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**Analysis of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict from the
Realistic Perspective of International Relations**

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DEDICATION

□ This degree work is dedicated to my family. My parents Felipe Alvarez and Bertha Guzman who have supported me in my dreams and have guided me in my life path. My brother Juan Felipe who has been my accomplice and best friend and my pet Canela, who has been my companion in my growth process. It is also dedicated to all the friends who have accompanied me in my years as a student giving me new perspectives about life and allowing my personal growth.

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ANÁLISIS DEL CONFLICTO RUSIA-UCRANIA DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA REALISTA DE LAS RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES.

Resumen

Este trabajo se centró en el análisis de la historia y los actores que precedieron al conflicto entre Rusia y Ucrania, así como sus posibles causas. También analiza el desarrollo de los hechos desde una perspectiva realista de las relaciones internacionales, a partir de las diferentes interacciones y relaciones que históricamente han existido entre ambos países y con terceros que pudieron haber influido en el desarrollo de los hechos ocurridos desde el 24 de febrero. 2022; así como el poder, la anarquía y el interés individual de cada estado. Este análisis se realizó mediante el estudio de diferentes fuentes relacionadas con la relación histórica entre ambos países, el desarrollo del conflicto y la teoría realista de las relaciones internacionales. Como resultado se encontró que la diferencia de intereses, así como la necesidad de conservar el poder es lo que motivó a ambas partes a dejar que el conflicto que se originó en 2014 evolucionara hasta lo que es hoy.

Palabras clave

Ucrania; Rusia; Realismo; Conflicto; OTAN

Abstract

This work focused on the analysis of history and actors that preceded the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as well as its possible causes. It also analyzes the development of the events from a realistic perspective of international relations, based on the different interactions and relationships that historically had existed between both countries and with third parties that could have influenced the development of the events that have occurred since February 24, 2022; as well as the power, the anarchy, and the individual interest of each state. This analysis was accomplished by the study of different sources related to the historic relation between both countries, the development of the conflict and the realist theory of international relations. As a result it was found that the difference in interest as well as the need to preserve power is what motivated both parties to let the conflict that originated in 2014 to evolve into what it is today.

Key-words: Ukraine, Russia, realism, conflict, NATO

Analysis of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict from the Realistic Perspective of International Relations

1. Introduction

The motivation behind this research is the comprehension of the violent conflict occurring at the time of writing between the countries of Ukraine and Russia. The ambiguity of the representatives as to reasons, intentions, and actions has created a fear that spread throughout Europe, especially in the Eastern countries. The lack of real comprehension as to why the peace was broken brought instability in political, economic, and social issues around the world such as the increase in the price of oil, a migration crisis, change in diplomatic relations, the abandonment of certain companies and services from Russia (which created problems with civilians), among many others.

Due to my residence in the Czech Republic during the beginning and development of the conflict, I have witnessed the impact of the confrontation, the migration crisis and the repercussions in the Eastern countries from a personal perspective. This closer look allows me to understand the importance of the analysis of the conflict, focusing on the real roots and the possible repercussions it may have in the future on economic and diplomatic affairs throughout Europe.

This analysis will be based on the realist theory of international relations that focuses on the protagonism of countries as the main actor in the international arena, the anarchic system and the differences in the balance of power. These are evidenced in the current situation that Ukraine is experiencing (Blinder, 2021).

By using historical and theoretical bases, the comprehension and analysis of such a delicate but powerful event can allow others to have a more holistic opinion and better judgment in acting and following the situation based on how it is portrayed by the media.

The problems to be addressed in this research work are:

- The difference of powers in the countries involved, which, as Aron explains, in international relations power is being able to impose one's will on others. This means that power is a relationship between men (1962). This dynamic is seen between President Vladimir Putin and Volodimir Zelensky.
- The anarchic system that allows one country to go against everything established by international law and attack another;
- The different power dynamics and the history behind the conflict. It is rooted in old problems and reasons other than those stated by the Russian president when explaining the reasons for the special military operation in Ukraine.
- The historical background of these events is based on the concepts of sovereignty and nationhood, as well as the national identity portrayed in the conflict; the identification of the different actors involved and their impact on the development of the events and whether this war will affect the countries' diplomatic and trade relations with Russia in the future.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to understand the real reasons for the conflict and its historical background. It also seeks to identify the different actors involved in the conflict and analyze the influence each of them have in the development of the problem. Finally, this work aims at analyzing the immediate repercussions of the conflict based on the realist theory of international relations.

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 General Objective

To determine the reasons for the detonation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

1.1.2 Specific objectives

1. To analyze the historical background and the relationship between Russia and Ukraine over the years based on the power relations of the realist theory of international relations, highlighting the protagonism of the state as the main actor in international relations.
2. To analyze the current situation of the confrontation and the most relevant impacts at the international level in the short term in terms of diplomatic and commercial relations with Russia from the anarchic system.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Realism in International Relations

“Homo homini lupus” “Man is wolf to man” –Hobbes

"International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate ends of international politics may be, power is always the immediate goal" (Morgenthau, 1963, p.112). International Relations, a relatively new and debated social science among experts, does not have an exact definition; however, Morgenthau gives us a realistic and crude perspective of how it works, of what it represents. Today we live in an interconnected world due to technology and globalization, which has led us to "evolve" from what humanity was in the First World War. Countries have sought peace ever since, in a "false" curtain of perfection that has been imposed by the media to maintain an image of solidarity and selfless cooperation between countries. Collaboration, regional blocs, international organizations are all after the goal of a collective welfare, painting almost a utopia in the text; however, as it is known thanks to the European conquest, the perception of what the world represents is biased (Piana & Tisera, 2017).

The realist theory of international relations begins to take a presence in the interwar period (1919-1936) as a counterpart to the "idealists," who considered that it was possible to delimit the reasons for war and that by doing it, war could be eliminated. They also believed that states had common interests such as peace, and that they could cooperate to achieve it. This was proved incorrect with the outbreak of the Second World War, giving voice to those who, after the analysis of classical authors, came to the conclusion that the selfishness of human beings, and therefore of States, would never allow war to be eradicated. Realism, which defends the important role of power in social and international dynamics, was crowned victorious in the first encounter between these two ideals that coexist to this day, after the atrocities carried out during the war by the different sides for reasons of selfishness, nationalism, and desire for power became evident. During this period, what is known as modern realism emerged, with subtle differences to classical realism, but in essence based on the 3 principles that are highlighted in both classical and modern authors: statism, survival and self-help (Dunne & Schmidt, 2001).

