

MAAT (Nassau).

Ukraine and Russia: An Ongoing Conflict.

Agustin V. Startari.

Cita:

Agustin V. Startari (2026). *Ukraine and Russia: An Ongoing Conflict*. Nassau: MAAT.

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/agustin.v.startari/246>

ARK: <https://n2t.net/ark:/13683/p0c2/Upf>



Esta obra está bajo una licencia de Creative Commons.
Para ver una copia de esta licencia, visite
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.es>.

Acta Académica es un proyecto académico sin fines de lucro enmarcado en la iniciativa de acceso abierto. Acta Académica fue creado para facilitar a investigadores de todo el mundo el compartir su producción académica. Para crear un perfil gratuitamente o acceder a otros trabajos visite: <https://www.aacademica.org>.

UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

AN ONGOING CONFLICT

AGUSTÍN V. STARTARI



WORKING PAPERS #8

Agustin V. Startari is a researcher, linguist, and author specialising in the intersection of language, artificial intelligence, power, legitimacy, and the historical sciences.

His work examines how linguistic, discursive, and technological structures organise perceptions of authority, distribute responsibility, and shape the ways in which institutions, artificial-intelligence systems, and structures of power represent political, historical, and social events. His research brings together linguistics, discourse analysis, artificial intelligence, historiography, theories of power, and legitimacy studies, with particular attention to the relationship between linguistic form, authority, and political responsibility.

He is the author of the research series **Grammars of Asymmetric Visibility: AI, Imperial Power, and the Syntax of Responsibility**, which focuses on the relationships between artificial intelligence, language, power, and the attribution of responsibility.

He is also the author of **Working Papers**, a series devoted to historical research, historiography, and the analysis of problems related to the historical sciences. His works also include *Propaganda Machinery* and *Christus Solus*, which extend his research into the intersections among discourse, ideology, institutional power, and historical interpretation.

His scholarship combines linguistic research, historical analysis, and the systematic study of the ways in which language, institutions, and technological systems participate in the construction and legitimization of power.

UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

An Ongoing Conflict

Title: Ukraine and Russia: An Ongoing Conflict

Series: Working Papers No. 8

Cover design: Visual Art Design

Editing: Dayana Vega, 2023

Cover illustration: Félix Parra.

ResearcherID: NGR-2476-2025

ORCID: 0009-0001-4714-6539

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22059020

© Agustin V. Startari, May 2023

First edition: May 2023

Revised and expanded edition: August 2026

Publisher: MAAT

This work has been published for distribution and public availability under the MAAT imprint on the publisher's online platform.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored, processed, or transmitted by any means or procedure, including reprographic or electronic means, or distributed through rental or public lending, without the written authorisation of the copyright holders, subject to the penalties established by law.

Series
WORKING PAPERS
No. 8

CONTENTS

NOTE TO THE REVISED EDITION: TWO-LAYER ARCHITECTURE AND AMENDMENT PROTOCOL 12	11
INTRODUCTION 14	13
Analytical framework, hypotheses, and method 15	14
Note on terminology and transliteration 16	15
Protocol for contested terms 17	16
PART ONE 28.....	27
1.2. The fall of Tsarism and the First World War 29.....	28
1.3. The enlarged Ukrainian SSR 31	30
1.4. Transfer of the Crimean Peninsula 33	32
1.5. The Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union 34.....	32
1.6. A complex origin 36.....	35
1.7. Summary 54	53
PART TWO 56.....	55
2.1. Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk comes to power 57	56
PART THREE 64.....	63
3.1. Background 65.....	64
3.2. The November 2013 crisis 68.....	67
3.3. Foreign intervention in the Ukrainian crisis 76.....	75
3.4. Crimea's independence and accession to Russia 80.....	78
3.5. Crimea and Russia's access to warm-water seas 84	82
PART FOUR 88	86
4.1. Pro-Russian protests in Ukraine 89	87
4.2. Outbreak of the conflict and Ukraine's response 90.....	88
4.3. Further reactions and protests 91	89
4.4. NATO and Russia 93.....	91
4.5. NATO's unsuccessful interventions: expanded chronology 99.....	96
4.6. NATO and Russia in the final quarter of the year in which the conflict began 110.....	106
4.7. 2015, EU ineffectiveness: chronology 119.....	114
4.8. April: the calm before the storm 127	120
4.9. Second half of 2015: continued ineffectiveness 129.....	123
4.10. 2016-2018: Minsk, attrition, and the Sea of Azov crisis 135.....	128

4.11. 2019-2020: Zelenskyy, renewed diplomacy, and an incomplete ceasefire	137
.....	129
4.12. 2021: from low-intensity war to a European strategic crisis	138
.....	131
PART FIVE	141
.....	133
5.1. February 2022: recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk and the Russian offensive	142
.....	134
5.2. The first campaign of 2022: Kyiv, Mariupol, and the Russian withdrawal from the north	143
.....	135
5.3. Negotiations, Bucha, and the collapse of the diplomatic space	143
.....	135
5.4. The territorial war of 2022: Kharkiv, Kherson, and the proclaimed annexations	144
.....	136
5.5. 2023: war of attrition, Bakhmut, and the Ukrainian counter-offensive	145
.....	137
5.6. 2024: Avdiivka, Kharkiv, Kursk, and an increasingly technological war	146
.....	138
5.7. 2025-2026: strategic continuity, long-range strikes, and intermittent diplomacy	147
.....	139
5.8. Transformation of the European security architecture	148
.....	140
5.9. Energy, sanctions, and economic reorientation	149
.....	141
5.10. Human cost, displacement, and reconstruction	150
.....	142
5.11. The nuclear dimension	151
.....	143
5.12. Causal assessment: what explains 2022 and what does not	152
.....	144
5.13. Language, identity, and political legitimacy	153
.....	145
ORIGINAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE FIRST EDITION (2015 HORIZON)	156
.....	148
WHAT THE FIRST EDITION ANTICIPATED - AND WHAT IT DID NOT	170
.....	161
A. What the first edition anticipated correctly	170
.....	161
B. What the first edition did not anticipate	171
.....	162
C. What was poorly framed rather than simply wrong	172
.....	163
D. Methodological consequence	172
.....	163
CONCLUSIONS OF THE REVISED EDITION (2026)	174
.....	165
1. The original thesis after 2022	174
.....	165
2. The security paradox	174
.....	165
3. Ukraine as an actor, not merely an object	174
.....	165
4. Crimea and the Donbas after the proclaimed annexations	175
.....	166
5. The failure of Minsk and the conditions for future negotiations	175
.....	166
6. Europe is no longer the actor it was in 2014	175
.....	166
7. Russia was not isolated from the international system either	176
.....	167

8. The human dimension changes the object of study 176.....	167
9. A durable peace requires an architecture, not merely a ceasefire 176	167
10. Final conclusion 177.....	168
CHRONOLOGY, 1917-2026 178	169
GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND INSTITUTIONS 180	171
NOTE ON THE STATUS OF VERIFICATION 182	173
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES 184	175
I. Academic bibliography and monographs 184	175
II. Primary sources and verification documents incorporated into this revision 187	178
III. Press sources and supplementary reference materials 188.....	179
IV. Institutional and documentary sources for the 2016-2026 update 189	180
V. Sources on language policy and terminological analysis 191	182
INDEX OF NAMES AND PLACES 192	183

NOTE TO THE REVISED EDITION: TWO-LAYER ARCHITECTURE AND AMENDMENT PROTOCOL

This volume consists of two layers of writing separated by eleven years and by a war. The first edition closed with a horizon that extended essentially to 2015; the present revision closes in August 2026. Between those dates came the full-scale invasion of February 2022, an event that not only expanded the object of study but also put the book's central hypothesis to the test. This note explains how the two layers have been articulated and how the reader can distinguish them on each page.

The editorial decision has been to preserve the 2015 text rather than re-write it. The reasons are methodological rather than sentimental. A book of international analysis formulates, explicitly or implicitly, expectations about the future behaviour of the actors it studies. Rewriting those expectations after the outcome is known removes the only evidence by which to assess whether the theoretical framework employed had predictive capacity. Silent rewriting produces books that always appear to have been right. Preserving the original formulation, by contrast, exposes the hypothesis to verification and turns the volume itself into a documented test comparing an analytical model with subsequent events.

The structure of the book follows from this decision. The main body, the first part of the bibliography, and the 'Original Conclusions of the First Edition' belong to the 2015 layer and are reproduced without alteration to their argument. The 2016-2026 update, sections 5.1 to 5.13, the 'Conclusions of the Revised Edition', the body of primary sources incorporated into this revision, and the set of amendment paragraphs belong to the 2026 layer.

The amendment paragraphs require separate explanation because they are the point at which the two layers come into direct contact. These are passages written in 2026 that correct a statement in the first edition, refine a figure, amend a causal attribution, or adjust a legal characterisation. They appear immediately alongside the passage they amend and are identified by the marker [2026 Revision] at the beginning of the paragraph. Their function is not to defend the original text but to state where and why it proved inaccurate.

It is useful to be explicit about what these amendments correct. Among other matters, they rectify the chronology of Ukrainian independence in 1918 and the relationship between the two Treaties of Brest-Litovsk; the claim that Ukraine was 'incorporated into the USSR' in 1919, when the Soviet Union was constituted in December 1922; the percentages for the national composition of the Ukrainian SSR, replaced by those of the 1926 census; the treatment of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the figure of Stepan Bandera; the characterisation of the Yalta agreement on the Polish border; the legal scope of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on Kosovo; the figures for European energy dependence on Russia; the evidentiary status of the May 2014 consultations in Donetsk and Luhansk; and the attribution of the downing of flight MH17, where the original text repeated a hypothesis circulated in the Russian media sphere that subsequent technical, criminal, and international investigations rejected.

One criterion has governed all of them: an amendment corrects the fact or inference, not the position. Where the first edition advanced a debatable but legitimate thesis, that thesis is retained and discussed in the revised conclusions. Where it stated something factually incorrect, the statement is corrected. In this book, the distinction between factual error and interpretative disagreement is a working rule, not a rhetorical concession.

The 'Original Conclusions of the First Edition' require a specific warning. They were written at a time when the conflict appeared to have stabilised along a line of contact and when the possibility of a general invasion lay outside the analytical horizon of most observers. Their register is more essayistic than that of the rest of the volume and contains formulations that the author would not endorse today in the same terms. They are retained for the same reason as the rest of the 2015 layer: a book that seeks to distinguish evidence, perception, and judgement must apply that standard to its own history as well.

The reader will therefore encounter two voices. The 2015 voice explains a conflict that it regarded as containable through a predominantly realist reading. The 2026 voice retains the structural core of that reading, shows where it proved insufficient, and acknowledges what the first edition failed to anticipate. The section 'What the First Edition Anticipated - and What It Did Not', placed between the two sets of conclusions, provides this assessment systematically.

INTRODUCTION

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK, THESIS, AND METHODOLOGY

Question and object of study. The central problem is to explain what combination of historical, strategic, political, and domestic factors transformed the Russo-Ukrainian relationship from the dissolution of the Soviet Union to the crisis under examination. The analysis considers together the European security architecture, Ukraine's geostrategic position, Russian and Ukrainian decisions, Western action, and internal political and identity-based cleavages.

Working thesis. The principal hypothesis is realist and relational: the eastward expansion of the Western political-military space, Moscow's perceived loss of strategic depth, Ukraine's centrality to Russian security, and the contest over Ukraine's international orientation produced a security dilemma that raised the costs and risks of decisions by all parties. This explanation does not eliminate the agency of any actor. Causal explanation, political justification, and legal or moral responsibility are treated as distinct categories. Rival hypotheses. The thesis is tested against four explanations: Russian agency and revisionist or sphere-of-influence objectives; Ukrainian agency and the construction of sovereignty; competition among institutional projects of integration; and political-identity factors, including nationalism, historical memory, regional divisions, and language. No single explanation is treated as self-sufficient.

Method and evidence. The study adopts a qualitative historical-interpretative method based on chronological reconstruction, comparison of decisions, and process tracing. Official documents establish positions, decisions, and legal frameworks; academic scholarship tests competing interpretations; statements reconstruct perceptions and interests; and the press primarily documents contemporary events. A statement by an actor is evidence of that actor's position, not automatic proof of its truth.

Criterion of objectivity. Verifiable facts, claims made by actors, historiographical interpretations, and the author's inferences are distinguished from one another. Categorical formulations that go beyond the documentary record should be read as propositions subject to testing. Objectivity here means

transparency of framework and the application to all parties of the same standards of evidence, causality, and contextualisation.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the setting, causes, conditions, and nature of the political, ideological, and military conflict in Ukraine, not only from the country's internal perspective but also from a broader regional and global perspective, taking into account all the parties involved in and implicated by the development of the dispute. The analysis therefore requires sustained reference not only to Russia's interests and positions but also to those of the United States and Europe in relation to Ukraine, as well as to the importance of Ukraine for both sides and for their own relationship with one another.

The conflict in Ukraine, and the balance of interests and power among the major powers surrounding it, have implications that are not merely regional but global. One hypothesis examined here is that the containment of Russia has retained an important place in US foreign policy and has, with qualifications and divergences, received the support of numerous European allies. The European Union and NATO, however, do not constitute a single institutional bloc and do not have identical memberships; their policies will therefore be analysed separately. The problem as a whole will be approached from an analytical and interpretative perspective grounded in the historical reconstruction of Russo-Ukrainian relations and in the comparison of rival explanations.

Analytical framework, hypotheses, and method

The central question of this research is: how have the European security architecture, the strategic interests of Russia and Ukraine, Ukrainian political agency, national and linguistic identities, and the intervention of external actors interacted since the dissolution of the Soviet Union to produce and escalate the Russo-Ukrainian conflict?

The principal thesis adopts a predominantly realist and relational framework. It argues that NATO enlargement and the Russian perception of a deterioration in its strategic environment are first-order structural factors for

understanding the crisis, but they are not presented as a single cause or as a sufficient explanation for all subsequent decisions. Causal explanation of a process does not, in itself, amount to its political, moral, or legal justification.

To test this thesis, rival and complementary hypotheses are considered: Russian territorial revisionism and imperial logic; Ukraine's sovereign agency and process of state-building; Ukrainian democratic and national mobilisation; nationalism and domestic politics in Russia and Ukraine; the security dilemma generated by Western institutional enlargement; and the economic, energy, cultural, and linguistic factors that shaped the bilateral relationship.

Methodologically, the study uses a historical-interpretative and process-reconstruction approach. Central claims should, wherever possible, be tested through triangulation among primary documents, official records, treaties and international resolutions, specialist academic literature, and, in a subsidiary role, contemporary journalistic sources. Press sources are used principally to document statements, perceptions, and sequences of events; on their own, they do not substitute for historiographical or documentary corroboration.

Five levels are distinguished in the treatment of evidence: verifiable facts; statements or positions of actors; historiographical interpretations; legal characterisations; and the author's inferences. Accordingly, contested terms such as 'coup d'état', 'revolution', 'annexation', 'incorporation', 'separatist', 'insurgent', or 'pro-Russian' are attributed to the relevant source or actor when no descriptive consensus exists regarding their use.

Objectivity is understood here as methodological transparency, consistency in evidentiary standards, and the presentation of alternative explanations, not as the absence of a thesis. The aim is to retain a defined interpretation while making explicit the distinction between evidence, argument, and judgement, so that the reader can assess the strength of each conclusion.

Note on terminology and transliteration

This edition systematically distinguishes among 'Russian' as a state, civic, or ethnic category depending on context; 'Russian-speaking' as a linguistic description; and 'pro-Russian' as a political orientation. These categories may overlap in particular cases, but they are not synonymous. Language use

is not treated as an automatic indicator of national identity, citizenship, or geopolitical preference.

A consistent editorial criterion is applied to personal names and place names, without assigning transliteration a partisan function. Established English exonyms are retained where their use is natural in the historiographical tradition, while original or institutional forms are respected in titles, quotations, and documents. Transliteration variants are normalised in the author's voice without altering the forms in which names appear in cited sources.

Legally or politically contested designations are attributed to the actor or framework that employs them: 'annexation', 'accession', 'incorporation', or 'return' for Crimea; 'revolution' or 'coup' for February 2014; 'separatists', 'insurgents', or 'people's republics' for actors in the Donbas. Lexical choice does not substitute for historical or legal analysis and, where a term contains a contested characterisation, its provenance is identified.

Acronyms and institutional names are normalised in English in the author's voice: NATO, EU, US, and USSR. This editorial normalisation does not alter official titles or direct quotations where the original form is relevant to the documentary reference.

Protocol for contested terms

The vocabulary of this conflict is not a wrapper around the analysis: it is part of the conflict itself. Each of the terms that follows embeds a legal or political characterisation that decides in advance what the analysis ought to establish. To call what occurred in Crimea in March 2014 an 'annexation' or an 'accession' is not to describe two nuances of the same fact, but to apply two incompatible legal regimes. To employ either term in the author's own voice is to resolve lexically a controversy that this book seeks to examine.

The protocol adopted is as follows. Where a neutral description is available, it is used. Where none exists, the term is expressly attributed to the actor or normative framework that employs it, through formulations such as 'what Moscow calls...', 'according to the characterisation adopted by the General Assembly...', or through attribution quotation marks. Where the controversy is central to the argument, competing designations are set out and the implication of each is identified. This criterion is applied symmetrically to all parties: Russian terminology is not subjected to scrutiny while Western terminology is exempted.

The table that follows records the principal contested terms appearing in the volume, the actor or framework that employs them, the implication they carry, and the criterion adopted in these pages. It does not claim to exhaust the vocabulary of the conflict; it identifies those cases in which lexical choice changes the proposition being made.

Term	Who uses it	What it implies	Criterion adopted in this book
Annexation / accession / incorporation / return (Crimea, 2014)	“Annexation”: Ukraine, EU, US, General Assembly Resolution 68/262. “Accession”, “incorporation” and “return”: Russian Federation.	“Annexation” presupposes unlawful territorial acquisition by force; “accession” presupposes a free act by a state already independent; “return” adds a historical claim.	The sequence of events—referendum of 16 March, declaration, treaty of incorporation—is described, and each designation is attributed to the party that maintains it.
Coup d’état / revolution (February 2014)	“Coup”: Russian Federation and sectors of eastern Ukraine. “Revolution of Dignity”: Ukraine and most Western states.	“Coup” implies an illegitimate rupture of the constitutional order; “revolution” implies original democratic legitimacy.	The procedure followed—Verkhovna Rada Resolution 757-VII of 22 February 2014—is set out, and the characterisation is identified as contested.

Separatists / insurgents / people's militias / people's republics (Donbas)	“Separatists” and “insurgents”: Ukraine and much Western scholarship. “People’s militias” and “people’s republics”: Russian Federation and the de facto authorities.	The first set presupposes the illegitimacy and unlawfulness of secession; the second presupposes popular representativeness and statehood.	“De facto authorities” or “forces of the self-proclaimed people’s republics” is used as an operational description; other terms are attributed.
Russian / Russian-speaking / pro-Russian	Frequently used interchangeably in press reporting from different sources.	The conflation permits language use to be treated as evidence of national identity, citizenship or geopolitical preference when none follows necessarily from it.	The categories are strictly distinguished: “Russian” as a state, civic or ethnic category according to context; “Russian-speaking” as a linguistic description; “pro-Russian” as a political orientation.
“Special military operation” / invasion / war	“Special military operation”: Russian Federation. “Invasion” and “war of aggression”: Ukraine, EU,	The first designation avoids the legal regime of war and the characterisation of aggression.	“Full-scale invasion” is used as a description of the military event, while “special military operation” is always

	US and the majority of the General Assembly.	sion; the second activates that legal framing.	quoted and attributed to its source.
Denazification / Nazis / neo-Nazis / nationalists (Ukraine)	“Denazification” and “Nazis”: official Russian discourse. “Nationalists” and “ultranationalists”: academic literature.	The first set justifies intervention as an antifascist necessity; the second describes a minority political current within a pluralist system.	Specific organisations, their documented ideology and electoral weight are described, and the term “denazification” is attributed to the discursive framework that produces it.
Genocide	Ukraine and numerous states and institutions regarding the Holodomor; Russian Federation regarding the Donbas; Ukraine regarding deportations and transfers of minors.	A legal characterisation with its own evidentiary threshold, centred on the specific intent to destroy a group as such.	The documented act, the legal characterisation and the actor advancing it are distinguished, and the existence of a determination by a competent body is identified.
Referendum / consultation	“Referendum”: Russian Federation and	“Referendum” presupposes a verifiable procedure;	“Consultation” is used, and the conditions under

pseudo-referendum	de facto authorities. “Consultation” or “pseudo-referendum”: Ukraine and international observers.	the alternatives deny that condition.	which it was held are made explicit: applicable constitutional framework, presence or absence of OSCE/ODIHR observation, and verifiability of the count.
“New Russia” / Novorossiya	Russian discourse and that of the de facto authorities since 2014.	Revives an eighteenth-century imperial designation in order to establish a claim of historical continuity over south-eastern Ukraine.	The term is placed in quotation marks with an indication of its historical origin and contemporary political revival.
Occupied territories / liberated territories / new regions	“Occupied”: Ukraine and the United Nations. “Liberated” and “new regions”: Russian Federation.	Each set presupposes that the question of sovereignty has already been resolved.	“Territories under Russian control” is used as a factual description without prejudging legal title.
Regime / government	“Regime” is applied to Kyiv in Russian discourse and to Moscow	“Regime” conveys illegitimacy; “government”	“Government” is used descriptively for both sides, while “regime”

	in Western discourse.	conveys institutional normality.	is reserved for attributed quotations.
Kiev / Kyiv and transliteration of place names	“Kiev” is the traditional English exonym; “Kyiv” reflects Ukrainian usage and has been institutionally adopted with increasing consistency since 2014.	The choice has acquired political significance since 2014.	Standard contemporary English forms are used in the authorial voice, while official forms in quotations, titles and documents are preserved; transliteration is not treated as a substitute for substantive political analysis.

This protocol is neither a formal preamble nor a stylistic precaution. It is the instrument that makes it possible to sustain the book's thesis without committing the very operation the book itself criticises: resolving a controversy through word choice. An analysis that uses 'annexation' in the author's own voice has decided the question of legality before examining it; one that uses 'return' has decided the question of historical legitimacy. In both cases, the conclusion was contained in the vocabulary and the argument becomes superfluous.

This also explains why language policy occupies a chapter of its own in this volume rather than an ancillary section. Section 5.13 examines how language legislation, schooling, and administrative usage became a terrain of political dispute in Ukraine after 1991, and how the identification of language use with national loyalty - practised by actors of every provenance - supplied discursive material both for Ukrainian nationalist mobilisation and for the Russian justification of intervention. The terminological protocol and that chapter are two aspects of the same problem: in this conflict, naming is a form of intervention.

The reader will therefore encounter throughout the volume a deliberately awkward use of language. Formulations such as 'what Moscow calls', 'according to the characterisation adopted by the General Assembly', or 'the self-proclaimed people's republics' are heavier than their direct alternatives. That awkwardness is the price of not deciding lexically what ought to be established documentarily, and it has been preferred to fluent prose whose conclusions are supplied in advance by the dictionary.

It is worth recalling Kennan's warning about NATO enlargement:

I think NATO expansion marks the beginning of a new Cold War. The Russians will gradually react quite adversely, and this will affect their policies. It is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for it. No one was threatening anyone else. Of course Russia will react badly, and then those expanding NATO will say that they had always warned us that the Russians are like that; but that is simply wrong.¹

Kennan's warning is relevant to the realist framework of this study. US and NATO leaders proceeded with further rounds of enlargement, including the three Baltic republics. Those countries had formed part of the Soviet Union and, before it, of the Russian Empire. Enlargement brought NATO to the border of the Russian Federation, a transformation that Moscow interpreted in increasingly adverse terms.

Kennan was not the only statesman or analyst to warn of the possible effects of NATO enlargement. Among the positions cited in this debate is that of Henry Kissinger, whose realist perspective is pertinent to comparing the different security models proposed for Ukraine:

For Ukraine to survive and thrive, it must not become either side's outpost against the other, but should instead function as a bridge between them. The West must understand that, for Russia, Ukraine can never be merely a foreign country.

Even such celebrated dissidents as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky insisted that Ukraine was an integral part of Russian history and, indeed, of Russia. Ukraine should not join NATO.²

In 2015, the linguist and political analyst Noam Chomsky advanced a similar criticism from a different intellectual tradition:

¹ The New York Times, 2 May 1998.

² Henry Kissinger, March 2014, <https://www.derechos.org/peace/russia/doc/rusukr1470.html>.

The idea that Ukraine might join a Western military alliance would be quite unacceptable to any Russian leader. This goes back to 1990, when the Soviet Union collapsed. The question was what would happen to NATO. Gorbachev accepted German reunification and Germany's entry into NATO. It was a remarkable concession, made in return for the understanding that NATO would not move one inch eastwards.

What happened was that NATO immediately incorporated East Germany. Clinton then expanded NATO to Russia's borders. The new Ukrainian government voted in favour of joining NATO. President Poroshenko was not protecting Ukraine; he was threatening it with a larger war.³

[2026 Revision] The documentary scope of this issue requires clarification. In 1990, Western officials gave verbal assurances concerning the non-extension eastwards of NATO's military jurisdiction in the context of German reunification; declassified memoranda record James Baker's phrase 'not one inch eastward'. Those conversations, however, did not crystallise into a treaty establishing a general and permanent legal prohibition on future enlargement of the Alliance. The distinction between a perceived political commitment and a formal legal obligation is central to interpreting the later controversy.⁴

William Perry, Bill Clinton's Secretary of Defense, stated in 1996:

I feared that NATO enlargement at this time would set us back. I believed that such a setback could squander the positive relationship we had developed with so much effort and patience during the promising post-Cold War period.

I believed that we needed more time to bring Russia, the other great nuclear power, into the Western security circle. To me, the overriding priority was clear.

Given that Russia still possessed a vast nuclear arsenal, I placed a very high priority on maintaining that positive relationship, particularly with regard to any future reduction in the threat posed by nuclear weapons.⁵

This study will critically examine the extent to which NATO contributed to the security of Western Europe while, at the same time, its continued ex-

³ Noam Chomsky, Democracy Now!, 2 March 2015, https://www.democracynow.org/es/2015/3/2/noam_chomsky_after_dangerous_proxy_war.

⁴ National Security Archive, George Washington University, "NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard", Briefing Book No. 613, 12 December 2017, colección de memorandos and transcripciones desclasificados de 1990.

⁵ W. Perry, *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), pp. 128-129.

istence and subsequent enlargement were interpreted by Moscow as a deterioration of its own strategic environment. Western Europe's economic prosperity cannot be attributed to, or denied on the basis of, a single causal factor such as a military alliance; the two dimensions will therefore be analysed separately.

From the realist hypothesis guiding this study, the United States and its European allies bear a significant share of the political responsibility for the deterioration of the security environment that preceded the crisis. In this reading, NATO enlargement is a central structural factor within a broader strategy of integrating Central and Eastern Europe into Western institutions. At the same time, the EU's eastward expansion and Western support for democratic movements in Ukraine, beginning with the Orange Revolution of 2004, were also relevant factors. From the mid-1990s onwards, Russian leaders repeatedly opposed NATO enlargement. In 2014, Putin described Viktor Yanukovych's departure as a 'coup d'état'; the Verkhovna Rada, by contrast, adopted Resolution 757-VII on 22 February 2014, stating that Yanukovych had unconstitutionally withdrawn from the exercise of his duties and calling early elections. The legal and political characterisation of the February 2014 transition must therefore be presented as contested rather than as an unequivocally established fact.⁶

From a realist perspective, the Russian response should not have been regarded as unexpected either. Moscow interpreted the expansion of Western institutions into Central and Eastern Europe as a progressive reduction of its strategic depth and as a threat to interests its leaders described as vital. Sections of the political elites in the United States and Europe, by contrast, assigned greater weight to liberal principles such as state sovereignty, the right to choose alliances, economic interdependence, and the spread of democratic institutions. The conflict between these two logics - great-power security and the sovereign autonomy of smaller states - is one of the principal interpretative axes of this book.

It should be noted that when the Cold War ended, Soviet leaders preferred US forces to remain in Europe and NATO to remain intact, an arrangement they believed would keep a reunified Germany pacified. Yet they

⁶ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Resolution No. 757-VII, "On self-withdrawal of the President of Ukraine from performing his constitutional duties and setting early elections of the President of Ukraine", 22 February 2014.

and their Russian successors did not want NATO to expand further and assumed that Western diplomats understood their concerns. The Clinton administration evidently took a different view and, by the mid-1990s, began pressing for NATO enlargement.

The first round of enlargement took place in 1999 and admitted the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The second occurred in 2004 and included Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Moscow protested bitterly from the outset. During NATO's 1995 bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs, for example, Russian President Boris Yeltsin said: 'This is the first sign of what could happen when NATO comes right up to the borders of the Russian Federation ... the flame of war could burst out across all of Europe.'

Russia then had only limited capacity to obstruct politically the first rounds of NATO enlargement. The accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999 did not yet create a new NATO-Russia land border; that changed with the accession of Estonia and Latvia in 2004. Russian threat perception was therefore cumulative and was not identical at every stage of enlargement.

[2026 Revision] The conflict in Ukraine is not new and cannot be reduced to a single cause. Within the framework of this study, the continuing process of NATO enlargement is one of the structural factors examined. During the negotiations over German reunification in 1990, senior Western officials gave Soviet leaders verbal assurances regarding the non-extension eastwards of NATO's military jurisdiction; the geographical and political scope of those assurances, and their relationship to subsequent enlargement, remain matters of historiographical debate.⁷

'We understand that it is important not only for the Soviet Union but also for other European countries to have guarantees,' then US Secretary of State James Baker told Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990. 'If the United States maintains its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, not one inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an easterly direction.'

⁷ National Security Archive, "NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard", 12 December 2017. For the debate on the scope of the assurances, see the declassified documents reproduced there and the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, 12 September 1990.

Nevertheless, the 1999 and 2004 rounds admitted numerous Central and Eastern European countries to NATO. Moscow perceived the policy as provocative, and it also drew criticism within US foreign-policy circles. As George Kennan, one of the principal architects of Cold War containment, observed, enlargement could have adverse consequences for relations with Russia.

The Russian government formulated two central demands in its security proposals: that Ukraine not join NATO and that certain Western military deployments in Russia's vicinity be restricted. The United States refused to accept a Russian veto over the sovereign alliance choices of third states. From a realist perspective, this position can be compared with US sensitivity to rival-power alliances and military deployments in its own geographical proximity, as illustrated by the Cuban Missile Crisis; the analogy is useful for analysing threat perceptions even though the legal and historical contexts are not identical.

The thesis advanced in this study is that US policy and Western institutional enlargement were central causal factors in forming the security environment that culminated in the crisis. This claim explains a structural dimension of the process, but it neither eliminates the agency of Russia, Ukraine, or other actors nor predetermines the attribution of legal or political responsibility for particular decisions.

PART ONE

Background to the Ukrainian Crisis

1.2. The fall of Tsarism and the First World War

With the collapse of the Russian monarchy in 1917 under the strain of war and political discord, Ukrainian patriots established their coordinating body, the Central Rada (Council), which soon became a revolutionary parliament.⁸

The Russian Provisional Government granted Ukraine autonomy under the name Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR), but the Bolsheviks subsequently refused to recognise it and invaded Ukraine in order to incorporate it into the Soviet state.

The UPR declared full independence in January 1918 and signed a peace treaty with the Central Powers at Brest before the Bolsheviks did the same.⁹

German authorities installed a Ukrainian monarch under the historical title of hetman, but the UPR returned to power after the end of the First World War and proclaimed unification with the Ukrainian lands of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The UPR could not survive the titanic clash between the Russian Reds and Whites during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922), since neither power recognised Ukrainian sovereignty. Yet the precedent of Ukrainian independence compelled the Bolsheviks to create a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR), which in 1922 became a founding member of the Soviet Union.¹⁰

When the Bolshevik Revolution occurred in 1917, Lenin's government sought to withdraw Russia from the First World War. The Ukrainian People's Republic had proclaimed its independence on 22 January 1918 and separately signed a peace treaty with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk on 9 February 1918. Soviet Russia signed its own Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918. It was therefore not that Russian treaty that initially 'gave' Ukraine independence: the Ukrainian government had already declared independence and concluded its own international agreement. The Soviet-

⁸ E. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 127.

⁹ E. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 239.

¹⁰ S. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 45.

Russian treaty accepted a new territorial balance imposed by military defeat and allowed the Bolsheviks to concentrate on the Russian Civil War.¹¹

[2026 Revision] Ukrainian independence in 1918-1920 was short-lived and passed through successive changes of government and occupation. Following the German capitulation in November 1918, Soviet Russia repudiated the territorial obligations imposed by Brest-Litovsk, and the Red Army again intervened in Ukraine. Bolshevik power was progressively consolidated in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic; it is inaccurate to state that Ukraine was 'incorporated into the USSR' in 1919, because the Soviet Union was formally constituted in December 1922, with the Ukrainian SSR as one of its founding republics. Political and military repression of opponents of the new regime was intense in the following years. The national composition also differs from the percentages cited earlier: the 1926 Soviet census recorded approximately 23.2 million Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR out of a total population of 29.0 million - around 80 per cent - 2.68 million Russians - approximately 9.2 per cent - and 1.57 million Jews - approximately 5.4 per cent - as well as Poles, Germans, Moldovans, and other minorities.¹²

Nevertheless, in the early 1930s Joseph Stalin returned to the unfinished task of crushing the Ukrainian political nation that had developed during the Revolution.

[2026 Revision] The famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine, known as the Holodomor, caused extraordinary mortality. The most recent demographic reconstructions estimate approximately 3.9 million excess deaths in Ukraine during 1932-1934, in addition to a substantial birth deficit. The characterisation of the Holodomor as genocide has been adopted by Ukraine and by numerous states and institutions, while its precise classification remains part of international historiographical

¹¹ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918, Russia, vol. II, documentation on the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Brest-Litovsk negotiations; Treaty between the UPR and the Central Powers, 9 February 1918; Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers, 3 March 1918.

¹² First All-Union Census of the Soviet Union (1926), national composition by republic; statistical tables reproduced by Demoscope Weekly. For the Ukrainian SSR: total population 29,018,187; Ukrainians 23,218,860; Russians 2,677,166; Jews, approximately 1,570,000; iVANOV, Y. (1986). "El Banco de Comercio exterior de la URSS (Vneshtorgbank)". Comercio Exterior, vol. 36, p. 1.016.

and legal debate. The causal attribution of collectivisation policies, requisitions, restrictions on movement, and decisions of the Soviet state must be distinguished from the specific debate over genocidal intent.¹³

Stalin also destroyed the Ukrainian cultural elite and began promoting the Tsarist notion of Ukrainians as the Russians' 'younger brother'.

1.3. The enlarged Ukrainian SSR

[2026 Revision] When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, sections of Ukrainian nationalism saw the war as an opportunity to recover lost independence and escape Soviet rule. Some Ukrainians collaborated with German authorities and forces; others took part in different forms of resistance. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) emerged as an armed nationalist formation in 1942, principally in western Ukraine, and at different times fought German occupation forces and Soviet power, as well as Polish organisations. Its declared objective was an independent and unified Ukrainian state. The UPA's trajectory cannot be reduced to a simultaneous and homogeneous resistance against two occupiers: its relations with the Germans varied over time and place, and units linked to the movement also participated in mass violence against Polish civilians in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. Anti-Soviet resistance continued after 1944 and was progressively dismantled by Soviet security organs during the post-war period.¹⁴

Following the German-Soviet pact of August 1939 and Germany's invasion of Poland, the Soviet Union invaded eastern Poland in September 1939 and incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR territories with substantial Ukrainian populations. Those territories had remained on the Polish side after the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1921 and the Treaty of Riga, signed on 18 March 1921 by Poland, Soviet Russia, and Soviet Ukraine. The Peace of Riga es-

¹³ Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, MAPA Digital Atlas of Ukraine, Great Famine Project, demographic estimates of the Holodomor; see also Oleh Wolowyna et al., demographic studies of the losses de 1932-1934; FERNÁNDEZ, Antonio *Historia del mundo contemporáneo*. Vicens-Vives, Barcelona, p. 135.

¹⁴ Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, "Ukrainian Insurgent Army": armed formation active mainly in western Ukraine between 1942 and 1949 against the German and Soviet occupation regimes. For violence against Poles and the complexity of its relations with Germany, see also the specialised historiography on the OUN-UPA.

established a border that divided lands inhabited by Ukrainians and Belarusians and brought to an end the military phase in which Bolshevik leaders had hoped to extend the revolution into Central Europe.¹⁵

[2026 Revision] At the Yalta Conference of February 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin agreed that the eastern border of post-war Poland would broadly follow the Curzon Line, with certain modifications favourable to Poland. In practice, the formula consolidated the Soviet Union's retention of much of interwar Poland's eastern territories, including regions with Ukrainian and Belarusian populations. The border was subsequently specified through Soviet-Polish agreements. It is therefore more accurate to speak of an Allied agreement on the post-war border than simply to state that Roosevelt and Churchill 'allowed Stalin to keep' those territories.¹⁶

The Soviets also pressured Czechoslovakia to relinquish its 'Rusyn' lands.

Under the energetic party leader Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971), the resulting enlarged Ukrainian SSR came to incorporate almost all territories with an ethnic Ukrainian majority, fulfilling a long-standing objective of Ukrainian patriots to create a united Ukraine.¹⁷

Khrushchev, however, pursued cultural assimilation towards Russia rather than promoting Ukrainian autonomy.

Persistent armed resistance to Soviet rule by Ukrainian nationalists in the former Polish territories continued into the 1950s.¹⁸

¹⁵ Jerzy Borzęcki, "Riga, Treaty of", 1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War; Treaty of Riga, 18 March 1921, signed by Poland, the Russian SFSR and Soviet Ukraine; s. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 39.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, documentation on the Polish question; the Yalta agreement took the Curzon Line as the basis of Poland's eastern frontier, with modifications favourable to Poland.

¹⁷ CARR, E. H. (1979). *La revolución bolchevique 1917-1923. La conquista and organización del poder*. Madrid: Alianza (4ª edición). – (1981). *La revolución rusa. De Lenin a Stalin, 1917-1929*. Madrid: Alianza, p. 239.

