Born on June 1, 1961, in Leningrad, Yevgeny Viktorovich Prigozhin received a two-year prison sentence for attempted theft on November 29, 1979, at the age of 18. In 1981, he was sentenced to 13 years in prison for theft, robbery, fraud, and involving minors in criminal activities. He benefited from amnesty in 1988 and was released from prison in 1990. Prigozhin opened a hamburger shop in 1990 and managed a supermarket in 1993. In 1996, he and his partner opened the first luxury restaurant in

St. Petersburg, which earned over a million dollars within 5 months. That same year, he established Concord Catering company. In 1998, he opened a restaurant on a ship named New Island [2].

This restaurant became a popular spot for many prominent figures, including V. Putin. In 2000, he entered the construction sector and between 2002 and 2012, he opened a chain of restaurants. During this time, Prigozhin began to be referred to as Putin's chef. After 2010, he focused more on the construction and real estate sectors. Starting from 2014, he began to win contracts not only for food and cleaning services for military institutions under the Ministry of Defense but also for the construction of military buildings and bases. The total value of the contracts he received from the Ministry of Defense by the end of 2015 amounted to around 68.6 billion rubles or about 1 billion dollars [9].

V. Putin confirmed that he knew Evgeny Prigozhin personally but denied being his friend in 2018, stating that Prigozhin was an entrepreneur and had no relationship with the state, and that his involvement in events in Syria was his own initiative. When asked by a BBC correspondent about rumors that Prigozhin's real job was to do his dirty work, Putin denied any involvement in dirty dealings. Since 2012, Prigozhin's companies have been involved in the press, media, and internet journalism sectors under different brand names, allegedly pursuing a pro-Putin editorial policy [5].

The most significant activity that brought Yevgeny Prigozhin to the international arena is his involvement with the private military company known as Wagner Group (ChVK Vagner = Private Military Company Wagner) or Group Wagner, and its relations with war zones and energy companies worldwide. Wagner operated in Crimea after its annexation in 2014 and later participated in the uprising in the Donbas region. Initially, Prigozhin denied any connection with Wagner, but later it was revealed that he was the owner of the company. After the Crimea and Donbas events, Wagner gained prominence for its activities in Syria, Libya, Sudan, and various African countries. It was claimed that around 1,000 Wagner fighters were present in the Central African Republic and Mali. In 2016, after the annexation of Crimea, the US included Prigozhin in the list of sanctioned individuals. In 2021, the EU also included him on the sanctions list for human rights violations in Africa and the Middle East [2].

After the start of the Russia-Ukraine war on February 24, 2022, Wagner forces became actively involved in various fronts, particularly in Donbas. Prigozhin closely monitored the activities of Wagner units, trying to recruit volunteer fighters for Wagner by visiting prisons in Russia. During the war, Prigozhin frequently criticized Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov for allegedly not providing Wagner with adequate ammunition and support. On June 23, 2023, Prigozhin announced a coup, claiming that Russian military units had bombed Wagner units and announced his march towards Moscow. He named this march the Justice March. The Russian intelligence service FSB interpreted Prigozhin's statements as a call for armed rebellion and opened a criminal case against him. Wagner forces, along with numerous private soldiers and armored vehicles, set off towards Moscow on June 23. They seized control of the administration of the city of Rostov-on-Don, their first stop. Following Wagner forces' rapid advance, a counter-terrorism operation regime was declared in Moscow. On June 24, with the mediation of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, the Wagner rebellion came to an end. Peskov announced that the criminal case against Prigozhin would be dropped, and he could go to Belarus [16].

Rus authorities announced on August 23, 2023, that Yevgeny Prigozhin, along with Vagner's leader Dmitry Utkin and other passengers, died as a result of the private jet they were traveling on from Moscow to St. Petersburg crashing. Evgeny Prigozhin, officially known for his work in the food and construction sectors, had been a prominent figure since the 2010s due to his connections to military activities and politics. Prigozhin's close ties to Russian leadership, especially President Vladimir Putin, have been emphasized. He has also been associated with the Internet Research Agency (IRA), which has been accused of attempting to influence elections in various countries, including the United States [17].

