

Strategic Confusion and its Impact on Perpetuating the Spread of Power on the European Continent

Imad Jassim Mohammed¹, Ammar Azeez Mahdi²

Abstract

The repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian war were reflected at all political, economic, and social levels, as well as international positions and the degree of response to deal with the outputs of the war, as its repercussions were clear on international trade and strategic goods, as Russia and Ukraine are among the largest wheat exporting countries, as well as its repercussions on investment and the global energy market. As a result of the varying repercussions of the war from the other region, the major countries tried to employ the war in its favor, Russia seeks through the war to restore its international status by achieving victory in the war that returns it with the desired gains, so it refuses to stop it unless it achieves its goals, and for its part, the United States found in the war opportunities to weaken Russia through the sanctions imposed by the West and prolonged the war and depleted Russian capabilities. As for China, the polar countries dealt rationally and according to their national interests, they declared their political neutrality at the same time, did not abandon Russia and did not abide by Western sanctions, and its function is economic by filling the Western economic vacuum with Russia and European countries.

Keywords: Strategic Confusion, United States, Europe.

Introduction

After the end of World War II, the United States played an important role in European affairs with its security, political and economic alliances and commitments with the countries of the continent. However, the American hegemony in the European continent faces some challenges, such as: increasing the economic and political role of some European countries; and most importantly, the return of the Russian threat to Europe, especially after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022; so Russian-American relations are currently witnessing a phase of tension and conflict, because the latter strives to maintain its superiority on the European continent; The United States has taken several steps to address Russian security challenges, including increasing military and economic support for Ukraine in its war with Russia, tightening economic sanctions on Moscow, and intensifying security cooperation with its NATO allies, particularly in Eastern Europe.

Given the centrality of Europe to U.S. strategic perception, it is important to understand the nature of the "new threats" that confuse the spread of U.S. power on the continent, which can be categorized on two levels.

¹ imad.mohammed@aliraqia.edu.iq

² mmrazize@gmail.com

The problem of research

US policy in light of the current international changes is witnessing a state of strategic confusion, despite its relentless pursuit to maintain its position as a dominant global power due to the changing global security and economic environment, which raises the question of the impact of strategic confusion in perpetuating the spread of power on the European continent.

Research hypothesis

The changing security environment on the European continent and the occurrence of the Russian-Ukrainian war led to confusion and uncertainty in the American strategy.

Research Methodology

The researcher relied on the descriptive analytical approach to understand and realize the subject by analyzing the determinants of American superiority and its merits according to current data.

The first topic

Russian-Ukrainian War

The Russian Federation seeks to gradually restore its role in Asia and the Middle East, and to focus on developing its role in a multipolar world, and that Russian attention is mainly focused on its geographical surroundings, what is known as the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Russian Federation's constant quest to form a Eurasian Union that includes all the CIS countries; An international organization capable of facing global challenges and threats (Asma, 2019, p. 190).

On February 27, 2014, pro-Russian militants seized a large number of government buildings in Crimea and major airports, and on March 1, 2014, the Russian Duma approved President Vladimir Putin's request to allow the use of Russian military force in Ukraine, under the pretext of protecting the interests of persecuted Russian minorities in Crimea; This represented a dangerous turning point in the Ukrainian crisis, and the next morning the Russian parliament approved the use of Russian military force in Ukraine; Russian forces entered Crimea and imposed their full control over it, and on March 16, 2014, a referendum was held in Crimea on joining the Russian Federation and 97% of the population agreed in the referendum without international monitoring, and on March 18, 2014, Crimea was officially annexed to the Russian Federation, effectively under condemnation The United States of America and Europe and their rejection and condemnation of Russian behavior, due to the violation by the Russian Federation of the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. (Mohammed Mutawa, 2015,p.9).

Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war on February 24, 2022, there have been sharp and qualitative changes in the regional and international strategic environment, as the invasion of the Russian Federation of Ukraine cannot be judged from a traditional perspective as an assault by a state on the sovereignty of another neighboring country, but the Russian-Ukrainian war can be considered a declaration of the birth of a new world order, which will lead to many challenges in the region and the world at various levels, that the Russian-Ukrainian war will impose a new perspective to deal with it; A key factor is the difficulty of accepting that Ukraine will be a stable country in the future, which will lead to new problems (Hisham, 2023, p. 85).