¹⁸ S. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 56.

1.4. Transfer of the Crimean Peninsula

Although connected by land only to Ukraine, Crimea - the Crimean Peninsula south of Ukraine - became an autonomous republic within Russia in 1921, partly because of the peninsula's strategic importance.

Neither Russians nor Ukrainians constituted a majority there, and during the 1920s the Soviets cultivated Crimean Tatar culture - the Tatars had lived on the peninsula since the thirteenth century, and their Crimean Khanate, a Crimean Tatar state established in 1441, was conquered by the Russian Empire in 1783 - in order to impress Western colonies and newly independent Asian states with the apparent benevolence of Soviet policy.¹⁹

When the Red Army recaptured Crimea from Nazi Germany in 1944, however, Stalin ordered the forced deportation of the Tatars, an act many historians regard as genocidal.

As a result of this deportation, ethnic Russians became the numerical majority almost overnight.

The war had left the peninsula's economy and cities in ruins.

In the context of commemorations marking the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement, Soviet authorities arranged the transfer of Crimea Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued the relevant decree on 19 February 1954, and the transfer was subsequently incorporated into the legislation of the Union and of both republics. The official reasons cited territorial proximity, economic integration, and cultural ties; the initiative has been politically associated with Khrushchev, but legally it was not his personal act.²⁰

He also hoped to please the Ukrainian bureaucrats who formed his power base and, perhaps, to add a culturally Russian counterweight to the recently incorporated nationalist western regions.²¹

1.5. The Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union

The origins of the Cold War lie in the outcome of the Second World War, when the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two principal

¹⁹ G. Hosking, *Una muy breve historia de Rusia* (Madrid: Alianza, 2014), p. 49.

²⁰ Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, decree on the transfer of Crimea Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR, 19 February 1954; text published in *Pravda* el 27 February 1954 and reproduced by the Soviet History, Michigan State University.

²¹ G. Hosking, *Una muy breve historia de Rusia* (Madrid: Alianza, 2014), p. 139.

superpowers. The Yalta Conference of February 1945 addressed, among other matters, the occupation and political future of Germany, reparations, the Polish question, and the future United Nations. There the USSR also undertook to enter the war against Japan two or three months after Germany's surrender in exchange for concessions in the Far East - including southern Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, and certain interests in Port Arthur and the Manchurian railways; there was no agreement granting the USSR a right to 'enter Berlin first'. The Potsdam Conference, held between July and August 1945, developed the conditions for the occupation of Germany and addressed other post-war issues. During the conference, the United States, United Kingdom, and China issued the Potsdam Declaration setting out the terms for Japan's surrender; the Soviet Union was not an initial signatory because it had not yet declared war on Japan. The post-war bipolar international order thus took shape progressively.²²

The definition of a new geography aligned with socialism and capitalism was reinforced by the Marshall Plan, announced by Secretary of State George C. Marshall in 1947, through which the United States committed itself to supporting the economic reconstruction of participating European countries. The USSR's response included the so-called Molotov Plan, organised through bilateral agreements with Eastern European countries, and subsequently the creation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) in 1949. Europe was divided into two broad politico-economic spheres: the Western sphere, including among others the United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Italy; and the Eastern sphere, comprising states such as Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and the German Democratic Republic. Greece and Turkey also joined NATO in 1952. Berlin, divided at the end of the war into four occupation sectors administered by the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the USSR, became the most visible symbol of tension between the two systems. In 1961 the Berlin Wall was erected, dividing the city, families, and social networks; it stood for just over twenty-eight years, until it was opened on 9

²² U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Yalta Conference, 1945" and FRUS, Agreement Regarding Entry of the Soviet Union Into the War Against Japan, 11 February 1945; "The Potsdam Conference, 1945" and Potsdam Declaration, 26 July 1945; s. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 46.

November 1989, not thirty-eight. The logic of bipolar alignment was reproduced, with local variations, in numerous conflicts and states throughout the Cold War.²³

The Cold War also coincided with the acceleration of decolonisation in Africa and Asia. The weakening of the European colonial powers after the Second World War, the growth of nationalist and anti-colonial movements, and competition between the United States and the Soviet Union interacted differently in each region; decolonisation therefore cannot be attributed to a single cause.²⁴

The bipolar logic internationalised numerous local and regional conflicts. The United States and the Soviet Union supported governments, movements, or armed forces with the aim of expanding or protecting their respective spheres of influence. Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, and El Salvador illustrate, in different contexts, how superpower rivalry prolonged or intensified wars with devastating consequences for civilian populations.

One of the moments of greatest risk of nuclear escalation occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. US reconnaissance aircraft identified Soviet missile installations on the island, and the John F. Kennedy administration responded with a naval quarantine and a large-scale military deployment. For several days, the confrontation brought the two superpowers close to a possible nuclear exchange.

The crisis ended through negotiation. The Soviet Union withdrew the missiles deployed in Cuba; the United States publicly committed itself not to invade the island and, privately, agreed subsequently to remove its Jupiter missiles from Turkey. The episode clearly demonstrated the sensitivity of great powers to strategic military deployments in their geographical vicinity.

For much of the Cold War, the possibility of nuclear escalation shaped international politics and public perceptions of conflict between the blocs. That threat was neither constant nor identical at every stage, but it constituted a structural element of the bipolar system.

Competition between the superpowers also accelerated certain scientific and technological programmes, particularly in the space race, computing,

²³ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Berlin Wall Falls and USSR Dissolves"; Berlin Wall Memorial / official German documentation: construction in August de 1961 and opening on 9 November 1989; Iovell, S. (2008). *Un destino incierto: Rusia desde 1989*. Intermon Oxfam, p. 120.

²⁴ E. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 56.

electronics, telecommunications, and navigation systems. Some developments commonly associated in broad terms with the Cold War - computers, the laser, the internet, the transistor, GPS, the photocopier, the microwave oven, the mobile telephone, and video games - nevertheless have distinct chronologies and origins; not all were direct products of bipolar rivalry. The more precise formulation is that the period's military, space, and scientific investment accelerated and financed decisive advances in several of these fields.²⁵

Mikhail Gorbachev's accession to the Soviet leadership in 1985 opened the final phase of the Cold War, but does not by itself constitute its end date. Gorbachev adopted a more conciliatory posture towards the West and promoted political openness, peaceful coexistence, arms reductions, troop withdrawals from various theatres, the release of political prisoners, economic reforms, greater scope for initiative and investment, and, more generally, the policies known as glasnost and perestroika. These changes contributed to the weakening of Europe's bipolar order. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 symbolised the collapse of that order; German reunification in 1990 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 completed the process.²⁶

1.6. A complex origin

As noted above, one of the immediate antecedents of the contemporary conflict lies in the transformation of the post-Soviet space after 1991. The dissolution of the Soviet Union converted its former internal boundaries into international borders and required economic, military, and political relationships to be redefined. From the Russian perspective, deeper Ukrainian integration with NATO reduced Moscow's influence over a neighbour regarded as strategically essential; conversely, deeper Ukrainian integration with Russia-led structures constrained the project of rapprochement with the European Union promoted by important sectors of Ukrainian politics.

In November 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolised the rapid disintegration of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. The crowds crossing the

²⁵ E. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 346.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Berlin Wall Falls and USSR Dissolves, 1989-1991", overview of the fall of the Eastern bloc, German reunification and Soviet dissolution.

boundary between the two German states turned the event into one of the defining images of the end of the European Cold War order.

Few could then foresee that, less than two years later, the Soviet Union itself would cease to exist and symbols of Soviet power would be removed in numerous republics. The sequence of 1989-1991 thus became associated with a political transformation of continental scope.²⁷

Between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the USSR came a chain of events whose combination of political acceleration and institutional crisis has been interpreted, depending on the author, either as unexpected or as the cumulative result of prior tensions.

The first in this sequence took place far from Moscow, at the summit held off the coast of Malta in the Mediterranean on 2 and 3 December 1989. Bad weather and heavy seas disrupted the programme and forced changes to several planned meetings aboard US and Soviet vessels, explaining the enduring image of the leaders meeting on ships tossed by a storm. It was the first bilateral summit between Mikhail Gorbachev and George H. W. Bush in Bush's capacity as President of the United States. The two men represented the two great superpowers of the Cold War international system, and the meeting symbolised a shift towards a less confrontational relationship.²⁸

The significance of the Malta Summit lay precisely in the fact that George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev represented the two superpowers of the bipolar system and sought to redefine a relationship that had been structured for decades by strategic confrontation.

George H. W. Bush had been President of the United States for less than a year and had succeeded Ronald Reagan, who had characterised the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire' and presided over a period of heightened military tension before the later *détente* with Gorbachev.

The political question was whether the new US administration would maintain the confrontational strategy of Reagan's early years or deepen the negotiating process opened during the second half of the 1980s.

The answer was not predetermined: different assessments coexisted within the Bush administration regarding the durability of Soviet reforms,

²⁷ IBISANTE, F. J. (2006). "Mijail Gorbachov: de la tragedia de Chernobyl a la Carta de la Tierra". *Realidad 107*. San Salvador: UCA, pp. 11-37. Indexmundi. Available at: <https://www.indexmundi.com/>

²⁸ National Security Archive, George Washington University, "Bush and Gorbachev at Malta", documentary collection published on 3 December 2009; Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs of Malta, "The 1989 Malta Summit".

Gorbachev's intentions, and the desirability of modifying the policy of containment.

Mikhail Gorbachev, for his part, had become General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985 and had launched far-reaching reforms. In foreign policy he progressively abandoned the interventionist doctrine that had constrained the autonomy of the socialist states of Eastern Europe and accepted that Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia could pursue political transformations of their own.²⁹

In domestic policy he promoted two concepts that became emblems of his programme: *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

Glasnost referred to greater informational and political openness; *perestroika* to the restructuring of the Soviet economic, administrative, and social system. The two processes were related but not equivalent, and their implementation produced contradictory results.

Gorbachev himself presented *perestroika* as a transformation requiring responsibility, cooperation, and a profound reorganisation of work and institutions. This rhetoric sought to reform Soviet socialism, not initially to announce its abandonment.

Soviet society experienced significant political opening: censorship was reduced, the space for public expression widened, and certain forms of political repression diminished. At the same time, economic deterioration and shortages increasingly affected everyday life. That contrast formed part of the context of the Malta Summit.

Gorbachev arrived in Malta in an increasingly difficult domestic position. He sought to reduce military confrontation for political and security reasons, but also because lower defence expenditure could release resources for *perestroika* and for the modernisation of a struggling economy.

For decades, the arms race had imposed extraordinary costs on both superpowers. In the Soviet case, the pressure of military expenditure coincided

²⁹ IBISANTE, F. J. (2006). "Mijail Gorbachov: de la tragedia de Chernobyl a la Carta de la Tierra". *Realidad* 107. San Salvador: UCA, pp. 11-37. Indexmundi. Available at: <https://www.indexmundi.com/>

with the need to finance economic and social reforms, strengthening the incentive to reduce strategic confrontation.^{30,31}

During the month preceding the summit, the Bush administration debated internally how Gorbachev and perestroika should be interpreted. The President assembled his team at Camp David and heard two opposing academic assessments. The historian Richard Pipes, deeply sceptical of Soviet reforms and of Gorbachev's intentions, presented one view. The historian Stephen F. Cohen presented the other, arguing that the reforms might offer the United States a historic opportunity to reduce confrontation and foster peaceful transformation. Cohen would later recall that Bush inclined towards exploring cooperation with Gorbachev. The correct names of the two scholars are therefore Richard Pipes and Stephen F. Cohen, not 'Richard País' and 'Stephen Wayne'.³²

After hearing the conflicting assessments of his advisers and outside specialists, Bush chose to explore a cooperative relationship with Gorbachev. Malta did not legally 'end' the Cold War in a single act, but it consolidated the political process that was transforming relations between the two powers.

*'As we stand on the threshold of the 1990s, I extend my hand to President Gorbachev and ask that we work together to tear down the last barriers to a new world of freedom. Let us move beyond a policy of containment and bring the Cold War to an end once and for all,' Bush urged.*³³

'We have to stop seeing one another as enemies.' Those simple words symbolised the end of the Cold War.³⁴

For the leaders involved, the advance of détente represented an achievement of considerable scope. Yet a more complex question immediately

³⁰ Avances Tecnológicos Durante La Guerra Fría. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <https://www.clubensayos.com/Tecnolog%C3%ADa/Avances-Tecnologicos-Durante-La-Guerra-Fria/1593668.html>

³¹ Bracho, G. (2004). "La liberalización del comercio exterior, la desindustrialización and la economía poscomunista en Rusia". Investigación Económica, vol. LXIII. (January-March), Ciudad de México: UNAM, p. 79.

³² Stephen F. Cohen, 2006 commentary on his debate with Richard Pipes at Camp David before President George H. W. Bush and his team, reproduced by H-Diplo/ISSF; see also documentation and testimony on preparations for the Malta Summit; iBISANTE, F. J. (2006). "Mijaíl Gorbachov: de la tragedia de Chernobyl a la Carta de la Tierra". Realidad 107. San Salvador: UCA, p. 15.

³³ El País. Document retrieved on 27 February 2022. https://elpais.com/diario/1989/11/24/internacional/627865205_850215.html

³⁴ iBISANTE, F. J. (2006). "Mijaíl Gorbachov: de la tragedia de Chernobyl a la Carta de la Tierra". Realidad 107. San Salvador: UCA, p. 115.

arose: how should European security be organised after the progressive disappearance of the bipolar order?

This new context coincided with the growth of independence movements in the Soviet republics. In January 1990 Gorbachev travelled to Lithuania, accompanied by Raisa Gorbacheva, in an attempt to assess and contain a national mobilisation demanding the restoration of independence. Lithuania, together with Latvia and Estonia, occupied an especially sensitive position because of the history of its incorporation into the USSR and the strength of its national movement.

Lithuania was occupied and incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940. Following the German invasion of 1941 it came under Nazi occupation; the Red Army reoccupied the territory in 1944, and the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic remained *de facto* integrated into the USSR until 1990-1991. This outcome did not derive from a territorial transfer agreed at Potsdam; moreover, throughout the Cold War the United States maintained a policy of non-recognition of the Soviet incorporation of the Baltic states.³⁵

During his visit, Gorbachev walked through streets and squares and met representatives of different sectors of society. Among broad mobilised constituencies, the question of whether Lithuanians wished to leave the Soviet Union received unequivocally pro-independence answers.³⁶

The affirmative response of the pro-independence sectors showed the extent to which reforms intended to modernise the Union had also opened a political space in which its very territorial continuity could be challenged.

Back in Moscow, Mikhail Gorbachev conveyed a more optimistic assessment to the Soviet leadership and maintained that the Union could still be preserved. That assessment contrasted with the speed at which the Lithuanian independence movement was moving towards an institutional break.

Two months later, on 11 March 1990, Lithuania proclaimed the restoration of its independence. For the first time, a Soviet republic formally declared its departure from the USSR, creating a political precedent of enormous importance.

The event had the potential to produce a demonstration effect in other republics and confronted the Kremlin with a dilemma: preserve the Union through coercion or seek a new constitutional formula.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, Welles Declaration, 23 July 1940, and historical documentation on the US policy of non-recognition of the Soviet incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

³⁶ E. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 128.

Gorbachev attempted to gain time and preserve Soviet legality while seeking a political solution that would prevent the disintegration of the state. That strategy became increasingly difficult as demands for sovereignty advanced.

A central feature of Gorbachev's public position was his insistence on legality and his professed reluctance to use force as an ordinary mechanism for preserving the system. His legal training contributed to this political self-image, although Soviet conduct towards the Baltic republics also included coercive episodes that require any purely moral characterisation of his behaviour to be qualified.³⁷

Gorbachev formally defended the supremacy of law and had sworn to exercise the presidency within the framework of the Soviet Constitution. His problem was that the existing legal order provided insufficient mechanisms for managing a sovereignty crisis of such magnitude.

The Congress of People's Deputies elected Gorbachev President of the USSR in March 1990. The same reform process abolished the Communist Party's constitutional monopoly and opened the system to broader political competition. Gorbachev was attempting to transform the regime profoundly without losing control of the state and party apparatus that made that transformation possible.³⁸

The Soviet system displayed growing signs of institutional obsolescence. The Communist Party, the central administration and the nomenklatura retained extensive powers of veto and control, so numerous reform initiatives encountered resistance within the very apparatus responsible for implementing them.

Gorbachev's efforts repeatedly became trapped in this contradiction. While some reformers demanded an acceleration of political and economic transition, conservative sectors sought to halt it; other actors came to conclude that effective transformation required reducing, or even dismantling, the structure of the Union.

Specialists and leaders close to perestroika, including Andrei Grachev and Alexander Yakovlev, debated different formulas for preserving a renewed union. One of the central criticisms of programmes for accelerated transition was that an administered economy could not be transformed into

³⁷ GOYTISOLO, J. (3 July 1996). "El zar Boris". Available at: <https://elpais.com>

³⁸ Herranz Fernández, F. J. (2019). Mijail S. Gorbachov: la persona, el político and el discurso desde el análisis transaccional and la teoría del guion de vida. Madrid: Facultad de Ciencias de la Información-UCM, p. 45.

a market economy within an extremely short period in the absence of appropriate institutions, rules and price mechanisms.

Gorbachev therefore faced both a political and an economic dilemma: to what extent could mechanisms of markets, property and competition be introduced within a system still structured by planning and the political power of the Communist Party?

Perestroika did not produce the expected economic results. Partial liberalisation introduced competition and new forms of private activity, but these coexisted with administered prices, supply constraints and inherited productive structures. The combination generated contradictory incentives and aggravated shortages.³⁹

The result included declining output, empty shelves and widespread shortages of numerous consumer goods. The economic crisis, in turn, increased political pressure on the reform programme.

Gorbachev recognised the need to reform the price system, but the social and political implications of rapid liberalisation made the decision difficult. Delay in defining a coherent programme reduced the government's ability to control the transition.⁴⁰

Mikhail Gorbachev postponed decisive economic measures and ultimately abandoned parts of his initial programmes when the crisis was already severe. The dollar circulated informally as a benchmark, the rouble lost value, inflation accelerated, and visible forms of poverty reappeared after decades in which official Soviet discourse had portrayed them as alien to the system.

Delays in the payment of wages and pensions became more frequent, further eroding the legitimacy of Soviet institutions.

In retrospect, Mikhail Gorbachev himself judged some of the programmes designed to accelerate the economic transition negatively and acknowledged that one economic system could not be transformed into another in a matter of days.

³⁹ Cerdas, R. (1989). "Perestroika and Revolución: los cambios en la política soviética hacia América Central". *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, vol. 15, n.º 2. San José: Universidad de Costa Rica, p. 21.

⁴⁰ De Andrés Sanz, J. (2017). "La crisis del sistema soviético: la era Gorbachov". *El colapso del comunismo (1989-1991)*. Valladolid: UVA, p. 19.

*'This failed programme for precipitating economic change was, in fact, a major mistake. It was impossible to move from one economic system to another in a matter of days.'*⁴¹

It was in this context that Boris Yeltsin returned to the centre of political life, having previously been removed from senior positions after criticising the slow pace of reform.

Yeltsin had been an important provincial apparatchik and First Secretary of the Party in Moscow. His reputation combined administrative effectiveness, political frankness and a growing willingness to confront Gorbachev publicly over the pace of perestroika.

Elected as a deputy and emerging as one of the leading figures of the reformist camp, Boris Yeltsin used Parliament as a platform from which to challenge Gorbachev and hold the Soviet leadership responsible for the insufficiency of the reforms.⁴²

Yeltsin attributed a substantial share of responsibility for the economic and political crisis to Gorbachev. He also criticised his foreign policy, accusing him of making excessive concessions to the West and of failing to negotiate the Soviet withdrawal from East Germany and the terms of German reunification with sufficient firmness.

The Bush administration maintained that German reunification should proceed and argued that a unified Germany should remain tied to Western structures. For Moscow, the issue was not reunification alone, but the military and strategic position of the new German state within the European system.

This gave rise to one of the questions that would later acquire particular relevance in the debate over Ukraine: what security architecture should replace the divided order of the Cold War, and what place would a reunified Germany occupy within it?⁴³

One solution advocated by Washington was to keep Germany within NATO. Gorbachev initially regarded that possibility as a major concession and sought assurances that would reduce the military consequences of extending the Alliance's jurisdiction.

⁴¹ De Andrés Sanz, J. (2017). "La crisis del sistema soviético: la era Gorbachov". El colapso del comunismo (1989-1991). Valladolid: UVA, pp. 15-29.

⁴² LOPEZ, L. M. (16 May 1999). "Yeltsin gana el pulso a la Duma, que no se atreve a procesarle por traidor and genocida". Available at: <https://elpais.com>

⁴³ S. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 34.

In the 1990 discussions, Western leaders gave Gorbachev verbal assurances that NATO's military jurisdiction would not move eastwards in the context of German reunification. As noted above, the territorial and temporal scope of those assurances remains disputed and was not established as a general prohibition in a multilateral treaty.⁴⁴

Gorbachev ultimately accepted the membership of a united Germany in NATO. The decision reflected a combination of Soviet weakness, economic incentives, agreements concerning the deployment of forces, and the expectation of a cooperative relationship with the West; reducing it to a simple error of personal trust would be insufficient to explain the process.

In the years that followed, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic actively sought NATO membership. Enlargement into Central Europe and, later, the Baltic states transformed what had originally been an issue connected with Germany into a broader question concerning the European security order.

Despite his political weakening, Gorbachev achieved an internal victory when he was re-elected General Secretary at the Twenty-Eighth Congress of the Communist Party in July 1990. The conservative sectors failed at that stage to remove him from the party leadership.

Yeltsin, for his part, deepened his break with both the Communist Party and Gorbachev. By the autumn of 1990, the balance of forces had changed: more radical reformers criticised the President for restraining their programmes, while conservatives blamed him for the system's loss of control.

Gorbachev was thus trapped between two incompatible coalitions. His ability to construct a stable majority diminished as the economic crisis and national demands eroded the institutions of the Union.

Unable to reach a lasting political agreement with Yeltsin and under growing pressure from the conservative apparatus, Gorbachev brought hard-line figures into important positions even though those same sectors blamed him for ending the Party's political monopoly.⁴⁵

During this turn he appointed or retained in key posts figures associated with the security apparatus and the conservative wing, including Boris Pugo at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Dmitry Yazov at Defence, and Vladimir Kryuchkov at the head of the KGB.

⁴⁴ G. García Higuera, *Historia and Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015), p. 57.

⁴⁵ G. García Higuera, *Historia and Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015), p. 45.

He also strengthened the weight of conservative sectors by appointing Gennady Yanayev Vice-President of the USSR and Valentin Pavlov Prime Minister. Several of these figures would take part only months later in the attempted coup of August 1991.

The political shift was sufficiently pronounced to prompt the resignation of Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, one of the officials most closely identified with the new Soviet foreign policy.

In his resignation speech, Shevardnadze publicly warned of the danger of dictatorship and presented his resignation as a protest against a possible authoritarian restoration. His intervention became a symbol of the rupture between reformers and the conservative wing of the Soviet apparatus.

The crisis also spread to the Baltic republics. Communist sectors in favour of preserving the Union mobilised supporters in Vilnius and Riga and confronted independence movements demanding full sovereignty.

The tension produced mass gatherings and growing polarisation. Soviet institutions and republican authorities competed for legitimacy as the risk that political conflict would turn violent increased.

In Vilnius, the confrontation reached a critical point at the beginning of 1991. Soviet forces, including special units, intervened against Lithuanian institutions and demonstrators; the events of January left people dead and injured and severely damaged the legitimacy of Soviet power in the Baltic republics.⁴⁶

In reality, however, no one wanted responsibility for the bloodshed to fall on their shoulders.

Alpha special forces seized public buildings in Vilnius and attacked nationalists who had barricaded themselves inside the television building. There were deaths and injuries, and similar events occurred in Riga, where four people were killed.

Gorbachev reacted immediately, something highly unusual for Soviet leaders:

⁴⁶ G. García Higuera, *Historia and Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015), p. 239.

*I deeply regret the tragic events that have recently taken place in Lithuania and Riga, and I express my sincerest condolences to the families affected by this tragedy.*⁴⁷

News of the deaths in Riga and Vilnius had a profound effect in the USSR and throughout the Western world.

After these events, the West, and the United States in particular, feared destabilisation not only in the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe but within the Soviet Union itself.

In an attempt to obtain a popular mandate to reorganise and preserve the Union, Mikhail Gorbachev promoted the all-Union referendum held on 17 March 1991, the first and only union-wide referendum in Soviet history.⁴⁸

The question asked whether it was considered necessary to preserve the Soviet Union as a 'renewed federation of equal sovereign republics' in which rights and freedoms would be fully guaranteed. Six republics - Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and the three Baltic republics - did not officially organise the vote, although local ballots were held in some areas.

Among those who participated in the Union referendum, 76.4 per cent voted in favour of preserving a renewed Soviet federation. In the Russian SFSR, a separate question was held simultaneously on the creation of a republican presidency elected by popular vote; approximately 71 per cent of voters approved that proposal. These were therefore two distinct consultations, not a single result.

Boris Yeltsin was elected President of the Russian SFSR by popular vote on 12 June 1991 and took office on 10 July of that year. He thereby became the first popularly elected president of the Russian republic.⁴⁹

Moscow was now the seat of two rival centres of power: that of the Soviet Union, represented by Gorbachev, and that of Russia, headed by Yeltsin, who had come to embody the hopes of a substantial part of the Russian population.

⁴⁷ G. García Higuera, *Historia and Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015), p. 167.

⁴⁸ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission), *Referendum in the Soviet Union, report on the referendum of 17 March 1991*; Soviet History, Michigan State University, "The March Referendum": 76.4% of participants voted in favour of a renewed federation.

⁴⁹ Presidential Library of the Russian Federation, audiovisual and documentary material on the inauguration of Boris Yeltsin, 10 July 1991; he was elected by popular vote on 12 June 1991.

The contradictions between Gorbachev and Yeltsin were profound. A struggle for power - ultimately, a struggle for the leading position - was one of the central forces driving their confrontation.⁵⁰

Both men also displayed a strong attachment to political power. Had Yeltsin become General Secretary of the Party, the institution might paradoxically have emerged strengthened rather than weakened.

In this contest Gorbachev was burdened by the economic results and, in order to sustain the reforms, sought large-scale Western financial assistance. He was invited to London after the Group of Seven Economic Summit, held from 15 to 17 July 1991, and met the G7 leaders to explain the Soviet situation and request support.⁵¹

In that context, after an exchange of cordial words, he made a striking request. In substance, he argued that he had done what had been asked of him: he had invited foreign experts, accepted American advisers, liberalised prices and opened markets, but was now 'up to his neck in water' and warned that, without assistance, the result would be disastrous.

The meeting was chaired by the British Prime Minister, John Major - not by an 'English major' - as host of the summit. Major expressed a willingness to support the reform process and later outlined several forms of assistance, although the G7 members avoided committing themselves to a financial package on the scale sought by Gorbachev.⁵²

Western leaders considered it necessary to support the reforms and avoid uncontrolled destabilisation of the Soviet Union, but they remained cautious in the face of political and economic uncertainty. The summit documentation supports an interpretation of prudence; it does not support reducing the G7 position to a simple preference for a 'hard and brutal' leader over democracy.

At that point Gorbachev remained, for the G7 governments, the recognised interlocutor of the Soviet Union and a central actor in the continuation of reforms, control of the nuclear arsenal and the international transition.

⁵⁰ HOBBER, K. (2003). The impeachment of President Yeltsin. New York: Jurisnet, p. 32.

⁵¹ G7 Research Group, documentación de la London Economic Summit, 15-17 July 1991; National Security Archive, "G-7 Meeting with President Gorbachev, London, July 17, 1991", con John Major como presidente de la reunión.

⁵² G. Hosking, Una muy breve historia de Rusia (Madrid: Alianza, 2014), p. 134.

This diplomatic preference for stability and negotiation should not be confused with a negative judgement of Russian democratisation or Western opposition to Boris Yeltsin.⁵³

Gorbachev was moving in a direction that might have taken Russia towards democracy and social democracy, and the republics towards greater political independence.

Gorbachev returned from London empty-handed, at a time when it was already clear that his political position was hanging by a thread.

As the summer holidays approached, rumours of a coup d'état were already circulating - and they were not without foundation.

Conservative opposition to Gorbachev's reforms had hardened during the months preceding the coup attempt, and several senior officials had discussed emergency measures. The available documentation makes it possible to reconstruct a gradual process of preparation, but not to identify with certainty a single beginning of the coup 'in December 1990'; the conspiracy that culminated in the State Committee on the State of Emergency crystallised during 1991.

Opponents of Gorbachev's government met in small committees.

They believed the country was heading towards disaster and that extraordinary measures were required to stop the process.

According to Gorbachev himself, those defending the continuity of the Union could invoke politically the March 1991 referendum, in which 76.4 per cent of participants had voted to preserve a renewed Soviet federation. That result was important, but it did not represent the six republics whose authorities did not organise the referendum and did not in itself confer constitutional legitimacy on a coup d'état.⁵⁴

The coup plotters were firmly opposed to the new treaty prepared by Gorbachev, which would have transformed the Soviet Union into a federation of states.

In August, while Gorbachev, his wife Raisa and their family were staying at the presidential residence in Crimea, a disturbing event occurred: the Ministry of Defence cut the residence's electricity and telephone communications. Military personnel said that they had received orders to do so.

⁵³ G. García Higuera, *Historia and Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015), p. 137.

⁵⁴ M. Gorbachov, *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992* (Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994), p. 56.

Amid the resulting confusion, movement around the residence was restricted, while Soviet naval vessels openly patrolled along the coast.⁵⁵

The purpose was to create an atmosphere of tension and isolation at the residence.

A few hours later, a delegation of ministers and Party officials entered the presidential residence and, without preamble, demanded that Gorbachev declare a state of emergency throughout the country - a measure that would in effect legitimise the coup.

Gorbachev responded by reaffirming constitutional principles.

He refused, arguing that the Congress of People's Deputies could be convened and that any necessary decision should then be taken through the proper institutional process. The plotters threatened him and pressed him to sign his resignation.

Gorbachev resisted both surrendering to the plotters and giving them the endorsement they sought.

The coup leaders moved into Moscow without Gorbachev's official authorisation and decided to accelerate the course of events.⁵⁶

The Soviet leadership then issued a declaration stating that Gorbachev was unable, for reasons of health, to perform his duties as President of the USSR and invoking constitutional emergency provisions to justify the transfer of authority.

Tanks entered Moscow. The Defence Minister gave the order, and the coup forces took up strategic positions near ministries, radio and television facilities, and around the Russian Parliament - the White House.

The Kremlin plotters imposed censorship, banned demonstrations and introduced a curfew. They also contacted Boris Yeltsin, who rejected their offer to join them.

A declaration to the public was drafted in Moscow stating as clearly as possible that the lawfully elected President, Gorbachev, had been removed from power and that the coup leaders were committing crimes against the state.

That formulation became one of the keys to what followed over the next three days. It was a declaration addressed both to the international community and to the Russian people.

⁵⁵ M. Gorbachov, *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992* (Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994), p. 77.

⁵⁶ M. Gorbachov, *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992* (Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994), p. 89.

As growing numbers of Muscovites made their way towards the White House, which was surrounded by tanks, Yeltsin went there to speak with the tank crews, most of whom were conscripts.

Within minutes, Yeltsin had climbed onto a tank; several deputies joined him, and he delivered his declaration.⁵⁷

'(...) the President elected in accordance with the law has been removed from power; we must therefore declare this so-called committee illegal.'

Boris Yeltsin's declaration had an immediate effect on the demonstrators who had gathered there in search of political leadership.⁵⁸

The young soldiers operating the tanks did not know how to react. Confusion spread among the forces deployed around the White House, while supporters of democratic resistance remained gathered outside it.

That afternoon the coup leaders appeared in public for the first time and held a press conference accompanied by five ministers and Party dignitaries, all of whom had been appointed under Gorbachev.

Members of the State Committee on the State of Emergency claimed that Mikhail Gorbachev was unable, for health reasons, to perform his duties. Soviet Vice-President Gennady Yanayev announced that he was temporarily assuming the presidency of the USSR; in reality, Gorbachev was isolated at his residence in Foros, Crimea, and refused to legitimise the operation. Vladimir Ivashko was not the official who assumed the acting presidency during the coup.⁵⁹

Mikhail Gorbachev and those with him, who had followed events on the residence caretaker's television, understood the intentions of the coup plotters.⁶⁰

Gorbachev said that the plotters would now try to make reality conform to their claims about his health and feared that they might attempt to poison him.

⁵⁷ LOPEZ, L. M. (16 May 1999). "Yeltsin gana el pulso a la Duma, que no se atreve a procesarle por traidor and genocida". Available at: <https://elpais.com>

⁵⁸ HOBBER, K. (2003). The impeachment of President Yeltsin. New York: Jurisnet, p. 65.

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, documentación sobre el intento de golpe de August de 1991; el Comité Estatal para el Estado de Emergencia anunció que el vicepresidente Guennadi Yanáyev asumía interinamente las funciones presidenciales.

⁶⁰ Herranz Fernández, F. J. (2019). Mijail S. Gorbachov: la persona, el político and el discurso desde el análisis transaccional and la teoría del guion de vida. Madrid: Facultad de Ciencias de la Información-UCM, p. 159.

Cut off from the outside world and fearing for his life, Mikhail Gorbachev recorded a statement on a video camera.

*'After the press conference held by the State Committee on the State of Emergency, I have understood that the Russian people and foreign countries have been misinformed. I declare that everything said about my health is false. This venture constitutes an attack on the Constitution. The elected President is being prevented from performing his duties. Moreover, the residence in Crimea where I am spending my holiday is surrounded by soldiers. I remain the President.'*⁶¹

Absolute confusion reigned among the coup leaders. One by one, they began to retreat from their positions.

Political and social resistance to the coup centred in Moscow around the Russian Parliament and the President of the Russian SFSR, Boris Yeltsin. The coup attempt began to collapse on 21 August 1991; military units withdrew from Moscow and the coup leaders were arrested. Gorbachev returned to Moscow in the early hours of 22 August.⁶²

The time had come to bring Gorbachev back to Moscow.

In panic, the coup leaders sent Vladimir Kryuchkov and others to Crimea. They hoped that remaining close to Gorbachev might help them avoid the consequences of the crisis they had provoked.

Learning of the move and suspecting a possible manoeuvre against him, Yeltsin sent his Vice-President to bring Gorbachev back, ensuring that the Russian leadership rather than the plotters would be seen publicly as responsible for his release.

Yeltsin then informed the Western embassies in Moscow of his initiative.

The plotters who had gone to Crimea wanted to take Gorbachev back to Moscow on their own aircraft. Instead, the Russian delegation reached him, and he flew back to Moscow the following morning.

Yeltsin, the principal political victor of the failed coup, received President Gorbachev in Moscow.

⁶¹ GORBACHOV, M. (1994). *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992*. Madrid: Globus Comunicación.

⁶² U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Berlin Wall Falls and USSR Dissolves, 1989-1991"; el golpe comenzó el 19 August, colapsó el 21 and Gorbachov regresó a Moscú el 22 August 1991.

Gorbachev condemned the coup unequivocally, but could not avoid acknowledging the role of those who had secured his release.⁶³

From that point onwards, Mikhail Gorbachev's political position was increasingly dependent on Boris Yeltsin, who presented himself as the defender of perestroika and democracy.

Before the Congress of People's Deputies, Yeltsin soon delivered what amounted to the final blow against his rival: he displayed the text of a decree suspending the activities of the Communist Party, arguing that the exact role played by Gorbachev's team in the coup had not yet been determined.⁶⁴

One deputy went further, arguing that, given the role played by the Communist Party in the coup, it should be dissolved and treated as a criminal organisation.

Gorbachev strongly disagreed with the proposal to dissolve the Communist Party as a criminal organisation.

In his view, banning the Party would itself be a mistake by a democratic government and president.

At this point an extraordinary scene unfolded. Boris Yeltsin approached the rostrum and pressed Gorbachev to sign the decree with him. The President resisted; Yeltsin insisted. Gorbachev refused and Yeltsin returned to his seat.

*'Comrades, let us settle this once and for all. I am going to sign the decree ending the activities of the Russian Communist Party.'*⁶⁵

The decree was signed, and the scene was broadcast live across the Soviet Union. It accelerated the institutional disintegration of the Union during the weeks that followed.

The Soviet government recognised the independence of the Baltic states and, as the process advanced, of Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Belarus. Gorbachev, still attempting to preserve some form of link, however weak, between Moscow and Ukraine, Belarus and the Asian republics, turned to the idea of an economic union.

Work had already begun on a new treaty of economic union, and Yeltsin himself had participated in the process and even signed the draft.

⁶³ M. Gorbachov, *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992* (Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994), p. 70.

⁶⁴ HOBBER, K. (2003). *The impeachment of President Yeltsin*. New York: Jurisnet, p. 78.

⁶⁵ M. Gorbachov, *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992* (Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994), p. 430.

Once published, the draft treaty was sent to the presidents of the republics for ratification. Meanwhile, without Gorbachev's knowledge, Yeltsin was preparing a separate agreement with other republican leaders.

In early December, at a government hunting residence in the Belarusian forest, Boris Yeltsin met secretly with the leaders of Belarus and Ukraine, Stanislav Shushkevich and Leonid Kravchuk.

Their purpose was to establish a new political and economic framework that would supersede the treaty Gorbachev was preparing and further undermine his position as President of the USSR.

The role played by Belarus and Ukraine was decisive in the final dissolution of the Soviet Union.⁶⁶

Mikhail Gorbachev had lost virtually every instrument of effective power and was forced to endure the final stage of the process to its conclusion.

The man who had become a democrat and sincerely believed that communism could be reformed; the man who had dismantled much of the fear on which the Soviet system had rested for decades, was now accused by many of his own citizens of cowardice, indecision and weakness.

Yet this raises an obvious question: how could a man supposedly so weak have initiated perestroika and set in motion a transformation of the social and political order?

The democratisation of parliamentary life, the end of the Cold War, the curtailment of political repression and the easing of religious repression formed part of that transformation.

