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Reflections for the interdisciplinary study of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in 2022

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Jorge J. Villasmil-Espinoza *

Yevhen Leheza **

Liudmyla Holovii ***

Abstract

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is an unusual geopolitical event that puts the security of Western Europe at risk and, at the same time, erodes the norms of international law that regulate, at least in theory, relations between civilized countries. Indeed, it is a tragic event that has cost the lives of thousands of civilians who have been victims of war crimes and serious violations of their fundamental rights. In this sense, the objective of this editorial is twofold, on the one hand, to present volume 40, number 73 of Political Questions and, on the other, to briefly explain the causes and geopolitical consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is concluded that the invasion of Putin's Russia in Ukraine can trigger a prolonged and extensive conflict that can even confront NATO directly with Russia. Ideologically, it is a conflict that means a clash between different political models such as the liberal democracies of the West (ensuring human rights, adherence to the principles of international law - the sovereignty of the country, freedom of speech, free movement around the world, etc.) with the militarist and neoconservative authoritarianism of tsarist roots.

Keywords: Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine in 2022; war crimes; human rights violations; interdisciplinary study of war; war in Ukraine.

* Historian expert in contemporary historical processes. PhD in Political Science with postdoctoral studies in Human Rights; editor of the journal *Cuestiones Políticas*; Director of the Scientific Dissemination Foundation; holder professor at the University of Zulia in Maracaibo, Venezuela. Web of Science Researcher ID: AAO-7385-2020. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0791-3331>

** Professor, Doctor of Science in law, Professor at the Department of public and private law, University of Customs and Finance, Dnipro, Ukraine. Web of Science Researcher ID: X-9904-2019. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9134-8499>

*** National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5537-0944>

Reflexiones para el estudio interdisciplinario de la invasión de Ucrania por parte de la Federación Rusa en 2022

Resumen

La invasión de Ucrania por parte de Rusia en febrero de 2022 es un evento geopolítico que pone en riesgo la seguridad de Europa Occidental y, al mismo tiempo, erosiona las normas del derecho internacional que regulan las relaciones entre países civilizados. De hecho, se trata de un acontecimiento trágico que ha costado la vida a miles de civiles que han sido víctimas de crímenes de guerra y de graves violaciones de sus derechos fundamentales. En este sentido, el objetivo de este editorial es doble, por un lado, presentar el volumen 40, número 73 de Cuestiones políticas y, por otro, explicar brevemente las causas y consecuencias geopolíticas de la invasión rusa de Ucrania. Se concluye que la invasión de la Rusia de Putin en Ucrania puede desencadenar un conflicto prolongado y extenso que incluso puede enfrentar a la OTAN directamente con Rusia. Ideológicamente, es un conflicto que significa un choque entre diferentes modelos políticos como las democracias liberales de Occidente (garantizar los derechos humanos, la adhesión a los principios del derecho internacional - la soberanía del país, la libertad de expresión, la libre circulación en todo el mundo, etc.) con el autoritarismo militarista y neoconservador de raíces zaristas.

Palabras clave: Invasión de Ucrania por parte de la Federación Rusa en 2022; crímenes de guerra; violaciones de los derechos humanos; estudio interdisciplinario de la guerra; guerra en Ucrania.

Exordium

An adequate understanding of the invasion of the Russian Federation to Ukraine that occurred on February 24, 2022, demands the identification of the main actors and factors, texts, and contexts that have converged dialectically in the realization of the dramatic events that represent a war of defense with characteristics of hybrid war on the part of Russia, for the Ukrainian society as a whole in the general framework of the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the invading troops, as evidenced by the ruthless killings (massacres) of thousands of civilians in the cities of Bucha, Borodyanka, Gostomel, Irpin, Buzova, and others.

The analysis presented below is based on the consideration of 7 important factors to take into account in political and legal analysis as a necessary condition to understand, without bias or partial vision, the main

events that determine the dynamics of political conflict in its course and war between Russia and Ukraine, the latter, a sovereign and independent country that has the irrefutable right to self-determine its national destiny, without the interference of Russia, beyond its historical and cultural ties.

The reasons and factors for the beginning of the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine are:

1. Signing without guarantees of compliance of the Budapest Memorandum on December 5, 1994. Denial of nuclear weapons. (Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. 1994)
2. The arrival of the pro-Russian president of Ukraine Viktor Fyodorovich Yanukovich who governed between 2010-2014, ruining the national economy and the military establishment.
3. Annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 by the Russian Federation and the weak position of Europe in the form of sanctions.
4. Uncontrolled dynamics of Corruption in Ukraine for 30 years (from 1990-2021). In fact, there were no arms purchases, especially military plans.
5. The impunity of President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in the military conflicts in Chechnya 1999-2009, Syria, and Ukraine. A situation that has underpinned Putin's "reign" from 1999 to the present.
6. Russian information war in the media inciting the Russians against the Ukrainians. Systematic lies about Nazis and fascists, NATO bases locations, etc., live on the territory of Ukraine.
7. Ukraine's withdrawal from Russian oil and gas, reduction in commercial turnover, i.e., a decrease in Russia's profits. It is profitable for Ukraine to sell products to Europe, and Asian countries. Russia is not happy about this.