After the Second World War realism became popular. The American hegemony after the cold war has been used as a tool to focus the interests of the state, to achieve peace with force and even determining that the coexistence of different interests is possible. This has allowed realism to position and maintain itself as "the central tradition in the study of global politics." (Keohane, 1989)

Within the realist theory there are different currents, since it is still relevant today and has centuries-old roots, it has had to advance in study to understand contemporary issues within timeless ideas. Classical writers such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, among others, are the ones who set the guidelines with their ideas of how a state should be managed in the international arena with actions that defend the "reason of state."¹ (Meinecke, 1957) Within this context, war and the use of force is justified as a mechanism for the preservation of the state itself. Reaching the point that even moral conceptions would become detrimental to the proper preservation of a state and that a good leader must find a "new morality" that suits the interests and power according to Machiavelli. This realist current is called Classical Realism, marking the basis for the development of new ideas and conceptions of it in new realities.

One of the first sources of realism is the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, in which the state is considered as the main and only actor in international relations in the realist perspective, and thus statism is established, which explains the legitimate representation of the people's desire by the state or "Preeminence of the state in social, economic or cultural activity" (RAE, 2021), which is what gives legitimacy to the state for the creation of laws and the use of force to ensure that they are complied with. However, realist theory considers that outside the boundaries of the state there is anarchy due to the lack of supranational control (Dunne & Schmidt, 2001). This gives rise to a differentiation between domestic politics and foreign or international politics. Within the domestic politics of a country there are mechanisms to control the natural impulse of human beings to acquire power, such as money and status, among other manifestations of it, due to the existence of laws and a government that controls this kind of actions through legislation, punishment, and sometimes the extreme use of violence. An example of this is the criminalization of murder in most states of the world. However, in international politics there is a much more violent reality under these arguments. In the absence of a body with sufficient power to legislate and control the actions of states, they take

¹ Reason of state: Term created by Giovanni Botero in his work *Della Ragion Di Stato* in 1589.

measures, whether of a political, economic, or even warlike nature, which are extremely violent, in some cases, against other states.

As part of this anarchy in which states find themselves in the international sphere, it is considered that the self-limitation of each state as sovereign and therefore its own ultimate authority causes no power to be followed above it. Unlike domestic politics, which operates with a quasi-hierarchical system in which there are different roles of power and subordination (Dunne & Schmidt, 2001). With this, the survival of the state is never assured in the international arena. A clear example is the appearance and disappearance of states at the hands of others after wars, conquests, and agreements that over this so-called "sovereignty" act with greater power and alter the reality of that state, even disappearing it completely in certain cases. International anarchy requires policies that preserve the survival of the state.

In the face of this reality, self-help is what a State does to maintain its welfare and survival, since the latter should be the main objective of every leader. Realism does not consider international organizations, regional blocs, or other forms of cooperation as actors because based on Machiavelli's precepts, today's friend may be tomorrow's enemy. This idea makes these forms of cooperation obsolete when it comes to making decisions for the welfare of the state, each state will act according to its own desires and needs. Because of this, states must ensure that their security depends solely on themselves.

War is inevitable because nothing prevents it from happening (Waltz, 1959). In view of this, realism emphasizes that wars will occur when the interests of a state are harmed. The lack of the existence of a supranational power to control actions will always result in the need for defense and will lend itself to the use of violence as has been evidenced in many cases throughout history.

A very important point to note is the definition of sovereignty, "Covenants that do not rest on the sword are but words without force to protect man in any way." (Hobbes, 2004) With this, Hobbes explains that sovereignty is the main instrument to obtain peace, since cooperation is not possible without this supreme and unlimited power of the states and their willingness to impose it. Likewise, in the Constitution of Cadiz (1812) sovereignty is positioned over the Nation, "sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation, and therefore belongs exclusively to the Nation the right to establish its fundamental laws."

In practice these realistic definitions, considered by many as outdated and only theoretical, take shape again, since wars have never stopped; they have only been masked in power relations and diplomatic excuses. Also, the power of strong states and their interests run over any previously established agreement on a false equality of conditions. Stephen Waltz suggests that it is "the balance of threats" that determines the actions of a state over power relations, which explains the anarchy in international relations (1959). We can see this reflected in the actions of different states that, in order to defend their interests, become immersed in wars with countries that are not so powerful, but which may represent a threat.

After the end of the Cold War, which came very close to a war, but one which never took place, Liberalism regained popularity with the optimism of cooperation and common interests of the states. However, this has not diminished the relevance of realism, since it has also advanced along with international dynamics, reaching what is today Neorealism, which in turn has distinctions.

Among these new interpretations of realism there is a marked differentiation between two currents. The first, which is based on authors such as Thucydides (430-400 BC), explains that conflict has no way of being avoided due to the selfish nature of the human being; this is why one must always be prepared for defense and the search for power for survival. On the other hand, there are those who, based on authors such as Waltz or Rosseau, interpret the need for defense and acquisition of power based on specific circumstances. They say that violence comes from anarchy in the international arena, and that conflict can occur even when states have benign intentions. There are even those who arrive at a liberal realism in which states can lessen the impact of anarchy with mechanisms of cooperation, creation of rules, and the control of those countries that wish to go down the violent path to maintain a state of peace.

However, of the different ideas existing in Neorealism, we can highlight the idea of practical realism or also called historical realism, whose main authors are Machiavelli and Carr. Within this current, it is considered that something very relevant in terms of international politics are the dynamics of power and subordination. Leaders must learn from these policies and the changing state of these in the international system. With this, regardless of the morality of certain states, force and power is what will end up controlling and subordinating the less powerful country regardless of the morality of the subordinate state.

A clear example of this are the events unfolding in Ukraine. On February 24, 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine in a violent manner with bombings in different parts of the country, while excusing this action in the threat and mistreatment of the inhabitants of border regions of Ukraine that have been the cause of conflict with

Russia since 2014. All this with the background of a request for annexation of Ukraine to NATO², action before which Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, was in complete disagreement alleging that it would be a danger to the state due to the conflict occurring since 2014 in the Crimea region, and that the petition was placed with the aim of containing Russia. Weeks earlier, the President of Ukraine, Volodimir Zelensky said, "Both Donbas and Crimea will return to Ukraine, exclusively through diplomacy. We will not usurp what is not ours, but we will not give up our land." His words make it clear Ukraine's peaceful intentions and do not entail any provocation for an attack involving violence and the use of armed forces. Nonetheless, after the attack, diplomatic relations were cut off with Moscow and weapons were distributed to all those who "want to defend the homeland." The West condemned the attack, and strong sanctions by the European Union and the United States were and continue being applied against the Russian economy, which, being a globalized country, depends on others, so sanctions have left them in a disadvantageous position. However, they have not stopped Russia from their military actions. The retaliations, although strong, have not been enough to help Ukraine, and any kind of war intervention could mean the triggering of a new war of great dimensions, and with it, great consequences (BBC News Mundo, 2022).