Politically isolated, Gorbachev submitted his resignation as President of the Soviet Union on 25 December 1991, days after the agreements establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States and after the republics had asserted their sovereignty from the Kremlin.⁶⁷

During the final months of 1991 the institutional disintegration of the USSR accelerated. Turkmenistan declared independence on 27 October 1991, not on Christmas Day. Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the Belavezha Accords on 8 December; on 21 December, eleven republics signed instruments at Alma-Ata that expanded the Commonwealth of Inde-

⁶⁶ IBISANTE, F. J. (2006). "Mijail Gorbachov: de la tragedia de Chernobyl a la Carta de la Tierra". *Realidad* 107. San Salvador: UCA, pp. 11-37. Indexmundi. Available at: <https://www.indexmundi.com/>

⁶⁷ HOBSBAWM, E. (1998). *Historia del siglo xx*. Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori.

pendent States. Gorbachev resigned as President of the USSR on 25 December and, on 26 December 1991, the Soviet of the Republics of the Supreme Soviet adopted the declaration recording the end of the Soviet Union.⁶⁸

1.7. Summary

When the relaxation of ideological controls under Mikhail Gorbachev permitted more open political competition, Ukrainian and Russian democratic activists initially converged around demands such as freedom of expression, expanded political rights and competitive elections.

The administration of Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007) did not seek to preserve the Soviet federation in its existing form, but rather to strengthen the sovereignty of the Russian Republic. This temporarily made Yeltsin an ally of Leonid Kravchuk in the process of dissolving the USSR, although their interests began to diverge once Russia and Ukraine had become independent states.⁶⁹

The Ukrainian referendum of 1 December 1991 consolidated independence politically and accelerated the dissolution of the Union. One week later, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the Belavezha Accords, declaring that the USSR had ceased to exist and establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States.

As economic reforms stalled and social conditions deteriorated in the early 1990s, nationalist discourses and nostalgia for the imperial or Soviet space gained weight in Russia. In this context, various actors challenged Ukrainian cultural policies, the status of Crimea and other elements of the new bilateral relationship.

In 1997, the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine affirmed principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders. Earlier, under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, Ukraine received security assurances linked to its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Collapse of the Soviet Union"; *Acuerdos de Belavezha*, 8 December 1991; *Declaración and Protocolo de Alma-Ata*, 21 December; *renuncia de Gorbachov*, 25 December; *statement of Soviet de las Repúblicas*, 26 December 1991; e. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 124.

⁶⁹ HOBER, K. (2003). *The impeachment of President Yeltsin*. New York: Jurisnet, p. 56.

weapon state. The Memorandum was signed by Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States; France and China issued separate assurances but were not parties to that specific memorandum.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ United Nations Treaty Collection, Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Budapest, 5 December 1994, participantes: Ucrania, Federación Rusa, Reino Unido and Estados Unidos; hOSK-ING, G. (2014). Una muy breve historia de la Rusia. Madrid: Alianza, pp. 239

PART TWO

*Relations between the Newly Established Republic of
Ukraine and Russia*

2.1. Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk Comes to Power

On 1 December 1991, just over three weeks before the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine held its first presidential election and, simultaneously, a referendum to confirm the Act of Declaration of Independence adopted by Parliament on 24 August. Independence was endorsed by 90.32 per cent of voters, not 92.30 per cent. With turnout above 84 per cent, Leonid Kravchuk received approximately 19.6 million votes, or 61.59 per cent, and was elected the first President of independent Ukraine.⁷¹

Vitold Fokin was appointed Prime Minister by the Verkhovna Rada. Ukraine participated at two distinct stages in the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States: on 8 December 1991 Leonid Kravchuk signed the Belavezha Accords with Boris Yeltsin and Stanislav Shushkevich; on 21 December, at Alma-Ata, eleven republics signed the Alma-Ata Protocol and Declaration, which expanded and structured the CIS.⁷²

For decades, the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic in exile claimed historical continuity with the Ukrainian People's Republic defeated at the beginning of the Soviet period. After independence in 1991 it recognised the new Ukrainian state as the continuation of that tradition: on 22 August 1992, its last president, Mykola Plaviuk, formally transferred his powers and symbols to President Leonid Kravchuk and declared the activities of the state centre in exile concluded. This was an act of historical and symbolic continuity, not a legal condition required to 'legitimise' the government produced by the 1991 elections and referendum.⁷³

After becoming President of an independent Ukraine, Kravchuk sought to strengthen the country's sovereignty and develop relations with the West. He resisted pressure from the Russian Federation and rejected proposals for

⁷¹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, documentación oficial sobre el referéndum de independencia del 1 December 1991: 90,32% de votos favorables, con participación superior al 84%; elecciones presidenciales celebradas simultáneamente; el Referéndum de independencia de Ucrania de 1991 se llevó a cabo en Ucrania el domingo 1 December 1991. La única pregunta que el referéndum hacía fue: "¿Apoya el Acta de Declaración de Independencia de Ucrania?" con el texto del Acta impreso en primer lugar. El referéndum fue convocado por el Parlamento ucraniano para confirmar el Acta de Independencia, que había sido aprobada por el parlamento el 24 August 1991.

⁷² Acuerdos de Belavezha, 8 December 1991; Protocolo and Declaración de Alma-Ata, 21 December 1991. Véase Presidential Library of the Russian Federation and documentación de la Comunidad de Estados Independientes.

⁷³ Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, "Government-in-exile of the Ukrainian National Republic"; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "Way of State": transferencia simbólica de poderes de Mykola Plaviuk a Leonid Kravchuk, 22 August 1992.

common armed forces or a common monetary union within the Commonwealth of Independent States. His presidency also saw the beginning of the complex process that would lead to the elimination of the strategic nuclear arsenal inherited on Ukrainian territory.⁷⁴

Following independence, the Kravchuk administration faced, among other problems, severe economic difficulties arising from the transition from a planned to a market economy. Output fell sharply and prices soared. Contemporary series show hyperinflation far exceeding the previously cited 1,210 per cent: an International Monetary Fund study indicates that the recorded retail price level increased more than twentyfold during 1992. Monetary expansion, fiscal imbalances, the disruption of Soviet production chains and the difficulties of transition all contributed. Falling output and inflation affected many former Soviet republics, but Ukraine was among the economies hit hardest. Prime Minister Vitold Fokin opposed more radical market reforms and, amid the crisis and intense political pressure, resigned on 8 October 1992.⁷⁵

At Kravchuk's initiative, Leonid Kuchma, then relatively little known outside industrial and political circles, was appointed by the Verkhovna Rada to succeed Fokin as head of government. On taking office he promised market-oriented reforms. He nevertheless resigned in mid-1993, criticising the slow pace and institutional limitations of the reform process. Inflation and social discontent continued to rise after his departure. Following a period in which Yukhym Zvyahilsky served as acting head of government, Kravchuk appointed Vitaliy Masol, who was perceived as more favourable to an economy with strong state intervention.⁷⁶

Kravchuk's position on the transfer and dismantlement of the nuclear weapons inherited after the dissolution of the USSR changed over time. Early in his presidency he maintained that Ukraine would move towards non-nuclear status; later, the government linked transfer of the arsenal to economic compensation, security assurances and agreements concerning fissile material. In November 1993, Kravchuk described the weapons and their components as 'material wealth' whose transfer should be compensated.

⁷⁴ G. Hosking, *Una muy breve historia de Rusia* (Madrid: Alianza, 2014), p. 258.

⁷⁵ International Monetary Fund, "Shortages Under Free Prices: The Case of Ukraine in 1992", IMF Staff Papers, 1994: el nivel registrado de precios minoristas en Ucrania aumentó más de veinte veces durante 1992; g. Hosking, *Una muy breve historia de Rusia* (Madrid: Alianza, 2014), p. 79.

⁷⁶ G. García Higuera, *Historia and Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015), p. 79.

These issues generated serious tensions with Moscow. At the same time, the Bill Clinton administration increased diplomatic pressure and offered economic assistance to Ukraine to facilitate denuclearisation. The process would culminate in trilateral agreements and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, within the broader framework of Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon state.⁷⁷

Kravchuk's term was originally due to run until 1996, but the economic crisis, confrontation between the Presidency and Parliament, and the erosion of his political support led to an accelerated electoral timetable. In June 1993 the Rada discussed holding a referendum of confidence; the mechanism was ultimately abandoned and parliamentary elections were scheduled for March 1994 and presidential elections for June. Although Kravchuk initially expressed doubts about standing again, he sought re-election amid low public approval.

Kravchuk won 38.4 per cent of the vote in the first round, while Leonid Kuchma advanced to the second round with particularly strong support in the south and east of the country. Kravchuk performed better in many western and central regions. The electoral geography revealed important regional differences, but these should not be mechanically reduced to an opposition between a 'nationalist west' and a 'Russian east': language, ethnic identity, economic preferences and geopolitical orientation overlapped only partially. Kuchma won the second round with 52.3 per cent, and Kravchuk transferred power peacefully and constitutionally.⁷⁸

To understand the scale and scope of the strategy pursued by the Russian government in response to instability and conflict in its neighbouring country, long-term historical antecedents must be taken into account. It is not methodologically sound, however, to describe a period in which neither modern state existed as a 'bilateral relationship between Russia and Ukraine lasting more than a thousand years'. Kyivan Rus, formed from the ninth century with Kyiv as one of its principal centres, is a shared and subsequently contested medieval inheritance in Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian historical traditions; it cannot simply be identified retrospectively with the modern Russian state. The territory of present-day Ukraine successively belonged to

⁷⁷ G. García Higuera, *Historia and Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015), p. 175.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.; de Andrés Sanz, and RUIZ, R. (2008). "Y Putin encontró el camino. Instituciones y Régimen Político en la Rusia del siglo xxi". UNISCI-Discussion Papers, n.º 17 (May). Madrid: UCM. De la Cámara, M. (2012), p. 90.

several political spaces - including the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire and its dependencies, the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire - contributing to regional, religious, linguistic and political differences. Crimea, with a significant Tatar population, belonged to the Crimean Khanate under Ottoman suzerainty until the eighteenth century and was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783 under Catherine II. It thereafter acquired central naval importance for Russia. Policies of integration and Russification developed across broad areas incorporated into the Russian Empire; during the nineteenth century imperial authorities severely restricted Ukrainian-language publishing and education, although the extent and intensity of those measures varied by period and territory.⁷⁹

During the 1920s, Soviet power pursued the broader policy of *korenizatsiia*, or indigenisation, whose variant in the Ukrainian SSR was *Ukrainisation*. Formally adopted in 1923, the policy promoted the use of Ukrainian, the training of local cadres and the expansion of publishing, education and administration in that language. It is therefore incorrect to place the beginning of a general policy of forced Russification as early as 1924. *Ukrainisation* continued through much of the decade and was decisively reversed in 1932-1933, alongside repression of cultural, political and academic elites accused of 'bourgeois nationalism'. Centralisation and Russifying pressure increased thereafter, although later Soviet language policies passed through different phases and degrees of intensity.⁸⁰

In 1954, the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR took place through a sequence of decisions by Soviet institutions. The measure occurred under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev and in the context of the Pereiaslav commemorations, but it was not legally his personal act: the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR

⁷⁹ Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, sección histórica sobre Kyivan Rus; see also la historiografía contemporánea sobre la competencia de memorias nacionales en torno a la Rus de Kyiv. El Estado medieval antecede a los Estados modernos ruso, ucraniano and bielorruso; e. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 89; e. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998), p. 175.

⁸⁰ Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, "Ukrainization": políticas aplicadas por el Partido Comunista de Ucrania entre 1923 and 1933 como variante de la *korenizatsiia* soviética; la reversión decisiva se produjo en 1932-1933; cARR, E. H. (1979). *La revolución bolchevique 1917-1923. La conquista and organización del poder*. Madrid: Alianza (4ª edición). – (1981). *La revolución rusa. De Lenin a Stalin, 1917-1929*. Madrid: Alianza, p. 78.

issued the decree of 19 February, and the Supreme Soviet subsequently incorporated the transfer into Union legislation, followed by amendments in the republics concerned. The Soviet leadership could hardly have foreseen that, sixty years later, the peninsula would become one of the principal points of conflict between two independent states. Crimea also retained major strategic, naval and historical importance, associated among other things with Sevastopol and the Soviet memory of the Second World War. The formal legality of the 1954 procedure has been disputed retrospectively, especially since 1991. The claim that the transfer was unambiguously illegal because the Presidium lacked the necessary authority must therefore be presented as a contested legal position, not as an incontrovertible constitutional fact. The Soviet political system did, however, concentrate enormous power in the senior leadership of the CPSU and allowed no meaningful public deliberation or independent popular consultation.⁸¹

Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms widened the space in which Soviet republics and nationalities could express political, cultural and territorial demands previously contained by the system. Those demands were not the sole cause of the USSR's dissolution, but they interacted with the economic crisis, fragmentation of central power and competition among republican leaders until continuation of the Soviet state in its previous form became unviable.⁸²

On 20 January 1991 a referendum was held in Crimea in which 93.26 per cent of participants supported restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a subject of the USSR and participant in the proposed Union Treaty. The result demonstrates strong support for restoring autonomous status, but the question submitted to voters did not directly ask whether the 1954 territorial transfer should be reversed or whether Crimea should separate from the Ukrainian SSR. Interpreting the result as a specific rejection of the 1954 transfer must therefore be presented as a political inference rather than the literal content of the consultation.⁸³

⁸¹ Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, decreto de 19 February 1954; Soviet Supremo de la URSS, ley de 26 April 1954 que incorporó la transferencia and modificó los artículos territoriales correspondientes. La evaluación de su legalidad retrospectiva es objeto de controversia; *ibid.*, p. 175..

⁸² Cerdas, R. (1989). "Perestroika and Revolución: los cambios en la política soviética hacia América Central". *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, vol. 15, n.º 2. San José: Universidad de Costa Rica, p. 18.

⁸³ Referéndum de Crimea, 20 January 1991. La pregunta sometida a voto se refería a la restauración de la República Autónoma Socialista Soviética de Crimea como sujeto de la URSS and

In 1992, the Russian Federation advanced political claims concerning Crimea, while Leonid Kravchuk's government defended Ukrainian territorial integrity. The peninsula retained autonomous status within Ukraine. In 1997, Russia and Ukraine agreed terms for the division of the Black Sea Fleet and Russian use of facilities in Sevastopol. In 2010, under President Viktor Yanukovych, the Kharkiv Accords extended the lease of facilities for the Russian Black Sea Fleet until 2042 in exchange, among other provisions, for discounts on gas prices.

In 2004, Viktor Yanukovych, then Prime Minister, was initially declared the winner of the presidential election. Allegations of fraud and mass protests led the Supreme Court of Ukraine to invalidate the second round and order a repeat vote. Opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko, who had suffered severe poisoning with TCDD dioxin during the campaign, won the rerun.⁸⁴

Yushchenko and members of his circle attributed the poisoning to adversaries linked to the former power apparatus, although responsibility was never conclusively established in court. The electoral crisis culminated in the Orange Revolution, a predominantly peaceful mobilisation that brought Yushchenko to the presidency and strengthened Yulia Tymoshenko politically, while Yanukovych moved into opposition.

The Orange Revolution received support and assistance from Western organisations in areas including election monitoring, political organisation, civic training and non-violent resistance. It also had a substantial domestic financial and organisational base. Any analysis of its character must distinguish documented external support from the broader claim that the movement was created or directed from abroad.

Foreign organisations active in democratisation and civil-society programmes included US agencies, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, Freedom House, Open Society and the National Endowment for Democracy. Gene Sharp's writings on non-violent resistance also influenced repertoires of mobilisation used by youth movements in several countries.⁸⁵

participante del Tratado de la Unión; el 93,26% de los participantes votó afirmativamente; COLOMER, A. and Flores, C. (eds.). (2002). *Rusia, en vísperas de su futuro*. Valencia: PUV, p. 67.

⁸⁴ BARTLES, C. K. (2016). "Cómo comprender el artículo de Gerasimov". *Military Review* (March-April). Fort Leavenworth: Army University Press, p. 59.

⁸⁵ Herranz Fernández, F. J. (2019). *Mijail S. Gorbachov: la persona, el político and el discurso desde el análisis transaccional and la teoría del guion de vida*. Madrid: Facultad de Ciencias de la Información-UCM, p. 56.

Russia likewise intervened politically in the contest through advisers, public support and media coverage favourable to Yanukovych. Consultants such as Gleb Pavlovsky participated in communication strategies, electoral mobilisation and negative portrayals of Yushchenko. Allegations of fraud included practices such as multiple voting and improper use of electoral registers.

Yanukovych returned to government as Prime Minister in 2006 and remained in office until the early elections of 2007, after which Yulia Tymoshenko again headed the government. During the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, the Ukrainian economy contracted by approximately 15 per cent. Energy disputes with Russia temporarily interrupted gas supplies in 2006 and 2009 and also affected European consumers. In 2010, Viktor Yanukovych was elected President with approximately 49 per cent of the vote in the second round.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 349..

PART THREE

The Crimean Crisis

3.1. Background

Among its antecedents, the contemporary Ukrainian crisis can be traced to the rapid institutional transformation produced by the dissolution of the USSR and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991. That process should not be described as purely 'sudden' independence or as evidence of a prior absence of national organisation. Ukrainian cultural and political movements of varying intensity had existed since the nineteenth century; in Galicia, organisations and parties progressively incorporated demands for autonomy and independence, while in Ukraine under Russian rule the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party (RUP) was founded in Kharkiv in 1900 alongside other Ukrainian political organisations at the turn of the century. Kyivan Rus, for its part, is a shared and contested medieval heritage and cannot simply be presented as 'the Russian state' that subsequently moved to Moscow. Ukrainian nationalism developed unevenly across regions and was shaped by the inclusion of Ukrainian territories within different empires, but political organisation existed before 1914.⁸⁷

While Ukraine was a Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet federal structure, the three-hundredth anniversary of the Pereiaslav agreement was commemorated in 1954. In that context, the Crimean Oblast was transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. The measure was politically associated with Nikita Khrushchev's leadership, but it was not a personal and unilateral decision: the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued the relevant decree on 19 February and the transfer was subsequently incorporated into Soviet legislation. Crimea had been annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783. The international significance of that administrative transfer changed radically in 1991, when an internal Soviet boundary became a frontier between sovereign states.⁸⁸

In 1991, the collapse of the Soviet system produced an extraordinarily rapid transition to full Ukrainian independence, but that independence did

⁸⁷ Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, "Parties, political": en la Ucrania gobernada por Rusia surgieron partidos Ukrainians a comienzos del siglo XX; la Revolutionary Ukrainian Party fue fundada en Járkiv en February de 1900. Para Galicia, see la formación de partidos Ukrainians en la década de 1890; el término "cercano extranjero" fue dado a conocer durante la década de 1990 para identificar a los países que habían formado parte de la Unión Soviética as of año 1991.

⁸⁸ Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, decreto de 19 February 1954; Soviet History, Michigan State University, "Transfer of Crimea", reproducción del text published in Pravda, 27 February 1954; concepto de la Política Exterior de la Federación Rusa, Boletín informativo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de la Federación Rusa, Departamento de Información and Prensa, Moscú, 18 February 2013, p. 6.

not arise simply because Russia had 'abandoned communism'. The Verkhovna Rada adopted the Act of Declaration of Independence on 24 August 1991 and, on 1 December, 90.32 per cent of voters confirmed the decision in a referendum, with majorities in favour in every participating region. Ukraine subsequently took part in the December agreements that ended the USSR and organised the Commonwealth of Independent States. The geopolitical rupture was abrupt; independence itself, however, rested on an explicit parliamentary decision and electoral ratification.⁸⁹

[2026 Revision] In the new Ukrainian state there was intense political competition over the degree of integration with Russia, the European Union and, among some sectors, NATO. The United States, the EU and Russia all sought influence through diplomatic, economic and political instruments, but the dynamic cannot be reduced to an external contest: Ukrainian parties, regions, business groups, social movements and voters pursued agendas of their own. The Orange Revolution of 2004 was one moment at which these tensions became particularly visible. After the Supreme Court invalidated the second round because of irregularities, the repeat election of 26 December produced a victory for Viktor Yushchenko over Viktor Yanukovich. The geography of the vote revealed strong regional differences, but these did not automatically correspond to mutually exclusive national identities.⁹⁰

The G8 summit held in St Petersburg in July 2006 focused international attention on Russia. On issues ranging from the Middle East to energy security, Vladimir Putin sought to present the Russian Federation as a restored great power capable of exerting autonomous influence over the international agenda.⁹¹

International coverage of the summit concentrated heavily on Putin: his foreign-policy priorities, the growing control exercised over the domestic political system, his relations with other heads of state and his leadership style.

⁸⁹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, 24 August 1991, and resultados oficiales del referéndum de 1 December 1991: 90,32% a favor.

⁹⁰ Pablo Telman Sánchez Ramírez, *El regreso de la eterna Rusia al orden internacional*, pp. 134-135.

⁹¹ Herranz Fernández, F. J. (2019). *Mijaíl S. Gorbachov: la persona, el político and el discurso desde el análisis transaccional and la teoría del guion de vida*. Madrid: Facultad de Ciencias de la Información-UCM.

This emphasis contributed to the personalisation of analysis of Russia and reinforced the idea that understanding Putin was equivalent to understanding Kremlin policy. Such an approach may be useful for studying leadership, but it becomes inadequate when it displaces from view the institutions, elites, bureaucracies, economic interests and ideological currents that also shape Russian policy.⁹²

Since Putin was appointed acting President on 31 December 1999, numerous analysts have used his biography, statements and writings to infer tendencies in domestic and foreign policy. Some studies emphasise his KGB background and the subsequent concentration of power; others stress his pragmatism, administrative experience and the influence of political networks formed in St Petersburg.⁹³

Other analyses have highlighted his relationship with former St Petersburg mayor and reformer Anatoly Sobchak, as well as the combination of pragmatism, state centralisation and sovereignist conceptions that characterised his trajectory. The use of Putin's academic thesis as a single key to explaining the behaviour of the Russian state illustrates the limits of an excessively biographical reading.

George W. Bush's well-known 2001 remark that he had been able to gain a sense of Putin's 'soul' symbolised this tendency to personalise the bilateral relationship. The approach sometimes called 'Putinology' can provide information about leadership and networks of power, but it produces an incomplete picture when it substitutes for analysis of institutions and the structural interests of the Russian state.⁹⁴

These considerations bring us to the underlying causes of the Crimean crisis and related disputes.

From 2007, Ukraine and the European Union negotiated a new Association Agreement intended to deepen political association and economic integration. The negotiations were politically concluded in 2011 and the text was initialled by the chief negotiators on 30 March 2012; the section concerning the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area was initialled in July of that year. The agreement did not in itself provide an automatic guarantee

⁹² FERNÁNDEZ, R. (21 November 2007). "Putin critica el despliegue de la OTAN en Europa". Available at: <https://elpais.com>

⁹³ De Andrés Sanz, and RUIZ, R. (2008). "Y Putin encontró el camino. Instituciones and Régimen Político en la Rusia del siglo xxi". UNISCI-Discussion Papers, n.º 17 (May). Madrid: UCM. De la Cámara, M. (2012), p. 76.

⁹⁴ Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales durante el siglo XX. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/planmarshall.htm>

of future Ukrainian membership of the European Union, nor did it legally imply accession to NATO, whose membership is governed by a distinct institutional procedure. From a geopolitical perspective, however, Ukraine's simultaneous movement towards Western institutions could be interpreted in Moscow as a strategic reorientation and therefore as a relevant element in Russia's perception of declining influence.⁹⁵

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a political-military alliance founded under the North Atlantic Treaty of 4 April 1949. The Soviet threat was a decisive factor in its creation, but describing NATO as an organisation established for the 'sole purpose' of confronting the Soviet Union oversimplifies its original objectives: NATO's own institutional history also identifies the prevention of a resurgence of nationalist militarism in Europe and the consolidation of the transatlantic political and security link. After the disappearance of the USSR, the Alliance redefined its functions and expanded its membership.⁹⁶

3.2. The November 2013 Crisis

The crisis of November 2013 was not triggered by NATO enlargement. It was triggered by a technical incompatibility between two trade regimes, and this point requires precision because, up to this stage, the present volume has devoted more attention to the Atlantic variable than to economic integration. That asymmetry reproduces a feature of much realist literature and needs to be corrected: the immediate trigger of the process that led to the Maidan, Crimea and the Donbas was the choice between the Association Agreement with the European Union and the Eurasian Customs Union.

The incompatibility was not political but legal and tariff-based. The Association Agreement included a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area

⁹⁵ European Commission, documentación sobre el EU-Ukraine Association Agreement: negociaciones concluidas en 2011, texto rubricado el 30 March 2012; Gobierno de Ucrania, documentación oficial del Acuerdo de Asociación, con la sección DCFTA rubricada el 19 July 2012.

⁹⁶ NATO, "A short history of NATO": la amenaza soviética fue central, junto con la prevención del resurgimiento del militarismo nacionalista europeo and la consolidación del vínculo transatlántico; North Atlantic Treaty, Washington, 4 April 1949; el acuerdo firmado con Ucrania establece un área de libre comercio bilateral and la desaparición de aranceles entre la Unión Europea and este país. Así mismo, se negocia un acuerdo de eliminación de visados que debe aprobarse en el futuro cercano. Véase Lucía Abellán, "Ucrania and la UE firman el pacto de libre comercio que desató la crisis con Rusia", *El País*, 27 June 2014, en http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/06/27/actualidad/1403853122_102740.html [2 July 2014]

requiring Ukraine progressively to align its technical, sanitary, customs and competition rules with the EU *acquis* and to apply the tariff schedule agreed with Brussels. The Customs Union formed by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan - transformed in 2015 into the Eurasian Economic Union - required, by definition, adoption of a common external tariff. A state cannot simultaneously apply the common external tariff of a customs union and the preferential tariff schedule of a free-trade area with a third party. In the strict sense, the choice was mutually exclusive.

This incompatibility operated within a commercial geography that made the decision particularly costly. Ukrainian exports were distributed in roughly balanced proportions between the European and post-Soviet markets, but with a decisive qualitative difference: higher-value-added products - machinery, railway equipment, aerospace and defence production, and much of the output of the Donbas and the south-east - were sold almost exclusively in Russia and other markets of the Commonwealth of Independent States, whereas exports to the European Union were concentrated in raw materials, basic metallurgy and agricultural products. Choosing Brussels therefore meant exposing the eastern industrial regions to European competition without immediately opening an equivalent substitute market to them. This fact helps explain much of the political geography of the subsequent crisis.

All three actors adopted positions that sharpened rather than managed the dilemma. Russia used instruments of commercial pressure - reinforced customs controls in August 2013, sectoral restrictions and warnings concerning gas prices - while at the same time offering a package of credit and cheaper energy in return for postponement. The European Union maintained that the Agreement was a bilateral matter between Brussels and a sovereign state and rejected a trilateral negotiating format that would include Moscow: a legally impeccable but politically costly position. Mykola Azarov's government spent months seeking a compatibility that neither side considered possible and eventually suspended preparations for signature on 21 November 2013. It was that decision, rather than the technical content of the Agreement itself, that brought people into the square.

Two consequences follow for the argument of this book. First, competition between integration projects must rank among the structural factors of the conflict on the same level as NATO enlargement, rather than being treated as a secondary circumstance: it was the concrete mechanism through

which a diffuse geopolitical tension became a datable political crisis. Second, the refusal to open a trilateral format in 2013 was a decision, not an inevitability. There was a technical problem - the incompatibility of two tariff regimes - for which international trade law provides familiar transitional solutions. The fact that these were not explored indicates that neither side regarded Ukraine's economic orientation as merely technical; both were already treating it for what it effectively was: a question of alignment.

*Euromaidan was a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Ukraine that began on the night of 21 November 2013 with public protests in Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv. The protests were triggered by the Ukrainian government's decision to suspend signature of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and pursue closer economic ties with Russia instead. Their scope subsequently widened, with demands for the resignation of President Viktor Yanukovich and Mykola Azarov's second government. They were fuelled by perceptions of widespread government corruption, abuse of power and human-rights violations in Ukraine.*⁹⁷

*Transparency International cited President Yanukovich as a prominent example in discussions of grand corruption.*⁹⁸

The situation intensified after demonstrators were violently dispersed on 30 November, an event that brought many more people into the protests. The mobilisation ultimately contributed to the Ukrainian revolution of 2014, known as the Revolution of Dignity.⁹⁹

The demonstrations began on the night of 21 November 2013, when protests erupted in Kyiv after the Ukrainian government suspended preparations to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union in favour of pursuing closer economic relations with Russia.

On 24 November 2013, clashes began between demonstrators and police. Protesters attempted to break through the cordon; police used tear gas and batons. Protesters also used tear gas and some fireworks - according to police, demonstrators used them first. Over the following days, growing numbers of university students joined the protests.

⁹⁷ Yanukovich Offers Opposition Leaders Key Posts, en Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (25 January 2014)

⁹⁸ Transparency International names Yanukovich world's most corrupt – Feb. 11, 2016". 11 February 2016, en <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/transparency-international-names-yanukovich-worlds-most-corrupt-407875.html>

⁹⁹ Grätz, Jonas (9 December 2013). "Revolution on Euromaidan". Foreign Affairs.

Euromaidan has been characterised as an event of major political symbolism for the European Union itself, including as one of the largest explicitly pro-European demonstrations in history.¹⁰⁰

The protests continued despite a heavy police presence, regular sub-zero temperatures and snow. The escalation of government violence in the early hours of 30 November increased participation sharply. Opposition estimates placed the number demonstrating in Kyiv on the weekends of 1 and 8 December at between 400,000 and 800,000, while attendance during organised rallies in the preceding weeks had fluctuated from tens of thousands to approximately 200,000.

Violent disturbances occurred on 1 December and again from 19 to 25 January in response to police brutality and government repression. From 23 January, activists associated with Euromaidan occupied several regional administration buildings and councils in western Ukraine.¹⁰¹

In Zaporizhzhia, Sumy and Dnipropetrovsk, demonstrators likewise attempted to enter local government buildings and encountered substantial resistance from both police and government supporters.

On 8 December, demonstrators pulled down the statue of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin in Kyiv, regarding it as a symbol of what they described as Russian-Soviet 'occupation'; some shouted that Yanukovych would be next.

The government of Mykola Azarov also made extensive use of groups commonly known as *titushky*, irregular pro-government formations accused of provocations and violence against demonstrators.

The protests received extensive political support from Western states interested in Ukraine's closer integration with European institutions. On 4 December 2013 the German Foreign Minister met opposition leaders in Kyiv and expressed support for their democratic rights. At the same time, US Secretary of State John Kerry, visiting nearby Moldova, stated that Ukrainians should be able to determine their own future.¹⁰²

On 15 December 2013, US Senator John McCain visited demonstrators in the square and publicly expressed support for their cause.

During January 2014 the protests continued, and demonstrators increasingly used protective equipment such as helmets, vests and both improvised

¹⁰⁰ "Ukraine Offers Europe Economic Growth and More". The New York Times. 12 December 2013. Retrieved 21 January.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales del Siglo XX document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/cuba1962.htm>

and professional shields. The demonstrations developed into sustained disturbances and grew in intensity, with many protesters remaining on the streets throughout the night and making their removal by the authorities increasingly difficult.

On 16 January, the Rada adopted legislation imposing penalties connected with demonstrations, obstruction of administrative buildings and the installation of protest encampments. Demonstrators regarded the measures as an assault on their right to protest. Violence escalated in response to the new laws, and on 22 January the protests recorded their first fatalities.

On 28 January, Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov tendered his resignation to the President. Shortly afterwards, a majority of deputies meeting in an extraordinary parliamentary session agreed to repeal the controversial laws restricting rights of assembly and protest.¹⁰³

On 18 February, at approximately 20:00, after a renewed escalation of violence, police attempted forcibly to clear Independence Square. By the following day, 26 people had been reported dead and more than one hundred injured in overnight clashes between police and demonstrators.

During the night of 19-20 February, the Ukrainian government and the opposition agreed a truce, which the leader of the principal opposition party described as welcome news.¹⁰⁴

After approximately six hours, the truce collapsed and violence resumed, this time involving firearms. Some media reported that 21 demonstrators had been killed by gunfire on the morning after the truce and described the atmosphere in Kyiv as approaching civil war.

Interior Minister Vitaliy Zakharchenko ordered combat weapons to be issued to police officers and described their mission as an 'anti-terrorist operation'.

By the afternoon, opposition medical sources placed the death toll close to one hundred, while official sources maintained a figure of 67.

At that stage opposition groups were holding 67 police officers. The opposition claimed that police were 'shooting to kill', whereas the government maintained that its forces were acting in self-defence in response to opposition violence.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Plan Molotov and Viacheslav Mólotov. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en https://es.unionpedia.org/c/Plan_Molotov/vs/Viacheslav_M%C3%B3lotov.

The events of 20 February - sometimes referred to as Black Thursday - constituted the most violent day of the unrest, with more than sixty deaths, principally around Kyiv's Independence Square, the Maidan, which had become the centre of the protests.

Images of the violence circulated worldwide through the internet and social media.¹⁰⁵

On 5 March 2014 a telephone conversation between EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet became public. Paet confirmed the authenticity of the conversation, in which he relayed information he had received in Kyiv concerning the possible origin of shots fired at protesters and police. The authenticity of the call demonstrates that this hypothesis circulated among diplomatic interlocutors, but it does not prove that the snipers belonged to the new opposition coalition. Subsequent investigations, including those assessed by the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights, identified serious deficiencies in the Ukrainian investigation of the Maidan killings without establishing that the recording itself resolved the question of responsibility for the shootings.¹⁰⁶

Three European Union foreign ministers - Radoslaw Sikorski of Poland, Laurent Fabius of France and Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany - arrived in Kyiv and met President Yanukovych in an effort to halt the spiral of violence. The Ukrainian presidency announced an agreement with the opposition after EU mediation. The agreement envisaged a coalition government, early elections and constitutional reform.

On 21 February, Yanukovych and opposition leaders signed an agreement providing for early elections, a transitional government, restoration of the 2004 Constitution and an end to violence.

The agreement did not stabilise the situation. On the morning of 22 February, with President Viktor Yanukovych absent from Kyiv and his whereabouts not formally communicated to Parliament, opposition forces assumed

¹⁰⁵ "Las imágenes más impactantes del jueves negro". *El Mundo*. 21 February 2014. En <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2014/02/21/53079211268e3e402a8b4585.html>

¹⁰⁶ Council of Europe, International Advisory Panel, Report of the International Advisory Panel on its Review of the Maidan Investigations, 31 March 2015; jurisprudencia del Tribunal Europeo de Derechos Humanos relativa a la investigación de los acontecimientos de Maidán; "Filtran una conversación de Ashton que insinúa que la oposición contrató a los francotiradores". *El Mundo*. 5 March 2014. En <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2014/03/05/531747ba268e3e39238b4588.html>

control of the principal institutions in the capital. Yanukovych had travelled eastwards and was expected at a congress of deputies and governors from eastern Ukraine and Crimea in Kharkiv, but did not appear there and later surfaced in Rostov-on-Don, Russia. The opposition accused him of abandoning his office; Yanukovych denied this and subsequently described the change of power as a coup. The Verkhovna Rada adopted Resolution 757-VII, stating that Yanukovych had withdrawn from performing his constitutional duties and scheduling an early presidential election, with 328 of 450 deputies voting in favour. The Party of Regions later expelled him on 29 March 2014. The constitutional and legal characterisation of his removal remained contested, in part because the formal impeachment procedure set out in the Constitution was not completed.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the Verkhovna Rada assumed control of the state institutions and Oleksandr Turchynov took responsibility for coordinating the government while serving as Speaker of Parliament. Turchynov alleged that Yanukovych had attempted to leave for Russia and had been stopped by border guards.¹⁰⁸

Yulia Tymoshenko, who had served as Prime Minister after the Orange Revolution and had spent more than two years imprisoned following her conviction for abuse of office in connection with gas contracts with Russia, was released on the same day. That evening, speaking from a wheelchair in Independence Square, she announced her intention to participate in the presidential election.

After Yanukovych was displaced from power for the second time in nine years - the first having occurred when he was Prime Minister - a congress of deputies and regional governors from eastern and southern Ukraine called for resistance and accused the opposition of violating the peace agreement signed with the President on 21 February.

The Verkhovna Rada also voted to repeal the 2012 Law on the Principles of State Language Policy, under which a language spoken by at least 10 per cent of the inhabitants of a district could acquire regional official status. Had the repeal taken effect, it would have affected Russian speakers in many

¹⁰⁷ Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales del Siglo XX document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/cuba1962.htm>

¹⁰⁸ M. Gorbachov, *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992* (Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994), p. 239.

eastern and southern districts, as well as Hungarian and Romanian speakers in specific western regions.¹⁰⁹

On 3 March 2014, however, acting President Oleksandr Turchynov refused to sign the repeal until the Rada had prepared replacement legislation, and the 2012 law therefore remained in force. In February 2018 it ceased to operate after being declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.¹¹⁰

In the early hours of 24 February, UDAR deputy Volodymyr Kurennoy claimed that Yanukovych had been arrested in Crimea and was being transferred to Kyiv. Later that day, however, the Interior Ministry issued an arrest warrant for Viktor Yanukovych on charges connected with mass killings during the uprising in Kyiv.¹¹¹

On 25 February, the Verkhovna Rada voted to refer allegations of crimes against humanity involving Yanukovych to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

On 26 February, the Ukrainian authorities issued international arrest requests concerning former President Yanukovych and former Interior Minister Vitaliy Zakharchenko. Parliament postponed until the following day the selection of an interim government to manage the country until the election scheduled for 25 May; its Speaker, Oleksandr Turchynov, also assumed by decree the functions of Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The Russian government reiterated that it did not recognise the new authorities in Kyiv, continued to describe Viktor Yanukovych as the legitimate President and characterised the change of power as a coup d'état.¹¹²

In May 2014, Russia recognised the result of Ukraine's presidential election, which was won by Petro Poroshenko.

¹⁰⁹ Un raión o rayón es uno de dos tipos de subdivisiones administrativas en el idioma de algunos de los estados postsoviéticos: una entidad subnacional and una subdivisión de una ciudad. En estos sentidos, el término casi siempre es traducido como "distrito", pero en esencia corresponde a una comarca. La unidad administrativa menor que un raión es un "selsoviet" en las zonas rurales and un "microrraión" en las áreas urbanas. Ambos términos corresponden a un municipio.

