

Notes and Questions on the Ukraine Crisis: An Utterly Frustrated Critical Opinion - İnan Rüma



One fact seems clear though it does not speak for itself: Russian Federation is directly attacking Ukraine. The rest appears as political or social scientific discussion, mainly as a debate centred on Russia and/or the USA. I am among those who feel amazed and even angry that the issue is not the fate of the world but the aggression of a major country that has been unprevented/mismanaged/neglected/rivalled/caused/fuelled/provoked by another major country, one among many other such aggressions by major countries in the 21st century. The words of Martin Kimani, Kenya's ambassador to the [UN](#), are noteworthy in this respect. One feels like

screaming a clear and bold “NO!” to all.

In the actual world where billions suffer under the deadly consequences of global economic and [ecological](#) crises, such a crisis like Ukraine that has been seriously mismanaged if not merely escalated and such aggression like Russia's are irrational and irresponsible. The ages-old discussions on rationalism, academic or not, is plausible, but who could seriously argue now that war is rational in this exhausting ecological crisis we suffer? Rationalism is to sustain survival, not extinction.

The approaches of many International Relations (IR) scholars/students seem rather part of the problem than a solution: If medical doctors, biologists, etc. approached the Covid-19 pandemic and other public health problems in the way some IR scholars/students have done to the Ukraine Crisis, please think how we humble humans would be doing in these days? Violence/War is a public health problem like an epidemic/pandemic: Observation, Acceptance, Treatment, and Prevention are essential!

Observation has taken a long enough time. “Russia,” no matter what the mindset of its leadership, foreign policy elite or nation, cannot accept Ukraine as a separate and indeed independent nation and state, even if it seems it can for the other post-Soviet states. According to them, Ukraine is not just “post-Soviet”; it is part of Russia, perhaps not even unlike other Republics/Regions in the Russian Federation. We are told that its independence can be acceptable only if it is under Russian control, and even that is an intermediate solution.

Moreover, the Russian elite, perhaps the society, has been socialized with that notorious perception of threat from “the West.” History seems to justify this perception ranging from medieval Swedish Empire to Napoleon's controversial French Empire, to Nazis, to Cold War. That Soviet

Union was not “Russia” at all only accentuated this perception or, in fact, the threat because it has been a communist attempt in a capitalist world. Capitalists and communists are clear about each other: a destructive disgust.

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Putin

and fellows have regularly mentioned “the West.” There is no unified “the West” (Please consider Stuart [Hall](#)).

Orientalism hardly survives, imperialism has been reformed (Please consider David [Harvey](#)),

yet curiously enough, the discourse on “the West” is reproduced instead by those who have been considered “non-Western,” indeed as a -desperately ostensible- reaction. This flawed *totalitarization* (uniformization) of “the West” seems to misinform much foreign policy formulation and implementation.

For instance, one may have difficulties

understanding why Russia has insistently pushed Europe to the USA. The American

role and presence in Europe have been challenged for years and not only by France, which has often been the black sheep on this topic. In a matter of (recent) days, a hesitant Europe has been compelled to bandwagon with the USA, undoubtedly

due to Russian aggressive actions. Would not such a security-obsessed mindset with a historical experience like the Russian elite require to benefit from the rifts between its rival/enemy and its potential and controversial collaborators? Doesn't that historically famous/notorious Realpolitik signify this? Were Soviet communists unhappy to cooperate with the leading capitalist USA in the Second World War?

An observer of Putin's latest speeches may well think that he seems to need psychiatric help. He seems disconnected from reality, absolutely convinced by his re-writing of history, and condemned by assumptions/obsessions. His words about and to Ukraine appear as a pathetic denial of concrete existence, unwanted and deliberately disassociated with. Under current conditions, Ukraine does not want to be part of the Russian Federation. Ukraine does not want to be controlled by the Russian elite. Does the Russian elite not see that they are unwanted and why?

That cliché of Russian-Chinese cooperation against the USA begs a similar questioning. It is fair to think that the effects of sanctions on Russia will crucially depend on possible Chinese economic [support](#). Isn't this a form of [dependence](#)? China is Russia's biggest supplier of imports, including those with high technology such as electronics, computers, and mobile phones. It is also the biggest export market of Russian [oil](#), and a growing market for its natural [gas](#). Does not Russia look like a peripheral country supplying raw materials to a developed industrial economy and importing finished industrial goods? Does not this quite transparent political economic dependence on China disturb the Russian elite who are so obsessed with sovereignty?