Following Prigozhin's armed rebellion declaration against the Russian government on June 23, 2023, the attention of the global public turned to Russia. Discussions began on how serious and successful this uprising could be and what changes could occur in Russia. Although the rebellion ended the next day, it had significant repercussions for the Russian government, revealing many weaknesses within Russia. Questions arose about the status of private military units in Russia and how these units should be structured [18].

## VI. GLOBAL TRADE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

The economic downturns that occurred in global economies after Covid-19 reached their peak with the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. This war marked the beginning of a new disruption for developed and developing economies alike. The involvement of Russia and Ukraine, known as the world's breadbasket, in the war deeply shook the global supply chain. High inflation in the Western world, especially in the United States, became a serious issue. Due to disruptions in the US economy and high inflation, the Federal Reserve (FED) had to raise its policy interest rates consecutively throughout 2023. As of September 2023, the FED announced its interest rate at historically high levels of 5.25-5.5%. According to the report released by FED officials, this rate could be further increased if deemed necessary [19].

The European Union's (EU) high dependency on Russia for energy resources led to the beginning of embargo measures, resulting in significant downturns in the Eurozone economies. The Russia-Ukraine war is considered one of the main reasons for the slowdown in economic activities in the European Union. The inflation rate in the Eurozone reached approximately 10% in 2022, marking the highest rate in the Union. Sanctions imposed by EU member states on Russia put significant pressure on the economic activities of EU member countries. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, the growth rate for the Eurozone in 2023 is forecasted to be 0.5%, with an inflation rate of 5.7% [12].

From 2013 to 2022, the Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) in the European Union averaged 2.1% annually. During this period, while Japan's rate remained below that of the European Union, the United States and the People's Republic of China experienced higher inflation rates. According to IMF data, the inflation rate for Turkey in 2023 is estimated to be 51.2%. Under the pressure of high inflation, the depreciation of the Turkish Lira has had a relatively positive impact on exports and tourism revenues [8].

International institutions as well as the United States and its allies have imposed the most severe economic, military, and financial sanctions on Russia in modern times, dealing a heavy blow to the Russian economy. However, Russia seems to have succeeded in minimizing these shocks in a short period through its developed policies and abundant natural resources, as well as other commodities. Although the drastic depreciation of the Ruble at the beginning of the war had negative effects on international trade, it later stabilized through the moves of the Central Bank of Russia. The Central Bank of Russia raised its interest rate by 1050 basis points to 20% in response to rapidly rising inflation and exchange rate shocks. Additionally, by mandating payments for natural gas and other major export items in Rubles, it prevented the excessive depreciation of the national currency. The successful control of capital outflows by Russian banks against being removed from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) system has been acknowledged for overcoming a major shock in financial and currency markets [17].

The reason for Russia's survival against the largest embargo in history has been attributed to the emergence of China, India, and Turkey as alternative cooperation regions for the West. As a result, as of 2022, Russia's foreign trade turnover increased by 8.1% to \$850 billion. Exports increased by 20%, imports decreased to the 12% range, and the trade surplus increased by approximately 70% compared to the previous year, reaching \$332 billion [20].

The situation for Ukraine has become quite dire. In 2022, economic activities and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shrank by almost one-third. Ukraine's trade deficit, which was around \$5.4 billion annually before the war, increased to \$8.2 billion as of 2022. The gross external debt stock exceeded 85% of GDP. While the pre-war inflation rate was around 10%, it soared to over 30% after the war. Since the war, public debt has increased by 31%, rising from 153 billion Ukrainian hryvnias to 606 billion hryvnias.

Wars directly or indirectly affect both developed and developing economies. By their very nature, achieving peace and restructuring economies takes a long time. The effects of the psychological, sociological, and economic devastation caused by wars also take a long time to manifest. In particular, the withdrawal of male population from production (mobilization) leads to significant disruptions in production and supply chains. In this context, the Russia-Ukraine war, by diverting resources from production and consumption expenditures to military technology and equipment, and focusing on security-enhancing measures, has led to inflation, unemployment, and economic downturns, primarily in the two countries concerned and generally in all economically related countries [13].