The purpose of this editorial is to briefly explain the causes and geopolitical consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. On the ideological level, the authors of the text openly and unambiguously support unrestricted respect for international humanitarian law and public international law as a guarantee of the order in international relations!

At the same time, people in Ukraine are suffering every day as a result of the war, which is manifested in the killing of civilians, constant air alarms, and the senseless destruction of civilian infrastructure, which is projected to reach about 600 billion US dollars.

In fact, it should be noted that one of the authors of this editorial, Professor Yevhen Leheza of the University of Customs and Finance in Dnipro, Ukraine, has witnessed the ravages of war with his family, so his testimony should be valued for its eyewitness status of the events.

This work is presented simultaneously in three languages: English, Spanish, and Ukrainian, with the humble intention of shedding light on the international debate on the scope and meaning of the war in Ukraine.

1. Texts and contexts that reveal the war in Ukraine

As in all social and political phenomena, the Russian invasion of Ukraine unfolded not only on the battlefields, but also in the collective imaginary of international politics through the staging of two completely exclusive narratives, each one of which responds to particular hegemonic interests in the case of Russia or, contract hegemonic, in the case of Ukraine.

For Putin's Russia, as absurd as it may seem, Ukraine is a "tool" of NATO and the US, which is used as a spearhead to erode its national security. In addition to the fact that the country is being controlled by NAZI forces that have systematically committed a kind of genocide against the Russians who live in Crimea and in the Donbas region. So, the "special operation" of the Russian military forces in Ukraine aims to liberate this country from the Nazis and genocides who are in power protected by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky, who otherwise contradictorily is from Jewish origin.

As is customary in propaganda stories, the Putin administration does not present concrete evidence to support or at least justify these controversial claims, much less plural and independent flow of information is allowed in Russia to question the official narrative of the war in Russia. public opinion or, at least, generate a serious debate about it. For its part, the Ukrainian narrative of the conflict argues that the country has been the victim of an unprecedented invasion that has meant the destruction of entire regions with a difficult to quantify balance of loss of human life, displaced persons, and refugees.

In this sense, the organized civil society and the armed forces of Ukraine thus have the historical responsibility to resist the Russian invasion as an indispensable condition to protect their lives, families, and national sovereignty against the onslaught of war from a power, which also threatens to unleash a nuclear war that would put the survival of Euro-Western civilization as a whole at imminent risk.

According to the Wilson Center's Nuclear Proliferation International History Project, a global network of researchers and institutions studying international nuclear history, the Budapest Memorandum was struck

in 1994 and was a key agreement in assuring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity from Russia (What is the Budapest memorandum and how does it impact the current crisis in Ukraine?, 2022).

With the memorandum, the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia committed "to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine" and "to refrain from the threat or use of force" against the country (Budapest memorandum on security assurances, 1994).

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has publicly commented on the Budapest Memorandum by arguing that it provides no true guarantee of safety due to Russia's coercive power (Zelensky's full speech at Munich Security Conference, 2022).

On 19 February 2022, Zelenskyy made a speech at the Munich Security Conference (Zelensky's full speech at Munich Security Conference, 2022) in which he said "Since 2014, Ukraine has tried three times to convene consultations with the guarantor states of the Budapest Memorandum [i.e., United States and the United Kingdom]. Three times without success. Today Ukraine will do it for the fourth time. ... If they do not happen again or their results do not guarantee security for our country, Ukraine will have every right to believe that the Budapest Memorandum is not working and all the package decisions of 1994 are in doubt." (Zelensky's full speech at Munich Security Conference, 2022).

This treaty has since been violated by Russia at the outbreak of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

During the reign of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014), Ukraine's gold and foreign exchange reserves fell from \$ 34 billion to \$ 7 billion, the population became poorer, unemployment increased, and the formal attitude to defending the country's sovereignty and national security led to the annexation of Crimea. February 2014.

In February and March 2014, Russia invaded and subsequently annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014).

This event took place in the aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity and is part of the wider Russo-Ukrainian War (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014).