¹¹⁰ M. Gorbachov, *Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992* (Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994), p. 240.

¹¹¹ El Mundo. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.elmundo.es/la-aventura-de-la-historia/2015/02/04/54d1eb99e2704e97388b4574.html>

¹¹² Ibid., p. ..

3.3. Foreign Intervention in the Ukrainian Crisis

On 19 January 2014, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych travelled to Russia for talks with President Vladimir Putin. They met in Sochi shortly before the Winter Olympics. The same day, violence escalated between demonstrators and police in Kyiv's Independence Square, overshadowing the diplomatic purpose of Yanukovych's visit. Projectiles and, in some incidents, gunfire were exchanged, and parts of the square took on the appearance of an urban battlefield.

That day US Secretary of State John Kerry stated that the Ukrainian government had to listen to the voices of its people. Russian President Vladimir Putin responded by arguing that the escalation of violence in Kyiv was being assisted by outside actors.¹¹³

Soon afterwards, a ten-minute recording of a telephone conversation between US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and US Ambassador in Kyiv Geoffrey Pyatt was leaked to the press. The two discussed preferred opposition figures and ways of consolidating a prospective political arrangement, including possible UN involvement. Nuland also used the phrase 'Fuck the EU' in expressing frustration at what she considered excessive European caution. Pyatt, for his part, referred to the likelihood that Russia would attempt to undermine the process from behind the scenes.¹¹⁴

The recording caused consternation, particularly among European allies of the United States, and Nuland apologised to EU counterparts for the remark. The episode nevertheless became important evidence in competing narratives about the extent of external involvement in the Ukrainian political crisis.

Nearly a month later, on 18 February, violence again intensified in Kyiv's Independence Square amid a mobilisation estimated at roughly 30,000 people. A group of protesters advanced towards the government district and premises of the Party of Regions were set alight. Police attempted to disperse the crowd and deployed armoured riot-control vehicles; demonstrators stopped, burned and destroyed some of them. The day left dozens injured

¹¹³ Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales del Siglo XX document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/cuba1962.htm>

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. ...

and, according to the figures used in this chronology, 35 dead, including 12 police officers.¹¹⁵

The previous day, 17 February, Russia had purchased a further tranche of Ukrainian debt worth two billion dollars, following an earlier purchase under the financial package agreed after November 2013.

Violence intensified again in Kyiv. The European Union condemned the clashes and held Yanukovich's government responsible for the escalation. On 20 February another bloody confrontation between security forces and protesters left dozens dead and hundreds injured. The international impact of the violence accelerated the loss of legitimacy of the Ukrainian government. Yanukovich subsequently left Kyiv and eventually took refuge in Russia. Oleksandr Turchynov, then Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, assumed presidential functions on an interim basis, and the new political authorities adopted a policy of closer alignment with the European Union amid growing confrontation with Moscow.

On 26 February, separatist tensions connected with Crimea - where pro-Russian political sentiment was strong and where Russia's Black Sea Fleet maintained its principal naval base - increased sharply. President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian forces in areas bordering Ukraine onto heightened readiness.

In Simferopol, the Crimean capital, pro-European and pro-Russian groups confronted one another in the streets. In Kyiv, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov announced the dissolution of the Berkut riot-police units.

The day ended with Maidan representatives supporting a new Government of National Unity headed by Arseniy Yatsenyuk. The foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland, who had mediated during the February crisis, continued to call for Ukraine's territorial integrity, de-escalation in Crimea and peaceful dialogue among the parties.¹¹⁶¹¹⁷

In the early hours of 27 February, armed men seized the buildings of the Crimean Parliament and Council of Ministers without encountering effective resistance. Russian flags were raised over both buildings. That same day, the Crimean parliament announced a regional referendum on the future political status of the autonomous republic.

¹¹⁵ Carrère d'Encausse, H. (2016). *Seis años que cambiaron el mundo*. Barcelona: Planeta (edición digital), p. 129.

¹¹⁶ Carrère d'Encausse, H. (2016). *Seis años que cambiaron el mundo*. Barcelona: Planeta (edición digital).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214..

On 28 February, armed pro-Russian groups took control of two Crimean airports, one civilian and one military. The Ukrainian government described the developments as an act of Russian invasion, an allegation Moscow initially denied.¹¹⁸

In response, the Verkhovna Rada requested an urgent meeting of the United Nations Security Council. The foreign ministers of Poland, France and Germany reiterated their support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and called for de-escalation.

*'We are deeply concerned by the unstable situation in Crimea. Everything possible must be done to reduce tensions in the eastern region and promote peaceful dialogue between the parties,' the ministers stated.*¹¹⁹

On 1 March, demonstrations against the new pro-European government spread into the industrial Donbas in south-eastern Ukraine, a region with a substantial ethnic-Russian population and widespread use of the Russian language. On the same day, the Crimean authorities announced that the referendum on the peninsula's status would be brought forward.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, the Crimean Prime Minister stated that he had requested Russian military assistance to maintain order until the referendum. That same day, the Russian Federation Council unanimously authorised the use of Russian armed forces on Ukrainian territory, formally framed as necessary to protect Russian citizens and compatriots. Pro-European opposition leader Vitali Klitschko described the move as aggression and called on the Ukrainian armed forces to respond. The United Nations Security Council convened an emergency meeting to address the crisis.¹²¹

European Union foreign ministers also announced an emergency meeting for Monday, 3 March.

¹¹⁸ Leiva Van de Maele, D. (2017). "Russia is back: Analysis of the evolution of the Russian's foreign policy in the Putin era". Estudios Internacionales, n.º 187. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales-Universidad de Chile, pp. 9-42.

¹¹⁹ «Ucrania denuncia la "ocupación" rusa de los aeropuertos de Crimea and pide ayuda a la ONU». Radio Televisión Española. 28 February 2014. En <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20140228/ucrania-denuncia-ocupacion-rusa-aeropuertos-crimea/888224.shtml>

¹²⁰ Leiva Van de Maele, D. (2017). "Russia is back: Analysis of the evolution of the Russian's foreign policy in the Putin era". Estudios Internacionales, n.º 187. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales-Universidad de Chile, pp. 9-42.

¹²¹ Leiva Van de Maele, D. (2017). "Russia is back: Analysis of the evolution of the Russian's foreign policy in the Putin era". Estudios Internacionales, n.º 187. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales-Universidad de Chile, pp. 9-42.

With Russian forces already present throughout Crimea, on 6 March the Crimean parliament unanimously approved a motion favouring incorporation into Russia, and Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Temirgaliev announced that the referendum would be brought forward to Sunday, 16 March. On 11 March 2014, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol adopted a declaration of independence and announced the creation of a Republic of Crimea, a step rejected by the government in Kyiv.

On 18 March, a treaty was signed providing for the incorporation of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into the Russian Federation as two federal subjects. Crimea entered under the status of a republic and Sevastopol as a federal city. The signatories were Sergei Aksyonov, Vladimir Konstantinov, Vladimir Putin and Alexei Chaly. Ukraine and most of the international community rejected the legality of the incorporation.¹²²

3.4. Crimean Independence and Incorporation into Russia

Viktor Yanukovych enjoyed strong support among parts of Ukraine's Russian minority and among political representatives associated with those constituencies. The events that unfolded between November 2013 and February 2014 and ultimately led to the fall of the Ukrainian President caused profound anxiety in many of these communities.

When the Ukrainian political crisis removed the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych and brought pro-Western political forces to power - through parliamentary decisions subsequently followed by an early presidential election - the Russian authorities used the upheaval to establish military control over Crimea.

Moscow calculated that a majority of the local population would support incorporation of the peninsula into Russia, encouraged by expectations of higher wages, employment opportunities and continued public use of Russian.¹²³

¹²² Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladímir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada (tesis doctoral).

¹²³ Leiva Van de Maele, D. (2017). "Russia is back: Analysis of the evolution of the Russian's foreign policy in the Putin era". *Estudios Internacionales*, n.º 187. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales-Universidad de Chile, pp. 9-42.

The referendum on joining Russia produced exceptionally high official figures and was rejected as invalid by Ukraine and by most of the international community. A small number of states broadly aligned with Moscow adopted a different position.

Following the imposition of Western sanctions, the new Russian authorities in Crimea increasingly restricted the activities of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar activists.

Having secured control of Crimea, Russia also encouraged and supported rebellions in other provinces of south-eastern Ukraine, where dominant regional political structures had long cultivated pro-Russian attitudes.¹²⁴

This strategy achieved durable territorial control only in parts of the Donbas, an industrial region with a predominantly Russian-speaking population. When Ukrainian forces attempted to restore state control, the Putin administration covertly deployed regular Russian military units in support of pro-Russian separatists and Russian 'volunteers'.

The most intensive phase of the war continued into 2015, with later episodes of renewed escalation. Before the full-scale invasion of 2022, the conflict had produced an estimated human cost of approximately 14,000 deaths and around one and a half million internally displaced people.¹²⁵

Ukraine is not culturally homogeneous. The 2001 census recorded approximately 77.8 per cent of the population as ethnic Ukrainians and 17.3 per cent as ethnic Russians. These categories, however, should not be treated as direct proxies for language, religion or geopolitical preference: Russian is widely spoken by citizens identifying as Ukrainian, religious affiliation is more complex than a Catholic-Orthodox division, and regional political identities overlap rather than coincide perfectly with ethnic categories. From late February 2014, protests and rebellions involving pro-Russian sectors expanded in parts of southern and eastern Ukraine.

On 11 March, twenty-one days after the bloody confrontations in Kyiv's Independence Square, the Crimean authorities adopted a unilateral declaration of independence from Ukraine. A referendum on Crimea's status was held on 16 March 2014; the official result reported overwhelming support

¹²⁴ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladímir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada (tesis doctoral).

¹²⁵ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladímir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada (tesis doctoral).

for incorporation into Russia. On 18 March, two days later, a treaty of incorporation was signed in Moscow. Crimea was subsequently incorporated into Russia's Southern Military District.¹²⁶

During the period between the seizure of key Crimean institutions and formal incorporation into Russia, disciplined armed personnel in uniform, carrying weapons openly but wearing no fixed insignia and often concealing their faces, provided security and controlled strategic locations throughout the peninsula.

At the time, competing accounts identified them as local pro-Russian militias, defectors from Ukrainian units or Russian special forces. Subsequent Russian acknowledgements and the accumulated evidence established that Russian servicemen had taken part in the operation. At the same time, north-east of Crimea, rebellions in Donetsk and Luhansk produced self-proclaimed 'people's republics', whose armed formations sought control of territory in confrontation with Ukrainian security forces.¹²⁷

On the day the treaty incorporating Crimea into the Russian Federation was signed, President Vladimir Putin remarked that it would have been regrettable to see the naval base at Sevastopol used by NATO sailors, adding humorously that they were 'good guys' but that it was preferable for them to visit Russian sailors there instead. The remark illustrates the major geopolitical importance Moscow attached to Crimea and Sevastopol.

The Declaration of Independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol was a joint resolution adopted on 11 March 2014 by the Crimean Parliament and the Sevastopol City Council. It expressed their intention to declare independence following the referendum scheduled for 16 March and envisaged subsequent incorporation into Russia as a federal subject. Although the two territories had been separate subnational units of Ukraine, the declaration treated them jointly as the prospective Republic of Crimea.¹²⁸

The document explicitly cited Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice as precedents for its action.

¹²⁶ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladímir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada (tesis doctoral).

¹²⁷ *Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales del Siglo XX* document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/cuba1962.htm>

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. ..

[2026 Revision] The comparison with Kosovo requires legal precision. In its advisory opinion of 22 July 2010, the International Court of Justice concluded narrowly that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate the applicable rules of international law. The Court did not establish a general right of secession, did not automatically recognise the statehood of every territory issuing a declaration of independence, and did not determine the legality of subsequent territorial acquisition by another state. In the case of Crimea, moreover, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity in Resolution 68/262 and declared that the referendum of 16 March 2014 could not form the basis for altering the status of Crimea or Sevastopol.¹²⁹

The Crimean declaration of independence stated as follows:

Declaration of Independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol

We, the members of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Sevastopol City Council, proceeding from the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments recognising the right of peoples to self-determination, and taking into account the position expressed by the International Court of Justice concerning Kosovo on 22 July 2010, according to which a unilateral declaration of independence by part of a state does not in itself violate international law, jointly decide:

- 1. If, as a result of the direct expression of the will of the peoples of Crimea in the referendum of 16 March 2014, a decision is taken for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to join Russia, Crimea shall, following the referendum, be declared an independent and sovereign state with a republican form of government.*
- 2. The Republic of Crimea shall be a democratic, secular and multi-ethnic state committed to maintaining peace and inter-ethnic and inter-confessional accord throughout its territory.*
- 3. As an independent and sovereign state, and in the event of the relevant referendum result, the Republic of Crimea shall approach the Russian Federation with a proposal for its admission, on the basis of an appropriate international agreement, as a new subject of the Russian Federation.*

¹²⁹ International Court of Justice, *Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo*, Advisory Opinion, 22 July 2010; Asamblea General de la ONU, Resolución 68/262, Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, 27 March 2014.

The Declaration was adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea at its extraordinary plenary session of 11 March 2014 (signed by the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Vladimir Konstantinov) and by decision of the Sevastopol City Council at its extraordinary plenary session of 11 March 2014 (signed by the Chairman of the Sevastopol City Council, Yury Doynikov).

The Ukrainian government regarded the declaration as illegitimate. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by contrast, maintained that the Crimean Parliament's adoption of the declaration was lawful. Several partially recognised entities also announced recognition of Crimean independence. Belarus subsequently moved towards formal political recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea, although its position evolved over time.¹³⁰

3.5. Crimea and Russia's Access to Warm-Water Seas

Crimea was conquered from the Ottoman sphere and annexed by the Russian Empire under Catherine II in 1783. The acquisition provided Russia with a naturally favourable harbour for a major naval base on the Black Sea, free from the winter conditions that constrained some northern ports such as Arkhangelsk and affected Baltic operations.

From 1783 the peninsula formed part of the Russian Empire. The naval base at Sevastopol became a strategic pivot from which imperial Russia projected power in the Black Sea, supported Orthodox Slavic causes in the Balkans and fought successive wars against the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century.¹³¹

Crimea was not only the scene of eighteenth-century conquest but also of Russia's defeat by the coalition of the Ottoman Empire, France, Britain and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia during the Crimean War of 1853-1856. After a subsequent period of strategic retrenchment, Russia again went to war with the Ottoman Empire in 1877 and advanced to the approaches to Constantinople in 1878.

¹³⁰ Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales del Siglo XX document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/cuba1962.htm>

¹³¹ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladímir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso. Granada: Universidad de Granada (tesis doctoral).

During the Second World War, Sevastopol was the site of a prolonged siege and intense fighting between Soviet land and naval forces and German-led Axis forces following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.¹³²

Soviet naval projection after the Second World War relied heavily on Sevastopol for a strong strategic presence in the Black Sea and access through the Turkish Straits - the Bosphorus and Dardanelles - into the Mediterranean, and from there towards both the Atlantic and, through Suez, the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. From the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Egyptian revolution of 1952, the rise of Nasser and the creation of the United Arab Republic in 1958, the Soviet Union progressively became an important strategic partner of Egypt and Syria in the Mediterranean. This gave the Black Sea Fleet access to supporting facilities such as Tartus and, at different periods, Mediterranean and Red Sea ports that widened Soviet naval reach towards the Indian Ocean.

On 19 February 1954, in the context of the three-hundredth anniversary commemorations of the Pereiaslav agreement, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decreed the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. The decision was subsequently incorporated into Union and republican legislation and should not be reduced to a personal, unilateral decision by Nikita Khrushchev. Sevastopol's administrative status had particular features associated with its naval function, so the transfer of the oblast should be distinguished from the city's specific legal evolution. There was no direct popular consultation of Russians or Ukrainians, a circumstance consistent with the authoritarian operation of the Soviet system. For practical purposes at the time, all were Soviet citizens and the Russian-Ukrainian boundary was internal to the USSR; it acquired full international significance only after the Soviet dissolution. In an important 1980 essay, 'The Mistake of the West', Alexander Solzhenitsyn objected to the automatic identification of the Soviet with the Russian. He argued that some Western discourse labelled positive achievements of the state 'Soviet' while describing particular acts of repression indiscriminately as 'Russian'. Solzhenitsyn challenged that association and maintained that Russian history and identity should not be confused with the communist state project or

¹³² NOLTE, Ernst. *El fascismo en su época*. Edicions S.A., Barcelona, p. 56.

its crimes. This distinction between Russian identity, the Soviet state and imperial continuity is relevant to later discourse on Crimea.¹³³

When the USSR dissolved in December 1991 and the Commonwealth of Independent States was created, Crimea's position acquired a new international dimension. Significant sectors of the Russian-speaking population and Crimean political leadership expressed dissatisfaction with the peninsula's new place within an independent Ukraine. It was at this point that the 1954 administrative transfer became politically different: Crimea ceased to lie on one side of an internal Soviet border and became part of a sovereign state separate from Russia. On 26 February 1992 the Crimean parliament changed the entity's name to the 'Republic of Crimea'. On 5 May it proclaimed a conditional independence subject to a later referendum and adopted a constitution; on 6 May the constitutional text was amended to declare Crimea part of Ukraine. The projected referendum was not held on those terms and, following negotiations with Kyiv, Crimea remained an autonomous republic within Ukraine. The designation 'Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic' for the May 1992 declaration is therefore incorrect.¹³⁴

Crimean separatists obtained no meaningful international support for independence and at that stage could not rely on decisive protection from Moscow, which was itself undergoing a turbulent, complex and dramatic transition from the Soviet political-economic system towards a capitalist order. This was an enormous transformation with major political and economic consequences. Under these conditions, Crimean leaders had little alternative but to negotiate their status with the new Ukrainian government.

In 1992, agreements with Kyiv preserved Crimea as an autonomous republic within Ukraine. Ukraine thereafter consisted of twenty-four oblasts, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the cities with special status provided for under Ukrainian law.¹³⁵

¹³³ Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, decreto de transferencia de Crimea, 19 February 1954; Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "Misconceptions About Russia Are a Threat to America", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 58, 1980, para su crítica a la identificación automática entre lo soviético and lo ruso; pARIS, R. *Los orígenes del fascismo*, Barcelona, Península. p. 87.

¹³⁴ Para la secuencia institucional de 1992: Parlamento de Crimea, cambio de denominación a República de Crimea, 26 February; statement of 5 May and Constitución del 6 May 1992, posteriormente modificada en el marco de las negociaciones con Kiev. Véase documentación constitucional ucraniana and literatura especializada sobre el estatus de Crimea; mEARSHEIMER, John J., *La tragedia de la política de las grandes potencias* (The Tragedy of Great Power Politics), Nueva York, W. W. Norton, 2001.

¹³⁵ Lovell, S. (2008). *Un destino incierto: Rusia desde 1989*. Intermon Oxfam, p. 128.

Following the consolidation of an independent Ukraine, one of the central problems in the new relationship with the Russian Federation concerned division of the Black Sea Fleet and the status of facilities in Sevastopol. Ukraine's denuclearisation was linked, among other instruments, to the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, signed on 5 December 1994 by Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. France was not a party to that specific memorandum, although it issued a separate security assurance to Ukraine. In March 2014, after Crimea came under Russian control, Moscow seized numerous Ukrainian naval vessels and facilities on the peninsula.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ United Nations Treaty Collection, Memorandum on Security Assurances, Budapest, 5 December 1994. Francia emitió una declaración separada de garantías a Ucrania and no fue signataria del memorándum cuatripartito; el Mundo. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.elmundo.es/la-aventura-de-la-historia/2015/02/04/54d1eb99e2704e97388b4574.html>

PART FOUR

The Donbas as a Prelude to an Announced Crisis

4.1. Pro-Russian Protests in Ukraine

The pro-Russian protests in Ukraine comprised a series of demonstrations, disturbances and episodes of civil disorder in eastern and southern regions from 22 February 2014 onwards, in reaction to Euromaidan and in parallel with the Crimean crisis. The protests subsequently intensified, increasingly taking the form of a separatist insurgency and, from approximately 12 April, an armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.¹³⁷

Some Russian media referred to the phenomenon as the 'Russian Spring'. Russian citizens were documented among participants in some protests, while the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe also reported disputes concerning Ukrainian restrictions on the entry of Russian journalists.

Protests occurred in at least eleven cities, including Donetsk, Kharkiv, Odesa, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Mariupol, Melitopol and Kher-son.

During the protests, many activists used Russian flags and orange-and-black Saint George ribbons, symbols widely associated in Russia with Victory Day commemorations and patriotic memory of the Second World War.

On 7 April, pro-Russian activists proclaimed the self-styled Donetsk People's Republic and, briefly, a Kharkiv People's Republic. On 8 April, activists in Luhansk discussed the proclamation of a Luhansk parliamentary republic.¹³⁸

On 13 April, the Kyiv authorities launched a special operation in the east involving the armed forces, marking the beginning of the 2014 armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. Deposed President Viktor Yanukovich said that the country was being brought to the 'brink of civil war'. The Russian Foreign Ministry condemned the Ukrainian government's actions as criminal.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Duguin, A. G. (2015). La geopolítica de Rusia. De la revolución rusa a Putin. Huesca: Hiperbola Janus, p. 45.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

¹³⁹ Amnistía Internacional (2018). Informe sobre el Estado de los Derechos Humanos en el mundo 2017-2018. Available at: [http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/Al%20Informe%20anual%202017-18%20\(LGBTI\).pdf](http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/Al%20Informe%20anual%202017-18%20(LGBTI).pdf)

4.2. Outbreak of the Conflict and Ukraine's Response

A bill proposing the introduction of a state of emergency in the Luhansk, Donetsk and Kharkiv regions was submitted to the Verkhovna Rada. Former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko travelled to Donetsk, where she held a press conference. Reports also indicated that Kyiv was deploying military forces to areas of conflict.

Acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk directly accused Russia of implementing 'a plan to dismember Ukraine'. Acting President Oleksandr Turchynov said that Russia was attempting to reproduce a 'Crimean scenario' in the east and warned that the government was preparing counter-terrorist operations against armed protesters.¹⁴⁰¹⁴¹

On 8 April demonstrators entered the regional prosecutor's office in Lviv. Meanwhile, the Dnipropetrovsk regional administration signed a co-operation agreement with pro-Russian activists who undertook to refrain from incitement to separatism.¹⁴²

The regional headquarters of the Security Service of Ukraine in Luhansk was also seized that day and barricades were erected. Reports indicated that people were being held inside and that the occupying group had access to explosives and a substantial weapons stockpile. Pro-Russian activists announced a projected 'Luhansk Parliamentary Republic', while other separatist groups occupied the Luhansk regional administration building and discussed creating a 'People's Army of South-Eastern Ukraine' with activists from other cities.¹⁴³¹⁴⁴

On 10 April, insurgent leader Alexei Mozgovoy travelled to Moscow and met political figures including Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and Sergei Mironov in search of support.

On 28 April, federalist activists in Luhansk proclaimed the self-styled Luhansk People's Republic. In Shchastia, local activists detained members of a special police unit and handed them over to forces associated with the new de facto authorities. The following day, several thousand people together with armed supporters occupied the Luhansk regional administration

¹⁴⁰ Recuperado en: <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20140407/activistas-prorRussians-toman-edificios-oficiales-este-ucrania/912681.shtml>

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Recuperado en: https://elpais.com/internacional/2014/04/29/actualidad/1398790716_186883.html

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

building. Federalist groups also seized the municipal building in Pervomaisk.¹⁴⁵

4.3. Further Reactions and Protests

On 9 April, the Ukrainian government promised to end the protests in the east within forty-eight hours. Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said that the situation would be resolved 'through negotiations or through force'. The government also promised greater devolution to the regions and assurances that the Russian language would not be restricted. Police ceased cordoning off the Kharkiv regional administration after an operation in which dozens of demonstrators supporting federalisation had been detained. Human barriers were also formed on the outskirts of Donetsk and Luhansk to obstruct Ukrainian military movements. The self-proclaimed authorities of the Donetsk People's Republic announced that they would issue decrees and extend their control across the region; on 10 April they announced the creation of a 'People's Army'.¹⁴⁶¹⁴⁷

On 10 April the acting President of Ukraine offered amnesty to protesters occupying administrative buildings in the east if they vacated the premises and surrendered their weapons. A Kharkiv regional court ordered pre-trial detention for several people involved in the occupation of the regional administration. In Odesa, clashes occurred between pro-Russian and Euro-maidan supporters. Deputies of the Luhansk regional council advocated a referendum on federalisation, guarantees of territorial integrity and official status for Russian. In Sevastopol, thousands gathered in support of south-eastern Ukraine, particularly the Donbas and Luhansk regions.¹⁴⁸

That day, Donetsk demonstrators and regional governor Serhiy Taruta negotiated without reaching agreement. Taruta proposed mixed patrols involving police, traffic officers and demonstrators; evacuation of the regional administration building, with another premises potentially made available to separatist groups; a joint working group to reformulate proposals for a May referendum; joint sessions of regional and municipal bodies; and amnesty

¹⁴⁵ Recuperado en: <https://www.boe.es/doue/2018/069/L00048-00059.pdf>

¹⁴⁶ Recuperado en: https://192.95.19.250/blog/es/Protestas_prorrusas_en_Ucrania_de_2014

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

for the occupiers. The activists regarded mixed patrols as possible and offered to release two floors of the administration building so officials could process pensions, subsidies and salaries, while also demanding the release of those detained on separatism charges, including Pavel Gubarev. The regional government rejected the counterproposal.

Donetsk separatists meanwhile voted to pursue links with Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and international institutions as part of their effort to break from Ukraine. There were reports of attacks on Belarusian journalists over their use of the Belarusian language. Authorities erected barricades at approaches to Zaporizhzhia to prevent armed or militant pro-Russian groups from entering. The Kyiv-appointed Donetsk regional authorities stated that they were prepared to hold a referendum on the region's status provided the administration building was vacated.¹⁴⁹

On 11 April, during a brief visit to eastern Ukraine, the head of the Ukrainian government met politicians, officials and business leaders in Donetsk. Rinat Akhmetov, the country's wealthiest businessman and a resident of Donetsk, described the situation as extremely difficult and argued that the people of the Donbas wanted their voice to be heard and their living standards improved. He called for negotiations with pro-Russian groups, expressed support for decentralisation and for an enhanced status for the Russian language, and noted that he had visited the occupied administration building on the night of 7 April.

By 1 May, as many as sixteen towns and cities in eastern Ukraine were partly or wholly controlled by armed pro-Russian groups, one day after Ukrainian officials publicly acknowledged that the situation in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk was escaping state control. On 2 May, Kyiv launched a new armed operation in Sloviansk. On 9 May, tanks, National Guard units and Ukrainian army forces entered Mariupol amid fighting around the local police headquarters and barricades, with deaths and injuries among combatants and civilians.

On 11 May, consultations on self-determination were held in parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts despite Russia's request that they be postponed to create conditions for dialogue. The *de facto* organisers reported turnout of 74.87 per cent in Donetsk and 81 per cent in Luhansk, with official results claiming 89.7 per cent support in Donetsk and 96.2 per cent in Luhansk for the propositions submitted. The votes were not conducted under Ukraine's

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

constitutional framework or standard international observation, and their figures cannot therefore be treated as independently verified measures of regional opinion. The self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics subsequently asserted independence from Ukraine.

4.4. NATO and Russia

Amid the conflict, the European Union supported Ukraine's interim government, while the United States expanded sanctions and argued that Russian intervention was a principal driver of separatist tensions. The United Kingdom advanced similar accusations. Russia, opponents of the new Kyiv authorities and some media reports, by contrast, alleged involvement by the US Central Intelligence Agency and private security contractors in providing advice, personnel or intelligence support to Ukrainian forces. Such claims varied considerably in evidentiary quality and must be distinguished from documented Western political and security assistance.¹⁵⁰

In response to the armed conflict and the wider deterioration in relations with Russia, NATO strengthened its military presence and reassurance measures in member states near Russia and Ukraine, including Poland, Romania and the Baltic states.¹⁵¹

As an interpretative frame, it is useful to return to a formulation by Chomsky concerning Russian perceptions of NATO enlargement:

Tensions over Ukraine are extremely serious, with Russian military forces concentrated on Ukraine's borders. The Russian position has been quite explicit for some time. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov set it out clearly at his United Nations press conference: "The main issue is our clear position on the inadmissibility of any further eastward expansion of NATO and the deployment of offensive weapons that could threaten the territory of the Russian Federation." Putin reiterated the same point shortly afterwards, as he had often done before.

There is a simple way to address the deployment of [US] weapons: do not deploy them. There is no justification for doing so. The United States may

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 21..

¹⁵¹ Recuperado en: https://www.iri.edu.ar/publicaciones_iri/anuario/anuario_2015/Europa/Cronologia.pdf

*claim that they are defensive, but Russia does not see them that way, and with reason.*¹⁵²

The military and humanitarian chronology of the Donbas shows, at the same time, that the strategic debate over NATO coexisted with an actual war whose consequences were felt daily by civilians.

*In the Donbas, the Ukrainian military command announced three corridors through which civilians could leave areas of fighting. Luhansk was in an increasingly precarious condition, with disruptions to electricity, water and telephone communications. A large proportion of Donetsk's pre-war population had left, and the exodus continued as fighting intensified. Humanitarian corridors announced by representatives of the 'anti-terrorist operation' were intended to operate during specified hours and to include security zones. The Ukrainian command urged civilians to leave separatist-controlled areas; routes from Donetsk included exits westwards via Marinka and northwards via Horlivka.*¹⁵³

The question of further enlargement is more complex. It reaches back more than three decades to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when Russia, the United States and Germany engaged in extensive negotiations centred on German reunification. Competing visions of the post-Cold War security order emerged. Gorbachev favoured a broad Eurasian security framework in which military blocs would lose their central role; the United States instead supported preservation of NATO while the Warsaw Pact disappeared.

German reunification within NATO was a matter of first-order importance for Soviet security. During the 1990 negotiations, James Baker and other Western leaders offered verbal assurances concerning the non-extension eastwards of NATO's jurisdiction or military presence; declassified records include formulations such as 'not one inch eastward'. These assurances, however, were made in the context of German reunification and were not incorporated into a treaty legally prohibiting any future enlargement of the Alliance into Central or Eastern Europe. Historians continue to debate whether a broader political expectation existed and was subsequently frus-

¹⁵² Noam Chomsky, *Democracy Now!*, 2 March 2015, https://www.democracynow.org/es/2015/3/2/noam_chomsky_after_dangerous_proxy_war.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2..

trated. This book regards that expectation as relevant to understanding Russian perceptions without presenting it as a formal legal prohibition that was breached.¹⁵⁴

A comparable formulation from offensive realism was advanced by John J. Mearsheimer, who used analogies with the Monroe Doctrine to explain why a great power might regard the military integration of a bordering state into a rival alliance as strategically intolerable:

'Russia is a great power and has no interest in allowing the United States and its allies to take a strategically important piece of territory on its western border and incorporate it into the West.

This should not surprise Americans, because the United States has the Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine treats the Western Hemisphere as a special security space and rejects the introduction of military forces from distant powers.

Recall how intensely the United States reacted to the prospect of Soviet military forces in Cuba. The underlying principle was that strategic deployments by a rival power in the Western Hemisphere were regarded as unacceptable.

Imagine, twenty years from now, a powerful China forming military alliances with Canada and Mexico and moving Chinese military forces onto Canadian and Mexican territory. Would the United States simply say that this posed no problem?

No one should therefore be surprised that Russia reacted furiously to the prospect of the United States drawing Ukraine firmly into the Western strategic camp. (...) Yet the West continued to pursue Ukraine's incorporation into Western institutions.

The West was encouraging Ukraine to pursue a course that could expose the country to destruction. What we were doing, in this view, was helping to produce that outcome.

*If relations with Russia already pose serious difficulties for Washington, the strategic problems associated with a rising China may prove still greater.*¹⁵⁵

NATO estimated that Russia had accumulated approximately 20,000 military personnel near the border and warned that Moscow might attempt a

¹⁵⁴ National Security Archive, "NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard", Briefing Book No. 613, 12 December 2017; Tratado sobre el Arreglo Final con respecto a Alemania, 12 September 1990.

¹⁵⁵ MEARSHEIMER, John J. en <https://nomos.com.ar/2022/03/23/por-que-la-crisis-de-ucrania-es-culpa-de-occidente/>, Foreign Affairs, September 2014.

direct operation in eastern Ukraine 'under the pretext of humanitarian action or peacekeeping'.¹⁵⁶

The Prime Minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Borodai, announced his resignation. He said that his role had been to administer the first phase of the crisis and that he would transfer political leadership to Alexander Zakharchenko while remaining a deputy prime minister. Borodai, a Russian citizen, had been selected by the separatist authorities after the consultation organised on 11 May 2014.¹⁵⁷

Between 20 and 24 November 2017 an internal crisis occurred in the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic. Interior Minister Igor Kornet and Leonid Pasechnik, a senior security official, confronted leader Igor Plotnitsky, who travelled to Moscow and subsequently announced his resignation. During the episode, Ukrainian forces used local movements along the line of contact to improve certain positions. The crisis illustrated that the separatist entities were not internally homogeneous actors and that their power struggles were closely connected to the Russian political and security environment.

During the 2019 Ukrainian presidential campaign, ceasefire violations continued to cause military and civilian casualties. Aggregate estimates varied by date, category and source, and single figures should therefore be avoided unless their methodology is specified. War fatigue affected the campaign of President Petro Poroshenko, who was defeated in the second round by Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Shortly afterwards, the Russian government simplified procedures for granting Russian citizenship to residents of separatist-controlled areas of the Donbas, a measure Kyiv interpreted as an additional instrument of political pressure. This episode is examined systematically in the 2016-2026 update.

In mid-May 2014, the United Nations published a report describing an 'alarming deterioration' in human rights in territory controlled by insurgents. The UN reported growing lawlessness and documented targeted killings, torture and abductions, principally by forces associated with the Donetsk People's Republic. It also reported threats, attacks and kidnappings involving journalists and international observers, as well as assaults on supporters of Ukrainian unity. Russia rejected the report, arguing that it neglected

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 3..

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 4..

abuses committed by Ukrainian government forces and accusing its authors of political bias in favour of the new pro-Western authorities in Kyiv.

In a report by the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, Ivan Simonovic, then Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, referred to unlawful detention, abductions and intimidation of election officials and called for urgent action to prevent a conflict resembling the wars of Yugoslavia. He also warned of a humanitarian crisis arising from the disruption of social services and population flight from affected areas. Donetsk, he said, was approaching a breakdown of essential services, including access to medicines such as insulin. Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk likewise referred to medical shortages.

Human Rights Watch accused government forces, pro-government militias and insurgent formations of indiscriminate use of unguided rockets in populated areas, causing significant civilian deaths. The organisation emphasised that indiscriminate attacks in populated areas violate international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, by 11 June 225 people had died since the beginning of the government's counter-offensive. Between 15,000 and 20,000 displaced people reportedly arrived in Sviatohirsk from Sloviansk after Ukrainian shelling intensified at the end of May. Many remaining residents of the besieged city lacked water, gas and electricity. Russian sources, meanwhile, reported that tens of thousands of refugees had crossed into Russia since the fighting began; such figures varied by source and registration method.

In August 2014, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk said in Kyiv that transit of Russian hydrocarbons through Ukraine could be affected by sanctions against Moscow. A government bill awaiting parliamentary approval provided for multiple types of restriction, including asset freezes and possible limits on transit. The draft also contained a blacklist of individuals and companies, principally Russian, whom Kyiv accused of financing terrorism.

During the period examined, a very significant proportion of Russian gas exports to the European Union transited Ukraine's pipeline system. The exact magnitude varied by year and method of calculation; the figure of 60 per cent should therefore be understood as an estimate associated with the context of the source rather than as a structural constant. Transit was governed by contracts between Naftogaz of Ukraine and Gazprom.

The relevant transit agreement, signed in January 2009 and valid until 2019, was legally distinct from the contract between the two companies for gas supplied to Ukraine's domestic market, which at that time was affected by payment disputes.

This legal separation of transit and domestic supply had been regarded as an important step towards preventing bilateral disputes from disrupting fuel destined for third-country consumers.

Russia responded officially to Western sanctions by issuing a decree ordering restrictions or prohibitions on imports from countries that had adopted measures against Russian individuals or legal entities or had joined such measures.¹⁵⁸

The restrictions could therefore affect not only the European Union and the United States but other countries participating in sanctions regimes.

President Vladimir Putin signed the decree instructing the government to prohibit or restrict the import of specified agricultural products, raw materials and foodstuffs from states imposing sanctions on Russia. The government was tasked with determining the relevant product list and adjusting it when necessary to preserve market balance and prevent excessive price increases.

The measures were framed as reciprocal and therefore potentially reversible if Western sanctions were not renewed or were subsequently relaxed.

4.5. NATO's Unsuccessful Interventions: An Expanded Chronology

The chronology that follows documents August and September 2014, the period in which the Ukrainian crisis ceased to be merely an internal conflict affected by external interference and became a problem of European security. It is presented as a detailed record for an argumentative reason: only the dense succession of declarations, summits, alleged incursions, aid convoys, sanctions and denials makes visible the phenomenon of interest here - not any single event, but the systematic distance between the volume of Western declaratory response and its effect on the ground.

¹⁵⁸ - POMERANTSEV, P. (2017). *La nueva Rusia. Nada es verdad and todo es posible en la era Putin*. Barcelona: RBA Libros (edición digital), p. 154.

In August, during his second visit to Crimea since its March incorporation into Russia, President Vladimir Putin held a meeting of the Russian Security Council in Sevastopol, the principal base of the Black Sea Fleet. The trip also carried considerable symbolic weight, underscored by the presence of ministers, parliamentarians and senior Russian officials in a territory that the European Union, the United States and most other states continued to regard as part of Ukraine.

At the meeting with his closest officials, Putin discussed issues concerning security in Crimea and Sevastopol and the functioning of law-enforcement bodies, according to presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov, who specified that external security was included. Measures against corruption on the peninsula were also discussed.