An important development escalated the crisis after the Russian President (Vladimir Putin) delivered a speech on 21/2/2022, in which he recognized the independence of the separatist republics of "Donetsk and Lugansk" from Ukraine, which torpedoed all previous diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, and the reaction of the United States of America was what came from the announcement of US President (Joe Biden) to impose

sanctions on the Russian Federation, describing this recognition step as "the beginning of a Russian invasion of Ukraine". The European Union also approved "unanimously" its member states a package of sanctions on the Russian Federation, which will be aimed especially at Russian deputies, and the foreign policy official (Josep Borrell) stressed that the sanctions "will be painful for the Russian Federation", and Brussels proposed to prevent the Russian authorities from entering European markets and services, as for NATO, after an emergency meeting to discuss relations between the alliance and Ukraine, it expects a major attack on Ukraine, and on the second day of recognition, the UN Security Council held a meeting; Western for this recognition. (Hamid, 2022, p. 104)

At the level of the United Nations, it was said in adapting this war two points of view: the first: that this war is a legitimate defense, and this is the view of the Russian Federation on the basis that there is a threat to its interests and national security from Ukraine and NATO, and the second point of view: that this war is a military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and this is the Western point of view, that the Security Council did not have an effective role in this war, whether in preventing it before its establishment, or stopping it after. The outbreak of the outbreak or the adoption of any of the measures authorized by the Charter of the United Nations, whether under Chapter VI or VII in the maintenance of international peace and security; The measures it has taken have consisted of statements and denunciations that have not even been condemned by a resolution adopted by the Council so far, even if this is due to legal and political obstacles. (Yasser, 2023, 105)

The Russian-Ukrainian war exposed deficiencies in European security arrangements, and showed the EU in the role of coordinator of the security policies of member states more than able to provide a security umbrella for those countries in the face of any threats and risks. The European Union has sought to deal with this shortcoming, issuing two important documents: the "Declaration of Versailles" on March 11, 2022, and the second: the document "Strategic direction for strengthening the European Union in the fields of security and defense over the next decade" on March 21, 2022. (Osama, 2023, p. 21)

The Russian-Ukrainian war is one of the biggest crises experienced by the European continent since World War II, which will inevitably have multifaceted repercussions on the entire world system as a result of the course taken by the dimensions of the war and the tensions that followed, and the nature of the active forces in formulating its economic, military, and political features, and in the first face of this conflict the supply of oil and gas to European countries stopped, which made it a source of concern for the European Union and the United States of America, which is trying Taking proactive measures to boost European energy security, prevent widespread disruption to gas and oil supplies, and their prices on the global market, are trying to identify alternative sources of natural gas that can be redirected to Europe. (Daman, 2020', p. 25)

With regard to the Versailles Declaration, the Declaration identified three areas of security in which the Union must achieve tangible results by 2030: First: strengthening European defense capabilities by increasing military spending, and encouraging Member States to participate in unified defense procurement programs with the aim of raising the level of capacity to mobilize and deploy military forces in various regions of the Union, Second: Reducing dependence on the Russian Federation as a source that covers the EU's energy needs (gas, oil and coal) in several steps, including: accelerating the reduction of dependence on fossil energy sources, diversifying sources of LNG imports, accelerating the development of renewable energy sources, and accelerating the connection of electricity and energy grids, Third: Building a stronger economic base by continuing to work to strengthen the market among the single EU countries to be more competitive at the global level, especially in the field of economic activities. Green and digital. (Osama, 2023, p. 21)

The document "Strategic direction to strengthen the European Union in the fields of security and defense during the decade; aims to strengthen the EU's ability to act militarily in the face of security crises" that threaten Europe, and to achieve a big leap forward in this area, and the document plans to complete the European Union in 2030 the establishment of what is known as the "European Union rapid deployment capability", consisting of 5,000 soldiers capable of rapid intervention to deal with crises, and the Union will be as well. Ready to deploy 200 experts to perform the tasks carried out within the framework of the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy within 30 days of the crisis, the document notes that the EU's ability to strengthen its military and defence tools requires enhanced cooperation with the Union's strategic partners, represented by NATO, the United Nations, and the Union's regional allies, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the African Union, and the ASEAN Organization)Netherland's Ministry of Defense. 2025)