## VII. AID COMMITMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION AND WESTERN STATES TO UKRAINE

After Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022, many countries, especially the United States and Western states, provided humanitarian, financial, and military assistance to Ukraine. As of September 2023, the amount of aid pledged by European Union and NATO member countries to Ukraine reached 95 billion euros. The United States topped the list with approximately 41.1 billion euros in support, followed by Germany with 17.1 billion euros, and the United Kingdom with 6.6 billion euros in humanitarian, financial, and military aid. Additionally, Japan and South Korea from East Asia provided military and financial aid exceeding 5 billion euros in total. Furthermore, 141 countries registered with the United Nations have imposed the most devastating sanctions on Russia in modern times, pushing Russia into economic and political isolation [21].

According to the latest report published by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy on September 9, 2023, the European Union has pledged 50 billion euros for the reconstruction of Ukraine. Several support packages, lasting several years, have been pledged, especially by the United Kingdom and Norway, as well as Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, and Portugal [8].

With Russia's proximity to NATO territories, Western countries initially provided Ukraine with over 40,000 light weapons and ammunition, as well as a series of portable land and air defense systems and equipment totaling 17,000. The longer-than-expected duration of the war led to an increase in the proportion of advanced weapons and ammunition assistance to Ukraine against Russia. In April 2023, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced the delivery of advanced tanks, including 230 Abrams, Challenger, and Leopard tanks, and nearly 550 armored vehicles to Ukraine. Stoltenberg also announced that Washington had lifted barriers to the purchase of F-16 fighter jets by third countries and their delivery to Ukraine [2].

The unprecedented sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and the Western world after the Russia-Ukraine war have adversely affected the Russian economy. However, through the policies developed in response to the sanctions, Russia has managed to mitigate these negative effects, significantly lagging behind the negative forecasts predicted by international independent organizations and economists. According to the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), Russia's GDP contracted by 2.1% in 2022. This rate is significantly below the forecasts of 2.9% by the Central Bank of Russia and 3% by the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia [22].

Russia has managed to minimize the shock of the heavy sanctions imposed by the United States and Western states through the policies it developed. Particularly after the restrictions imposed by Europe on Russian gas and oil, Russia's turning to the People's Republic of China and India has been a significant factor in overcoming a major shock. The amount of crude oil exported from Russia to these countries by sea has reached over 1.5 million barrels per day. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) revised its forecast for a 3.4% contraction in the Russian economy for 2022 to 2.2% [19].

Many economists have considered the possibility of a major financial and banking crisis in Russia following the unprecedented sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union, and Western states and allies after the Russia-Ukraine war. However, Russia is managing this process with minimal damage through its developed policies and quick decisions. While Europe, the largest importer of Russian oil and natural gas before the war, has been sidelined, it has been replaced by China and India. According to the international commodity data firm Kpler, the proportion of crude oil transported by sea to China and India exceeds 90% of total production. It has been reported that after the war, Russia's exports to Europe have fallen to less than 10%. After China and India, Turkey and Bulgaria are among the largest buyers of Russian crude oil. Especially Turkey's non-participation in the embargoes and its neutral policies have increased its trade volume with both countries. Turkey, especially, has played a significant role in the Russian and Ukrainian grain crisis, strengthening its influential position in the international arena [22].

## VIII. CONCLUSION

After declaring its independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine, despite its ethnic, cultural, and historical ties, maintained its relationship with Russia in an asymmetric manner. Ukraine's efforts to determine its own future as an independent country led to tensions in its relationship with Russia. Policies aimed at strengthening relations with Western countries gradually strained relations with Russia. Additionally, issues inherited from the Soviet era such as borders, ports, and military assets emerged as factors exacerbating tensions and negatively affecting relations between the two countries. This reflects the challenges encountered during the transition period following Ukraine's independence and the effects of conflicting

interests.