1.2.2 Historical Analysis of the relations between Russia and Ukraine

Historically there has been a conflictive relationship between the two countries since the very beginning of their existence in medieval Kievan Rus, the common point of origin from which these now two nations emerge. The religious base of orthodox Christianity acquired in 987 was the one that gave beginning to what later would become a common culture. This was maintained among the people even when, what is known as Ukraine today, was divided and conquered by different empires during the years. One side was a part of the Russian domain almost in perpetuity and the other passed through the hands of Lithuanians, Poles, Germans, among others and finally the Russian empire until the definitive independence in 1991 (Cordero, 2022).

The Russian Empire took control of the "left bank" of Ukraine east of the Dnieper River in the 17th century, in the war between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Tsarism. The "right bank" to the west was controlled by Poland and later, by other nations. This was until 1793 when the "right bank" was annexed to the Russian Empire. Since then, it began the policy of "Russification" in which the use and study of the Ukrainian language was forbidden, and pressure was exerted on the people to convert to the Russian Orthodox faith. This continued into the 20th century with the intention of discouraging Ukrainian national identity (Gintsburg, 2022).

With the arrival of the 20th century came changes that would determine the future of both nations: The Russian Revolution (1917) and the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (1922). In the period between the devastating civil war brought about by the Russian Revolution and its annexation to the USSR at the end of World War I, Ukraine was briefly an independent nation.

In the 1950s, in an attempt to further attach Ukraine to Russian influence, Joseph Stalin's government caused the "Holodomor," a famine that killed millions of Ukrainian citizens in an attempt to force the peasants to join farm collectivization campaigns, causing many sectors of the east to be desolate due to the deaths. Faced with this, Russian and Soviet citizens were mobilized to these areas to achieve a repopulation; however, these people had no connection with the culture, with the land, and in most cases, neither with the language (Menkouski, et. al., 2021).

Even with all these efforts, the USSR was never able to completely dominate Ukraine because of the cultural sphere, which had some autonomy in culture and education and which managed to arouse the rejection of a large part of the population. All other decisions and actions had to come from the central order (Menkouski, et. al., 2021).

2. Literature review

In July 1941, during the Second World War, Germany decided to move towards the conquest of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics through the already conquered Poland and through what is now known as

² NATO: "The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is an international organization of a political and military nature whose objective is to guarantee the security and freedom of its members" (El Mundo, 2022).

Ukraine. The Ukrainian people saw the opportunity to gain independence once again as it happened at the end of the First World War. Thus, with the desire for independence, as well as the rejection originated in the mistreatment of the Soviet leaders towards the population, Ukrainians decided to support the invasion of Germany under Hitler's command. With this arose the problem of the division between Ukrainian nationalists and Russian separatists in Ukraine; this last group suffered strong attacks from the German army as well as from the Ukrainian liberation army, and are considered a genocide by Russia. Part of the Ukrainian territory passed into the hands of the German army, who, on gaining power, subjected the population to mistreatment and oppression. In 1944, the USSR regained control of Ukraine and also took control of the lands of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania (Granados, 2007).

In 1990, the sovereignty of the Ukrainian State was declared, and in 1991, the longed-for independence was obtained. After this, despite internal differences in culture and language between Ukrainian nationalists and pro-Russian groups, a certain balance was maintained due to governments that were against European liberalism and supported Russian ideals (Granados, 2007). However, this changed in 2014. The presidency was in charge of Viktor Yanukovich of the communist party, a controversial character in Ukrainian politics due to multiple cases of corruption and his prioritizing of Russian interests over Ukraine's own interests. This provoked disapproval from the majority of the population, and with this, he lost many followers. To increase his popularity in 2013, he and his ministers promised the Ukrainian people to sign an association agreement with the European Union, a promise that brought a lot of support and hope from the people since it would not only increase the economic development of the country, but also move them away from the old Soviet practices and bring them closer to European practices considered more modern and successful by the majority groups. However, after all the campaign and popularity of the signing of the agreement, Yanukovich's government went back on its word and decided not to sign the agreement, causing social discontent that led to violent demonstrations and even the creation of the Euromaidan³ movement whose objective was to overthrow the government in order to take power and lead Ukraine to more liberal and European oriented practices away from Russian control. In February 2014, an agreement about the political crisis in Ukraine was signed, and days later both Yanukovich and other high-ranking officials fled the country to Russia. The parliament removed Yanukovich from office and Petro Poroshenko, a Euromaidan supporter, was appointed as a temporary leader. In view of this, there began to be demonstrations and revolts in eastern Ukraine, as well as in the Crimea area, which historically have been occupied by Russian-speaking citizens and have a cultural and ideological inclination with that country (Cúneo, 2018).

Crimea is an area located in southeastern Ukraine, which was transferred by Moscow to the Ukrainian Republic within the USSR in the 1950s; however, the Russian Black Sea Fleet base in Sevastopol was maintained. This was an arrangement with which Russia maintained a strong influence within the area due to the naval base. Additionally, here the population is Russian speaking and culturally Russian. At the beginning of Yanukovich's government, he signed an agreement in which he extended Russia's control over the base in Sevastopol for 25 years beyond the expiration date initially set for 2017 in exchange for a discount on gas prices. That action was frowned upon by western Ukraine (Marxsen, 2015).

During the revolts of 2014, as a result of the ideological differences of the new government that supported the ideas of the West with the pro-Russian separatist groups, violent altercations took place that led to the invasion of Crimea by a group of armed soldiers thought to have come from Russia to take the area, first, by blocking the roads that connected the peninsula with the rest of Ukraine, then electing a new Russian mayor, and finally, by making the declaration of independence of Crimea and Sevastopol, thus constituting the Republic of Crimea. With this, they held a referendum in which, according to official results, 96% of the population wanted to be annexed to Russia and cease to be part of Ukraine. These results were very controversial in the international community since no international actor witnessed the counts, being the government of Ukraine as the European Union who branded this as a violation of international law. However, Russia signed and in a takeover and silent invasion took control of the Crimea area (Grant, 2015). Russia justifies the action by claiming mistreatment by the "rebels who took over Kiev" against Russians in Crimea, as well as a possible limitation to the speaking of the Russian language, the mostly used language in the region. The strongest argument used against the allegations of the international community was that the citizens voted and applied the right to self-determination. Multiple sanctions were imposed against Russia, and a year later, President Vladimir Putin stated that the plan to seize Crimea was orchestrated weeks before the referendum. Only Belarus and Russia recognize Crimea as part of Russia; the rest of the international community still recognizes it as part of Ukraine. However, administratively, it is under Russian control (BBC News Mundo, 2022).

³ Euromaidan: Social movement that began as protests in Maidan Square in Kiev and led to altercations between the population and the Ukrainian government, overthrowing President Viktor Yanukovich.