Putin sent a conciliatory message to the West, stating that Russia did not wish to isolate itself and remained open to international cooperation, though not at any price. He also said that Russia would do everything possible to bring the Ukrainian conflict to an end while continuing to defend what it defined as its national interests.¹⁵⁹

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen reported an alleged incursion of Russian armoured vehicles into Ukrainian territory and described it as further evidence that the Kremlin was supplying separatist forces.

Two journalists from The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph reported witnessing a group of light armoured vehicles, fuel tankers and support vehicles cross through a gap in the border fence between Russia and Ukraine.

Kyiv claimed to have destroyed a 'significant part' of the column. Moscow denied both the alleged incursion and the Ukrainian account, stating that the British reporters had observed a mobile border-guard unit patrolling Russian territory near the frontier.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that 'some progress' had been made in talks held in Berlin on 17 August by the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine.¹⁶⁰

Although no major breakthrough was achieved on a ceasefire or effective control of the border, the parties appeared to make progress towards

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 254..

¹⁶⁰ MILOSEVICH-Juaristi, M. (2018). El putinismo, sistema político de Rusia. ARI, n.º 16. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, p. 69.

resolving the impasse concerning a Russian humanitarian-aid convoy destined for eastern Ukraine.

In this context, German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Ukraine on Saturday, 23 August, at President Petro Poroshenko's invitation as part of a wider round of diplomatic contacts intended to address the war in the east.

The announcement coincided with confirmation that the Russian and Ukrainian presidents would attend a regional summit in Belarus on 26 August, with EU participation including José Manuel Barroso and High Representative Catherine Ashton.

Following diplomatic contacts encouraged by Berlin, the conflict between the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian rebels appeared to be entering a more intensive phase of negotiation, even as civilians continued to bear some of the heaviest costs of the fighting.

Thousands of people took part in a peace march organised by Kremlin opponents in Moscow, which became a public act of solidarity with Ukraine.

The demonstration began in Pushkin Square and ended on Sakharov Avenue, a traditional route for extra-parliamentary opposition marches, and passed without major incident. Demonstrations in other Russian cities attracted only dozens of participants, except in St Petersburg, where several hundred, and according to some sources more than a thousand, protested.¹⁶¹

German Chancellor Angela Merkel offered Ukraine EUR500 million in support for reconstruction of the war-damaged east.

President Petro Poroshenko announced the commitment in Kyiv during Merkel's visit, whose principal purpose was to demonstrate political support for the Ukrainian government. In addition to meetings with Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Merkel met other political and social representatives and sought to advance a plan capable of reducing the conflict between government forces and separatists in eastern Ukraine.¹⁶²

Shortly after a Russian humanitarian convoy entered Luhansk without Kyiv's authorisation and without Ukrainian escort, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that the Alliance had observed, since mid-August, transfers of weapons, tanks, artillery and armoured vehicles to pro-Russian militias fighting the Ukrainian army. He also said that Russian-origin weaponry was being used against Ukrainian forces and expressed

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 215..

¹⁶² Duguin, A. G. (2015). *La geopolítica de Rusia. De la revolución rusa a Putin*. Huesca: Hipérbola Janus.

alarm at the concentration of Russian air and ground assets near the border. Rather than reducing tensions, he argued, these actions were increasing them.

'This can only lead to greater isolation for Russia,' he said. The NATO Secretary General also urged Moscow to refrain from further 'provocative actions' and condemned what he described as a blatant violation of international commitments in connection with the convoy's entry into Ukraine.

Within this context, President Poroshenko stated that the Ukrainian government would invest substantial resources in re-equipping the armed forces fighting separatists in the east.¹⁶³

The rebels, meanwhile, used Ukraine's Independence Day to display captured tanks and armoured vehicles in Donetsk and parade approximately one hundred prisoners. Poroshenko stated that the war in Luhansk and Donetsk had been imposed on Ukraine from outside, an unmistakable reference to Russia even when Moscow was not explicitly named in the speech.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Moscow would insist on implementation of earlier agreements concerning the conflict, particularly an unconditional ceasefire. His remarks came before a summit in Minsk involving the heads of state of the Customs Union - Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia - together with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and European Commissioners. Poroshenko had meanwhile dissolved Parliament and called legislative elections for 26 October. Lavrov also announced plans for another Russian humanitarian convoy to eastern Ukraine, where conditions continued to deteriorate and the documented death toll had risen substantially.¹⁶⁴

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Minsk during the Customs Union summit with the European Union and Ukraine, where they discussed both economic issues and the conflict in eastern Ukraine.¹⁶⁵

Poroshenko reiterated his peace plan, which envisaged the disarmament of separatist forces, while Putin maintained that the conflict could not be

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 285..

¹⁶⁴ Freedom House (2017). *Informes Freedom in the World*. Años 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

¹⁶⁵ Leiva Van de Maele, D. (2017). "Russia is back: Analysis of the evolution of the Russian's foreign policy in the Putin era". *Estudios Internacionales*, n.º 187. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales-Universidad de Chile, pp. 9-42.

resolved by force without taking account of the interests of inhabitants of Ukraine's eastern regions. At the opening of the meeting, hosted by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Poroshenko argued that matters of wider European importance were being decided in Minsk and called for support for his peace plan. He also referred to decentralisation, while insisting that Ukraine would remain a unitary state, a position rejected by the separatist leadership.

As fighting intensified in eastern Ukraine, with pro-Russian forces opening an additional axis near the Sea of Azov, allegations multiplied that Russian troops had crossed into Ukraine to support the separatists.¹⁶⁶

President Petro Poroshenko denounced the presence of Russian forces in the rebel-held Donetsk region, where Ukrainian units had been encircled near Amvrosiivka.

A NATO general supported Kyiv's allegations, stating that the Alliance assessed more than one thousand Russian soldiers to be operating inside Ukraine. Russia denied that its forces were crossing the border.

After an emergency meeting prompted by reports of Russian troops entering eastern Ukraine, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that Russia had fired on Ukraine from Russian territory and from within Ukraine and maintained thousands of combat-ready troops near the border. He described this as a serious violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.¹⁶⁷

Rasmussen also announced plans for a rapidly deployable force numbering several thousand troops, with its final composition to be determined and approved by Allied heads of state and government at the forthcoming NATO summit in Wales.

The rationale for the force, and for an increased Allied presence in Eastern Europe, reflected concern over Russian military activity. NATO presented the rapid-reaction element as a spearhead designed principally for deterrence, signalling that the Alliance could respond quickly to a potential attack on a member state.¹⁶⁸

The European Union approved a further round of sanctions against Russia, aimed at increasing institutional, economic and financial pressure. In

¹⁶⁶ Poch de Feliu, R. (2003). *La Gran Transición. Rusia 1985-2002*. Barcelona: Crítica. – (2018). *Entender la Rusia de Putin. De la humillación al restablecimiento*. Madrid: Akal.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 239..

coordination with the G7, Brussels sought to tighten restrictions on access to capital markets, arms transactions and technologies relevant to the energy sector. Political debate also considered Russia's participation in selected international cultural, economic and sporting events, although the scope of measures differed across sectors and over time.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko spoke by telephone in an attempt to reduce the conflict. Putin proposed a seven-point plan that he said could provide a basis for a ceasefire. It included an end to offensive operations by both Ukrainian forces and the militias of Donetsk and Luhansk, withdrawal of Ukrainian forces to distances that would prevent artillery and missile fire against cities, objective international monitoring of the ceasefire, restrictions on the use of combat aircraft, exchange of prisoners, humanitarian corridors and delivery of relief assistance.¹⁶⁹

The NATO summit in Wales, held in early September, produced important decisions concerning the Alliance's eastern posture. NATO agreed to strengthen its rapid-response capabilities, pre-position equipment and ensure that additional forces could be deployed quickly to Eastern Europe if required. The measures were intended to demonstrate collective-defence credibility in response to the changed security environment created by the Ukraine crisis.¹⁷⁰

Ukrainian authorities and separatists accused one another of violating the ceasefire after projectiles struck Donetsk, the principal rebel stronghold, and areas around the government-held port of Mariupol. Despite these incidents, both sides sought publicly to prevent the emerging peace process associated with the Minsk Protocol from collapsing immediately.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) stated at the time that the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine was generally being observed, although it remained fragile. The organisation, which had approximately 250 observers in the area, indicated that more equipment, including protected vehicles supplied by participating states, would be required for more effective monitoring.

On 8 September, Crimea's acting Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov stated that by 2017 the peninsula would be fully incorporated into the legislative

¹⁶⁹ Recuperado en: (7 February 2018). "Rusia cierra el 2017 con un aumento de más de 26% de sus ingresos petroleros". Available at: <https://mundo.sputniknews.com>

¹⁷⁰ RSF (2018). "Atmósfera asfixiante para las voces independientes". Available at: <https://rsf.org/es/rusia>

regime of the Russian Federation and that its economy would be brought towards the level of an average Russian region. Moscow planned major federal expenditure for the development of Crimea and Sevastopol.¹⁷¹

On 9 September, the Russian government announced that it would not immediately implement retaliatory measures previously discussed by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev because the European Union was delaying implementation of its latest sanctions. Measures under consideration had included restrictions on European airlines' use of Russian airspace and limits on imports of European automobiles.¹⁷²

Russian diplomatic sources argued that restrictive measures were the wrong approach and indicated that Moscow was prepared to withdraw contemplated restrictions on European products if the European Union removed its own measures.

After several days of uncertainty, the new EU sanctions against Russia entered into force on 12 September, one week after formal approval by the member states. The measures focused particularly on finance, energy and access to oil-sector technology and were coordinated with additional US sanctions.

The measures were published in the Official Journal of the European Union while political statements left open the possibility that sanctions could later be adjusted if the ceasefire and peace process improved.

The European Commission suspended part of an emergency agricultural-support scheme designed to mitigate the immediate effect of Russia's import ban after applications substantially exceeded normal annual export volumes for certain fruit and vegetable categories. The original package had been introduced after Moscow prohibited imports of a range of perishable food products from Western states.¹⁷³

On 11 September the United States announced that it would tighten sanctions on Russia in response to what it described as illegal actions in Ukraine. President Barack Obama said the purpose was to broaden and deepen existing measures affecting the financial, energy and defence sectors, increasing Russia's political isolation and economic costs. He argued that despite announcement of a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, there was insufficient evidence that Russia had ended efforts to destabilise its neighbour.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. ..

¹⁷² Ibid., p. ..

¹⁷³ MILOSEVICH -Juaristi, M. (2019). *Rusia en América Latina: repercusiones para España*. Documento de trabajo n.º 02/2019. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano.

Moscow, for its part, claimed that the European Union was undermining a peaceful solution to the Ukrainian crisis and warned that Brussels would have to explain to its citizens the economic consequences of confrontation and reciprocal sanctions.

Russian officials indicated that possible countermeasures would focus on sectors in which European exporters were relatively more dependent on access to the Russian market, including automobiles and selected light-industry products.¹⁷⁴

Russian Economy Minister Alexei Ulyukayev stated that Russia would challenge new European and US sanctions through the World Trade Organization. He also said that countermeasures would be adopted only where they served Russia's own economic interests and argued that imposing new sanctions while the peace process was stabilising risked undermining that process.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko welcomed the new European sanctions and noted that the Kyiv Parliament would ratify the Association Agreement with the European Union whose suspension the previous year had helped trigger the Maidan crisis and Yanukovich's fall. Implementation of the trade component, however, was delayed until 2016 as part of an arrangement intended to address Russian concerns. During the interim, the EU maintained unilateral trade preferences for Ukrainian goods.¹⁷⁵

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov argued on 13 September that one US objective in imposing sanctions was to weaken the economic relationship between Russia and the European Union and improve Washington's position in transatlantic trade negotiations. He also criticised efforts to promote US liquefied natural gas in Europe as an alternative to Russian pipeline supplies. At the same time Poland temporarily reduced reverse-flow gas deliveries to Ukraine amid supply concerns and accused Gazprom of restricting deliveries, an allegation the Russian company disputed.¹⁷⁶

On 15 September, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko submitted a bill to the Verkhovna Rada granting a three-year special regime of local self-government to certain districts of the separatist-controlled Donetsk and Luhansk regions, together with a partial amnesty and guarantees concerning

¹⁷⁴ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladimir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada (tesis doctoral), p. 198.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ...

¹⁷⁶ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladimir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada (tesis doctoral), p. 125.

use of the Russian language. The proposal formed part of the framework associated with the twelve-point peace plan signed on 5 September and the ceasefire that followed months of fighting.

On 16 September, the Ukrainian Parliament approved two measures of major significance: legislation establishing a special status for certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk, and ratification of the Association Agreement with the European Union. The special-status legislation envisaged local elections, protected the use of Russian in public and educational life and allowed cross-border economic cooperation with neighbouring Russian regions. The related amnesty covered many participants in the separatist structures but excluded serious offences. The Association Agreement created preferential access for Ukrainian goods to the EU market, while implementation of the reciprocal trade regime was postponed until 2016.¹⁷⁷

The agreement symbolised a substantial deepening of political and economic ties between Ukraine and the European Union.

On 20 September, the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian separatists signed a memorandum supplementing the ceasefire and envisaging a security zone from which heavy weapons would be withdrawn. The document was achieved through negotiations involving Russia and the OSCE. Fighting nevertheless continued after its signature.

The understanding sought to stabilise the line separating government and separatist positions in Donetsk and Luhansk, where control of territory remained divided and fluid.¹⁷⁸

On 21 September, despite the agreement on a security zone, numerous ceasefire violations were reported.

The same day, thousands of people participated in a peace march organised by opponents of the Kremlin in Moscow and expressed solidarity with Ukraine.

From the beginning of the conflict, journalists, officials, local politicians and members of the OSCE were among those abducted or held by forces associated with the Donetsk People's Republic. On 9 May, insurgents entered the local office of the International Committee of the Red Cross and seized medical supplies, detaining several staff members on accusations of

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. ..

¹⁷⁸ The Economist (2018). "Democracy Index". Available at: <http://www.eiu.com/> Trindade, G. (3 November 2017). "Rusia impulsa la transformación digital de su economía". Available at: <http://www.expansion.com>

espionage. They were released the following day; one detainee was reported to have been badly beaten.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission lost contact with four observers in Donetsk Oblast on 26 May and a further four in Luhansk Oblast on 29 May.¹⁷⁹

Later in September, NATO reported a significant withdrawal of conventional Russian forces that it assessed had been operating in or near Ukraine, while warning that thousands of Russian troops remained deployed around the border.

On 26 September, the energy ministers of Russia and Ukraine, with mediation by the European Commission, reached a preliminary arrangement intended to secure gas supplies to Ukraine for the following six months.

The arrangement still required governmental approval, but EU Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger and Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak both expressed confidence that agreement could be achieved. The negotiations benefited from a period of relative reduction in fighting between Kyiv and pro-Russian separatists.

Three conclusions emerge from the preceding record. First, NATO's response was deterrent with respect to Allied territory rather than interventionist with respect to Ukraine. Rapid-reaction forces, reinforcement of the eastern flank and other measures protected member states, not the state already at war. Ukraine was not a member of the Alliance and Article 5 did not apply to it. NATO activity during these months must therefore be read in light of this elementary distinction, which the original 2015 title of this section tends to obscure by speaking of 'failed interventions' by an actor that had not decided to intervene militarily in Ukraine.

Second, the effective diplomatic channel did not run through NATO but principally through Berlin and Paris. The August contacts in Berlin, Merkel's visit to Kyiv, the Minsk summit and the protocol of 5 September emerged from the diplomatic framework that would later become known as the Normandy Format, in which NATO as an organisation did not participate. Conflating these two levels - the Atlantic military dimension and Franco-German diplomacy - makes it impossible to understand why Western pressure could be intense in rhetoric yet limited in its effect on the ground.

¹⁷⁹ Papeles de Geografía, n.º 23-24. Madrid: UNED, pp. 283-298.
Seipel, H. (2017). Putin. El poder visto desde dentro. Córdoba: Almuzara (edición digital).

Third, sanctions and negotiation operated on different and at times contradictory timetables. European measures adopted in August and September entered into force as a ceasefire was being negotiated, and Russian officials cited this precisely as evidence that the West was not seeking a solution. Whether that interpretation was sincere or instrumental, the mismatch between the coercive instrument and the negotiating instrument is verifiable, and it would recur throughout later phases of the conflict.

4.6. NATO and Russia in the Final Quarter of the Conflict's First Year

The final quarter of 2014 completed the first full cycle of the conflict: from the Maidan crisis to open war in the Donbas, and from open war to a ceasefire that neither side fully observed. The analytical significance of these months lies in the pattern established for the following seven years: a formal agreement valid on paper, an active line of contact on the ground, and an expanding sanctions regime that did not alter the behaviour it was intended to change.

On 1 October, President Vladimir Putin stated that cyberattacks against Russian information resources were multiplying and that their methods, means and tactics were becoming more sophisticated. He made the remarks while opening a special Security Council session devoted to protecting Russia's information space from contemporary threats.¹⁸⁰

Putin described information security as exceptionally important to defence capability, sustainable economic and social development and the protection of sovereignty. He gave no figures, but Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev stated that Russian systems had recorded and repelled tens of millions of cyberattacks since 2010, with a particularly high number during 2014 in connection with events such as the Sochi Olympics and the situation in Ukraine.¹⁸¹

Putin called for additional information-security measures, including stronger protection for communications networks and state information resources, while insisting that Russia did not intend to exercise total control over or 'nationalise' the internet.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Recuperado en: https://elpais.com/internacional/2014/09/24/actualidad/1411587574_471261.html

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

On 13 October, several hundred soldiers of the Ukrainian National Guard demonstrated near the Presidential Administration in Kyiv, demanding demobilisation after long periods of military service exceeding the normal statutory term.

The National Guard had been re-established in March 2014 and included both military personnel and members drawn from Maidan self-defence formations. Commanders proposed short periods of leave for those who had served longest, while President Poroshenko argued that large-scale demobilisation was premature while the conflict in the Donbas remained unresolved.

On 16 October, before attending the Asia-Europe Meeting, Vladimir Putin warned that if Ukraine were to take Russian transit gas from export pipelines without authorisation, Moscow would reduce export volumes correspondingly, as it had done during earlier gas disputes. He maintained that any resulting energy crisis would not be Russia's responsibility and presented Moscow as a reliable supplier.¹⁸³

At the annual Valdai discussion meeting in Sochi, Putin used the metaphor that the Russian bear would not ask anyone's permission or surrender the taiga over which it ruled. His address strongly criticised US foreign policy, emphasised national sovereignty and insisted that Russia would not yield to sanctions. He portrayed the United States as attempting to impose its will arbitrarily in both Europe and Asia and stated that Russia would defend its interests.¹⁸⁴

On 26 October, Poroshenko called on Russia to fulfil the obligations undertaken at Minsk, including withdrawal of foreign forces and restoration of border control. He described planned separatist elections as 'pseudo-elections' intended to create illegitimate authorities. Under Ukrainian legislation, local elections in areas under insurgent control were to be municipal elections conducted within Ukraine's legal framework, not votes designed to establish representative parliaments for independent entities.

On 28 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin argued that elections in the Donbas should be held in a manner 'coordinated' with Ukrainian legislation, while Moscow and Kyiv continued to interpret the Minsk provisions differently. Poroshenko, supported by European institutions, insisted that the

¹⁸³ Recuperado en: <https://foropolitico.es/vladimir-putin-amenaza-europa/>

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

Kremlin use its influence over separatist leaders and that any elections concern local authorities and comply with Ukrainian law. The insurgent leadership, by contrast, sought elections for separate parliaments and leaders capable of legitimising the self-proclaimed 'people's republics' as political entities and negotiating counterparts.¹⁸⁵¹⁸⁶

On 29 October, NATO reported that four groups of Russian military aircraft had conducted unusually extensive activity around European airspace. Allied aircraft intercepted a number of Russian planes over the Baltic, North Sea and Black Sea regions, with some approaching the Atlantic coast. NATO interpreted the pattern as an unusual level of military aviation activity and as a possible effort to test Allied readiness amid continuing tension over Ukraine.

On 1 November, EU Ambassador to Russia Vygaudas Usackas said that areas of eastern Ukraine controlled by pro-Russian separatists were beginning to display characteristics associated with 'frozen conflicts'. He compared the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics with unresolved post-Soviet territories such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria. The comparison emphasised the role external military and economic support can play in sustaining de facto entities whose status lacks broad international recognition.¹⁸⁷

The self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics held elections intended to consolidate their internal legitimacy. Russia accepted the results politically, while Ukraine, the European Union and most Western governments regarded the votes as incompatible with the Minsk arrangements and with Ukrainian law. Russian State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin said Moscow was prepared to work with the new authorities. President Poroshenko described the elections as a farce organised by what Kyiv designated terrorist organisations.

Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky emerged as the winners of the votes held in the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics respectively, with official figures reporting very large majorities.

¹⁸⁵ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladimir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada(tesis doctoral).

¹⁸⁶ Leiva Van de Maele, D. (2017). "Russia is back: Analysis of the evolution of the Russian's foreign policy in the Putin era". *Estudios Internacionales*, n.º 187. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales-Universidad de Chile, pp. 9-42.

¹⁸⁷ Villegas Cara, F. M. (2017). *Análisis Crítico del discurso político de Vladimir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Granada: Universidad de Granada(tesis doctoral).

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk stated that areas of Donetsk and Luhansk outside government control would not continue to receive all central-budget transfers while, in Kyiv's view, illegitimate separatist authorities controlled them. Ukrainian ministries calculated that the affected territories had previously received substantial state subsidies.¹⁸⁸

Those transfers included pensions, unemployment payments, disability benefits, family allowances and other social support, as well as subsidies connected with coal extraction, a central industry of the Donbas.¹⁸⁹

Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council alleged that a Russian column comprising tanks, trucks, troops and military equipment had crossed towards Luhansk. President Poroshenko warned of possible escalation because of serious violations of the ceasefire agreed at Minsk. NATO also reported increased Russian troop and equipment concentrations near Ukraine.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development warned that the Ukrainian crisis could erode part of the peace dividend obtained in Eastern Europe after the Cold War and encourage a new cycle of military expenditure. Defence spending had fallen sharply after 1989 across Russia and many former Soviet republics, a trend that had already begun to reverse and that the Ukrainian conflict accelerated.¹⁹⁰

OSCE observers reported columns of unmarked military trucks moving towards Donetsk, some carrying weapons. The absence of visible insignia prevented legal attribution of their origin on visual observation alone. Ukrainian and Western authorities linked the movements to Russia or to separatist forces supplied by Moscow; the Russian government denied moving military personnel and equipment into Ukraine.

On 12 November, NATO stated that it had observed vehicles and military matériel entering Ukraine from Russia and said that its assessment was consistent with reports by OSCE observers. The Alliance viewed the movements as a new escalation after the ceasefire agreed at Minsk on 5 September. Moscow repeatedly rejected allegations of direct military participation formulated in those terms.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. ..

¹⁹⁰ Amnistía Internacional (2018). Informe sobre el Estado de los Derechos Humanos en el mundo 2017-2018. Available at: [http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/AI%20Informe%20anual%202017-18%20\(LGBTI\).pdf](http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/AI%20Informe%20anual%202017-18%20(LGBTI).pdf)

A senior NATO commander interpreted the additional troops and equipment as intended to establish a stronger and more durable connection between the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and Russia.¹⁹¹

On 13 November, former Ukrainian presidents Leonid Kravchuk (1991-1994) and Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010) issued a joint statement arguing that Ukraine should prepare for prolonged resistance to what they described as Russian imperial ambitions. They rejected direct negotiations with the authorities of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and argued that existing contacts had not changed the Kremlin's strategy. They also accused separatist forces of violating the ceasefire and Russia of continuing to supply weapons and personnel. These claims represent the position of the signatories and should be distinguished from independent verification of each alleged fact.¹⁹²

At the G20 summit in Australia on 16 November, Vladimir Putin attracted considerable diplomatic attention because of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. He held meetings with British Prime Minister David Cameron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel that were publicly described as tense. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said EU foreign ministers would review the situation in light of allegations concerning the entry of heavy weapons and troops into Ukrainian territory. He maintained that the EU would continue to use diplomatic instruments, including sanctions, while arguing that Russia could still contribute to implementation of the Minsk agreements and de-escalation.

Despite the Minsk ceasefire, shelling continued in Donetsk, the principal urban centre controlled by pro-Russian rebels who rejected Kyiv's authority. Ukrainian military officials reported further soldiers killed and wounded in separatist attacks over successive twenty-four-hour periods.

In an interview released by the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin stated that Russia would not allow the Ukrainian central government to 'annihilate' its political opponents in the east. The formulation expressed the Russian narrative of the conflict and the claimed need to protect the population of separatist-held regions.

Putin also maintained that a political solution required a more federalised state structure

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. ..

¹⁹² Ibid., p. ..

and criticised President Petro Poroshenko's decree suspending certain state payments and services in areas outside Kyiv's control. Moscow supported federalisation, while broad sectors in Ukraine rejected it as a mechanism that could institutionalise Russian influence over the country's domestic politics.

Vladimir Putin accused the United States of using sanctions against people close to him in an attempt to weaken his government politically. He was referring to measures adopted by Washington in response to Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Putin maintained that sanctions targeting Russian citizens whom he described as patriots violated their rights. The governments imposing them, by contrast, justified the measures as foreign-policy instruments directed at individuals considered responsible for decisions contrary to international law.¹⁹³

On 1 December, Vladimir Putin announced that Russia was abandoning the South Stream gas-pipeline project, which had been designed to supply southern Europe directly across the Black Sea. In Russian planning, South Stream was intended to complement Nord Stream and reduce reliance on Ukrainian transit routes. During a visit to Ankara, Putin attributed cancellation to what he called the European Commission's 'unconstructive position' and announced that part of the gas would instead be redirected towards Turkey and other energy projects.

President Vladimir Putin accused the West of pursuing, 'for decades, perhaps even centuries', a policy of containing Russia and of having wished to see the country dismembered in a manner comparable to Yugoslavia. In his annual address to Parliament and the political elite, delivered in the Kremlin's St George Hall, he attacked the United States and the European Union and accused Russia's former adversaries of attempting to erect a 'new Iron Curtain'. At the same time, Grozny experienced a serious outbreak of violence. Local reports indicated that an armed group entered the city shortly after 01:00, killed three traffic police officers and occupied the House of the

¹⁹³ Freedom House (2017). *Informes Freedom in the World*. Años 2016, 2017, 2018y 2019. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

Press. Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee reported ten police officers and ten militants killed and twenty-eight police officers wounded during the assault, in which security forces used heavy weapons.¹⁹⁴¹⁹⁵

To address the worsening economic situation, Putin proposed an amnesty for certain capital returned to Russia, tax stability for businesses, temporary exemptions for new companies, reductions in some public expenditure and limits on administrative inspections. He also advocated using resources from the National Welfare Fund, accumulated during years of high hydrocarbon revenues, to recapitalise banks and support projects in the real economy at a time when access to Western capital markets had been restricted.

The Russian government, the Central Bank and major exporting companies debated measures to stabilise the rouble and support the financial system after the currency's sharp depreciation. The Central Bank expanded mechanisms for providing foreign exchange to financial institutions and announced new operations intended to ease external-financing pressures. The crisis opened an internal debate about the effectiveness of Russia's economic-management institutions.

By temporarily relaxing selected regulatory requirements, the Central Bank sought to give financial institutions greater room to manage reserves and confront market volatility.

Vladimir Putin defended the performance of the government and Central Bank during the economic turmoil that drove the rouble lower. He described their response overall as 'adequate', while acknowledging that some decisions might have been taken more quickly.

Putin attributed the crisis both to external factors and to a longstanding internal weakness: inadequate diversification of an economy highly dependent on hydrocarbons. At his annual press conference, he argued that even under an adverse scenario Russia might require approximately two years to restore stability.

On 23 December, the government in Kyiv reaffirmed its aspiration for closer relations with NATO by promoting legal changes that removed Ukraine's formal non-aligned status.

¹⁹⁴ Freedom House (2017). *Informe Freedom in the World. Años 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019*. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ..

The amendment legally reopened the possibility of participation in military alliances, although it did not in itself amount to an invitation to join NATO or to immediate accession.

Russia reacted immediately to the Verkhovna Rada vote, describing it as hostile, while NATO stated that it respected Ukraine's sovereign decision without making any membership commitment. Ukraine's movement towards the Alliance remained one of Moscow's principal concerns about its neighbour's new strategic course, although any formal accession process could take years and would require separate institutional decisions.

On 25 December, representatives of the Ukrainian government and separatist forces resumed talks in Minsk with Russian and OSCE mediation. The dialogue rested on the September agreements and on a renewed truce agreed on 9 December. Issues included prisoner exchanges, withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact, the economic situation in territories outside Kyiv's control and definition of a special regime of self-government within the Ukrainian state framework.

At the end of December Vladimir Putin signed a new Russian military doctrine identifying NATO enlargement and deployment of US missile-defence systems among the principal external military risks to national security. The document did not establish a general doctrine of preventive nuclear attack; it retained specific conditions for possible nuclear use. It also stressed the need to develop capabilities capable of overcoming or neutralising missile-defence systems, reflecting the growing importance of strategic competition with the United States and NATO.

The quarter established that the Minsk Protocol had produced a nominal cessation of hostilities, not a political settlement. Implementation depended on a sequence - withdrawal of heavy weapons, border control, local elections and special status - that the parties interpreted incompatibly: Kyiv placed restoration of border control near the beginning of the process, while Moscow and the separatists placed it later. This sequencing dispute, rather than an abstract absence of willingness alone, was a technical reason for failure and explains why the revised conclusions of this volume insist that any future negotiation must connect its component steps through mechanisms whose order and consequences are defined unequivocally.

4.7. 2015: The EU's 'Ineffectiveness' - A Chronology

The title of this section comes from the first edition and should be subjected to the same scrutiny as the rest of the book's vocabulary. 'Ineffectiveness' is a judgement, not a description, and presupposes an answer to the question of what the European Union sought to achieve in 2015. The chronology below allows that premise to be examined against the documentary record. What it records is not an absence of European action - there was Franco-German mediation, successive sanctions, financial assistance and OSCE monitoring - but a mismatch between instruments designed to alter economic calculations over the medium term and a conflict whose military balance could change on the ground within weeks.

On 8 January, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced a third macro-financial assistance package for Ukraine amid the continuing crisis with Russia over Crimea. Ukraine required urgent support to prevent balance-of-payments pressures from developing into a broader financial and sovereign-debt crisis. The package, worth up to EUR1.8 billion, still required approval by EU institutions, while some member states expressed concern about the pace of reforms.

On 12 January, Interpol issued an international wanted-person notice concerning former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in connection with allegations of misappropriation and embezzlement brought by the Ukrainian authorities. Yanukovich had fled to Russia in February 2014 after mass mobilisation against his government's decision to suspend signature of the Association Agreement with the European Union. The new Ukrainian authorities accused him and members of the network known as 'the Family' of accumulating substantial wealth at the expense of state assets.

On 13 January, Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov stated that Russia would strengthen its military capabilities, with particular attention to Crimea, Kaliningrad and the Arctic. These priorities were connected to the new military doctrine adopted at the end of 2014, which identified NATO enlargement, the movement of Allied military infrastructure closer to Russia and US missile-defence systems as security concerns. The doctrine also paid increasing attention to the Arctic and to relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Freedom House (2017). *Informes Freedom in the World. Años 2016, 2017, 2018y 2019*. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

On 16 January, intense fighting resumed in eastern Ukraine, particularly around Donetsk airport. The parties issued competing accounts of territorial control and responsibility for escalation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed concern about Ukrainian troop movements; Petro Poroshenko said some movements were rotations. On 19 January, forces loyal to Kyiv intensified operations around Donetsk. The military deterioration coincided with interruption of diplomatic contacts and postponement of a planned meeting among leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine.¹⁹⁷

Sanctions imposed by the United States and European Union restricted access by major Russian companies and banks to selected international financing markets. During the World Economic Forum in Davos, Russian business leaders attempted to reassure investors and argued that eventual normalisation of political relations would allow some disrupted commercial flows to recover.

On 24 January, pro-Russian separatist forces intensified operations towards Mariupol on the Sea of Azov. A rocket attack on residential districts killed and injured dozens of civilians. The episode prompted strong international condemnation and demonstrated the risk that a southward offensive might expand the land corridor under separatist control.

On 26 January, Vladimir Putin criticised Ukrainian military mobilisation and announced temporary measures facilitating the stay in Russia of certain Ukrainian citizens of military age. He described the Ukrainian armed forces as a 'foreign NATO legion', a political formulation intended to portray the war as part of a broader geopolitical confrontation with the West.

On 27 January, the European Union considered additional sanctions against Russia in response to the worsening security and humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. EU heads of state and government asked the Foreign Affairs Council to assess further measures and reiterated the need to implement the Minsk agreements. Foreign ministers subsequently held an extraordinary meeting devoted to the crisis.

The Verkhovna Rada designated Russia an 'aggressor state' and called on the international community to recognise what it described as aggression and occupation of Ukrainian territory. It also requested further sanctions and designated the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics terrorist organisations. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev responded by warning of possible retaliation should Russia be excluded from the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. ...

SWIFT international payments system. These classifications reflected an increasingly profound divergence between the parties' legal and political narratives.

The Russian government presented a sixty-point plan intended to mitigate the economic crisis produced by falling hydrocarbon prices, rouble depreciation and the effects of Western sanctions. The measures sought to support economic activity and social stability during 2015; their cost and financing mechanisms were to be discussed with the legislature.

On 30 January, Ukraine reported that an attempt to convene a new round of Contact Group talks in Minsk - involving Ukraine, Russia and separatist representatives under OSCE auspices - had failed. Meanwhile, the war continued to claim lives and destroy homes and infrastructure.

By the end of January, NATO maintained heightened surveillance and reassurance measures in the Baltic states amid deteriorating relations with Russia. The geographical proximity of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, together with substantial Russian-speaking populations, generated security concerns, but language should not in itself be treated as an indicator of political loyalty or predisposition to conflict. This distinction is developed later in the section on language, identity and legitimacy.

On 2 February, Donetsk rebel forces prepared to mobilise tens of thousands of men, according to Alexander Zakharchenko, head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic. The announcement came amid intensified fighting and repeated diplomatic failures to secure a durable ceasefire and establish a heavy-weapons exclusion zone.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, then in Beijing, accused the United States of giving unconditional support to Kyiv in a policy that, in his account, sought to resolve the conflict by force.

As the war in eastern Ukraine intensified, Western diplomacy launched a Franco-German peace initiative. French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel travelled to Kyiv on 5 February and then to Moscow on 6 February for talks with President Vladimir Putin. The initiative sought a renewed framework for implementation of Minsk, including withdrawal of foreign military support and restoration of Ukrainian control over its eastern border. It remained unclear at first to what extent the new

proposals differed from the documents signed in Minsk the previous September by Russia, Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists under OSCE auspices.

At a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Brussels, the question of supplying weapons to Ukraine was debated. Although most European states politically supported Ukraine, they remained opposed at that stage to large-scale provision of lethal weaponry, a possibility being considered in Washington. Poland and the Baltic states, which perceived themselves as particularly exposed to Russian pressure, were more supportive of military assistance.

Angela Merkel and François Hollande travelled to the Kremlin to persuade Vladimir Putin to reduce escalation in Ukraine. The initiative was one of European diplomacy's principal attempts to prevent an intensification of the conflict while the United States considered supplying weapons to the Ukrainian army. After approximately five hours of talks, Merkel and Hollande left Moscow with an agreement to hold a four-way telephone conversation on 8 February with Putin and President Petro Poroshenko. The Kremlin said work was continuing on a peace plan based on the Minsk agreements; French and Russian spokespeople described the discussions as constructive and substantive.

At the Munich Security Conference, Merkel and Hollande, together with the US Vice-President, sharply criticised Russia's position in the conflict. At the same time, divisions within the Western camp became visible. Merkel and Hollande prioritised a diplomatic solution and continuation of negotiations, while sections of the US administration considered it necessary to supplement diplomacy with arms for Ukraine in order to strengthen its defensive capacity. Russian officials, for their part, continued to insist that the crisis required a political settlement.

On 10 February, Kyiv's forces and pro-Russian separatists intensified fighting in eastern Ukraine on the eve of the planned Minsk summit of the German, French, Russian and Ukrainian leaders. Members of the Contact Group met behind closed doors in the Belarusian capital. The group comprised representatives of Ukraine, Russia and the insurgents from the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics under OSCE auspices.

President Barack Obama and Chancellor Angela Merkel set aside tactical differences and sent a public message of unity to Vladimir Putin. Preserving cohesion among Western partners was itself an immediate objective,

since divisions among EU members, between the United States and Europe and within Washington affected the diplomacy surrounding Ukraine.

Merkel, the principal European interlocutor in the crisis, and Obama sought to coordinate decisions. At times this required Washington to slow or sequence sanctions while waiting for EU agreement. A similar divergence appeared over the possibility of US arms deliveries to Ukrainian forces: Merkel opposed supplying lethal weapons at that stage.

On 11 February, the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia met in Minsk in an effort to reduce violence in eastern Ukraine. By then the estimates cited in contemporary sources placed cumulative deaths since the beginning of the war in April 2014 at more than 5,200. Fighting continued around Donetsk even while diplomacy was under way; six civilians were killed in an artillery strike for which insurgents blamed forces loyal to Kyiv.

The leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia endorsed, through a political declaration, a package of measures intended to reactivate the peace process. The first provision established a ceasefire from 00:00 on 15 February. The initiative led by Angela Merkel and François Hollande, together with Petro Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin, culminated in a Minsk summit held in parallel with Contact Group negotiations involving representatives of Ukraine, Russia, the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and the OSCE.

The European Union added further Russian and separatist officials to its sanctions list in connection with the Ukraine conflict. Publication of the measures had been delayed so as not to obstruct the peace negotiations. Among those listed were senior Russian defence officials whom the EU considered involved in supporting Russian military deployments connected with Ukraine, alongside leaders of the separatist entities.