On 22–23 February 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin convened an all-night meeting with security service chiefs to discuss assisting the deposed Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich with leaving the country (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014). At the end of the meeting, Putin remarked that "we must start working on returning Crimea to Russia" (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014). On 23 February 2014, pro-Russian demonstrations were held in the Crimean city

of Sevastopol (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014). On 27 February 2014, masked Russian troops without insignia took over the Supreme Council (parliament) of Crimea and captured strategic sites across Crimea.

This led to the installation of the pro-Russian Sergey Aksyonov government in Crimea, the Crimean status referendum, and the declaration of Crimea's independence on 16 March 2014 (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014). Russia formally incorporated Crimea as two Russian federal subjects—the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol on 18 March 2014 (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014). Following the annexation, Russia escalated its military presence on the peninsula and made nuclear threats to solidify the new status quo on the ground (Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, 2014).

The Minsk agreements were a series of international agreements which sought to end the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine (Minsk agreements, 2015). The first, known as the Minsk Protocol, was drafted in 2014 by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, consisting of Ukraine, Russia, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), with mediation by the leaders of France and Germany in the so-called Normandy Format (Minsk agreements, 2015). After extensive talks in Minsk, Belarus, the agreement was signed on 5 September 2014 by representatives of the Trilateral Contact Group and, without recognition of their status, by the then-leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) (Minsk agreements, 2015). This agreement followed multiple previous attempts to stop the fighting in the region and aimed to implement an immediate ceasefire (Minsk agreements, 2015).

The agreement failed to stop fighting and was thus followed with a revised and updated agreement, Minsk II, which was signed on 12 February 2015 (Minsk agreements, 2015). This agreement consisted of a package of measures, including a ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line, release of prisoners of war, constitutional reform in Ukraine granting self-government to certain areas of Donbas and restoring control of the state border to the Ukrainian government (Minsk agreements, 2015). While fighting subsided following the agreement's signing, it never ended completely, and the agreement's provisions were never fully implemented (Minsk agreements, 2015). The Normandy Format parties agreed that the Minsk II remains the basis for any future resolution to the conflict (Minsk agreements, 2015).

Amid rising tensions between Russia and Ukraine in early 2022, Russia officially recognised the Luhansk and Donetsk people's republics on 21 February 2022 (Minsk agreements, 2015). Following that decision, on 22

February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that the Minsk agreements «no longer existed», and that Ukraine, not Russia, was to blame for their collapse (Minsk agreements, 2015). Russia then invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

So, by launching a full-scale war, the Russian Federation unilaterally violated the Minsk agreements of 2014 and 2015, Budapest Memorandum of 1994.

Conclusions

From no point of view is Russia's military invasion of Ukraine acceptable, since it is a military onslaught to affect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a free and independent country such as Ukraine. Consequently, Ukraine has every right to build an autonomous national project based on its interests, aspirations, and needs and everything indicates that this project will be developed within the framework of the European Union, liberal democracy, and free trade, tools that characterize the development strategies of the free world.

Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, which began gradually in 2014 with the de facto annexation of the Crimean peninsula, admits different geopolitical and geostrategic readings. In the first scenario, it is an attempt by Moscow to regain the territorial hegemony of the USSR or even of the Tsarist empire which also implies the political and economic control of neighboring countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. This seems to be the reality of their intentions since the invasion of Georgia and the latent threat to invade now Moldova. It is a plan of territorial division and the creation of artificial republics in the occupied territories subordinated to the authoritarian power of the Kremlin, regardless of the parameters of international law.

However, since the disintegration of the USSR and after having lived through the experience of real socialism, it is clear that the societies of the aforementioned countries want to be integrated into the political expectations of the West, as a condition of possibly increasing their economic potential and productive capacities in a climate of respect for individual liberties and the rule of law that identifies democracy, since it is understood in the social representations of the younger generations that democracy, without denying its contractions, is the best form of government when seeking the general enjoyment of human rights.

In conclusion, the invasion of Putin's Russia in Ukraine may trigger a prolonged and extensive conflict where a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia is not ruled out. Ideologically, it is a conflict that

means a clash between different political models, such as Western liberal democracies (guaranteeing human rights, adherence to the principles of international law - the sovereignty of the country, freedom of speech, free movement around the world, etc.) with militaristic and neoconservative authoritarianism with tsarist roots. Recall that in the absence of the Marxist-Leninist ideology of yesteryear, Russia has sought to recall its Tsarist past and its Orthodox religious tradition as a new source of national unity and historical consciousness.

Thus, the Russian Federation, violating the norms of international law, bears full legal and political responsibility for thousands of civilians in Ukraine, destroyed infrastructure (houses, bridges, airports, factories, hospitals, schools, etc.), world hunger due to blocking the ports of Ukraine and the exit of civilian ships to the Black Sea to export more than 20 million tons of wheat.

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