On the other hand, Crimea was not the only area that presented problems, after the overthrow of Yanukovych, the new government ideology had affected a large part of eastern Ukraine, primarily in the Donbas area. This area*, which is a border area, holds a strong mixture of cultures, as most borders between countries do, but due to multiple historical events, in this particular area there is a strong union with the Russian culture, so that the language spoken here is Russian. The Donbas is composed primarily of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and its name means basin of the Donets (river found in the region). This was the most populated area of Ukraine after Kiev and coal mining was an important economic activity. Donetsk was known as the unofficial capital of the Donbas region and the fifth most populous city in Ukraine.

With the conflicts, in 2014 there were major clashes between the pro-Russian and the new post-revolution government, leading both Donetsk and Lugansk to self-proclaim themselves as independent states, which is the reason why the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics are not recognized by the Ukrainian government as independent. The Ukrainian government declares that the situation has gotten out of hand by bringing more troops to fight in the area where clashes claimed the lives of thousands⁴ of people from both pro-Russian separatist groups and armed forces of the new government. These actions in the international community were seen as Russia's fault for provoking, financing, and supporting those coming from the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, but on the other hand, the Russian government condemns the actions of the Ukrainian government against the inhabitants of these areas.

These clashes have gone through different stages over the years. At the end of 2014, attempts were made to reach agreements with the different actors in the conflict, as well as with the representatives of different countries in the international community in the Minsk treaty and the Minsk 2 treaty without obtaining successful results due to the polarized desires of each side involved. Momentary ceasefires, prisoner exchanges and even dialogue have been possible during the time without any significant change. In 2019, the current president Volodimir Zelensky won the elections and tried to implement another plan of action, but again, the interests of both sides got in the way and peace was not reached since, for there to be a ceasefire by the Russian forces, Ukraine had to grant Donbass autonomy, which would lead it to be in total control of Russia and lose these lands definitively. This stalemate of the problem has maintained the tension and conflict between Ukraine and Russia until today, where on February 24, 2022 Russia carried out a "special military operation" bombing Ukrainian territory justifying itself in two main objectives: to defend itself and stop the genocide in Donbas and the denazification of Ukraine (Sasse & Lackner, 2018).

It all started in November 2021 when Ukraine reported the presence of Russian soldiers on the borders, but tensions escalated in January as Russia and Belarus conducted large-scale maneuvers near the Ukrainian border mobilizing a third of the Russian army. Such a large Russian mobilization posed a threat to many, so various European representatives met with the Russian president to dialogue and urged negotiation. The United States alerted the world of a possible invasion, but Russia stressed that these were only military exercises that would end soon. However, after the date set for the withdrawal of the troops, they remained there, which caused high tension and led Ukraine to arm itself with the help of the United States and Great Britain. In the West, there was fear, but socially, the Ukrainian population was calm due to multiple alarms of a possible invasion in the past that had not been not real; therefore, even president Volodimir Zelensky asked not to alarm the population and to stop causing fear.

The problem was in the Donbas region, where the Ukrainian army and the Donetsk and Luhansk people's militia increased the level of violence of the usual fights with artillery shelling along the entire line of contact. On February 21, President Putin gave a speech in which he alarmed the population by talking about the genocide that was happening to the Russians in Ukraine as well as how NATO had broken its promises by being closer and closer to the Russian borders. Putin also said that Ukraine had the will to develop nuclear weapons. The day after this speech, the situation worsened with the Russian recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, and a new speech demanding that Ukraine could join NATO and for it to dissolve its army.

In the early morning of February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the world about the genocide of Russians in Donbas and stated that his goals were the overthrow of the Ukrainian government, as well as the denazification of Ukraine. Immediately afterwards, the Russian army invaded Ukraine after a bombardment of strategic points; thus starting the first phase of the conflict, as seen in figure 1, in which the attack is carried out at different points along the border with Russia, as well as with Belarus. In addition to the physical attacks, there were also cyber-attacks intended to slow down the Ukrainian response to frighten the population and lower their morale. On this first day, Russian troops advanced rapidly taking

⁴ By January 2022, approximately 14,000 dead, 30,000 injured, 1.4 million displaced and 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (Swissinfo, 2022).

different cities along the border, in addition to the attempt to seize the airport located in Hostomel, 30 kilometers from the Ukrainian capital Kiev. However, this was unsuccessful due to the counterattack by the Ukrainian defense forces. Martial law was decreed in Ukraine, which mobilized the army and prohibited men between 18 and 60 years of age to leave the country (CNN Español, 2022).

Figure 1.

Map of areas under attack by Russia on February 24, 2022



Note. Map of areas under attack by Russia on February 24, 2022, by europapress, 2022, <https://www.perfil.com/noticias/internacional/cuales-fueron-las-zonas-atacadas-por-rusia-en-ucrania.phtml>

Quickly the Russian forces advanced to the vicinity of the capital and the civilians devoted themselves to the defense of the city making Molotov cocktails and using the weapons distributed by the Ukrainian authorities. Zelensky shared a video in which he expressed that he would stay to defend the capital, and emotionally, he said goodbye to the population due to the possibility of his death. After this, the dictator of the Russian republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov gave a speech saying that his soldiers, known for their war crimes, would participate in the capture of Kiev. Faced with this situation, the European Union announced a package of sanctions against Russia to condemn the invasion. Companies from all over the world began to terminate their activities in Russia. As a result, stock markets fell sharply and gas and oil prices rose significantly. In addition, a large number of people fled Ukraine to different countries of the European Union which expressed their support and said they were ready to receive them, as was the case of Poland, the country with the largest number of migrants.

After the arrival of the Chechen army in Ukraine, Zelensky announced the creation of a foreign legion composed of volunteers from different countries of the world (Tendencias El Tiempo, 2022). Initially it was considered that this would be a short conflict, but the attacks have not ended. Peace negotiations have been attempted on several occasions, but no agreement has been reached as neither side has given in to their conditions. The Russian conditions for ending the conflict initially were the demilitarization of Ukraine, the declaration of international neutrality, and the recognition of Crimea as belonging to Russia. They also asked for the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. On its side, Ukraine refused and expressed that these conditions were a humiliation to the country. During this time, sanctions were also increased by many countries and arms were sent to Ukraine, especially by the United States. Russia asked for military aid from China, but the latter refused, maintaining impartiality; however, two Chinese state-owned banks joined the sanctions imposed on Russia.

In early March, Russia moved to phase two of its special military mission in an attempt to weaken the Ukrainian defenses through a slower advance and more air and artillery bombardment. During this period the movement of Russian troops through the Ukrainian sea exits was evident, so it was considered that the next city to attack was Odessa. However, at the time of writing this paper this has not happened. An important point was that the pro-Russian forces surrounded the city of Mariupol, a strategic point located between Donbass and Crimea, which was attacked from the first day. From then on, the conflict in this area lasted until the end of May. Both sides suffered thousands of casualties, and the city was reduced to ashes.