On 18 February, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko confirmed the withdrawal of most Ukrainian forces from Debaltseve, the focal point of intense fighting during the opening days of the new ceasefire. Columns of Ukrainian soldiers were seen retreating while pro-Russian separatists claimed to have captured hundreds of troops and continued their offensive against the strategically important railway hub.

On 22 February, a bombing in Kharkiv killed two people and injured approximately a dozen, one year after the Verkhovna Rada had adopted its resolution concerning Yanukovich's withdrawal from presidential duties. Yanukovich had left his residence near Kyiv on the night of 21-22 February

2014 without completing the political-reform measures agreed hours earlier with parliamentary opposition leaders.

'Marches of Dignity' were held in Ukraine to commemorate the Maidan protests. President Petro Poroshenko led the march in Kyiv accompanied by several foreign leaders, including representatives from the Baltic states, Poland, Moldova, Georgia and German President Joachim Gauck. The Kharkiv attack occurred during a local commemorative march. Prosecutors said an explosive device hidden near the route caused the deaths of an activist and a police officer and injured several police officers and civilians. National Security and Defence Council Secretary Oleksandr Turchynov announced a counter-terrorist response, and the Security Service of Ukraine reported arrests of suspects whom it alleged had links to training in Belgorod, Russia.

Ukraine's representative to the European Union, Kostiantyn Yelisieiev, called for weapons to be supplied to Ukraine to halt attacks by eastern rebels. Most European governments nevertheless remained reluctant to provide lethal arms for fear of escalating the conflict.

Russia warned that it might cut gas supplies to Ukraine unless Kyiv replenished advance payments for consumption. Gazprom stated that only a limited prepaid volume remained. Moscow had introduced prepayment requirements amid the continuing dispute over Ukraine's accumulated gas debts.

Previous Russia-Ukraine gas disputes had produced accusations that transit gas destined for European consumers was being diverted within Ukraine, making the security of transit routes a recurrent European concern. Kyiv later stopped supplying gas directly to separatist-held areas, after which Moscow used available infrastructure to provide fuel directly to those territories.

From 19 February 2015, Gazprom began supplying gas directly to the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

President Petro Poroshenko's government continued to receive substantial international support. The IMF approved a USD17.5 billion assistance programme to be disbursed over four years. The United States also announced additional sanctions and approximately USD75 million in non-lethal security assistance.

President Vladimir Putin stated in an interview that Russia had been prepared to place its nuclear forces at heightened readiness during the operation in Crimea in February and March 2014 if circumstances required it. He framed the decision as necessary to protect the local population from what

he described as threats following the change of power in Kyiv. He also acknowledged that Russian special forces had carried out the seizure of the Crimean Parliament in Simferopol, thereby confirming direct Russian military participation in the operation.

On 18 March, NATO detected Russian military aircraft operating near European airspace. Estonia intercepted aircraft approaching the Baltic region without standard flight-plan notification. Such activity formed part of the broader pattern of Russian military signalling that had intensified since the Ukrainian crisis began.

The 2015 balance permits a more precise formulation than the original section title. The European Union was not inactive: it helped secure a second Minsk agreement in February that verifiably reduced the intensity of fighting after Debaltseve, sustained a sanctions regime while preserving cohesion among twenty-eight member states with divergent energy interests, and financed the fiscal survival of the Ukrainian state. What it failed to achieve was translation of that capacity into a political settlement, in part because it lacked two instruments that would have been required for a strategic bargain: autonomous military power and a willingness or ability to offer Russia a negotiated settlement concerning the wider security architecture.

This limitation was structural rather than merely circumstantial. The Union was designed to transform neighbouring states through progressive economic integration, not to negotiate strategic balances with a nuclear power. Applying that toolkit to a territorial war produced precisely what the chronology records: extensive activity, considerable internal coherence and limited influence over the decisive military variable. The appropriate conclusion is therefore not that Europe did nothing, but that it used the instruments for which it had been constructed in a situation that demanded something different.

4.8. April: A Calm before the Storm

The middle months of 2015 provide the first example of a phenomenon that would recur until 2022: relative stabilisation of the line of contact not as a step towards peace, but as a period in which both sides rebuilt capabilities. This section documents that lull and should be read with the appropriate question - not why the fighting diminished, but what the actors did with the time that the reduction in hostilities gave them.

The relative calm between Russia and Ukraine continued after the ceasefire agreed in Minsk in February. The dispute over gas supplies, however, remained unresolved. Gazprom and Naftogaz agreed to extend the so-called winter package for a further three months at a reduced price, lowering the rate paid by Ukraine from USD329 to USD248 per thousand cubic metres.

'This temporary agreement covers only the second quarter of 2015. It will nevertheless allow us to accumulate gas for the next autumn-winter season,' Ukrainian Energy Minister Volodymyr Demchyshyn said in a statement.

The European Commission, acting as mediator in gas-supply negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, supported the temporary extension. The EU executive regarded the measure positively, while reiterating that sanctions against Russia would not be lifted until the Minsk agreements had been fully implemented. Energy formed part of the wider negotiating environment but was not itself equivalent to compliance with the political and security settlement.

'I hope that an agreement acceptable to both sides will soon be reached and help reduce tensions in the two countries' energy relations,' EU High Representative Federica Mogherini stated on 20 March.

The Ukrainian Parliament approved legislation condemning both communism and Nazism and prohibiting propaganda and symbols associated with the two ideologies. The bill, presented to the Rada on behalf of Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and the government, was supported by 254 of the chamber's 423 deputies and formed part of a broader package of decommunisation laws.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that Western sanctions were intended to constrain Russia's development.

'I have told businesspeople that they should not expect sanctions to be lifted for the time being, because this is a political matter; for some of our partners it is part of their strategic interaction with Russia, intended to contain our development,' Putin said during his annual live televised question-and-answer programme.

The depreciation of the rouble, economic sanctions and the cost of the Kremlin's political confrontation with the West over Ukraine were among the central issues addressed by the President. Putin acknowledged that Russia's economic difficulties reflected not only sanctions but also errors by the government. Former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin called for a new model

of economic development and substantial reform of the judicial system and administrative structures.

A journalist publicly identified with pro-Russian positions and a former deputy associated with former President Viktor Yanukovych's Party of Regions were among a series of political killings in Ukraine during the first months of 2015. Journalist Oles Buzina was shot dead in Kyiv; hours earlier former deputy Oleh Kalashnikov had been killed outside his home. These episodes increased concern about political stability as the eastern conflict approached its first anniversary.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker avoided offering President Poroshenko a concrete prospect of EU accession when the Ukrainian leader explicitly raised the issue.

'For me, Ukraine is part of the European family. Not the African or sub-Saharan family, but the European one. For the moment, that is the answer,' Juncker said in Kyiv.

In an earlier answer to the press, Juncker had been more explicit about timing:

'Accession is not an issue of immediate relevance.'

The European Union and Ukraine held their first bilateral summit since the Maidan protests and fall of Viktor Yanukovych's government. The meeting addressed the future EU-Ukraine relationship against a background of war in the east, economic adjustment and declining public confidence after a second year of recession.

The documentary record indicates that both sides used the truce to prepare. Ukraine reorganised and professionalised armed forces that had entered the 2014 conflict in a state of severe disorganisation and began training cooperation with Western partners that would prove important seven years later. Russia and the de facto authorities consolidated administrative and military control of the territory they held. Neither side used the interval to advance substantially through the political sequence envisaged at Minsk.

This leads back to a warning already formulated in the 2015 edition and subsequently confirmed by events: a line of contact without a political settlement is not a stable situation but a phase in a continuing process. The calm of spring 2015 did not precede merely a local storm; seven years later it preceded the largest interstate war in Europe since 1945.

4.9. The Second Half of 2015: 'Ineffectiveness' Continues

The second half of 2015 closes the temporal horizon of the first edition of this book. Its documentary value is twofold: it records the consolidation of the conflict into a prolonged low-intensity format and, at the same time, constitutes the final segment of reality available to the author when the original conclusions reproduced later in this volume were written. Reading it with that fact in mind makes it possible to judge the empirical basis on which those expectations rested.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Vladimir Putin set out their differences over the Ukrainian crisis during a meeting in Moscow marking the seventieth anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany. Merkel noted that the ceasefire envisaged in the Minsk agreements was not being fully observed and stressed the need to preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity. Putin, for his part, lamented the absence of shared criteria for interpreting international developments connected with the crisis.

In June, journalists and opposition figures published a report entitled *Putin. War*, which alleged that Russia had spent more than one billion dollars on the conflict in eastern Ukraine and that approximately 220 Russian servicemen had been killed. The document developed from research initiated by Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov before his assassination in central Moscow. President Vladimir Putin and US Secretary of State John Kerry also met in Sochi in an effort to keep dialogue between the two powers open during a period of severe deterioration in relations; Ukraine, Syria and Iran were among the issues discussed.

Also in June, Russia's permanent representative to NATO and former Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko stated that Russia would strengthen its military grouping in Crimea. He justified the measure by referring to increased NATO activity near Russian borders and to the need to modernise the Black Sea Fleet.

A controversy arose over the Russian interpretation of Chancellor Angela Merkel's wording concerning Crimea. Merkel referred to the 'criminal and illegal annexation of Crimea', while the Russian rendering softened the formulation to describe an incorporation carried out in violation of international law. The episode reflected the terminological conflict examined elsewhere in this volume: Russian official discourse generally rejected the term 'annexation' in favour of 'incorporation' or 'return'.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg used a European meeting to call on Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to withdraw Russian troops and heavy weapons from eastern Ukraine.

The wider Council of Europe meeting focused principally on a binding instrument to combat terrorism and radicalisation. Despite exchanges over Ukraine, European foreign ministers adopted a legal protocol concerning foreign terrorist fighters and a multi-year plan addressing radicalisation in schools, prisons and online spaces. The episode illustrates how the Ukraine confrontation was increasingly embedded within a broader European security agenda.

On 21 June, the Verkhovna Rada terminated an agreement regulating the transit of Russian military personnel across Ukrainian territory between Russia and Transnistria, the breakaway region internationally recognised as part of Moldova. Kyiv also tightened rules governing the movement of Russian male citizens through Ukraine, citing concern that Russian forces stationed in Transnistria might be used in destabilising operations, particularly in the Odesa region.

The Riga Summit concluded without giving Eastern Partnership states the immediate membership perspective that some had sought. Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia wanted the final declaration to recognise their aspirations for eventual EU accession more clearly. Ukraine and Georgia also sought progress on visa liberalisation, which Moldova already enjoyed. The final declaration referred these prospects back to existing Association Agreements, while recording progress towards closer economic integration and announcing EUR1.8 billion in assistance for Ukraine.

Fighting between forces loyal to Kyiv and insurgents in eastern Ukraine intensified in June around Ukrainian positions at Marinka and Krasnohorivka, west and north-west of Donetsk. Civilian and military deaths were reported. Both sides accused the other of restarting hostilities and using heavy weapons that should have been withdrawn under Minsk. These were among the most intense clashes since the February agreement. Kyiv alleged that Ukrainian positions had been attacked by up to one thousand fighters supported by tanks, armoured vehicles and 152-mm artillery.

In June, the European Union had to decide whether to renew one of its principal foreign-policy measures of the previous year: economic sanctions against Russia for its role in the Ukrainian conflict.

The measures adopted in July 2014 were approaching expiry, and the twenty-eight member states intended to extend them for a further six months,

until the end of the year. The formal decision was to be taken by EU leaders meeting in Brussels on 25-26 June.

The sanctions restricted European financing for selected Russian companies, imposed limits on the energy sector and maintained an arms embargo. The six-month extension was intended to align the duration of economic pressure with the implementation timetable set out in the Minsk peace framework.

That framework envisaged restoration of Ukrainian control over its international border as part of the process by the end of 2015, and EU governments did not wish to reduce pressure before that timetable had been tested.

President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would add more than forty new intercontinental ballistic missiles to its strategic forces during the year, describing them as capable of overcoming advanced missile-defence systems.

In Brussels, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg described the announcement as unjustified, destabilising and dangerous nuclear 'sabre-rattling'.

US Secretary of State John Kerry likewise expressed concern about Putin's statement.

Russia and the United States were at that time bound by the New START Treaty, which entered into force in February 2011 and limited deployed strategic delivery systems and nuclear warheads while establishing verification and inspection procedures. Since the treaty remained in force, Putin's announcement was generally understood as involving modernisation and replacement within the treaty's numerical limits rather than the addition of an unlimited new arsenal.

Later in the year, the European Union confirmed that economic sanctions against Russia would remain in place for a further six months.

EU foreign ministers agreed to renew measures originally adopted in July 2014 in response to Moscow's role in destabilising Ukraine.

The sanctions were extended through the next review period, with the Council linking their duration to implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The limits of sanctions were nevertheless evident in Russia's ability to redirect part of its external economic relationship. Russia briefly overtook Saudi Arabia as China's largest crude-oil supplier, illustrating intensifying competition for the world's second-largest oil market.

China had become increasingly important to global oil exporters as the US shale boom reduced American import demand. International Energy

Agency projections underlined China's growing share of world oil consumption and its increasing importance as a customer for Russian energy exports.

At the same time, humanitarian conditions remained serious in the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. A survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology for the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation found widespread need for medicines among civilians in areas outside Ukrainian government control.

A humanitarian map presented in Kyiv indicated that, among more than two thousand adults surveyed across settlements in the region, approximately half reported a need for medicines, with substantial proportions also reporting shortages of food and basic household items.

The most serious conditions were reported in towns such as Stakhanov, where large majorities of respondents said they required food, medicines and cleaning supplies. Many respondents reported that conditions had worsened in recent weeks, even though others believed they could continue coping with the difficulties.

On 11 July, President Vladimir Putin described the BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - as future leaders of the world economy and international system.

He spoke after two summits hosted in Ufa: a meeting of BRICS heads of state and a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, whose members at the time included China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Leaders associated with the Eurasian Economic Union were also present, reflecting Russia's effort to develop alternative and overlapping institutional networks beyond its deteriorating relationship with the West.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko also faced a new challenge to state authority.

Armed members of Right Sector, a radical nationalist organisation that had emerged during the Maidan revolution, refused to surrender after a fire-fight with police and the security detail of a parliamentary deputy near Mukachevo in Zakarpattia, close to the Hungarian and Slovak borders.

Accounts of the origin of the clash differed. One version attributed it to a dispute between Right Sector militants and local interests over control of smuggling routes; another claimed that the militants were attempting to suppress smuggling.

The Ukrainian authorities subsequently launched a security operation in the area.

Michel Kazatchkine, the UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, reported difficulties in delivering antiretroviral medicines to the Donbas. Ukrainian authorities cited concern that state resources might fall into the hands of armed groups, while humanitarian organisations also faced access restrictions. Kyiv classified the territories concerned as temporarily occupied or outside government control, creating severe institutional problems for continuity of medical care.

President Putin's press secretary stated that Russia did not rule out asymmetric responses to the expansion of US sanctions. He said that Russian measures would follow a principle of reciprocity while stressing that retaliation was not an end in itself and could damage both sides. The Russian Foreign Ministry likewise accused Washington of choosing confrontation and argued that such measures harmed bilateral relations and cooperation on other international problems.

The United States and European Union had imposed sanctions on Russia in 2014 over the Kremlin's policy in Ukraine and renewed or extended them during 2015.

By the end of 2015, the conflict had acquired the form it would retain until February 2022: a fortified line of contact roughly four hundred kilometres long, daily ceasefire violations, a negotiating format stalled over the sequence of implementation, a sanctions regime renewed periodically, and a Ukraine moving further towards Western integration without obtaining formal security guarantees. Seen from 2015, each element appeared to be a sign of stalemate; seen from 2026, each formed part of the accumulation that eventually culminated in the full-scale invasion.

This is why the following section preserves the conclusions of the first edition without alteration. The reader now possesses the same information available to the author when they were written and can judge which inferences were reasonable on that basis and which required a variable the original framework had not contemplated.

4.10. 2016-2018: Minsk, Attrition and the Sea of Azov Crisis

The period 2016-2018 confirmed that Minsk II had reduced the probability of an immediate general offensive but had not resolved the conflict. The agreement combined security measures - ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons and OSCE monitoring - with a political roadmap including constitutional reform, a special regime for specified districts of Donetsk and Luhansk, local elections and restoration of Ukrainian control over the border. Kyiv and Moscow interpreted the sequence of these obligations differently: the Ukrainian government maintained that minimum security conditions and effective control had to precede political normalisation; Russia insisted that institutionalisation of special status and direct dialogue with separatist-held territories should advance before full border restoration. This sequencing dispute became one of the central knots in the Minsk process and cannot seriously be attributed to a single clause or a single party.¹⁹⁸

The war thus became lower in intensity but persistent. The line of contact remained militarised, shelling continued, weapons prohibited under the agreements were used and observers faced restrictions on freedom of movement. The political problem became inseparable from the problem of attribution: Kyiv and its allies regarded Russia as a party to the conflict because of its material, political and military support for separatist formations; Moscow formally presented itself as a mediator and demanded that the Ukrainian government negotiate with Donetsk and Luhansk. This conceptual incompatibility - an internationalised interstate conflict for one side, a civil conflict with Russian mediation for the other - weakened every subsequent mechanism because each Minsk provision acquired a different meaning depending on the prior characterisation of the war.

Domestically, the conflict accelerated Ukraine's institutional reorientation towards the West. Defence reforms, cooperation with NATO and implementation of the Association Agreement with the European Union deepened while economic and political ties with Russia contracted. This process did not yet amount to NATO or EU membership, but it altered the balance that had prevailed through much of the post-Soviet period. For Russia, loss

198 OSCE, "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements", 12 February 2015; Presidency of the French Republic (Élysée), "Paris Normandie Summit – Common agreed conclusions", 9 December 2019. El texto de Minsk II combinó medidas de seguridad and medidas políticas cuya secuencia de aplicación fue objeto de interpretaciones contrapuestas.

of influence over Ukraine moved from a hypothetical risk to an accumulating strategic reality; for Ukraine, privileged ties with Moscow came increasingly to be seen by broad sectors as a source of vulnerability rather than a guarantee of stability.

The tension acquired a decisive naval dimension on 25 November 2018, when Russian forces intercepted and detained three Ukrainian naval vessels and their twenty-four crew members near the Kerch Strait. The episode directly connected Crimea, the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and freedom of navigation with the land conflict in the Donbas. Ukraine brought aspects of the dispute into proceedings under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In May 2019, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ordered, as provisional measures, that Russia release the three vessels and twenty-four servicemen and allow their return to Ukraine.¹⁹⁹

The Kerch crisis marked a qualitative change. Until then, much of the armed conflict had operated through separatist forces, unmarked units, material assistance and deliberate ambiguity concerning the degree of direct intervention. At sea, by contrast, the confrontation occurred between identifiable state organs of Russia and Ukraine. The ambiguity that had characterised much of 2014-2017 was beginning to erode. The maritime space became, alongside Crimea and the Donbas, a third theatre in which the strategic interests of the two states could collide directly.

4.11. 2019-2020: Zelenskyy, Renewed Diplomacy and an Incomplete Ceasefire

The 2019 presidential election produced a significant change in Ukrainian politics. Volodymyr Zelenskyy defeated Petro Poroshenko in the second round with 73.22 per cent of the vote against 24.45 per cent. The result expressed rejection of the traditional political class, demand for anti-corruption measures and an expectation that new leadership might reduce the war in the Donbas. The electoral margin did not, however, remove structural con-

¹⁹⁹ International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Case No. 26, “Case concerning the detention of three Ukrainian naval vessels (Ukraine v. Russian Federation), Provisional Measures”, Order of 25 May 2019. El Tribunal ordenó la liberación de los buques Berdyansk, Nikopol and Yani Kapu and de los 24 militares Ukrainians detenidos.

straints: no Ukrainian administration could easily offer territorial or constitutional concessions perceived as imposed by Moscow without encountering strong domestic opposition.²⁰⁰

At the same time, the state's strategic orientation had been formalised. Constitutional amendments entering into force in February 2019 incorporated the irreversibility of Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic course and assigned state institutions responsibility for implementing it. From a realist perspective, the reform increased the incompatibility between Kyiv's declared strategic preferences and the red lines Moscow had expressed for years. From a sovereignty-based perspective, it was a legitimate expression of an independent state's right to define its alliances. Both readings coexisted, and their conflict could not be resolved simply by asserting one of them.²⁰¹

Zelenskyy attempted to reactivate the diplomatic channel. The Normandy Format summit held in Paris on 9 December 2019 brought together Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany. Its conclusions reaffirmed the Minsk agreements as the basis of the process and called for a comprehensive ceasefire, additional disengagement areas, prisoner exchanges and progress on the so-called Steinmeier Formula concerning special status and local elections. The meeting demonstrated that a diplomatic framework still existed, but also that fundamental positions on sovereignty, security and political sequencing remained unresolved.²⁰²

Additional measures to reinforce the ceasefire entered into force on 27 July 2020. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission recorded a sharp reduction in violations during the following months, one of the few periods in which the mechanism produced a clearly visible operational result. The effect was temporary. The OSCE subsequently observed a gradual increase in violations from January 2021 and continued restrictions affecting its ability to verify events. The 2020 ceasefire demonstrated that technical agreements

200 Central Election Commission of Ukraine, resultados oficiales de la segunda vuelta de la elección presidencial de 21 April 2019: Volodymyr Zelenskyy 73,22%; Petro Poroshenko 24,45%.

201 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Constitution of Ukraine, enmiendas introducidas por Law No. 2680-VIII, 7 February 2019, relativas al curso estratégico del Estado hacia la pertenencia plena a la Unión Europea and a la OTAN.

202 Presidency of the French Republic (Élysée), "Paris Normandie Summit – Common agreed conclusions", 9 December 2019: reafirmación de Minsk, compromiso con un alto el fuego completo, medidas de separación de fuerzas, intercambio de detenidos and discusión de la fórmula Steinmeier.

could reduce violence, but not resolve the political disagreement generating it.²⁰³

4.12. 2021: From Low-Intensity War to a European Strategic Crisis

During 2021, the conflict ceased to be merely a frozen problem in the Donbas and again acquired an interstate scale. From the spring onwards, Russia concentrated substantial forces and equipment in regions near Ukraine and in Crimea. Some units were later withdrawn or redistributed, but the infrastructure, deployment capacity and possibility of renewed concentration remained. From April 2021 through February 2022, NATO and several Western governments repeatedly called for de-escalation and described the deployment as a large-scale military build-up.²⁰⁴

Military hardening coincided with doctrinal hardening. In July 2021 Vladimir Putin published an essay on the 'historical unity' of Russians and Ukrainians that challenged several foundations of contemporary Ukrainian nation-building. The text should not be read as an operational order, but it is evidence of a historical conception according to which Ukraine's political separation from Russia resulted in part from Soviet decisions, external intervention and an artificially reinforced national identity. This ideational dimension complements rather than replaces the security explanation. Reducing the crisis exclusively to NATO omits the weight of a narrative concerning nation, history and sovereignty present in the Kremlin's own discourse.

In December 2021, Russia transformed accumulated objections into formal legal proposals. The Russian Foreign Ministry published draft treaties with the United States and NATO. Among other provisions, they demanded guarantees against further Alliance enlargement, non-admission of Ukraine and restrictions on certain military activities across the post-Soviet space. These demands demonstrate that NATO enlargement constituted a genuine

203 OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Daily Report 178/2020, 28 July 2020, and posteriores informes temáticos sobre tendencias del alto el fuego. Las medidas adicionales entraron en vigor a las 00:01 del 27 July 2020 and produjeron una reducción marcada de violaciones durante los meses siguientes, antes de un nuevo incremento desde comienzos 2021.

204 NATO, "Relations with Russia", cronología de la crisis 2021-2022: desde April 2021 los Aliados señalaron una acumulación militar rusa de gran escala approximately Ucrania and reclamaron reiteradamente desescalada and transparencia.

security concern for Moscow; at the same time, their formulation sought restrictions on the sovereign decisions of third states and attempted to revise, through great-power agreement, the European security framework that had emerged after 1991.²⁰⁵

NATO responded in January 2022 by offering negotiations in areas including arms control, transparency, risk reduction and communication mechanisms, while rejecting the proposition that Russia should receive a veto over other states' membership decisions. The negotiations therefore did not fail because there were no areas of common interest. They failed because the core Russian demand - legal reversal or blockage of Euro-Atlantic enlargement - collided with the Alliance's 'open door' principle and with the strategic autonomy claimed by Ukraine.²⁰⁶

By early February 2022, three overlapping conflicts therefore coexisted: an active war in the Donbas, a territorial dispute over Crimea and a security-architecture crisis between Russia and the West. In the days preceding the general offensive, the OSCE recorded a sharp increase in ceasefire violations in Donetsk and Luhansk. The Minsk structure was effectively paralysed, but its replacement by a full-scale war was not logically inevitable. The decision to transform military and diplomatic pressure into an open invasion was a specific political choice and requires the structural antecedents of the crisis to be distinguished from the concrete decision to employ force on a large scale.²⁰⁷

205 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" and "Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees", publicados el 17 December 2021.

206 NATO, "NATO conveys written proposals to Russia", 26 January 2022. La Alianza propuso negociar sobre relaciones NATO-Rusia, seguridad europea, reducción de riesgos, transparencia and control de armamentos, pero mantuvo sus principios sobre soberanía and elección de alianzas.

207 OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Daily Report 42/2022, 21 February 2022: entre las tardes del 18 and 20 February la misión registró 2.158 violaciones del alto el fuego en Donetsk, incluidas 1.100 explosiones, and 1.073 en Lugansk, incluidas 926 explosiones.

PART FIVE

*From the Donbas War to Open Interstate War, 2022-
2026*

5.1. February 2022: Recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk and the Russian Offensive

On 21 February 2022, the Russian Federation recognised the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics as independent states. Three days later, on 24 February, Russian forces began a large-scale offensive against Ukraine along multiple axes, including from Russian territory, Crimea and Belarus. The operation immediately extended far beyond the territorial framework of the Donbas and affected Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Chernihiv, Sumy, Mariupol and other areas. In international legal terms, the change of scale was decisive: the conflict could no longer be described solely as an internationalised civil war or a separatist conflict supported from abroad, but now included an open interstate military intervention.

On 2 March 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution ES-11/1, entitled 'Aggression against Ukraine', by 141 votes in favour, 5 against and 35 abstentions. The resolution deplored the aggression by the Russian Federation and demanded the withdrawal of its forces. The vote does not make the General Assembly a criminal court and does not resolve every causal debate about the war's antecedents, but it is a fundamental legal and diplomatic fact: an overwhelming majority of member states rejected Russia's claim that its use of force was compatible with the Charter.²⁰⁸

The methodological distinction established in the Introduction becomes most important here. It is possible to argue that NATO enlargement, the failure to create an inclusive security architecture, competition over Ukraine and the erosion of Minsk contributed to an environment of insecurity. None of these factors, however, eliminates the agency of the Russian state in deciding to launch a general offensive. Explaining the conditions that increased the probability of war is not the same as automatically transferring responsibility for the final decision. Likewise, attributing that decision to Moscow does not require denying that Western choices over previous decades had foreseeable strategic effects.

208 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution ES-11/1, "Aggression against Ukraine", 2 March 2022, adopted by 141 votes in favour, 5 against and 35 abstentions.

5.2. The First 2022 Campaign: Kyiv, Mariupol and Russia's Withdrawal from the North

The initial campaign revealed a divergence between the apparent objectives of the operation and the military results achieved. Deployment from Belarus and the advance on Kyiv indicated an intention to impose a rapid political or military transformation far deeper than the defence of the Donbas alone. Ukrainian resistance, Russian logistical problems, the inability to secure extended supply lines and Western support for Ukraine prevented a rapid resolution. By late March and early April, Russian forces withdrew from Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy and shifted their main effort towards the east and south.

Mariupol acquired military, symbolic and territorial value simultaneously. Its capture enabled Russia to consolidate a land connection between its border, occupied areas of Donetsk and Crimea. The siege, urban fighting and destruction of infrastructure produced one of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes of the war's first phase. The final fall of the Azovstal complex in May 2022 closed that phase and enabled Russia to control a land corridor to Crimea, one of the geostrategic objectives already identifiable in the dynamics of the conflict since 2014.

Russia's withdrawal from the north disproved two opposing initial expectations. On the one hand, it showed that Russia could not easily impose regime change in Kyiv or convert its aggregate material superiority into rapid victory. On the other, it did not mean that the conflict could return to the limited Donbas war. Russian mobilisation of resources, Western military assistance and Ukraine's decision to continue resistance transformed the war into a prolonged contest of attrition with much broader consequences for European security.

5.3. Negotiations, Bucha and the Collapse of Diplomatic Space

During the first weeks of the invasion, Russian and Ukrainian delegations held negotiations, first in Belarus and later in Turkey. They discussed neutrality, security guarantees and other elements of a possible settlement. These contacts have subsequently generated competing interpretations as to how close an agreement came and why the process failed. The available evidence supports the conclusion that substantive negotiations took place, but not that a final treaty was ready for signature and was simply prevented by

a single outside power. Disagreements remained over territory, guarantees, armed forces, security and implementation.

The discovery, after the Russian withdrawal, of dead civilians in Bucha and other locations in the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions profoundly altered the diplomatic environment. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documented summary executions and attacks on civilians during the period of Russian occupation in northern Ukraine; in Bucha it verified dozens of deaths and continued investigating other allegations. These findings must be distinguished from wartime propaganda by either side and assessed through documentary and forensic investigation.²⁰⁹

The war also opened a dimension of international criminal responsibility. In March 2023, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova for alleged responsibility for the war crime of unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied territories of Ukraine. In 2024 the Court issued further warrants, including against Sergei Shoigu and Valery Gerasimov, linked to alleged crimes arising from attacks on civilian objects and other acts. Warrants are not convictions: they reflect a judicial finding that there are reasonable grounds to believe specified crimes were committed and that the accused may bear responsibility.²¹⁰

5.4. The Territorial War of 2022: Kharkiv, Kherson and the Proclaimed Annexations

By mid-2022, the war was concentrated in the Donbas and along the southern axis. Russia advanced in Luhansk and consolidated positions in the south, while Ukraine reorganised its forces and received longer-range and more precise Western systems. In September, a Ukrainian offensive in the Kharkiv region recovered a large area that had been under Russian control.

209 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Killings of civilians: summary executions and attacks on individual civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions in the context of the Russian Federation’s armed attack against Ukraine”, 7 December 2022. The report documented ejecuciones sumarias and otras muertes de civiles durante la ocupación rusa del norte de Ucrania, incluida Bucha.

210 International Criminal Court, Situation in Ukraine: órdenes de arresto de 17 March 2023 contra Vladímir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova and de 24 June 2024 contra Sergei Shoigu and Valery Gerasimov. The warrants express judicial determinations of “reasonable grounds to believe” and do not constitute convictions.

In November, Russia withdrew from the city of Kherson and from the western bank of the Dnipro, a military decision that again demonstrated the limits of occupation when logistical lines were exposed.

Between these two episodes, Russia organised consultations in occupied areas of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia and announced their incorporation into the Federation. On 12 October 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution ES-11/4 by 143 votes in favour, 5 against and 35 abstentions, rejecting the so-called referendums and attempted annexation of Ukrainian territory. From the Russian perspective, the incorporations were presented as exercises of self-determination; from the majority position in the United Nations, they were acts conducted under military occupation and without validity to alter internationally recognised borders.²¹¹

The proclaimed annexations created a territorial contradiction that persisted in later years: the Russian Federation constitutionally incorporated regions it did not fully control. From that point onward, any territorial negotiation no longer concerned only areas occupied *de facto* but collided with their formal incorporation into the Russian legal order, while Ukraine maintained that all remained part of its sovereign territory. This incompatibility dramatically raised the domestic political cost of compromise for both sides.

5.5. 2023: War of Attrition, Bakhmut and the Ukrainian Counter-Offensive

In 2023 the war entered a phase of industrial attrition. The battle of Bakhmut, fought for months and conducted on the Russian side largely by regular forces and the Wagner Group, symbolised a form of warfare in which the political and operational value of a town could become subordinate to the objective of destroying enemy forces and demonstrating endurance. Russia eventually took control of the city, but at high human and material cost. The episode also exposed internal tensions within the Russian military system, culminating in June in Wagner's rebellion and brief march towards Moscow before an agreement halted the uprising.

211 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution ES-11/4, "Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations", 12 October 2022, adopted by 143 votes in favour, 5 against and 35 abstentions.

Ukraine's summer 2023 counter-offensive sought to break Russian lines in the south and threaten the land corridor to Crimea. It did not achieve the maximum territorial objectives publicly anticipated beforehand. Layered defences, minefields, artillery, helicopters, drones and the absence of air superiority limited the pace of advance. The outcome showed that high-intensity modern warfare again strongly favoured a defender possessing depth, engineering and persistent aerial surveillance. It also forced revision of the expectation that a single campaign might produce a decisive operational collapse.

The relative failure of the counter-offensive did not automatically constitute a strategic defeat for Ukraine, just as the capture of Bakhmut did not give Russia a decisive victory. By late 2023 the front had largely stabilised while competition shifted towards production of ammunition, drones and missiles, air defence, intelligence and the ability to replace personnel. The conflict became a test of institutional and productive resilience for Russia, Ukraine and the states materially sustaining each side.

5.6. 2024: Avdiivka, Kharkiv, Kursk and an Increasingly Technological War

In February 2024 Russian forces captured Avdiivka after months of fighting. During the spring they increased pressure in the east and opened a new axis in the Kharkiv region without achieving a strategic breakthrough. Ukraine responded by reinforcing defensive lines and increasing use of unmanned systems and precision strikes against logistical, military and energy installations at depth. The land front remained important, but the ability to affect rear areas hundreds of kilometres away began to alter the operational geography.

In August 2024, Ukraine launched an incursion into Russia's Kursk region. The operation had military and political value because, for a significant period, it carried ground combat onto the internationally recognised territory of the Russian Federation, forced redistribution of forces and provided Kyiv with a potential source of leverage for future negotiations. At the same time, it did not by itself reverse the broader pattern of attrition in the Donbas. The war displayed a paradox: both states could produce tactical and operational surprises, but neither had converted them into a strategic resolution.

Drones became a structural element of the war. Cheap observation and attack systems, FPV drones, unmanned naval vehicles and longer-range

weapons altered the relationship between cost and effect. Russia's Black Sea Fleet lost freedom of operation under Ukrainian attack and dispersed part of its assets, while Russia steadily increased its use of strike drones and missiles against Ukrainian infrastructure and cities. Innovation ceased to be a technological supplement and became one of the central variables of military adaptation.

5.7. 2025-2026: Strategic Continuity, Long-Range Strikes and Intermittent Diplomacy

During 2025 and the first half of 2026, no agreement ended the war. Ground operations continued, with local Russian advances and Ukrainian counteractions, while long-range attacks against infrastructure, cities, energy facilities and logistical nodes became increasingly important. The humanitarian trend worsened: the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission verified 2,514 civilians killed and 12,142 injured during 2025, a civilian-casualty total higher than in 2024 and 2023.²¹²

Diplomacy did not disappear. In March 2025, a joint Ukrainian-US statement reported that Ukraine was prepared to accept a proposed provisional thirty-day ceasefire if Russia accepted and implemented it concurrently. In April, Kyiv expressed willingness to accept an unconditional ceasefire and negotiations towards a durable peace. In 2026 proposals, contacts, prisoner exchanges and international calls for a complete cessation of hostilities continued without producing a stable comprehensive agreement. The simultaneous existence of negotiations and war shows that the problem had ceased to be absence of channels and had become the incompatibility of termination conditions acceptable to both sides.²¹³

At the editorial cut-off for this revision, 16 August 2026, the war continues. For July 2026, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission verified at least 437 civilians killed and 2,610 injured, a significant increase over the previous month and the highest monthly number of civilian deaths since

212 United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, balance anual publicado en January 2026: en 2025 se verificaron 2.514 civilians killed and 12.142 injured, un aumento respecto 2024.

213 President of Ukraine / delegaciones de Ucrania and Estados Unidos, Joint Statement, Yeda, 11 March 2025: Ucrania expressed willingness to accept un alto el fuego inmediato e interino de 30 días conditional on concurrent acceptance and implementation by the Russian Federation. Véase también President of Ukraine, "Ukraine is Ready for an Unconditional Ceasefire and Negotiations on Lasting Peace in Any Format", 22 April 2025.

May 2022. Verified figures are documented minimums and do not equal the true total of losses. This evidence makes it necessary to avoid any narrative treating the war of 2022-2026 as a completed episode.²¹⁴

The increase in long-range attacks and massive use of drones has eroded the old distinction between 'front' and 'rear'. Cities far from the line of contact, energy infrastructure and ports have been exposed to periodic attack. At the same time, Ukraine has developed increasing capacity to strike military, logistical and energy installations inside Russia and Crimea. This reciprocal depth does not imply complete symmetry in capability or effects, but it changes the nature of the war and raises economic and social costs even when ground lines move slowly.

5.8. Transformation of the European Security Architecture

The invasion produced one of the conflict's most important and paradoxical strategic outcomes: immediate NATO enlargement in northern Europe. Finland and Sweden, which for decades had maintained policies of military non-alignment, applied for membership in May 2022. Finland became the thirty-first member on 4 April 2023 and Sweden the thirty-second on 7 March 2024. The direct land frontier between Russia and NATO expanded substantially.²¹⁵

This result is central to evaluating the book's realist hypothesis. If a principal Russian objective was to limit the approach of Western strategic infrastructure, the war produced the opposite result in northern Europe. This does not demonstrate that Russian concern about enlargement was fictitious; it demonstrates that a perceived threat can generate a response that worsens precisely the security variable it was intended to correct. The security dilemma operates not as a moral justification but as a feedback mechanism: actions conceived by one actor as defensive may be interpreted by another as offensive and produce new containment measures.

NATO also changed its military posture. From 2022 it reinforced the eastern flank, expanded multinational battlegroups and adopted new defence plans. At the 2024 Washington Summit the Allies established a baseline

214 United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict — July 2026", 12 August 2026: at least 437 civilians killed and 2,610 injured during July; el número mensual de civilians killed fue el más alto desde May 2022.