The political-economic domination of China in what Russia considers "near abroad," such as Central Asia, seems unrivalled. Can Russia remain immune to Chinese political economic expansionism? Let's even ask: Can China benefit from this Ukraine-Russia Crisis as a proxy war in its conflict with the USA? While the Russian elite thinks they profit from the American-Chinese competition to assert their sovereignty, don't they seem peripheralized in this conflict? One may even argue: that there is no Russian-Chinese cooperation but a peripheralization of Russia by China while The Russian elite thinks they emphasize their beloved sovereignty. Therefore, while Russia is argued to follow a rational plan against Ukraine and elsewhere, has it been rational recently, or

is it merely failing in delusion?

One may equally question American attitude within this respect. It does not seem genuinely understandable why the USA insistently pushed Russia towards China by declaring both enemies. Same famous/notorious *Realpolitik* question again: Why unite two rivals against oneself while there could and would be rifts between them? Remembering that the Trump administration has been hostile even to Europe previously named the "Transatlantic Cooperation," the rationalism discussion can be revisited even in this limited sense.

American elite escalated the crisis while the Russian elite has been obsessed with a threat perception under a narrow-minded and obsolete understanding of security. The USA has also behaved in the same context and accentuated these perceptions with -again- narrow-minded understanding of deterrence. Russian elite was instead provoked than deterred. Simply put, the American elite could not manage the crisis. They escalated it to a level of conflict. Was it a (mis)calculation?

Winners and losers? There seems no winner. Losers seem to the ordinary humans earning and enjoying their life with their honest labour most dramatically in Ukraine, but Russians are not spared either.

It has been just a new stage in the context of continued mismanagements of relations with post-Soviet Russia. It must also stem from the early deficient observation and misoriented behaviour of treating the Russian Federation as a defeated power like Germany after both wars. Hence, a disoriented Versailles moment for Russia.

There was an opinion published in *Le Monde* in autumn 1993, warning about the possibility of Weimar Germany-looking Russian Federation could produce Nazi-like leader/elite aggression. Nobody heard Vladimir Putin at the time, and the Russian nationalist leader Zhirinovsky looked like a potential Nazi.

The flawed nature and imposition of the so-called liberal reforms in Russia throughout the 1990s were even criticized by many liberal economists like Joseph [Stiglitz](#). Then Putin came, and the rest is known. But a question remains: Has Putin always been so, or has he gradually become so within the global economic and political crisis framework, to which the American elite has substantially contributed. Illegal and illegitimate military occupations in recent years started with the American occupation of Iraq; can we thus say Putin's Russia has become like or nothing more than G.W. Bush's America? One salient and vital difference: Bush left power with elections; the administration has changed. Nobody expects that from Putin and his cronies.

All in all, this infamous multipolarity in world politics could not be managed in the case of the latest Ukraine-Russia crisis. The USA looks like missing its "unipolar [moment](#)," though, in a self-declared "trade war" with China, Russia aims to restore [bipolarity](#). Yet, it is not comparable to the Soviet Union, especially in political-economic sense. As a result, Ukraine could not become an independent and neutral Austria of the Cold War. It could be questionable whether better management of multipolarity would be better for world peace. It can be said that USA, Russia and China are in a typical imperialist rivalry. What is more, it is an utterly destructive one due to the total extinction risk under the devastating ecological crisis. Above all, the main aim is world peace for all beings, and self-centric conflictual behaviour is the main problem. But a Ukraine, like an independent and neutral Austria, seems much better than what it is now.

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concerned

about the fate of peaceful and democratic Maidan protesters in 2014, and at the same time because of the increasing nationalist oppression in Ukraine in recent years as a result of Russian aggression. The so-called post-communist transition has been marked with the tragic disappointments of the masses aspiring more freedom without necessarily losing social security. Neo-liberal economic exploitation,

though with some levels of political freedom, has continued with increasing authoritarianism and eventually destructive old war. Meanwhile, the world is on the extinction route in an ecological breakdown...



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