The controversial Azov battalion (due to its far-right ideological current), together with the civilians defended the area marking a different path to the development of the events due to the difficulty they faced in taking the city, which forced numerous Russian resources to stagnate there for months. Russian efforts were concentrated on reaching Kiev, but because of the resistance of the Ukrainian defense, the Russian high command had to change strategy and started to mobilize its allies such as Syria (CNN Español, 2022).

Figure 2.

Map of Russian invasion of Ukraine as of March 29, 2022



Note. Map of Russian invasion of Ukraine as of March 29, 2022, by E.I. Graph., 2022, <https://www.elindependiente.com/internacional/2022/03/28/rusia-busca-la-rendicion-de-mariupol-para-dividir-ucrania-en-dos/>.

With this, at the end of March, the last phase of its special military mission began, in which it began to concentrate on the seizure and liberation of Donbas, thus renouncing the seizure of Kiev and the overthrow of the Ukrainian government, in addition to the withdrawal of troops in the north of Ukraine, grouping the troops in Donbas. After the Russian withdrawal a series of war crimes were confirmed in Bucha, a residential locality in the outskirts of the capital, where about 320 civilians were found dead (Rzheutska, 2022), Russia accuses Ukraine of carrying out a false flag operation, however the images made another reality clear. In the month of April attacks were registered in Russian territory, as well as multiple strategic facilities and fuel depots suffered fires reaching the vicinity of Moscow, with this and the strong resistance of Ukraine the West continued to increase sanctions against Russia, as well as sending more weapons. On April 13 Ukraine sank the Black Sea flagship, the Moskva, which was a heavy blow to Russia.

Russia's offensive with the seizure of Donbas was proving more difficult than apparent due to the fact that this area, having been in conflict since 2014, was highly fortified. President Zelensky went so far as to say that this was the largest Russian military operation since World War II (Ledwidge, 2022). Since the beginning of the conflict, multiple Russian generals have been reported killed, this being made possible by constant U.S. intelligence assistance. Not everything was negative for Russia, since at the beginning of May the ruble recovered its value prior to the conflict, partly due to the measures taken by the representatives to collect the gas debts from the different countries in rubles and not in other currencies, thus sanctioning the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Poland, Bulgaria and France, cutting off their gas supplies since they refused to pay in this currency and cutting the supply in half to Italy and Slovakia. (Debate, 2022)

In May, Mariupol fell to Russian forces as the worn-out Ukrainian forces surrendered due to the impossibility of breaking the siege or receiving help from abroad. Ukraine conducted a counteroffensive in Kherson relieving Russian pressure in the Donbas. Zelensky has gone to the areas of greatest conflict despite being a great risk to boost the morale of the troops. Internationally, the United States partially lifted its sanctions on Venezuela to compensate for the lack of Russian oil by allowing companies to start bringing oil from Venezuela to different parts of Europe (Goncharenko, 2022). Zelenski started to get more force in his statements talking about expelling Russians from Donbas and even Crimea (Deutsche Welle, 2022). The NATO Secretary General also declared that the only way to cease the conflict would be through negotiating tables.

During the month of June, the conflict remained static with Russian forces advancing slowly, and Ukrainian forces constantly gaining and losing ground. Russia announced that a referendum will be held in the Kherson area to join the Russian Federation once the city is taken. Ukraine shelled Snake Island, sunk ships and shelled three oil platforms. Lithuania announced that Russia will no longer be able to use its roads to send resources to the military enclave of Kaliningrad, the main base of the Russian Baltic Fleet. Regarding the global economy, due to the sanctions on Russia, there has been a considerable rise in the price of raw materials since January, in addition to the rise in gasoline, which reached a 50% increase in Poland (CNN Español, 2022).

At the NATO summit that took place in Madrid on June 30, 2022, the Lisbon 2010 strategic plan was updated. Within this new strategic concept, Russia is mentioned as the main threat, among other things due to the increase and modernization of Russian nuclear weapons. The manifesto explains that cyber-attacks can be considered an armed attack, which means that Article 5⁵ of the NATO treaty can be triggered, i.e. an armed response by NATO to an attack by one of its members. Likewise, the use of coercive tactics in matters such as politics, energy, economics or information can be considered an armed attack, which implies that the dissemination of false news, economic warfare tactics, political destabilization campaigns, simple gas or oil sanctions with the aim of weakening NATO member countries could be considered an armed attack. The second main threat is terrorism and the modernization of potential attacks by extremist groups, specifically emphasizing the Sahel, also known as the southern flank, in Africa, since the instability of the area is potential for the emergence of new extremist groups as they are weak states with economic, health, food and political crisis, which is determinant to give way to dangerous speeches. The third threat is China, since its strategic intentions are doubted and its political, diplomatic, and economic movements are skeptical. It is clear that NATO does not trust this country, as well as its relationship with Russia, its cyber-attacks, and its desire to control strategic points of world logistics and industry.

In the face of all this, the new commitment to defend the territorial integrity of the members, leaving under NATO protection the non-continental territories of the member states such as the Falklands or Ceuta, is remarked upon. Finally, NATO underlines its commitment to cooperate with the security of Bosnia, Ukraine, and Georgia. In addition, the Turkish delegation signed a document in which it commits itself not to oppose the union of Sweden and Finland in exchange for the lifting of sanctions imposed on Turkey because of the country's intervention in northern Syria. Turkey also commits to cooperate against terrorism, not to support YPG and FETO, and finally to support Turkey's participation in the foreign and security policy of the European Union (U.S Department of State, 2022).

Additionally, in mid-June, the Ukrainian high command ordered the withdrawal from the town of Severodonetsk because it was surrounded and moved the army to more easily defensible locations. In addition, Ukraine shelled the city of Kursk in Russia, which, in response, continued shelling the Ukrainian strategic structure, and points with more than a thousand civilians, such as a commercial center. Russia justified this attack claiming that they had information that this was a point in which there was an arsenal. On the other hand, Ukraine denied this fact.

At the time of writing this paper Russia has taken two of the four cities that Ukraine had in control at the beginning of the offensive in Donbas. Russia is gaining more and more ground, but the prolongation of the conflict has meant a high economic price for both sides. Russia has had to partially mobilize its reserves to build new battalion groups and is losing large army resources and leaving the country in a compromised situation for future international interventions and even for the defense of its own territory after two months of total offensive in a given area to obtain less than fifty percent of its objectives.

Figure 3.

Map showing the war situation in eastern Ukraine on July 13, 2022

⁵ Article 5: The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them, taking place in Europe or North America, shall be considered as an attack directed against all of them, and accordingly agree that if such an attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, shall assist the Party or Parties attacked, and shall thereupon take, individually and in agreement with the other Parties, such measures as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore security in the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken in consequence shall be immediately brought to the attention of the Security Council. These measures shall cease when the Security Council has made the necessary arrangements for the restoration and maintenance of international peace and security. (NATO, 1949)

Note. Map war situation in Ukraine on July (Status at E.P.



showing the eastern 13, 2022 14:00), by

Graphic, 2022, <https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/internacional/2022/07/14/rusia-pulveriza-dombas-1587743.html>.