Following Georgia's military operations in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008, and Russia's involvement in these events, Russia continued its policy of expanding its geographical borders. Russia's annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in October 2008 and Crimea in 2014 illustrates this trend, leading to assessments that Russia is advancing its Neo-Eurasianist goals. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 became a major point of contention between Russia and Ukraine, bringing relations to a breaking point. Following the annexation of Crimea, particularly in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, armed separatist groups supported by Russia emerged. Escalating clashes between these groups and Ukrainian forces quickly escalated into full-scale war, which persisted until Russia declared war on Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Historically, Russia has seen Ukraine as part of its sphere of influence. Ukraine's efforts to establish closer ties with the European Union and NATO, opting to shape its future with the West, were met with suspicion by Russia and escalated tensions. Ukraine has been a significant transit country for Russian natural gas exports to Europe. Disputes over gas prices and transit fees have led to energy supply disruptions and increased overall tension. The issue of national identity, language, and cultural differences also played a significant role. Ukraine sought to strengthen its national identity and move away from Russian influence, a move that Moscow never viewed favorably.

Russia's declaration of war on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, changed geopolitical balances worldwide. The United States and the European Union, among others, began supporting Ukraine against Russia. This war led to assessments that the era of World War II and the Cold War was returning. It significantly affected global supply chains and led to price hikes and inflation. The Federal Reserve (FED) continuously raised its policy rates in 2023, and interest rates in the country reached historical levels of 5.25-5.5%.

International institutions and allies of the United States imposed the heaviest economic, military, and financial sanctions on Russia in modern times, dealing a serious blow to the Russian economy. However, Russia managed to quickly minimize these shocks thanks to the policies it adopted and its natural resources. Although the extreme depreciation of the Ruble at the start of the war had negative effects on international trade, the intervention of the Russian Central Bank stabilized the situation. In response to rapidly rising inflation and exchange rate shocks, the Russian Central Bank raised the interest rate by 1050 basis points to 20%. Additionally, by making payments for natural gas and other major exports in Ruble's mandatory, it prevented the excessive depreciation of the national currency. By removing Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system, Russia successfully controlled capital outflows, overcoming a major shock to the financial and currency markets. One of the main reasons for Russia's survival was the emergence of China, India, and Turkey as alternative cooperation zones to the West. As a result, Russia's foreign trade turnover increased by 8.1% to \$850 billion as of 2022. While exports increased by 20%, imports decreased to 12%, resulting in a foreign trade surplus of approximately \$332 billion, a nearly 70% increase from the previous year. Russia's policies against sanctions fell behind the negative forecasts of international independent organizations and economists. In 2022, Russia's GDP shrank by 2.1%, which was below the Central Bank of Russia's forecast of 2.9% and the Ministry of Economic Development's forecast of 3%.

Since the start of the war, the United States has been the top contributor to aid to Ukraine, providing approximately 41.1 billion euros. Germany ranks second with 17.1 billion euros, while the United Kingdom ranks third with 6.6 billion euros in humanitarian, financial, and military aid. Ukraine's economic situation has deteriorated significantly during the war. In 2022, economic activities and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decreased by about one-third. The trade deficit increased from \$5.4 billion to \$8.2 billion, and the gross external debt stock exceeded 85% of GDP. While the inflation rate was around 10% before the war, it rose to over 30% after the war. Public debt has increased by 31% since the start of the war, from 153 billion Ukrainian hryvnias to 606 billion hryvnias.

It can be seen that relations between Russia and Ukraine evolved from tension to conflict and war in the post-Soviet era following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Looking at the historical background, it is observed that with the strengthening of the suppressed Ukrainian national identity after independence, Ukraine turned its development towards the West and did not want to build a future as an ally with Russia. Russia, on the other hand, is considered to view Ukraine as its natural sphere of influence and hegemony. In conclusion, Russia's attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, led to the creation of conditions reminiscent of the Cold War era. Russia largely isolated itself. The export of energy resources such as oil and natural gas ensured that Russia did not suffer economically in this war. However, militarily, Russia suffered significant losses and its army

suffered a major blow to its image. Ukraine, on the other hand, was the most affected party in this war. It was dragged into a serious economic crisis and suffered significant losses militarily, but it also put-up serious resistance against Russia with external aid. The United States, the EU, and other countries imposing sanctions on Russia were also significantly affected economically by this war. However, the ongoing war caused serious supply problems in world markets, leading to inflation in many countries. It can be said that the continuing war will have more effective negative effects politically, economically, and socially in the future.

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