215 NATO, official membership documentation: Finlandia joined the Alliance el 4 April 2023 and Suecia el 7 March 2024, bringing the number of members to 32.

level of funding for support to Ukraine; in The Hague in 2025 they reaffirmed support commitments; and in Ankara in July 2026 they pledged EUR70 billion in equipment, assistance and training for Ukraine during 2026, together with a commitment to sustain at least equivalent levels in 2027.²¹⁶

Ukraine's relationship with the European Union likewise changed in nature. The EU formally opened accession negotiations on 25 June 2024. In June 2026 the 'Fundamentals' cluster was opened, followed in July by the cluster covering external relations, foreign policy, security and defence. Accession was not complete at the close of this edition and remains conditional on compliance with the *acquis* and institutional reforms. Ukraine's position in relation to Europe is nevertheless no longer comparable to that of 2013: a formal membership-negotiation process now exists.²¹⁷

5.9. Energy, Sanctions and Economic Reorientation

One strategic assumption of the first edition concerned Europe's high energy dependence on Russia. That observation was valid for the period in which it was made, but the war accelerated structural change. The European Union diversified suppliers, reduced pipeline imports, expanded use of liquefied natural gas, sanctioned energy sectors and developed REPowerEU. According to the Council of the EU, Russian gas fell from approximately 45 per cent of European imports in 2021 to about 13 per cent in 2025; Russian oil declined from around 27 per cent to below 3 per cent, and imports of Russian coal were eliminated.²¹⁸

Reduced dependence did not eliminate all costs. Europe faced price increases, extraordinary subsidies, industrial reconfiguration and the need for new infrastructure. Russia, for its part, redirected a growing share of its energy and other exports towards Asia and additional markets, with China and

216 NATO, Washington Summit Declaration, 10 July 2024; The Hague Summit Declaration, 25 June 2025; Ankara Summit Declaration, 8 July 2026. In Ankara, the Allies committed €70.000 millones in military equipment, assistance and training for Ukraine en 2026 and at least un nivel equivalente para 2027.

217 Council of the European Union, First Accession Conference with Ukraine, 25 June 2024; "EU and Ukraine open first accession negotiations cluster", 15 June 2026; "EU opens accession negotiations with Ukraine on external relations policies", 14 July 2026. In 2026 the following clusters were formally opened 1 (Fundamentals) and 6 (External Relations).

218 Council of the European Union, "Ending Russian energy imports", update of 26 January 2026: between 2021 and 2025 Russia's share of EU gas imports fell from 45% al 13%; oil from 27% a menos del 3%; and coal from 50% al 0%.

India becoming more important. Analytically, sanctions did not produce an immediate collapse of the Russian economy, but they altered flows of technology, finance, transport and energy and forced long-term adaptation. Academic assessment should avoid both the claim that sanctions 'failed' because they did not destroy the Russian economy and the claim that they completely isolated Russia.

The European Union also created specific instruments to sustain the Ukrainian state. The Ukraine Facility, in force from March 2024, provides up to EUR50 billion for 2024-2027 in grants, loans and investment mechanisms aimed at macro-financial stability, recovery, modernisation and accession-related reforms. This financial institutionalisation reinforces a trend that the war deepened: the stronger Russia's attempt to prevent Ukraine's strategic separation from its orbit, the denser the institutional relationship between Kyiv and Europe became.²¹⁹

5.10. Human Cost, Displacement and Reconstruction

[2026 Revision] The cost of the war cannot be reduced to the territory controlled by either side. Millions have left their homes, both as refugees abroad and as internally displaced persons. By the end of 2025, UNHCR estimated approximately 5.9 million refugees from Ukraine worldwide, most of them in Europe. The International Organization for Migration estimated in 2026 that several million people remained internally displaced, amid protracted displacement, partial returns and renewed evacuations associated with military developments and infrastructure destruction.²²⁰

The economic dimension is equally structural. The Fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, prepared by the Government of Ukraine, World Bank, European Commission and United Nations and published in February 2026, estimated cumulative direct damage above USD195 billion through December 2025 and recovery and reconstruction needs approaching

219 European Commission, "The Ukraine Facility": support instrument for 2024-2027, in force since 1 March 2024, with capacity of up to €50.000 millones for stable and predictable financial support, reform, investment and reconstruction.

220 UNHCR, regional data: at the end of 2025 approximately 5,9 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded worldwide, about 5,4 million of them in Europe. International Organization for Migration, Ukraine Internal Displacement Report, 2026: approximately 3,9 million people remained internally displaced in 2026.

USD588 billion over the following decade. Housing, transport and energy were among the sectors most severely affected.²²¹

These figures have political consequences. Reconstruction will not be a purely post-conflict phase: it is already part of strategic competition, the EU accession process and debate concerning immobilised Russian assets, private investment, guarantees and future security. A formal peace without a reconstruction mechanism and conditions for population return might freeze military violence without rebuilding the state or economy. Conversely, reconstruction without a credible security architecture would leave open the possibility of renewed conflict.

5.11. The Nuclear Dimension

The nuclear dimension operates at two different levels. The first is strategic: Russia and the United States remain nuclear powers capable of mutual destruction, limiting direct NATO military participation against Russian forces. Western assistance to Ukraine has expanded gradually but has continually been accompanied by debate over escalation, weapons range, deep strikes and the risk of direct confrontation between nuclear powers. The second level is civilian: occupation and militarisation of the area surrounding the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant created a nuclear-safety risk without precedent in contemporary warfare.

The International Atomic Energy Agency maintains a presence at Zaporizhzhia and has negotiated temporary local ceasefires to repair power lines. In April 2026 the plant completely lost external power for the fifteenth time since February 2022; in August it again suffered losses of off-site power, while the reactors remained in cold shutdown and depended on electrical systems essential to safety functions. The situation illustrates how a nuclear installation can become a point of strategic vulnerability even where neither side deliberately seeks an accident.²²²

221 World Bank, Government of Ukraine, European Commission and United Nations, “Ukraine Fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA5)”, 23 February 2026: direct damage estimated at more than US\$195.000 millones as of 31 December 2025 and recovery and reconstruction needs approaching US\$588.000 millones over ten years.

222 International Atomic Energy Agency, updates on nuclear safety in Ukraine. On 14 August 2026 el OIEA reported that la central nuclear de Zaporihia had briefly lost all external power supply on 8 August, the third such loss in one week, underscoring the continuing fragility of nuclear safety at the site.

5.12. Causal Balance: What Explains 2022 and What Does Not

NATO enlargement remains a necessary variable for understanding Russian strategic perceptions. The warnings of diplomats and specialists cited at the beginning of this book do not lose relevance because Russia used force in 2022. Enlargement altered the security environment that Russian leaders compared with that existing at the end of the Cold War and increased Ukraine's strategic value as an intermediate space. To deny this variable entirely impoverishes the explanation.

The evidence accumulated between 2014 and 2026 nevertheless requires rejection of a monocausal explanation. NATO alone does not explain why a multi-axis offensive was chosen across much of Ukrainian territory; nor does it explain historical conceptions of Ukrainian identity present in Kremlin discourse, decisions on territorial annexation, Russian domestic politics, the relationship between regime and nationalism, or the specific way Moscow evaluated Ukrainian capacity for resistance. The realist explanation must be expanded with ideational, domestic and perceptual variables if it is to retain analytical power.

Ukrainian agency must also be incorporated more strongly than in the first edition. Ukraine was not merely territory contested by Russia and the West. Its elections, governments, protests, constitutional reforms, defence decisions and military responses changed the course of the conflict. Presenting the country as a passive object between great powers reproduces precisely the sphere-of-influence logic at issue. The international structure constrains small and medium-sized states, but does not eliminate their capacity for decision.

Finally, causation and responsibility must remain separate. It is possible to conclude that post-Cold War Western policy contributed to an environment of growing Russian insecurity and that certain warnings concerning NATO enlargement were underestimated. It is also possible to conclude, without logical contradiction, that the decision to launch the full-scale invasion of 2022 was taken by the leadership of the Russian Federation and that the majority of the international community regarded it as incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations. A robust academic explanation must be capable of sustaining both propositions at the same time.

5.13. Language, Identity and Political Legitimacy

The linguistic dimension is not a cultural appendix to the conflict. In Ukraine, language has functioned simultaneously as an instrument of state-building, a marker of belonging, an electoral resource, an object of public policy and a vocabulary of legitimisation. For that reason, analysis must distinguish the everyday use of a language from ethnic identity, citizenship and geopolitical orientation. Conflating these variables produces circular inferences: if every Russian speaker is defined in advance as politically pro-Russian, the category itself ends up manufacturing the conclusion it purports to demonstrate.

The Constitution of Ukraine establishes Ukrainian as the state language while also guaranteeing the free development, use and protection of Russian and the other languages of national minorities. This dual constitutional design expresses a structural tension between the consolidation of a common state language and the protection of a historically multilingual society.²²³

The 2012 law on the principles of language policy expanded the possibilities for the public use of regional or minority languages under specified conditions. Following Yanukovich's fall, the Rada voted in February 2014 to repeal that law, a decision that generated concern among Russian-speaking sectors and other minorities. However, acting president Oleksandr Turchynov did not promulgate the repeal, and the law remained in force. In February 2018, the Constitutional Court declared it unconstitutional because of defects in the procedure by which it had been adopted. The claim that the new authorities in Kyiv 'banned Russian' immediately after Maidan therefore does not accurately describe the legal sequence.²²⁴

In 2019, Law No. 2704-VIII strengthened the role of Ukrainian as the state language across broad areas of public life. The Venice Commission recognised as legitimate the objective of strengthening a language that had

223 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Constitution of Ukraine, art. 10, official English text. The article establishes Ukrainian as the state language and guarantees the free development, use and protection of Russian and the other languages of national minorities.

224 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Law No. 5029-VI, On Principles of the State Language Policy, 3 July 2012; OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, "Restraint, responsibility and dialogue needed in Ukraine, including Crimea", 24 February 2014, and statement of 4 April 2014; Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Recent developments in Ukraine, Doc. 13482, 8 April 2014, párrs. 62-64. The repeal voted in February 2014 was not promulgated; the law remained in force until the Constitutional Court declared it unconstitutional on 28 February 2018 because of defects in the adoption procedure.

historically been subjected to policies of subordination, while at the same time recommending a more robust balance between the promotion of Ukrainian and the effective protection of minority languages.²²⁵

Analytically, 'Russian-speaking', 'ethnic Russian', 'Russian citizen' and 'pro-Russian' must be treated as distinct variables. They may coincide in particular individuals or regions, but there is no necessary equivalence between them. Ukraine's electoral history, the 1991 independence referendum and subsequent political behaviour show that habitual use of Russian could co-exist with support for independence, Ukrainian citizenship or political options not subordinated to Moscow.

The vocabulary used to narrate the conflict also performs a political function. 'Annexation' and 'reunification' do not describe Crimea within the same legal framework; 'revolution' and 'coup d'état' distribute legitimacy and responsibility differently in relation to February 2014; 'separatist', 'insurgent', 'independence activist' and 'terrorist' assign different statuses to actors in the Donbas. Academic analysis need not eliminate these terms, but it must attribute them correctly and distinguish an actor's designation from a factual description of the event.

Language policy became still more sensitive as the war made civic cohesion and information security state priorities. International organisations documented both the need to protect Ukrainian as the state language and concerns relating to minority rights and to threats or acts of intimidation against people who criticised particular language policies. The problem therefore cannot be reduced exclusively either to state sovereignty or to linguistic rights: both levels must be weighed together.²²⁶

Language should therefore be incorporated into the causal model as a variable of legitimacy, state-building and political mobilisation, but not as a deterministic substitute for loyalty. Separating language use, identity, citi-

225 European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Opinion on the Law on Supporting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language, CDL-AD(2019)032, adopted at the 121.^a Plenary Session, Venice, 6-7 December 2019, especially paras. 133-139; verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Law No. 2704-VIII, On Supporting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language, 25 April 2019.

226 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights / Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2020-31 January 2021; OHCHR, statement of 22 March 2021 sobre Ucrania, which documented, among other problems, hate speech and threats against people speaking Russian and Hungarian; see also subsequent reports on civic freedoms and minority rights.

zenship and political preference improves the explanation of Ukraine's regional divisions and avoids turning a complex sociolinguistic reality into a binary map of geopolitical allegiances.

ORIGINAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE FIRST EDITION (2015 HORIZON)

Editorial warning. The following section belongs entirely to the 2015 layer and is reproduced without correcting its argument. It was written before the full-scale invasion of February 2022, within an analytical horizon that regarded the conflict as containable, and it contains formulations that the author would not endorse today in the same terms. It should be read as a document of its time rather than as the position maintained in this edition. A systematic assessment of what it got right and wrong appears in the section 'What the First Edition Anticipated and What It Did Not', while the conclusions currently maintained are those of 2026.

The conclusions that follow are preserved in full as the analytical close of the first edition and as a record of the hypotheses formulated within a temporal horizon extending essentially to 2015. The 2016-2026 update and the revised conclusions are incorporated after this section without deleting the original text.

[2026 Revision] Russian society experienced profound moral and material disappointment during the 1990s following the economic, financial and social crisis of the post-Soviet transition. As a consequence, Putin's nationalist discourse helped strengthen distrust of US policy. In 2014, Russia Today broadcast an interview with Konstantin Sivkov in which he argued that Flight MH17 might have been brought down by Ukrainian air defence. That claim must be preserved solely as evidence of a public narrative circulating in Russia at the time, not as a current factual explanation: the Dutch technical investigation established that the aircraft was destroyed by a 9N314M warhead launched by a Buk system; the joint criminal investigation determined that the Buk-TELAR came from Russia's 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade, was transported into an area controlled by separatists and subsequently returned

to Russia. In 2025, the ICAO Council concluded that the Russian Federation had failed to uphold its obligations under international aviation law in relation to the downing.²²⁷

Attribution of the attack to Kyiv was a narrative widely circulated in the Russian media environment and is relevant to the study of public-opinion formation and domestic cohesion around the Kremlin. A distinction must nevertheless be drawn between that social perception in 2014 and the later findings of technical, criminal and international investigations into the downing of MH17. The domestic political effect of the controversy can be analysed without equating a propaganda narrative or perception with an established fact.

Unlike the case of the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the brief armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008, it was evident that, for historical and geopolitical reasons, securing Crimea's accession would mean safeguarding an interest of the first order for Moscow, even though the risky move would disrupt normal diplomatic relations with Ukraine, the EU and the US.

The West rejected the scheduled Crimean referendum as illegitimate and demanded that Russian president Vladimir Putin withdraw his support for the peninsula. That pressure did not succeed and, if anything, only strengthened Putin's determination to recognise Crimea as an independent state or as part of Russia. Attempts to explain Putin's intervention in Crimea on the basis of Russia's economic weakness and fear of democracy are unconvincing and ignore what this first-edition argument regarded as the genuine roots of Putin's action: nationalism and the role of the West itself in its rise.

Although Russia's domestic problems were serious, Putin's approval ratings were already high before the intervention and he had little need to improve his internal position. By the autumn of 2013, the Kremlin had gained renewed political confidence, largely by locating what analysts identified as Putin's conservative majority. After examining Russian reactions to the Anti-Magnitsky Law, the trial of Pussy Riot and restrictions on protesters and NGOs, Putin's government concluded that it possessed a sufficiently strong social base to avoid destabilisation. In December of that year, Putin granted amnesty or clemency affecting some 20,000 prisoners, including

²²⁷ Dutch Safety Board, MH17 Crash: Final Report, 13 October 2015; Joint Investigation Team / Netherlands Public Prosecution Service, investigación criminal MH17; International Civil Aviation Organization, "ICAO Council vote on Flight MH17 case", 12 May 2025.

members of Pussy Riot and his long-standing critic, former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Many of those charged over disturbances during the protests of early 2012 were released or received lighter sentences than expected.

The real motives behind Putin's intervention in Ukraine had nothing to do with a domestic policy of distraction, just as his real intentions had nothing to do with attempting to recreate the USSR. Rather, support for Crimea was a reflexive nationalist reaction to what the Kremlin regarded as unfair treatment by the West. Putin could no longer ignore those within Russia who had for years been concerned with protecting the country's security and values from what they saw as a dangerous encroachment by Western nations.

Nationalism in Russia had been a potent force, but it would not have become so influential without the Ukrainian revolution and Western support for it. The nationalist coalition behind Putin's intervention in Crimea included security hawks known for their strong opposition to NATO enlargement and ethno-imperialists advocating the 'reunification' of all Russian lands in the former Soviet space. The security hawks formed an inner circle of Putin's old KGB associates who had enjoyed access to him since he came to power in 2000. In 2008, one member of the group, Sergei Ivanov, then head of the presidential administration, had hoped to become Putin's heir but was passed over in favour of the more liberal and Western-friendly Dmitry Medvedev. The other group included figures such as Dmitry Rogozin, who had argued since the 1990s that Russians were the core of the post-Soviet revival and that the state should defend them throughout Eurasia. The two groups converged, mutually reinforcing each other's quotations and political arguments. Rogozin, for example, was a well-known critic of NATO and a former Russian ambassador in Brussels.

Russia's relations with NATO are well known. In response to the Alliance's intervention in Yugoslavia, two rounds of enlargement in Europe and the US decision to deploy elements of a missile-defence system in Europe, ostensibly directed against Iran, Russia made clear where it considered its red lines to lie. In August 2008 it went to war with Georgia in part out of its determination to assert those red lines. Ukraine had also sought to join NATO under President Viktor Yushchenko. Although his successor, Viktor Yanukovich, abandoned membership plans and signed a long-term lease allowing Russia to retain its military bases in Crimea, security hawks in the Kremlin, including Sergei Ivanov and Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, remained suspicious that Yanukovich's desire to strengthen relations with the European Union was a Trojan horse route into NATO.

With the rise of Arseniy Yatsenyuk's pro-Western coalition in Kyiv, Moscow had reason to believe that Kyiv would resume its drive to join NATO and denounce the Black Sea agreement allowing Russia to keep its fleet in Crimea until 2042. By intervening in Crimea, Putin acknowledged that his leverage over Kyiv—based largely on natural-gas supplies and personal ties with Ukrainian pragmatists—was insufficient to guarantee Ukraine's neutral status and preserve the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

[2026 Revision] In addition to the security hawks, the Ukrainian revolution gave greater visibility to disputes over historical memory that Russian nationalists and sectors of the Kremlin used as political arguments. In this reading, a version of Ukrainian history that diminishes the Soviet contribution to the defeat of Nazism and rehabilitates nationalist figures is perceived by sectors of Russian society as a symbolic aggression. The figure of Stepan Bandera is especially controversial. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, including its OUN-B faction led by Bandera, adopted an authoritarian and ultranationalist ideology, and members and formations linked to that milieu participated in anti-Jewish violence and campaigns of ethnic cleansing. At the same time, reducing Bandera's personal trajectory to the claim that he 'fought alongside the Nazis' throughout the war is inaccurate: after the unilateral proclamation of a Ukrainian state in June 1941, the German authorities arrested him and he remained imprisoned by the Nazis until 1944. Bandera's personal responsibility for specific crimes and his relationship to the Holocaust must be formulated precisely, distinguishing ideological leadership from material authorship of acts committed while he was detained. Viktor Yushchenko posthumously awarded him the title Hero of Ukraine; the award was subsequently annulled. The absence, insufficiency or selectivity of Western condemnation of certain expressions of Ukrainian nationalism has been used in Russian discourse to reinforce a sense of double standards and betrayal by Kyiv and the West; that perception is relevant as a political and discursive object, although it does not replace historical analysis of the organisations and individuals involved.²²⁸

²²⁸ Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist: Fascism, Genocide, and Cult*, Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2014; for the OUN-UPA and ethnic violence, see also the specialised literature by Per Anders Rudling and Grzegorz Motyka.

The steps that followed confirmed Russian fears. Kyiv voted to repeal the law on the Russian language—an action later reversed—restricted the coverage of Russian media, excluded or displaced many representatives of the east and south from the Rada, proposed 'lustration' measures against members of what it called the 'former regime', and formed a new government with strong representation from nationalist figures. Prominent posts in the new cabinet were in fact occupied by members of ultranationalist organisations with political roots in Bandera's tradition. They included the defence minister, the head of national security, the prosecutor general and the education minister, to whom official Russian discourse attributed the aim of educating Ukrainians in what it termed a 'Russophobic history'.

Also back in government was Borys Tarasyuk, an advocate of NATO membership under Yushchenko. The new Rada was then considering a bill to apply for membership of the Alliance. In response to the fact that many Crimeans had obtained Russian passports, there was also a proposal to punish dual, specifically Russian, citizenship with up to ten years' imprisonment.

During the Ukrainian revolution, Putin could not ignore those who turned to Russia for protection. In the Georgian war he had defended not only Russia's security perimeter but also Russian citizens and the smaller nationalities of the Caucasus. Putin had also adopted some ethnonationalist ideas in response to nationalist and middle-class protests in 2011-2012. In one of his pre-election articles, for example, he described ethnic Russians as 'the core (sterzhen') that binds the fabric' of Russia as a culture and a state. Inaction in the face of the Ukrainian revolution would have carried the high cost of diminishing support for Putin's claims to leadership in Eurasia.

Although the exact extent of nationalist influence on Putin is unknown, it is clear that the intervention in Crimea strengthened his domestic position.

Security guarantees for Russia, serious consideration of a status for Ukraine outside NATO, and the protection of ethnic Russians were never adequately addressed; in the argument of the first edition, this contributed to Crimea remaining under Kremlin influence and not being returned to Ukraine.

Two positions emerged regarding Crimea's accession to Russia. For Ukraine, the European Union and the United States, Russia had violated the 1997 strategic partnership agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, under which the latter recognised Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea. From this standpoint, those states and Ukraine itself maintained that

independence should have been obtained in a 'constitutional manner', that is, through a process of independence convened by the government in Kyiv.

On 27 March, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 68/262, 'Territorial Integrity of Ukraine', by 100 votes in favour, 11 against and 58 abstentions, with 24 states absent, thereby rejecting the independence process and referendum in Crimea. Under Article 10 of the Charter of the United Nations, the resolution is a recommendation and is not legally binding on UN Member States. The Security Council, whose decisions may be binding under the Charter, did not adopt a corresponding decision because of the Russian veto.

[2026 Revision] For Russia, Crimea's declaration of independence could be justified by analogy with Kosovo. Moscow invoked the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 22 July 2010. The precise legal formulation of that opinion is that Kosovo's declaration of independence of 17 February 2008 did not violate applicable international law; the Court did not establish a general right of secession, nor did it hold that every unilateral declaration automatically creates a state or legitimises the subsequent incorporation of territory into another state. Kosovo can therefore be used by the parties as a comparative argument, but not as a precedent that by itself resolves the legality of Crimea.²²⁹

From the standpoint maintained by Moscow, Crimea's accession to Russia took place after its unilateral declaration of independence and the referendum said to confirm it. Accession was therefore presented as the free act of an independent state rather than the annexation by Russia of a Ukrainian autonomous republic, which would have constituted a violation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Ukraine. In Moscow's account, Crimea's independence was an autonomous and free act preceding accession to Russia.

Whatever the competing legal arguments, the major strategic interests were visible to the entire world. On 3 April 2014, Crimea was integrated into Russia's Southern Military District. NATO's response was immediate, involving strategic deployments and the movement of troops and military assets along an arc extending from the Baltic states to Romania on the Black Sea.

²²⁹ International Court of Justice, *Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo*, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2010, p. 403, 22 July 2010.

On 29 April, the United States and the European Union imposed sanctions on Moscow. Whereas the US measures targeted visa access and the freezing of assets belonging to businessmen and officials linked to the Kremlin or to Crimea's accession—among them energy magnate Igor Sechin, head of Rosneft—the European sanctions were careful not to impose significant measures on the Russian energy sector.

[2026 Revision] Ukraine unquestionably played an important role during the period under study as a transit corridor for Russian gas to Europe, which partly explains the caution of the European Union. Germany, like other major European consumers, imported a significant proportion of its hydrocarbons from Russia. However, the claim that Germany received '37 per cent of its energy from Russia through gas and oil pipelines crossing Ukraine' conflates different indicators and overstates the exclusivity of the Ukrainian route. Russian gas reached Europe through several routes, including the Ukrainian transit system, Yamal-Europe and Nord Stream. Ukraine remained strategically important because it controlled a substantial part of the transit infrastructure inherited from the USSR, but no single actor controlled the entirety of Russian energy flows to Europe. On learning of the sanctions against Russia, President Vladimir Putin stated that countermeasures would be adopted and criticised what he regarded as Europe's political subordination to the United States.²³⁰

Some European figures objected to sanctions against Russia, including former British prime minister Tony Blair and former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the latter closely associated with Gazprom. Both politicians belonged broadly to the European social-democratic tradition.

Meanwhile, from May 2014 onwards, the conflict began to escalate dangerously in the heart of Ukraine's industrial region—Donetsk and Luhansk, which Russian discourse and the de facto authorities called 'Novorossiia' or 'New Russia'. A glance at the map of the region suggested that the pro-Russian militias sought to establish an autonomous regime beginning in Donetsk and Luhansk, with the border of the Russian Federation immediately to their east. To the south, this area would extend as a corridor towards the port of

²³⁰ Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany, "Instruments used to secure gas supply" (infrastructure situation in 2014): el gas ruso llegaba por Yamal-Europa and Nord Stream además del tránsito ucraniano; see also European Commission, estudios de seguridad de suministro de gas 2014.

Mariupol and ultimately join the Crimean peninsula, giving Crimea land access and communications with Russia, or vice versa. Russia repeatedly called for urgent dialogue between the de facto authorities in Luhansk and Donetsk and the government in Kyiv with a view to resolving the nationality question.

[2026 Revision] On 11 May 2014, the separatist authorities in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk organised consultations on the political status of those regions and announced overwhelmingly favourable results for 'self-determination'. Those percentages influenced propaganda, mobilisation and nationalist positions on the Russian side, but they should not be presented as verifiable electoral results in the same sense as an internationally observed election: the consultations were conducted outside Ukraine's constitutional and electoral framework, in a context of violence and insecurity, without an OSCE/ODIHR election-observation mission and without sufficient guarantees for independent verification of the register, turnout or count. The Russian president, meanwhile, reached high levels of domestic support after Crimea and the outbreak of the conflict.²³¹

Discontent in Ukrainian society was directly related to the poor economic and social management of previous Ukrainian governments and to corruption in the prevailing political system, above all under Yanukovich but also under his predecessor Yushchenko. Socio-economic indicators from the preceding two decades were cited in the first edition in support of this claim. In 1989, Ukraine's overall GDP was substantially higher than that of neighbouring Poland. At the time of writing, Poland's overall GDP—despite the country being around 20 per cent smaller than Ukraine—was three times that of Ukraine. Poland stood in the more favourable upper quartile of Transparency International's corruption-perception measures, whereas Ukraine ranked 144th out of 177 in 2013, at a level comparable at the time with Nigeria and Iran. The data in this paragraph belong to the moment when the first edition was written and do not describe the current situation.

Despite the tense and abrasive climate persisting in Ukraine, no direct military confrontation between Russia and the West appeared likely, just as none had occurred during the Cold War. At the same time, there was little

²³¹ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, "OSCE PA President calls for cancellation of absurd referendums in eastern Ukraine", 8 May 2014; absence of conditions for a free and fair vote; European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, description of the consultations of 11 May 2014 in areas under separatist control.

prospect in the short term of an effective negotiating climate capable of producing durable and stable peace and mutual understanding. On the contrary, if the existing atmosphere of tension and confrontation in Ukraine persisted, it would have a negative influence on the European regional order and the wider international environment, especially in trade and economic affairs, while also prompting a realignment of regional and global strategic alliances. The Russian president's recent tour of Latin America and his leadership role at the BRICS summit were cited as supporting this scenario. The policies of containment and isolation towards Russia pursued by the United States and Europe also aroused caution and distrust among regional powers closer to Russia, including China, Brazil and even Iran.

The deepening conflict in Ukraine has destroyed the fragile climate of understanding and compromise that had been achieved between Russia and the West after the end of the Cold War. Although that climate of bilateral dialogue and negotiation was unstable, intermittent and fragile, it prevented the re-emergence of an atmosphere of hostility and distrust comparable to that of the Cold War. Integration between Russia and the West was never consolidated, but a degree of interaction and cooperation had nevertheless developed in the international arena, including coordinated work on common fronts such as counter-terrorism and nuclear disarmament. The Ukrainian crisis, by contrast, once again awakened distrust, rivalry, geopolitical competition and even diplomatic and commercial confrontation between the two sides. Europe again placed itself, in the formulation of the first edition, in a position of dependence on the United States in its relations with Russia. This recalled 2008, when the George W. Bush administration announced plans to deploy radar installations and elements of a missile-defence shield in European countries—initially Poland and the Czech Republic, and later Romania and Bulgaria—which Russia regarded as a direct threat to its national security and territorial integrity. Together with the creation that same year of an independent Kosovo and the decisive support provided by the United States, NATO and the European Union for that process, this produced a cooling of relations between Russia and the West, although not to the level of confrontation reached during the Ukrainian crisis.

President Putin repeatedly expressed his view of the importance of consolidating a 'Greater Europe'. In an article published in May 2005, he stated:

'(...) I am deeply convinced that a United Greater Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, and indeed including Russian territory as far as the Pacific Ocean, offers a unique opportunity to all the nations of the continent,

*including the Russian nation. (...) We believe that Russia's efforts to develop integration ties both with the Member States of the European Union and with the member states of the CIS constitute a single, organic process that should lead to a considerable expansion of harmonious common spaces of security, democracy and business cooperation throughout our greater region.*²³²

Russia's leadership within the CIS countries was not presented as contradicting the integration of the European continent as a whole, including Russia; at the same time, the United States was excluded from this proposed construction of a single intra-European space.

According to this conception, two clearly defined centres of power could coexist in Europe: the European Union sphere under German leadership and the Eurasian European sphere under Russian leadership. For Moscow, Ukraine had always belonged to the latter group.

First, the crisis appeared to produce a clear strengthening of Russia's leadership at both regional and global levels. To cite one example, the Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, in July 2014 was regarded as a success for Putin. On that occasion, the Russian president received strong support from the leaders of the member countries, and a series of important agreements was signed that reinforced the main lines of Russian foreign policy and its aim of consolidating a multipolar world order in political, economic and financial terms. Putin's convergence with Dilma Rousseff and Xi Jinping on international issues appeared increasingly strong. Contrary to President Obama's claim, Russia had not been isolated after the conflict in Ukraine. Rather, it was gaining 'sympathies' outside the framework of the CIS, which the first edition regarded as an obsolete and ineffective mechanism. Latin America was emerging as an alternative market for Russia, as countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay expressed interest in supplying products, especially foodstuffs, that Russia had previously imported from European Union countries.

Second, Russia began a new phase of military rearmament across all sectors, with particular emphasis on strategic aviation and aerospace defence. At a meeting on the Russian armaments programme for 2016-2025, Putin called for major progress in the 'development of all components of high-

²³² V. Putin, "Las lecciones de la victoria sobre el Nazismo- hacia la construcción conjunta de un futuro de seguridad para la humanidad" (in Russian), 7 May 2005, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, en <http://www.mid.ru/ns-pobeda.nsf/304a70a9f8af4383c3256eda00378036/c3256eda00375761c3256ffb0030159b?OpenDocument>

precision weapons' and stressed that the country should itself manufacture all equipment of vital importance.²³³

The need to dispense with imports for the domestic defence industry in the short term became a priority for Russia following the recent European and US sanctions in this sector. The Ministry of Defence announced that a new version of Russia's Military Doctrine was being prepared and would be presented in December of that year. According to Mikhail Popov, deputy secretary of the Russian Security Council, the need to amend the existing military doctrine arose from the emergence of 'new military threats', manifested, for example, in the Ukrainian crisis.

As a consequence of the conflict in Ukraine, the Russian government, and President Putin in particular, gained stronger and more decisive domestic support after a third presidential term that had followed elections less favourable than his previous contests. Putin was then expected to seek re-election in 2018 for another six-year term; the conflict helped him consolidate internal support, including among some detractors. He was re-elected in 2018 and again in 2024, following the 2020 constitutional reform that reset the calculation of his presidential terms.²³⁴

Western support for the new government in Kyiv helped Russian nationalism gain greater weight and influence both domestically and in Russia's external projection. As University of San Francisco professor Andrei Tsygankov argued, 'attempts to explain Putin's intervention in Crimea on the basis of Russia's economic weakness and its fear of the spread of democracy in the region are unconvincing and ignore the genuine foundations of Russian nationalism and the role of the West in its recent strengthening'. Influential sectors around Putin pressed from within the Kremlin for Russian foreign and defence policy to become still more nationalist and to make defence of the Russian state's national interest its overriding priority, including categorical rejection of NATO enlargement towards territories bordering Russia. The conflict in Ukraine and Western pressure on Russia gave these sectors grounds for advocating a more conservative and nationalist foreign-policy line. The most important force within this mechanism was identified as the *siloviki*, including former defence minister and presidential-administration

²³³ BULLOUGH, O. (29 March 2014). "Vladimir Putin and la reconstrucción de la Rusia 'soviética'". Available at: <https://www.bbc.com>

²³⁴ Leiva Van de Maele, D. (2017). "Russia is back: Analysis of the evolution of the Russian's foreign policy in the Putin era". *Estudios Internacionales*, n.º 187. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales-Universidad de Chile, p. 34.

figure Sergei Ivanov, former foreign minister Igor Ivanov, and Rosneft president and former deputy prime minister Igor Sechin, who had also been regarded as a central figure in economic policy for a decade. The strength of the siloviki lay not only in their close links with the FSB, the successor to the KGB, the Interior Ministry and the military sector, but also in their association with the St Petersburg circle close to Putin, their control of key sectors of the national economy, their broadly similar political and military outlooks, and their occupation of strategic positions.²³⁵

They also held key positions in Rosoboronexport and Almaz-Antey, two of the country's most important military-industrial corporations, as well as in Aeroflot, the Russian railways and major banks such as Vnesheconombank, Mezhprombank and Rossiya Bank.

[2026 Revision] Within the period originally analysed by this book, the Barack Obama administration led and promoted the imposition of economic and financial sanctions on Russia. These did not immediately produce all the political repercussions expected by their sponsors. Markets in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America then offered partial alternatives for Russian trade and remained interested in deepening bilateral ties. Russia primarily exported natural resources—gas, oil and strategic minerals—that were difficult to replace immediately, reducing some of its short-term vulnerability. Europe, meanwhile, retained considerable dependence on Russian gas, with especially high levels in several Eastern European countries. Figures cited in contemporary sources—including percentages approaching 60 per cent in certain aggregate formulations and levels close to 100 per cent for particular states—varied by year, country, product and methodology; they should therefore be understood as estimates from the period rather than permanent proportions. Germany, France and Italy were among the leading European buyers of Russian gas and would have been significantly affected by an energy blockade. In that historical context, a trade war between Russia and the European Union was complicated for Moscow but also for an EU still dealing with the effects of the economic, financial and fiscal crisis.

²³⁵ BULLOUGH, O. (29 March 2014). “Vladimir Putin and la reconstrucción de la Rusia ‘soviética’”. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com>

The crisis in Ukraine had become highly ideologised both within and outside the country, recalling the tense atmosphere of distrust and ideological confrontation that existed during the Cold War. Why, the first edition asked, should the West take decisions and dictate solutions in a conflict that did not directly concern or affect it? Such intervention, it argued, made it more difficult to establish the understanding and dialogue required for a negotiated settlement. Ukraine should not be divided into two independent states; that would perhaps be an extremist and imposed solution unlikely to produce stable and lasting peace. On the contrary, it would create favourable conditions for a permanent conflict between the parties involved. A complete political, economic, administrative and cultural rupture between Ukraine and Russia would be as difficult and complex as encouraging the separation of the eastern and western territories of the existing Ukrainian state. Neither process would consolidate lasting peace in the region. Might greater federalisation within the framework of existing law, without complete separation of the eastern territories, constitute a more suitable solution for all the parties involved? The first edition suggested that it might, above all for Ukrainians themselves, who remained the most important party to the conflict: a people then suffering an undeserved war.

WHAT THE FIRST EDITION ANTICIPATED — AND WHAT IT DID NOT

The following section subjects the first edition to a test that every analysis of international affairs ought to accept and almost none does: comparing its expectations with what actually occurred. This is neither an exercise in contrition nor one of self-justification. Its purpose is to establish what kinds of phenomena the realist framework employed in 2015 captured well, what kinds it failed to capture, and what methodological consequence follows from that distribution.

A. What the First Edition Anticipated Correctly

The first success is the most structural. The 2015 edition argued that Crimea would not be returned to Ukraine and that no combination of diplomatic pressure and sanctions would alter that situation. Eleven years later, the peninsula remains under Russian control and no negotiation has seriously contemplated reversing that position.

The second success was the prediction that Russia would not be isolated from the international system. Against the common assertion at the time that Moscow had been excluded from the international community, the book argued that alternative markets and partners existed and that a reorientation towards Asia, the Middle East and Latin America would reduce the effectiveness of isolation. The enlargement of BRICS, the deepening of relations with China and India, and the Russian economy's adaptation to sanctions regimes confirmed that reading, even after a rupture far deeper than that of 2014.

The third was the warning that Russian nationalism would be strengthened as an effect, and not merely a cause, of Western pressure. The book described a dynamic of mutual reinforcement between an external perception of threat and the internal consolidation of the government. That dynamic intensified after 2022 and remains one of the factors complicating any negotiated settlement.

The fourth was the prediction of rearmament. The 2015 edition recorded Russia's 2016-2025 armaments programme and the priority given to import substitution in the defence industry. Russia's wartime economy after 2022 rested precisely on that industrial base.

The fifth, and probably the most important, was the warning that a line of contact without a political settlement produces not peace but postponement. The book argued that maintaining a frozen conflict would create 'the conditions for a permanent conflict'. That proposition was fulfilled in the most literal possible manner in February 2022, and it is why the revised conclusions insist that a ceasefire without an architecture does not amount to a settlement.

A negative success should also be added: the prediction that there would be no direct military confrontation between Russia and NATO. Despite the scale of the war, that line has not been crossed.