3.Methods

Through this research, different factors that could have given rise (provoked) the conflict between Russia and Ukraine are analyzed through a theoretical, explanatory, and qualitative investigation.

The analysis began with a review of the historical aspects that both countries have shared since the beginning of the cultural and historical development of both nations, until February 23, 2022, which is the day prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The study focused on the power relations present in the realist theory of international relations based on the reading and research of the most relevant points.

Subsequently, an inquiry was carried out about the influence of different actors within the conflict such as the interests of the countries within NATO and other powers, as well as the possible influence of these in the decision taken by President Vladimir Putin, establishing the protagonism of the state in the different interactions.

And finally, this work concluded with an analysis of the current armed conflict and its short-term impact on the world from the perspective of the anarchic system that governs the world in the realistic perspective of international relations.

This was accomplished by the study of different sources related to the historic relation between both countries, the development of the conflict, and the realist theory of international relations.

4. Discussion

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has shaken the world and the international community. Europe, thanks to its advanced level of integration with the Euro zone, the Schengen area, and especially the European Union, considered it almost impossible for such an event to take place in current times; unless reality was analyzed from a realistic perspective. As previously explained, realism speaks about anarchy in international relations, as well as the need to defend the interests even against morality; thus, the welfare of the State should be the priority of a government. This is where the actions taken by the different countries involved in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine are reflected (Meinecke, 1957).

Ukraine is a strategic zone for Russia as well as for the countries of the European Union and the countries member of NATO. Since Ukraine is located at the midpoint between the countries of the European Union and Russia, it is fundamental for the transport of gas and oil traded between them. Moreover, being so close culturally and geographically to Russia, Ukraine can easily be a threat in case of allying with organizations such as NATO. Also, it is a country that has a large outlet to the Black Sea, which is a strategic point globally for trade leading to the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East. This is why Ukraine is a strategic point in more than one area and has been controlled by governments that supported Russian interests over any other (Gómez, 2021).

With all this, the events of 2014 presented a new challenge for Russia, due to the new inclination on the part of the Ukrainian government and Euromaidan movements. Russia was faced with the dilemma of how to maintain control within this important and sensitive ally. Likewise, due to the revolts in Donbas and strikes in Crimea, multiple citizens who wanted to support Russian ideals were being killed by their own government, the new government supporting Western ideals, according to Russian accusations. Russia made the decision to support these groups and under the concept of self-determination of the population, administratively took over Crimea where the population chose that they wanted to be Russian and not Ukrainian by suffrage. As mentioned above, the legitimacy of this referendum is questionable; however, Russia can even be considered a hero by those settlers of the Crimea and Donbas areas who did not support the new government ideology, nor the nationalist sentiment of the rest of Ukrainians, and who, due to the revolts were dying in clashes.

On the other hand, we have the interests and sovereignty of Ukraine, a country in which the people have decided by majority that they wish to break with the traditional ways of managing the state in favor of Russia and move closer to the West, where they saw an opportunity that could be economically positive as well as a change of practices to something they considered more modern. Joining this giant bloc of the European Union would be positive according to the Ukrainians who supported Euromaidan since they would get support in different areas from member countries and they would also have more security in case of economic crises, even war. Being a sovereign state, it is totally free to manage its international relations as it pleases and also to deal with those groups that violently oppose the ideological change in Ukraine because of their pro-Russian ideals, trying to destabilize the government and using violence as a means of expression.

Thus we can see in Russia's actions the interest of preserving its power and in Ukraine's actions the interest of development and innovation. Both states have different and, unfortunately, opposing ideas and priorities. As the realist theory explains, states are the protagonists and the only important actors in international relations because today's allies can be tomorrow's enemies according to Machiavelli's ideas. Here, we can see how two allied countries break their relations for their own interests and start a conflict that would turn into a highly violent confrontation in 2022. In these actions we also see the reason of state in which each country looks after its own interests, welfare and obtaining power (Meinecke, 1957).

Once Crimea is seized in the international community it is not recognized as part of Russia as this would be going against the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine. Regardless of Russia's power, and its significant gas and oil resources to Europe a number of sanctions were implemented to punish this act. The states do this with the intention of demonstrating to Russia that even with all that power, it cannot act without repercussions, thus, ensuring the internal security of each country. In this case, there is a collaboration for

a goal that the countries share, fear. By not allowing Russia to act without any consequences they make it clear that this country cannot attack or destabilize other states without retaliation.

After this, the conflict did not stop, but the international intervention and support to Ukraine decreased due to the absence of a real threat to other states for them to really care to act; as it is known that cooperation always has individual interests behind it. Who continued to support the separatist groups was Russia because it was in its interest to do battle; in this way it maintained control in these strategic and important areas of the country. However, this could not be a long term strategy as financing a civil war where the Ukrainian government is the one in power was unproductive. Eventually either independence had to happen or these groups had to surrender; the latter was the most likely to happen without Russian support. Russia could not allow this to happen and in November 2021, when the fighting escalated in intensity causing more deaths and violence, a strategy to ensure prolonged control of the area was gradually put in place. This is how Russia eventually mobilized troops to the border in an alleged training, an action before which the United States alarmed the world about a possible invasion; here, a new actor in the conflict emerged.

U.S. interests made it clear that the growth of a historical enemy and the disappearance of a strategic ally such as Ukraine would be negative for their influence in Europe, so they warned and insisted that Ukraine should prepare for an invasion. Under this strategy, the United States sent armaments to Ukraine even before any official conflict. For it, Ukraine is the gateway to Russia, and it is a geographically favorable point for alliance due to its proximity to Russia, as well as a commercially important place. The Russian control of Crimea and Donbas is not positive for the United States since they would control most of the exit to the Black Sea and thus, Russia would gain more commercial and economic power and strength .

By this time, Putin's speeches started to worry the different countries of the world, especially those that are part of the European Union since, being highly dependent on Russian gas and oil, they want to preserve peace and good relations with this country. Different representatives of the member countries met with Vladimir Putin to urge a negotiation and try to maintain peace in Europe. This had no real effect on the development of events since Ukraine did not comply with the requirements to disband its army and liberate Donbas, and NATO refused to commit to keep Ukraine out of the organization due to its sovereign status. Thus, Russia started its special military operation on February 24, 2022. Based on the speech that gave way to the bombings that morning, I can rescue certain hidden intentions on the part of the Russian leader, such as that he wants to take control of the territories of Ukraine, especially the area of Donbas and Crimea, or that the annexation of Ukraine to NATO would be an extraordinary threat to Russia and that this will not be allowed. None of this was explicitly stated and these are personal interpretations based on the speech itself as well as the actions of this country. Highly strategic points were attacked from the very beginning, such as Mariupol or the attempted seizure of Kiev to ensure that the conflict would be short, easy, and favorable to Russia.