It can be said that the importance of this document for European security arrangements is related to the fact that it reassessed the threats to European security, which has come to include Russian policies aimed at establishing spheres of influence in a number of European countries using military force and cyberattacks, and the document considers that the United States of America is an influential country in European security; on the one hand, it is a partner with whom cooperation can be made to deal with global issues, such as climate change; but on the other hand, it is a party to many of the Crises and hotbeds of tension in the world. (Osama, 2023, p. 22)

The document stresses that the threats resulting from Russian and American policies not only affect the Union's ability to protect the security of the European citizen internally, but also affect the external dimension of European security related to relations with the Western Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Southern Mediterranean, Africa, the Arab Gulf States, the Indo-Pacific region and Latin America, areas in which the Union has not been sufficiently active to promote its security interests, leaving a vacuum that China and Russia seek to fill. The EU may have a quest to become an organization capable of providing security by dealing with conventional threats related to the use of military force, the arms race, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and those related to terrorism, hybrid warfare, cyber attacks, climate change, and global health crises (Iman 2022).

Therefore, there seems to be confusion within the United States of America regarding the time span of the Russian-Ukrainian war; the US administration has so far failed to radically change the balance of the war despite the unlimited support for Ukraine, which would threaten the structure of the American alliance in Europe and undermine American plans to continue Western military support for Ukraine; and then give Russia an additional advantage over the United States because it has become more threatening to its allies in the European Union. It encourages a peace deal in favor of Russia, similar to the assertions of some American politicians — including some Republicans — to Ukrainian President Zelensky that it should not be based on Western aid because it will not last long.

The second topic

NATO's new security burdens

What distinguishes the policy of the United States after the end of the Cold War towards NATO and Europe is its orientation towards expanding the alliance towards the east; to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; some believe that expansion is the basis for establishing a (European collective security system), while others see that the expansion process is a phenomenon for a transitional phase with all the hesitation and imbalance it entails more than it is a security option for the transatlantic region. Not only in favor of Euro-American relations, but also in favor of the security problem of the

countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Mohammed, 1999, p. 31). It is necessary to highlight here a basic fact, which is that the United States of America controls the formulation of NATO's strategy; it is the dominant power over the capabilities of the alliance, because of its military and technological capabilities and influence that cannot be replaced by the military capacity of other member states, which was clearly seen in the Kosovo crisis, and the inability of European countries to deter the former Yugoslavia and intervene to resolve the crisis alone.

It is clear from this that NATO's security missions in Europe are at the forefront of those carried out by the alliance in Europe, despite the fact that not all countries are included in that alliance. (Student '2010' p. 139)

The idea of expanding the alliance according to the American perspective dates back to the days of the transformations that began to take place on the European continent for the years from 1989 to 1991; the United States found the historical opportunity to expand towards the East, which was expressed by James Baker during his speech on June 18, 1991 in Berlin by saying: "Our goal is to bring freedom to the whole of Europe and build a transatlantic bond based on the ideals of the Enlightenment that possess universal values that transcend national borders." (Daniel S,2019,p61)

In 1994, the Clinton administration had succeeded in securing commitment to enlargement of NATO east at the NATO Summit; by 2009, 12 new countries from Central and Eastern Europe had joined, pushing NATO's borders to the borders of the Russian Federation; therefore, this enlargement process raised many points of controversy, including: (Zuhair, 2010, p. 406).