B. What the First Edition Did Not Anticipate

The principal failure is of a magnitude that admits no mitigation: the first edition did not consider a general invasion of Ukraine possible. Its horizon envisaged a conflict localised in the Donbas and containable through federalisation and negotiation. The multi-axis offensive of February 2022, with objectives that included the capital, lay outside the range of scenarios that the framework employed regarded as plausible.

The second failure is analytical before it is predictive, and partly explains the first. The book treated Ukraine fundamentally as a space contested between Russia and the West rather than as an actor with an independent capacity for decision. That theoretical choice—common in realist literature on states situated between great powers—prevented incorporation of the variable that most altered the course of the war: the capacity and willingness of Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian state to resist. A framework that reduces a country to a board cannot foresee that the board will decide.

The third failure concerns the logic of the security hypothesis itself. The first edition argued that Western pressure strengthened Russia and weakened Europe's position. The outcome of 2022 was the reverse in terms of regional architecture: Finland and Sweden abandoned decades of non-alignment and entered the Alliance, the eastern flank was reinforced, European defence expenditure increased, and military support for Ukraine became institutionalised. Russian concern over NATO enlargement was real; the strategy chosen to answer it produced exactly what it was intended to prevent. That paradox had not been anticipated.

The fourth failure is empirical and verifiable. The book treated European energy dependence on Russia as a structural fact that would durably limit

the European Union's capacity to respond. Between 2022 and 2026 that dependence was substantially reduced through substitution of suppliers, liquefied-natural-gas terminals and reduced consumption. The premise that Europe could not alter its structural dependencies proved false.

The fifth failure is political. Federalisation within existing law, proposed in 2015 as 'the most suitable solution for all parties', fell outside the space of negotiable options after the invasion. The European Union, described at the time as a subordinate and incapable actor, is now conducting formal accession negotiations with Kyiv.

C. What Was Framed Incorrectly Rather Than Simply Wrong

Some formulations from 2015 were not false so much as badly constructed. The rhetorical question asking why the West should intervene 'in a conflict that does not concern or directly affect it' presupposed a separation between Ukrainian security and continental security that subsequent events disproved: the conflict reorganised Europe's security architecture, energy flows, defence budgets and population movements.

Likewise, several descriptions in the original section—'Ukrainian revolution', 'regime', 'Russophobic history'—were used in the author's own voice without the attribution required by the terminological framework of this book. The revised edition preserves those passages as part of the record, but the criterion applied elsewhere in the volume would have required returning each term to the actor who formulated it.

D. Methodological Consequence

The distribution of successes and failures is not random, and it yields the central lesson of this revision. The realist framework was consistently successful where permanent interests, perceptions of threat, structural incentives and long-term consequences were concerned: Crimea, Russia's failure to become isolated, rearmament, nationalism as an effect, and the instability of a frozen conflict. It failed equally consistently where discrete decisions were concerned—when, how and to what extent force would be used—and where the responses of concrete societies to those decisions mattered.

That asymmetry has a precise theoretical explanation. Structural realism describes the field of pressures within which states operate, not the process by which a particular leadership chooses one option within that field. The

latter requires domestic, ideational, organisational and individual-perception variables. A hypothesis that explains the environment cannot, without expansion, explain the choice.

The revised conclusions therefore retain the structural core of the original thesis and add the variables it lacked, rather than replacing it with an explanation based purely on agency or ideology. A framework corrected by expansion preserves its explanatory capacity; a framework replaced whenever an event surprises it explains nothing. This section exists to make that operation visible and to allow the reader to judge it directly.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE REVISED EDITION (2026)

1. The Original Thesis after 2022

The central hypothesis of this book—that Ukraine's strategic position cannot be understood without Western institutional expansion and the Russian perception of a loss of strategic depth—retains explanatory capacity, but can no longer be presented as sufficient causation. The 2022 war requires a distinction between structural conditions of insecurity, discourses of legitimation, domestic-policy decisions and the choice to use force. Realism explains why Ukraine acquired extraordinary importance for Moscow; by itself it does not explain why the Russian leadership considered a large-scale offensive viable and desirable, nor why it accepted the costs produced by that decision.

2. The Security Paradox

The most visible strategic consequence of the war has been paradoxical. Russia sought to prevent Ukraine from consolidating itself as a Western political-military platform and demanded legal limits on NATO enlargement. The invasion, however, led Finland and Sweden to abandon their policies of non-membership and enter the Alliance, strengthened the eastern flank, increased European defence expenditure and transformed military support for Ukraine into a long-term policy. The result does not demonstrate that Russian security concerns were unreal; it demonstrates that the strategy chosen to address them produced a regional structure even less favourable to Moscow's declared objectives.

3. Ukraine as an Actor, Not Merely an Object

The second correction to the original thesis is the centrality of Ukrainian agency. Since 1991, and with particular intensity since 2014, the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian society have taken decisions that cannot be reduced to instructions from Washington, Brussels or Moscow. The independence referendum, electoral alternation, Maidan, constitutional reforms, military resistance and the decision to continue European integration are processes

with domestic dynamics of their own. Great powers influence, finance, pressure and constrain; that does not automatically turn local actors into instruments without agency.

4. Crimea and the Donbas after the Proclaimed Annexations

The territorial conflict is more difficult to resolve today than it was in 2015. Crimea remains under Russian control, and in 2022 Russia proclaimed the incorporation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia even without fully controlling those regions. Ukraine and the majority of UN Member States do not recognise those territorial changes. A negotiated settlement must therefore address not only the location of the front line but also the contradiction between military control, Russia's constitutional claim, Ukraine's internationally recognised sovereignty and the rights of affected populations.

5. The Failure of Minsk and the Conditions for Future Negotiation

Minsk must be evaluated more precisely than by describing it as mere 'ineffectiveness'. Its mechanisms at times reduced the intensity of combat and provided channels for exchanges, separation of forces and monitoring. It failed as a political settlement because the parties never shared a common sequence of implementation or a common characterisation of the conflict. A future negotiation will need to avoid that defect: security guarantees, the status of territories, verification, withdrawal or limitation of forces, and border control must be linked through mechanisms whose sequence and consequences are defined unambiguously.

6. Europe Is No Longer the Actor of 2014

The European Union of 2026 has a qualitatively different relationship with Ukraine from that which existed at the beginning of the crisis. Kyiv is formally negotiating accession, receives multiannual financial support and forms part of an ongoing political architecture of integration. At the same time, Europe has substantially reduced its energy dependence on Russia and increased its defence commitments. This does not imply complete strategic

autonomy from the United States or the absence of internal divisions, but it makes obsolete the image of a Europe incapable of altering its structural dependencies.

7. Russia Was Not Isolated from the International System Either

The war produced a profound rupture between Russia and much of the West, but not absolute global isolation. Moscow maintained and expanded economic and political relations with China, India, Iran, the Gulf states, Africa, Latin America and other actors. BRICS expanded, and the Russian economy found mechanisms for adapting to sanctions and restrictions. The correct conclusion is not that sanctions have no effect, but that the international system is broad enough to permit commercial, financial and diplomatic reorientation that reduces—without eliminating—the coercive capacity of one bloc of states.

8. The Human Dimension Changes the Object of Study

After four and a half years of full-scale war, the conflict can no longer be studied solely as a competition for power. Millions of refugees and displaced persons, civilian casualties, the destruction of housing, infrastructure, energy systems and cultural heritage, prisoners, transferred children, mines and the contamination of extensive areas are producing effects that will continue for decades. Reconstruction estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars makes peace an institutional, economic and demographic question as well as a military one.

9. Durable Peace Requires an Architecture, Not Merely a Ceasefire

A cessation of hostilities would bring an immediate human improvement, but would not in itself amount to stable peace. The experience of 2014-2021 shows that a line of contact without a political settlement can become a period of preparation for a new phase of war. Any sustainable solution will need to combine verification mechanisms, external security arrangements, treatment of disputed territories, reconstruction, exchanges of detainees, the

voluntary and safe return of populations, protection of minorities, and a future relationship among Russia, Ukraine and the rest of Europe. No single element can substitute for the whole.

10. Final Conclusion

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia did not begin in February 2022, but February 2022 changed its nature. Historical roots, the Soviet dissolution, Crimea, NATO enlargement, competition between integration projects, nationalism, language policy, the Donbas and Minsk all form part of the explanation. The full-scale invasion added a new rupture: it transformed a post-Soviet dispute into one of the largest interstate wars in Europe since 1945 and reorganised continental security.

The principal conclusion of this edition is therefore less monocausal than that of the first. The West made strategic decisions that Russia perceived over decades as diminishing its security and whose capacity to provoke reaction was identified early. Russia, however, was not an actor mechanically determined by those decisions: it chose instruments, timing and objectives, and in 2022 it chose a general invasion whose scope exceeded the immediate defence of the Donbas. Ukraine, in turn, was not simply the board on which others moved pieces, but an actor that altered the possibilities available to all the others through its own decisions and its resistance.

As of 16 August 2026, there is still no historical closure that would allow this war to be narrated as a completed process. Negotiations continue intermittently, military operations remain active and the civilian cost has again increased. The subtitle 'An Ongoing Conflict' therefore remains fully applicable. The academic task is not retrospectively to anticipate who 'was right', but to keep evidence, perception, causation, responsibility and legitimacy separate. Only that separation makes it possible to understand how a crisis born from the disintegration of the Soviet order ultimately transformed the European order once again.

CHRONOLOGY, 1917-2026

Dates follow the Gregorian calendar. Only the milestones necessary to follow the argument of the volume are included; the detailed chronology of 2014-2015 appears in Sections 4.5 to 4.9, and that of 2022-2026 in Chapter 5.

- 1917 — Fall of the Russian monarchy. The Central Rada is established in Kyiv and develops into a revolutionary parliament.
- 1918 — On 22 January, the Ukrainian People's Republic proclaims its independence. On 9 February it signs a peace treaty with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk; Soviet Russia signs its own treaty on 3 March.
- 1919-1921 — Polish-Soviet War. The Treaty of Riga of 18 March 1921 establishes a border dividing lands populated by Ukrainians and Belarusians.
- 1922 — The Soviet Union is formally established in December. The Ukrainian SSR is one of its founding republics.
- 1932-1933 — Famine in Soviet Ukraine, known as the Holodomor.
- 1939 — German-Soviet Pact in August. In September, the Soviet Union incorporates eastern Polish territories into the Ukrainian SSR.
- 1941-1944 — German occupation. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army is organised from 1942 onwards, mainly in western Ukraine.
- 1945 — Yalta Conference in February. It is agreed that Poland's eastern frontier will broadly follow the Curzon Line.
- 1954 — On 19 February, Crimea Oblast is transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.
- 1991 — On 24 August, the Verkhovna Rada declares independence. A referendum ratifies it on 1 December and Leonid Kravchuk is elected president. On 8 December, the Belavezha Accords are signed; on 26 December, the Soviet Union is dissolved.
- 1994 — The Budapest Memorandum is signed on 5 December: Ukraine relinquishes the nuclear arsenal it inherited in exchange for security assurances from the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation.
- 1997 — NATO-Russia Founding Act, 27 May. Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine, and agreements concerning the Black Sea Fleet.
- 1999 — First eastward enlargement of NATO: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

- 2004 — Second NATO enlargement, admitting seven states, including Estonia and Latvia, and creating a land border with Russia. Orange Revolution in Ukraine.
- 2008 — Bucharest Summit in April: the Alliance declares that Ukraine and Georgia 'will become members', without granting a Membership Action Plan. In August, war between Russia and Georgia.
- 2010 — Viktor Yanukovych becomes president. The Kharkiv agreements extend the presence of the Russian Fleet in Sevastopol until 2042.
- 2013 — On 21 November, the government suspends preparations for signing the Association Agreement with the European Union. The Maidan protests begin.
- 2014 — On 22 February, the Verkhovna Rada adopts Resolution 757-VII concerning Yanukovych's withdrawal from office. The Crimean consultation is held on 16 March and the treaty of incorporation into the Russian Federation is signed on 18 March. On 27 March, the General Assembly adopts Resolution 68/262. Armed conflict begins in the Donbas in April. Flight MH17 is shot down on 17 July. The Minsk Protocol is signed on 5 September.
- 2015 — The Minsk II Package of Measures is agreed on 12 February. The line of contact stabilises without a political settlement.
- 2016-2021 — War of attrition. In November 2018, a naval incident occurs in the Kerch Strait. Volodymyr Zelenskyy becomes president in 2019 and the Normandy summit meets in Paris in December. Russian military concentrations recur during 2021 and Moscow presents proposals for security guarantees in December.
- 2022 — Russia recognises Donetsk and Luhansk on 21 February. The full-scale invasion begins on 24 February. The Istanbul negotiations take place in March and April, Russian forces withdraw from the north and the events in Bucha become known. In September, Ukraine conducts a counter-offensive in Kharkiv and Russia proclaims the annexation of four regions. In November, Russian forces withdraw from the right bank of the Dnipro in Kherson.
- 2023 — Finland joins NATO on 4 April. Bakhmut falls in May. Ukraine conducts its counter-offensive between June and October, with limited advances.
- 2024 — Avdiivka falls in February. Sweden joins NATO on 7 March. In August, Ukraine launches an incursion into Russia's Kursk region. The war becomes increasingly technological in character.
- 2025-2026 — Strategic continuity, long-range strike campaigns and intermittent diplomacy. At the close of this edition in August 2026, no peace agreement exists.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

The abbreviations and institutional names used in the volume are listed here in their standard English forms. This editorial normalisation does not alter official titles or direct quotations where the original form is relevant to the documentary reference.

CIS — Commonwealth of Independent States. Established in December 1991 as a framework for coordination among post-Soviet republics. Ukraine participated without ratifying the Charter and progressively disengaged from 2014 onwards.

DCFTA — Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. The trade component of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine.

EAEU — Eurasian Economic Union. Established in 2015 as the successor to the Customs Union formed by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

FSB — Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, successor to the KGB in the field of domestic security.

G7 — Group of Seven. Coordination forum for major advanced economies. Russia participated between 1998 and 2014 in the expanded Group of Eight format.

JIT — Joint Investigation Team. A format for international criminal-law cooperation; in this volume, the term refers to the team established to investigate the downing of Flight MH17.

ICAO — International Civil Aviation Organization, a specialised agency of the United Nations.

ODIHR — Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE, responsible for election observation.

OSCE — Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. It deployed the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine from 2014 to 2022.

NATO — North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Political-military alliance established in 1949. Article 5 contains the collective-defence clause, which applies only to Member States.

OUN — Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, founded in 1929. Its OUN-B faction, led by Stepan Bandera, adopted an authoritarian and ultranationalist ideology.

Verkhovna Rada — Ukraine's unicameral parliament.

Russian SFSR — Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the largest republic of the Soviet Union.

Ukrainian SSR — Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, established in 1919 and a founding republic of the Soviet Union in December 1922.

TELAR — Transporter Erector Launcher and Radar. The configuration of the Buk anti-aircraft system referred to in the investigation of the downing of Flight MH17.

EU — European Union. It should not be confused with NATO: they are distinct organisations with different memberships, competences and decision-making procedures.

UPR — Ukrainian People's Republic, proclaimed in 1917 and independent from January 1918.

UPA — Ukrainian Insurgent Army, an armed nationalist formation organised from 1942 onwards.

USSR — Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, established in December 1922 and dissolved on 26 December 1991.

NOTE ON THE STATUS OF VERIFICATION

A book that declares a hierarchy of levels of evidence must also declare where it has been unable to apply that hierarchy. This note records the limits of the verification undertaken for the present edition. It is not a disclaimer: it is part of the critical apparatus that allows the reader to assess the weight of each claim and to identify the points at which the volume relies on information that could not be corroborated to the standard required elsewhere.

First, a number of references retained from the first edition contain incomplete publication data. Where it has not been possible to identify with confidence the edition used in 2015, the available information has been recorded and marked [n.d.] rather than completed by inference. Assigning a plausible but unverified date or imprint to a work creates an appearance of rigour greater than the evidence supports; an explicit gap has therefore been preferred.

Second, figures for civilian and military casualties, displaced persons and material damage derive from international organisations that publish their own methodological caveats. Civilian casualty estimates record verified minimums rather than totals; military casualty figures for both sides lack independent verification and most figures in circulation come from interested sources. Any such figure used in the volume should therefore be read as a documented order of magnitude rather than a closed count.

Third, the reconstruction of the 2022-2026 period relies on sources contemporary with the events. Insufficient temporal distance and the continuing nature of military operations make it impossible to apply the same standard of historiographical comparison used for earlier periods. Sections 5.5 to 5.7 should therefore be regarded as a provisional reconstruction, subject to revision as archives open and monographic studies are published.

Fourth, the conversations and verbal assurances of 1990 concerning the non-extension of the Alliance's military jurisdiction remain the subject of historiographical debate. This book argues that political formulations to that effect existed and that they did not crystallise into a legal obligation; it presents that distinction as the core of the controversy, not as a settled question.

Fifth, certain legal characterisations invoked by the parties—genocide, aggression, war crime—belong to competent bodies rather than to the author. Where a court or international organisation has issued a determination, it is cited; where none exists, the text identifies who advances the characterisation and on what basis, without replacing that absence with the author's own judgment.

Finally, the volume has not made systematic use of unpublished archival documentation or of Russian- or Ukrainian-language sources consulted in the original. Its documentary base consists of published official documentation, reports by international organisations, accessible academic literature and contemporary press sources. This limitation constrains the type of conclusion that can be drawn and should be borne in mind when evaluating sections that depend on actors' internal perceptions and deliberations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

I. Academic Bibliography and Monographs

References have been standardised according to a convention based on Chicago Notes and Bibliography. Where the first edition did not provide complete publication data and the source apparatus does not permit sufficient documentary verification, the available information has been retained without completion by inference.

- Bracho, G. "La liberalización del comercio exterior, la desindustrialización y la economía poscomunista en Rusia". *Investigación Económica* 63 (January-March de 2004): 75-102.
- Bartles, C. K. "Cómo comprender el artículo de Gerasimov". *Military Review* (March-Abril de 2016): 55-64.
- Bullough, O. "Vladimir Putin y la reconstrucción de la Rusia 'soviética'". BBC, 29 March 2014. <https://www.bbc.com>.
- Carr, E. H. *La revolución bolchevique, 1917-1923: la conquista y organización del poder*. 4.^a ed. Madrid: Alianza, 1979.
- . *La revolución rusa: de Lenin a Stalin, 1917-1929*. Madrid: Alianza, 1981.
- Carrère d'Encausse, H. *Seis años que cambiaron el mundo*. Barcelona: Planeta, 2016. Edición digital.
- Cerdas, R. "Perestroika y Revolución: los cambios en la política soviética hacia América Central". *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 15, n.º 2 (1989): 5-25.
- Colomer, A., y C. Flores, eds. *Rusia, en vísperas de su futuro*. Valencia: PUV, 2002.
- Conquest, R. *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Constitución de la Federación de Rusia. Cuadernos Constitucionales México-Centroamérica, n.º 15. Ciudad de México: Biblioteca Jurídica Virtual del Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la UNAM. <https://biblio.juridicas.unam.mx/bjv/detalle-libro/186-cuadernos-constitucionales-mexico-centroamerica-15-la-constitucion-rusa-de-1993>.
- De Andrés Sanz, J. "La crisis del sistema soviético: la era Gorbachov". En *El colapso del comunismo* (1989-1991), 15-29. Valladolid: UVA, 2017.
- De Andrés Sanz y R. Ruiz. "Y Putin encontró el camino. Instituciones y régimen político en la Rusia del siglo XXI". *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, n.º 17 (May de 2008). Madrid: UCM.

- De la Cámara, M. (2012). [Referencia conservada con los datos disponibles en la primera edición.]
- Duguin, A. G. La geopolítica de Rusia: de la revolución rusa a Putin. Huesca: Hipérbola Janus, 2015.
- Fernández, Antonio. Historia del mundo contemporáneo. Barcelona: Vicens-Vives, [s. f.].
- Fernández, A. “Kózírev anuncia el fin de la ‘luna de miel’ entre Washington y Moscú”. El País, 24 March 1995. <https://elpais.com>.
- Fernández, R. “Putin critica el despliegue de la OTAN en Europa”. El País, 21 November 2007. <https://elpais.com>.
- Fitzpatrick, S. Stalin’s Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Fontana, J. Por el bien del imperio: una historia del mundo desde 1945. Barcelona: Pasado y Presente, 2011.
- García Higuera, G. Historia y Perestroika: la revisión de la historia soviética en tiempos de Gorbachov (1987-1991). Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2015.
- Gessen, M. El hombre sin rostro: el sorprendente ascenso de Vladimir Putin. Barcelona: Debate, 2012.
- Gorbachov, M. Memorias de los años decisivos, 1985-1992. Madrid: Globus Comunicación, 1994.
- Goytisolo, J. “El zar Boris”. El País, 3 July 1996. <https://elpais.com>.
- Herranz Fernández, F. J. Mijaíl S. Gorbachov: la persona, el político y el discurso desde el análisis transaccional y la teoría del guion de vida. Tesis doctoral, Facultad de Ciencias de la Información, UCM, 2019.
- Hober, K. The Impeachment of President Yeltsin. New York: Jurisnet, 2003.
- Hobsbawm, E. Historia del siglo XX. Buenos Aires: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1998.
- Hosking, G. Una muy breve historia de Rusia. Madrid: Alianza, 2014.
- Huayamave, G. “Los planes quinquenales en la Unión de Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas bajo un régimen totalitario”. Gaceta Sansana 2, n.º 6 (2015). Guayaquil: Universidad Santa María.
- Ibisante, F. J. “Mikhail Gorbachev: de la tragedia de Chernobyl a la Carta de la Tierra”. Realidad 107 (2006): 11-37. San Salvador: UCA. Indexmundi: <https://www.indexmundi.com/>.
- Ivanov, Y. “El Banco de Comercio Exterior de la URSS (Vneshtorgbank)”. Comercio Exterior 36 (1986): 1.015-1.020.
- Leiva Van de Maele, D. “Russia Is Back: Analysis of the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy in the Putin Era”. Estudios Internacionales, n.º 187 (2017): 9-42.
- Levin, M. El siglo soviético: ¿qué sucedió realmente en la Unión Soviética? Barcelona: Planeta, 2017.
- Litvinenko, A., y Y. Felshtinski. Rusia dinamitada: tramas secretas y terrorismo de Estado en la Federación Rusa. Barcelona: Alba Minus, 2009.

- López, L. M. "Yeltsin gana el pulso a la Duma, que no se atreve a procesarle por traidor y genocida". *El País*, 16 May 1999. <https://elpais.com>.
- Lovell, S. *Un destino incierto: Rusia desde 1989*. Intermón Oxfam, 2008.
- Lyle, R. "Russia: Blackmail Payments Cost Rosprom Millions, Says CEO". *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 1997. <https://www.rferl.org>.
- McNair, B. *Glasnost, Perestroika and Soviet Media*. Oxford: Routledge, 1991.
- Maestre, Alfonso J. "La posición de los países socialistas ante los derechos humanos". *Revista de Estudios Políticos (Nueva Época)*, n.º 19 (January-February de 1981).
- Malcangio, L. "La Perestroika comenzó como una esperanza ilusa". *El Tiempo*, 15 February 2017. <https://www.eltiempo.com>.
- Moragas, Miquel. *Sociología de la comunicación de masas*. Vol. III, *Propaganda política y opinión pública*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, [s. f.].
- Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2001.
- Milosevich-Juaristi, M. *El putinismo, sistema político de Rusia*. ARI n.º 16. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, 2018.
- Milosevich-Juaristi, M. *Rusia en América Latina: repercusiones para España*. Documento de trabajo n.º 02/2019. Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, 2019.
- Nolte, Ernst. *El fascismo en su época*. Barcelona: Edicions S.A., [s. f.].
- Paris, R. *Los orígenes del fascismo*. Barcelona: Península, [s. f.].
- Perry, W. *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.
- Pizarroso Quintero, Alejandro. *Historia de la propaganda*. Madrid: Eudema, [s. f.].
- Pomerantsev, P. *La nueva Rusia: nada es verdad y todo es posible en la era Putin*. Barcelona: RBA Libros, 2017. Edición digital.
- Pratkanis, Anthony, y Elliot Aronson. *La era de la propaganda: uso y abuso de la persuasión*. Barcelona: Paidós Comunicación, [s. f.].
- Sánchez Ramírez, Pablo Telman. *Razón y poder: Rusia, una potencia en el siglo XXI*. México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa / Tecnológico de Monterrey, 2005.
- Tenbrock, Robert-Hermann. *Historia de Alemania*. Múnich: Max Hueber, [s. f.].
- Timoteo Álvarez, Jesús. *Historia y modelos de comunicación en el siglo XX*. Barcelona: Ariel, [s. f.].
- Vengoa, H. F. *La Unión Soviética: de la Perestroika a la disolución*. Bogotá: ECOE Ediciones, 1992. ———. *Rusia en el largo siglo XX: entre la modernización y la globalización*. Bogotá: Uniandes, 2005.
- Villegas Cara, F. M. *Análisis crítico del discurso político de Vladimir Putin en el contexto del resurgimiento nacional ruso*. Tesis doctoral, Universidad de Granada, 2017.
- Wines, M. "Drive to Impeach Russian President Dies in Parliament". *The New York Times*, 16 May 1999. <https://www.nytimes.com>.
- Wren, C. "Architect of Perestroika Sells It in the West". *The New York Times*, 28 February 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/>.

Villani, Pasquale. La edad contemporánea. Barcelona: Ariel Historia, [s. f.].

II. Primary Sources and Verification Documents Incorporated in This Revision

- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. «The All-Ukrainian referendum initiated by the Verkhovna Rada on December 1, 1991 is a real example of democracy». 29 November 2021.
- United Nations Treaty Collection. Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Budapest, 5 December 1994, UNTS No. 52241.
- International Court of Justice. Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo, Advisory Opinion, 22 July 2010.
- United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 68/262, «Territorial Integrity of Ukraine», 27 March 2014.
- OSCE. Protocol on the Results of Consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group, Minsk, 5 September 2014; Memorandum de 19 September 2014; Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, 12 February 2015.
- U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. Foreign Relations of the United States: Russia, 1918, documentation on Ucraina and the treaties de Brest-Litovsk February y March de 1918.
- U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. «The Berlin Wall Falls and USSR Dissolves» and documentation histórica sobre el final de la Guerra Fría, 1989-1991.
- National Security Archive, George Washington University. «NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard», collection of declassified memoranda and transcripts de 1990-1991.
- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Resolution No. 757-VII, «On self-withdrawal of the President of Ukraine from performing his constitutional duties and setting early elections of the President of Ukraine», 22 February 2014.
- Council of Europe / European Court of Human Rights. Documentation on las investigaciones de los acontecimientos de Maidán and relevant case law pertinente.
- Dutch Safety Board. MH17 Crash: Final Report, 13 October 2015.
- Joint Investigation Team / Netherlands Public Prosecution Service. Criminal Investigation JIT MH17, resultados and documentation probatoria.
- International Civil Aviation Organization. «ICAO Council vote on Flight MH17 case», 12 May 2025.
- European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber. Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia, Judgment (Merits), 9 July 2025.

- Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, MAPA Digital Atlas of Ukraine. Great Famine Project, demographic mortality estimates del Holodomor.
- Cambridge University Press / Nationalities Papers. Recent demographic and historiographical studies on las pérdidas de la hambruna soviética de 1932-1933.
- Soviet History / Michigan State University. Documentation on la transferencia administrativa de Crimea de 1954 y su contexto soviético.
- Presidential Library of the Russian Federation and documentation internacional de la CIS sobre los Acuerdos de Belavezha (8 December 1991) y el Protocolo/Declaración de Alma-Ata (21 December 1991).
- Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action of Germany / European energy documentation. Russian gas-transit infrastructure to Europe: Yamal-Europa, Nord Stream y tránsito ucraniano.
- OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Statements on las consultas de Donetsk y Luhansk May 2014 y conditions for free and fair elections.
- European Commission / Government of Ukraine. Official documentation on la negociación y rubricación del Acuerdo de Asociación EU-Ukraine, 2007-2012.
- G7 Research Group / National Security Archive. Documentación de la Cumbre de Londres del G7 y de la reunión con Mikhail Gorbachev, 15-17 July 1991.
- Presidential Library of the Russian Federation. Material documental sobre la toma de posesión de Boris Yeltsin como presidente de la RSFS de Rusia, 10 July 1991.
- Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission). Referendum in the Soviet Union, informe sobre la consulta del 17 March 1991.
- U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. Documentación de la Conferencia de Yalta y de la Conferencia de Potsdam, incluida «Agreement Regarding Entry of the Soviet Union Into the War Against Japan», 11 February 1945, y la Declaración de Potsdam de 26 July 1945.
- International Monetary Fund. «Shortages Under Free Prices: The Case of Ukraine in 1992», IMF Staff Papers / Working Paper material, 1994.
- Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies: «Ukrainian Insurgent Army», «Ukrainization», «Government-in-exile of the Ukrainian National Republic», «Curzon Line» y «Parties, political».
- First All-Union Census of the USSR (1926), national composition of the Ukrainian SSR; statistical tables reproduced by Demoscope Weekly / Institute of Demography.

III. Press Resources and Supplementary Reference Materials

- For traceability with the first edition, journalistic and popular materials and reference websites originally used have been retained. In the revised edition they are not used as sole sources for contested historical, legal or quantitative claims; central checks rely on the primary and institutional sources in Sections II, IV and V.

- Amnistía Internacional (2018). Report on el Estado de los Derechos Humanos en el mundo 2017-2018. Available at: [http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/AI%20Informe%20anual%202017-18%20\(LGBTI\).pdf](http://www.bienestaryproteccioninfantil.es/imagenes/tablaContenidos03SubSec/AI%20Informe%20anual%202017-18%20(LGBTI).pdf)
- Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales del Siglo XX document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/cuba1962.htm>
- EL Mundo. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.elmundo.es/la-aventura-de-la-historia/2015/02/04/54d1eb99e2704e97388b4574.html>
- EL PAIS. Document retrieved on 27 February 2022 https://elpais.com/diario/1989/11/24/internacional/627865205_850215.html
- Historia de la Relaciones Internacionales durante el siglo XX. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/GLOS/planmarshall.htm>
- Kissinger En: <https://www.derechos.org/peace/russia/doc/rusukr1470.html>, March 2014.
- MEARSHEIMER, John J. en <https://nomos.com.ar/2022/03/23/por-que-la-crisis-de-ucrania-es-culpa-de-occidente/>, Foreign Affairs, September 2014.
- Plan Molotov y Viacheslav Mólotov. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en https://es.unionpedia.org/c/Plan_Molotov/vs/Viacheslav_M%C3%B3lotov.
- Avances Tecnológicos Durante La Guerra Fría. Document retrieved on 18 March 2018 en <https://www.clubensayos.com/Tecnolog%C3%ADa/Avances-Tecnologicos-Durante-La-Guerra-Fria/1593668.html>
- Freedom House (2017). Informes Freedom in the World. Años 2016, 2017, 2018 y 2019. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

IV. Institutional and Documentary Sources for the 2016-2026 Update

- OSCE. Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, 12 February 2015; and documentation de la Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine sobre alto el fuego y verificación, 2016-2022.
- Élysée. «Paris Normandie Summit – Common agreed conclusions», 9 December 2019.
- International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Case concerning the detention of three Ukrainian naval vessels (Ukraine v. Russian Federation), Order on Provisional Measures, 25 May 2019.
- Central Election Commission of Ukraine. Results of the second round of the presidential election de 2019.

- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Constitution of Ukraine, enmiendas introducidas por Law No. 2680-VIII de 7 February 2019 sobre el curso europeo y euroatlántico.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Draft Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Security Guarantees y Draft Agreement on Measures to Ensure the Security of the Russian Federation and NATO Member States, 17 December 2021.
- NATO. «NATO conveys written proposals to Russia», 26 January 2022; documentación del NATO-Russia Council January 2022.
- United Nations General Assembly. Resolution ES-11/1, «Aggression against Ukraine», 2 March 2022.
- United Nations General Assembly. Resolution ES-11/4, «Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations», 12 October 2022.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights / Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. Reports on the human-rights situation, protection of civilians and summary executions en el norte de Ucrania, 2022-2026.
- International Criminal Court. Situation in Ukraine: arrest warrants issued since March de 2023, including documentation relating to Vladimir Putin, Maria Lvova-Belova, Sergei Shoigu y Valery Gerasimov.
- NATO. Documentación de adhesión de Finlandia (4 April 2023) y Suecia (7 March 2024); Washington Summit Declaration 2024; The Hague Summit Declaration 2025; Ankara Summit Declaration 2026.
- Council of the European Union. «EU opens accession negotiations with Ukraine», 25 June 2024; conferencias de adhesión June y July de 2026.
- European Commission / Council of the European Union. Ukraine Facility, 2024-2027, and documentation REPowerEU sobre reducción de importaciones energéticas rusas.
- World Bank, Government of Ukraine, European Commission and United Nations. Ukraine Fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA5), February 2026.
- UNHCR. Ukraine Refugee Situation and Regional Refugee Response Plan 2025-2026.
- International Organization for Migration. Ukraine Internal Displacement Reports and Ukraine Crisis Response Plan 2026.
- International Atomic Energy Agency. Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards in Ukraine and statements by the Director General on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, 2022-2026.
- President of Ukraine / Government of the United States. Joint statement of the Ukrainian and American delegations, 11 March 2025; subsequent communications on ceasefire and negotiation proposals.
- United Nations Security Council. Meetings and documents from 2025-2026 concerning Ukraine, calls for a ceasefire, protection of civilians and diplomatic efforts.

V. Sources for Language Policy and Terminological Analysis

- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Constitution of Ukraine, art. 10, official English text.
- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Law No. 5029-VI, On Principles of the State Language Policy, 3 July 2012; legal status until its declaration of unconstitutionality on 28 February 2018.
- OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. “Restraint, responsibility and dialogue needed in Ukraine, including Crimea”, 24 February 2014; and “Statement by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities on her recent visits to Ukraine”, 4 April 2014.
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Recent developments in Ukraine, Doc. 13482, 8 April 2014, sections concerning language policy.
- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Law No. 2704-VIII, On Supporting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language, 25 April 2019.
- European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). Opinion on the Law on Supporting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language, CDL-AD(2019)032, adopted on 6-7 December 2019.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights / Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. 2021 reports on the human-rights situation, hate speech, threats and the rights of linguistic minorities.

ONOMASTIC AND TOPONYMIC INDEX

Persons, places, institutions and documents are indexed. Modern authors are listed by surname. Terms appearing constantly throughout the volume—Ukraine, Russia, NATO, the European Union and the United States—have deliberately been omitted, as indexing them would produce reference lists of little navigational value.

A

Aydiivka 145, 178
Azárov, Mykola 68, 71

B

Bakhmut 144, 145, 178
Baker, James 23, 25, 94
Bandera, Stepan 158, 159, 179
Belavezha, Accords, 53, 54, 56, 177, 187
Bielorrusia 52, 53, 54, 68, 83, 91, 99, 101
Brest-Litovsk 28, 29, 177, 186
BRICS 132, 163, 164, 169, 175
Bucarest, cumbre de 178
Bucha 142, 143, 178
Bush, George W. 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 66, 163

C

Carr, E. H. 183
CIS 53, 54, 56, 57, 64, 65, 68, 85, 179
Chomsky, Noam 22, 93
Clinton, Bill 23, 25, 58
Conquest, Robert 183
Corte Internacional de Justicia 82, 160

Crimea 16, 17, 32

D

Donbás 16, 18, 19, 68, 87, 91, 93, 96
Donetsk 81, 88, 89, 90, 91
Duguin, Alexandr 184

E

Estambul 84, 178

F

Finlandia 147, 170, 173, 178, 189
Fitzpatrick, Sheila 184
Flota del Mar Negro 61, 86, 98

G

Gazprom 97, 106, 124, 125, 126, 162
Georgia 45, 52, 124, 130, 156, 157, 159, 178
Gorbachov, Mijail 23

H

Hobsbawm, Eric 184
Hollande, François 121, 122, 123

J

Kharkiv 61, 64, 73, 88, 89, 90, 124
Kherson 88, 141, 143, 144, 174, 178

K

Kazajistán 68, 91, 133, 179
 Kennan, George 22, 26
 Kerch, estrecho de 135, 136, 178
 Kissinger, Henry 22, 188
 Kosovo 82, 160, 164, 186
 Kravchuk, Leonid 52, 54, 56, 57, 58
 Kuchma, Leonid 57, 58
 Kursk 145, 178

L

Lavrov, Serguéi 93, 99, 101, 106, 119, 121, 129
 Lenin, Vladímir 28, 70, 183
 Luhansk 81, 88, 89, 90
 Lukashenko, Alexandr 102

M

Medvédev, Dmitri 104, 120
 Memorándum de Budapest 54, 58, 86, 177
 Merkel, Angela 99, 100, 109, 114, 121, 122
 MH17, vuelo 155, 156, 178, 179, 180, 186
 Minsk, Accords, 101, 102, 104, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114

O

Obama, Barack 105, 122, 165, 167
 Odesa 74, 88, 90, 130
 OSCE 20, 88, 104, 107, 108, 114, 117, 118, 120, 121

P

Patrushev, Nikolai 158
 Perry, William 23
 Polonia 25, 30, 31, 33, 37, 43, 73

Poroshenko, Petró 23, 75, 95, 99, 100, 101, 102

Putin, Vladímir 24, 65, 66, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80

R

Rada Suprema 17, 24, 56, 57, 65, 73, 74, 75, 77
 Rasmussen, Anders Fogh 99, 100, 102

S

Sebastopol 60, 61, 79, 81, 82
 Sechin, Ígor 161, 166
 Stalin, Iósif 29, 30, 31, 32, 183, 184
 Suecia 147, 170, 173, 178, 189

T

Tsygankov, Andrei 166

U

Unión Aduanera Euroasiática 68, 101, 179

Y

Yalta, conferencia de 31, 33, 177, 187
 Yanukóvich, Viktor 24, 61, 62, 65, 69, 70
 Yatseniuk, Arseni 89, 96, 97, 100, 113, 127
 Yeltsin, Borís 25, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47
 Yúshchenko, Viktor 61, 62, 65, 114, 157, 158, 159, 162

Z

Zaporizhzhia 144, 151, 174, 189
 Zelenski, Volodymyr 95, 136, 137, 178