The war has not been formally declared but the actions are very similar. We can point out that Russia had no formal reasons to attack, but internally, it is known that Ukraine joining NATO would mean a very big threat and that, if the situation were the opposite and Russian military bases with missiles were being placed in Mexico, close to the United States, the world reaction would be very different. Here we can see an attempt of defense and prevention on the part of Russia, as well as taking a country as strategically located as Ukraine whose commercial power would increase. The attack on Ukraine was an immoral but very strategically positive action for Russia. If events had unfolded as they did in the past with Georgia⁶, realistically Russia's action would have been completely natural and if the West had not reacted so aggressively it would have had very positive repercussions for the state.

However, a large number of sanctions were imposed with the intention of greatly affecting the Russian economy and thus limiting the ability to finance the war. These sanctions came from different parts of the world, and many were announced by the European Union, but their application was threatened by Hungary, a country that has great and good relations with Russia. Once again, we see here the common interests of a group have no relevance before the real individual interest of each state. With the change of government, Hungary declared that it will not support the sanctions and that, if necessary, it will veto them, thus preventing sanctions from being applied. After multiple negotiations on each package of sanctions, Hungary has reached the point where it has almost managed to exclude itself from their application and has expressed internationally the uselessness of the sanctions. In the same way, the application of these sanctions has been a strong blow to the European economy with extremely high increases in the prices of

⁶ Georgian War: Conflict that occurred in 2008 in which Russia supported the liberation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia due to the rapprochement and intentions of Georgia's union to the European Union and NATO, in which there was no major intervention from the West.

gasoline and the basic food basket due to the impossibility of sending raw materials through the Black Sea thanks to the blockade that exists in this place. More effective sanctions are in the limitation of materials for the elaboration of weapons and military resources, which would limit Russia's capacity to produce these goods and therefore, affect the resources available for use in Ukraine.

In the face of all this, the United States has taken advantage of the situation by signing an agreement in which it commits itself to be the new supplier of gas and oil to the European Union and subsequently partially lifting the sanctions imposed on Venezuela so that it can sell its oil in Europe, thus alleviating the impact on the price increase (CNN Español, 2022). The anarchy in international relations due to the lack of a regulating entity leaves the interests of each state as a determining factor for the development of events. In addition, a main but not direct actor in this conflict has been the United States, who has supported Ukraine in arms more than any other state, and has led the negotiations to obtain economic benefits from the war behind a curtain of good deeds. In Venezuela, the humanitarian and crisis circumstances have not changed, but the sanctions were decreased to benefit European countries, as if suddenly, the need for oil would lessen the negative impact of the Venezuelan government's actions. What is the reason why the United States protects the European economy? Because in view of the collapse of the agreements with Russia on trade issues and the new rivalry that has arisen, this is the perfect moment to capture the European market as a major buyer of its products and this is why it must avoid a recession as much as possible.

Economically, Russia was not prepared for this number of sanctions applied, since in principle the West did not tend to react so radically to its previous offenses such as the seizure of Crimea or its intervention in Georgia. In Putin's speeches, it can be seen how his attitude has changed after the implementation of different measures that caused discontent among the Russian population. In addition, such a long prolongation of the conflict was not foreseen, since it was initially thought that it would not last even a week. The Ukrainian capacity to defend itself, the support of other countries, and the impact this would have on the world were underestimated. Also, since Ukraine is a country that borders both NATO countries and Russia, two nuclear and arms powers, the sensitivity of the conflict lies in the possibility of a third world war, this time a nuclear one. The reasonable response to these measures would have been to reduce calls for a cease-fire and negotiate peace quickly; however, if Russia backs down, it leaves the image that it could be controlled by economic measures which would leave Russia vulnerable to NATO. On the other hand, if NATO countries do not support Ukraine, it would also leave the image that Russia could easily repeat this action against other states making it an even more dangerous enemy. And Ukraine as a state cannot allow its territorial integrity to be stolen. With all this Finland and Sweden are asking to join NATO to prevent a possible future invasion, especially in Finland. The price of the Ruble, Russia's official currency, was affected, bringing it to historic lows. This kind of weakening is what the West was looking for and what Russia could not allow, so it decided to charge the other countries for gas debts in rubles, increasing the value of the currency and even raising it to the values recorded in February. It also penalizes those who decide not to pay the debts in rubles, highlighting the power and importance of Russian gas for European countries, and it will be in winter that we will be able to see the true extent of these gas cuts.

With the prolongation of the conflict, Russia has turned to its allies asking for help from Syria and China, among others, who have responded in different ways. For example, Syria accepted and sent a group of volunteers to fight in Ukraine, while China, on the other hand, has refused to intervene in order to maintain its neutrality. It is not in China's interest to get into wars and win enemies; its objectives are marked by the growth of economic power. Alliances lose importance if the will of the State dictates it. The conflict progressed and stagnated in the area of Mariupol where many Russian resources were used up for the capture of this strategic city. Here was where the AZOV battalion took the lead in the defense of the area giving time to Urania to reinforce the defense in Donbas. This battalion is ultra-right wing and has similarities of thought with neo-Nazi movements, so being defeated by Russia fulfills the second objective that Putin initially gave for the attack. But for the courageous defense of the area in Ukraine instead of branding them as a group with a negative ideology, they are marked as heroes, which may have some influence on Ukrainian politics in the future (VEGA, 2022).

After the takeover of Mariupol, the Russian offensive decided to focus on the Donbas area, renouncing the main objectives since the takeover of the whole Ukraine was not feasible due to the long time of the conflict and the lack of resources. On the other hand, thanks to the support in arms received and the strong fight that has been given, Ukraine keeps optimistic about expelling the Russians from their lands and recovering Crimea. Nevertheless, this is an ambitious hope since such a conflict would take years, and it is very unlikely that the countries of the European Union or the United States would continue with such a high financing to this fight. Intentions of support and solidarity will disappear once the economic consequences of the sanctions are realized. At present, there is already talk of negotiating sanctions despite the fact that the end of this struggle is far off. Even if Russia achieves the independence of Donbas and takes Crimea

together with the eastern strip of Ukraine, due to the internal need of the European states to obtain resources and to heat their homes in winter, the morale of what happened in Ukraine will not matter anymore, so in the future, it is likely that these sanctions will not last in time and will decrease their intensity according to what Europe and the United States need.

In conjunction with the economic crisis is the migration crisis that all this has caused, with the displacement of about 5.6 million inhabitants of Ukraine since the beginning of the conflict in February (ACNUR, 2022). Many of them are refugees in European countries such as Poland mainly. All this in conjunction with the unfolding economic crisis has ushered in a historically difficult time for Europe. However, even with all these problems and after multiple requests, neither NATO nor the European Union have proceeded to join Ukraine because the member countries of both organizations do not want to integrate a country invaded by Russia and directly involved in the conflict. It would be risking their security to help a nearby country. It is not convenient for them and therefore, it is not carried out at the cost of Ukrainian lives. Hence the marches requesting support in different countries across Europe. The will of each member state is to maintain its national security over international peace.