1. The expansion will draw a new dividing line between East and West, because this means the formation of a New Yalta's leading in the future to the return of clashes in the future.
2. The expansion will seem provocative in the eyes of Russia, which will push to strengthen the hardline nationalists at the expense of reformists loyal to Western proposals, and here (Roscoe Bartlett) poses a question: (How can the United States risk its bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation by accepting a group of countries to NATO, it is not clear what those countries will add to NATO, but it is clear that those countries will be greatly affected if the relationship between Washington and Moscow worsens).
3. These countries suffer from internal instability; which will move into the alliance, such as minority problems, borders, and ethnic conflicts, which would blow up the alliance from within; especially since Washington still finds it difficult to manage the Turkish-Greek conflict.
4. Neither the official departments, nor the American public opinion in general, is ready to expand the scope of Article V of the Charter of the Alliance (resort to collective defense in case of aggression) to the countries of this sensitive region, and here the British newspaper (The Economist) indicated in its issue of December 30, 1995 by saying ((Does NATO want to extend its security guarantees regionally? NATO is a defense alliance whose primary mission is to protect its members; and thus it is not the regulator required to ensure the stability of countries. Eastern Europe, because the main threat it faces comes from within from very low living standards and from a very slow pace of reforms.

Zbigniew Brzezinski therefore sees it as an ongoing process related to the creation of a new Europe, and identifies three principles regarding the expansion of the alliance: (Mohsen, 2012, p. 16).

- 1- Think only of eligible countries that really want to join the alliance.

2- The red line drawn by Moscow by its side shall not prevent the exclusion of any European country eligible to join the Alliance in line with the Madrid Declaration.

3- Accession should not be accepted by a group of countries or continuous rings of countries at once, whether in southern Europe or northeast of the continent.

This trend argues that the necessities of NATO enlargement are due to the following reasons:

1. Expanding NATO to Eastern European countries will promote democratic reform and stability there, provide a stronger collective defense and a better ability to address new security concerns.

2- The expansion of the alliance will improve relations between Eastern and Central European countries; as well as promote a more stable climate for economic reform, trade, and foreign investment. Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright also stated: "The new NATO can do for Eastern Europe what the old NATO did for Western Europe in defeating old hatred, promoting integration, creating a secure environment for prosperity and deterring violence" (Jeffrey' 2001' (p48)

3- This trend also argues that Russia should not be allowed to exercise the right to object to Western measures in the field of security taken within the framework of a democratic process aimed at strengthening the stability of all; the reason is because Russia at this stage suffers from unprecedented fragility and weakness and is preoccupied with its internal problems; and then it can only protest and declare its opposition to the expansion process, and this is what (Henry Kissinger) pointed out by saying: ((We will not accept Russia's ultimatum when it was strong, so do we submit to it now after it has suffered internal weakness)) (Zuhair, 2010, p. 409)

Between these two trends emerged towards a center based on the need to move and seize the historical opportunity to strengthen relations with the countries of the East; at the same time does not seek to provoke the nationalist feelings of the Russians; let alone take into account the demands of those countries; and this is the direction adopted by the administration of President Bill Clinton; the Clinton administration faced three important and interrelated questions arising from the end of the Cold War: First, what is the scope of the Euro-Atlantic alliance? Second, what role should Germany play in post-Cold War Europe? Third, what should Europe-NATO's relationship with Russia be? (Zbigniew Brzezinski, 1995)

President Clinton's administration was an active supporter of such a move, based on a study issued by the Program on International Policy Positions entitled "American Public Positions on NATO Enlargement", which included a national survey of 1214 randomly selected adults conducted on September 14-20, 1996, where the results indicated (Steven Kull, 1997, p. 1.)

1- A strong majority has a positive attitude toward NATO and U.S. participation in it.

2- A large majority supports the expansion of NATO to include Eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

3- Broadly, while the majority wants to preserve NATO; most support NATO expansion outside its function as a military alliance geared toward the Russian threat, becoming a more inclusive and diverse security system.

4- If NATO were to be enlarged, only a minority would oppose contributing U.S. troops to NATO's efforts to defend a new NATO member from attack.

5- Support for NATO expansion derives more from a desire to be inclusive, removing Cold War divisions than worrying about a potential Russian threat.

6- A majority will eventually support Russia's inclusion in NATO.

7- Support for NATO enlargement stems not only from immediate concerns about U.S. security, but also from more global and moral concerns to maintain a base in the face of aggression, resolve potential conflicts between Eastern European countries, promote democracy, and fulfill a moral obligation to provide assistance to Eastern European countries.