NATO cannot intervene; an intervention would mean the start of a war of gigantic proportions that could even lead to an atomic war. However, in the face of such a threat, many countries increased their investment in defense, and an update on the terms under which NATO would activate Article 5 took place during the meeting held in Madrid. Issues of national and international interest to many of the members were discussed. Some U.S. interests such as the trade war with China were highlighted by implementing a clause in which an attack of a commercial nature could be taken as an armed attack and turn NATO forces to an armed attack there. With this update it becomes more delicate how to deal with NATO member countries as many actions could be considered an armed attack and lead to war. This makes them more powerful, but also more dangerous. Moreover, with Russia's military weakening, the strengthening of militias in NATO countries as well as the new clauses leave the world at the door of a possible war where NATO would have a potential advantage if it does not think of nuclear weapons, which may be Russia's last resort of defense.

To obtain and maintain peace, negotiations continue, but due to the strong position of each of the parties that an agreement will be reached and the conflict will stop, an end to the conflict is a reality that looks distant and difficult to obtain. Meanwhile, within the affected territory, people are still fighting and dying, families are breaking up, and war zones are going up in ashes.

5. Conclusion

The confrontation between Russia and Ukraine has left multiple consequences in the short, medium and long term not only for the two main actors of the conflict, but also for the whole world. The retaliations that this brought about are not something we can ignore as they affect our day to day life, such as the rise in prices of basic food baskets, the increase in the price of gasoline, the limited availability of products such as wheat, which, among many others, make this everyone's problem. In recent months the interest in the conflict has decreased dramatically leaving the average citizen in ignorance of how much this is affecting their lives and their economy reaching revolts by the rise in gasoline or energy in many countries of the world. Those who are in Europe, mainly in the center and east of Europe, are more aware of the reality in Ukraine because everywhere they will be able to find someone who is willing to give their testimony of what they have experienced.

On the international level, the consequences will not be easy to ignore either. Diplomatic relations with Russia have been put into perspective by most of the countries that are close to the conflict, and the relationship with the members of the European Union, both diplomatic and commercial, have been one of the most affected parts due to the discrepancies and sanctions imposed, as well as the cut of gas supplies and the obligation to pay in rubles; two areas very dependent on each other commercially at this moment suffer crisis due to the broken relationship that exists. The European Union has learned a valuable lesson by not depending so much on Russian gas, and plans are being made to progressively reduce this dependence, and although summer is here and heating is not missed, this will change in the months of November and December, that is when the population will suffer and that is when governments will put sanctions into perspective, when temperatures drop below zero and they will have to keep warm thousands or millions of inhabitants, hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages and greenhouses, which are an important source of food during the winter. Likewise, Russia is losing one of its largest buyers and although it is not a total loss, it should be noted that the Russian economy was not enviable prior to the conflict. It is currently worse and is staying afloat thanks to the high oil prices that are still exported; although in smaller quantities because many countries are afraid in the logistic area. Thanks to all these sanctions and the blockade in the

Black Sea, it is not known if the product will reach its final destination, so purchases from Russia have decreased.

One could think that the countries that produce oil would benefit from these increases and in a certain way this is the case. Venezuela has had the best part, but the sanctions imposed by the United States have not been completely removed and this still limits its sales. However, most oil producing countries, especially in areas such as Latin America, depend on gasoline prices and although oil is more expensive and they earn more money, gasoline is also more expensive and this causes discontent among the population. As gasoline is more expensive this makes transportation prices more expensive causing a higher final price of many products, which has led to conflicts in different countries such as Ecuador, the country where I live, where there was a strike of 18 days with riots and violence against the government due to the high prices of products and gasoline. Likewise, some countries in Africa are suffering shortages of food and various products since they depended directly on Ukraine, both for the products that came from there and the passage through this territory of products from other European countries; creating discontent and the beginning of strikes.

We are experiencing global instability since despite having improved in recent months, there are serious threats of economic recession in both the United States and Europe. A reality like this will strongly affect all those countries that are suppliers of raw materials, as well as their buyers. A global economic crisis is emerging thanks to this conflict, and ignoring it is negligent as it is a major factor that contributes to global reality daily. Understanding why this (conflict) detonated, and analyzing the intentions and selfishness behind the humanitarian and economic crisis this represents is fundamental.

The humanitarian crisis, on the other hand, is a painful reality that many have to live with, teenagers escaping alone, broken families, women and children crying for the absence of parents and siblings. I personally had the opportunity to know firsthand the atrocities that some lived there and what they escaped from. I saw women crying for fear of not seeing their husbands, children scared and lost, young people traveling thousands of miles to be reunited with their still incomplete families. Shelters full, people sleeping in subway stations, in the streets, remembering how their life was in January, how everything changed so suddenly, how the bombs and the weapons do not spare anyone. About 8 million people are recorded as having fled Ukraine, scattered around the world, looking for a way to start over and waiting for the end of the conflict to return home to their families. Stories of how many stayed, and how many are working trying to lead a relatively normal life in the middle of a battlefield to distract the mind from the bombs. Support for the Ukrainian refugees could be seen in many parts of Europe by hanging Ukrainian flags on buildings and monuments, marching for peace, or begging for help by requesting NATO intervention. It is not only those who left Ukraine who suffer. At the beginning of the conflict, hatred towards Russians living elsewhere was marked. There were teachers denying them education, hateful words in the streets, as well as shame and fear of saying where they came from. A conflict like this shatters the lives of many and affects us all.

Following the realist line of argument, wars are inevitable as long as the interests of the states are different and negotiations do not work, since the need for state preservation is basic to a government. The mistake of the contemporary world is to take for granted that because of alliances, regional blocs or international organizations these are not going to happen. People do not see the threat of a possible war as something possible. It gets so much into people's heads that the UN system, the WTO, and other organizations have the international system under control and that anarchy does not exist because of the rules they impose, but these organizations are not supranational. Sovereign states can still act and attack whenever they wish, demonstrating that anarchy is present, that one is not safe and that trusting in the good intentions of collaboration and help is closing one's eyes to an attempt to control. Russia has attacked Ukraine in order not to lose power and avoid having NATO closer. China is slowly getting countries rich in raw materials to go into debt with them and controlling more aspects behind economic aid. The United States is gaining market share and taking advantage of the conflict in Europe once again behind the mask of collaboration. All this is happening right now before our eyes, but because of optimism of equal ideals and desires for peace we are not seeing it. This confrontation did not happen overnight, and many other conflicts like this are about to begin.

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