8- Opposition to NATO expansion arises from concern that it will impose an excessive burden on the United States, doubts about the stability of Eastern European countries, and isolationist sentiments.

9- A strong majority supports accelerating NATO expansion in a way that accommodates Russian concerns; yet a majority opposes a commitment not to place nuclear forces and weapons in Eastern Europe to absorb Russia.

In this context, some of them, such as Strobe Talbot, former US Deputy Secretary of State, offer a number of justifications for expanding the alliance, as follows: (Fred' 2005, p. 134)

1- Collective defense, which remains an urgent need for European and Atlantic security, as well as to justify the presence of the United States of America on the European continent.

2- The accession of the peoples of Eastern and Central Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union to the Alliance is a step in the process of consolidating democratic institutions, economic liberalism and respect for human rights principles.

3- Membership can reinforce the desire of these peoples to settle their disputes by peaceful means.

It is worth noting that the basic objectives of NATO expansion are much further; the United States, which crowned itself the sole victor in the Cold War, has been clear since the Second Gulf War that it aspires to reformulate the international relations that were established after World War II, commensurate with its new geopolitical situation in the world; this requires the expansion of NATO for several reasons, the most important of which are: (Fred' 2005, p. 134).

1- Finding the justification for keeping its military bases in Europe to contain Germany and France, and to thwart their political efforts towards Europe's independence from the United States.

2- Isolating Russia from Europe, thwarting any attempt at economic, political and military integration with it, containing it by planting military bases on its borders, annexing and isolating countries, which could constitute a strategic dimension for it in the future, so that it does not reappear as a competitor to the United States on the international arena, and then depriving it of the possibility of attracting Eastern European countries, and pressuring them economically and politically so that the alliance can reduce its nuclear and missile capabilities.

3- Encircling China with NATO military bases to curb its future attempts to emerge as a competitor at the international level.

4- Controlling the energy sources needed by these countries to be an important catalyst for the implementation of these goals.

5- Marginalizing the role of the United Nations, and reformulating its charter in line with the new geopolitical situation of a unipolar world led by the United States.

In this context, Finland and Sweden submitted an official application to join in May 2022, which will raise a number of challenges for the concerned countries, all European countries, and even the United States of America, including: (International Security File, 2022, p. 10)

1- Strengthening the division in the views addressing the nature of the Ukrainian-Russian war between Britain and the United States on the one hand and Europe led by Germany and France on the other. Although France and Germany are pushing for Sweden and Finland to join NATO for the sake of European security, France believes that the steps and opportunities for peace should not be to humiliate Russia, and that geography cannot be changed by power politics, and all this stems from the French-German feeling that the United States is trying to achieve its interests on the path of Europe only.

2- Enlarging the alliance along the path of Finland and Sweden violates the principle of military and strategic balance of power in Europe in favor of the United States. The Russians have consistently maintained that nothing should anger Finland and Sweden if they remain neutral.

3- Expanding NATO in new areas does not bring security and stability to European countries, but rather puts them in the front line with Russia, turns Europe into a mechanism to achieve America's goals and interests, disrupts the development of the old continent politically and economically, and turns Eastern and Northern Europe into a new crisis focus in the global geopolitical map.

The end

In this context, Russia has strived to restore its global role, as Russian President Vladimir Putin is making efforts to share with the United States the leadership of the international system, with many political and economic reforms to overcome the crises inside Russia, and to build a new foreign policy to build a parallel influence to the United States of America. Syria, which acted in favor of the Syrian regime, Russia's ally, in return for the decline in the intensity of US statements towards it.

References

1. Asma Haddad, Russian Strategy in Managing the Ukrainian Crisis: "Analysis of the Hybrid War Model", PhD thesis, University of Algiers 3, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Algeria, 2019, p. 190.
2. Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr , Open Door NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War , Washington, DC: Foreign Policy Institute/Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs, Johns Hopkins University SAIS 2019 , p.61 .
3. Farid Hatem Al-Shahf, Russian-Iranian relations and their impact on the geopolitical map in the Arabian Gulf region and the Central Asian region and the Caucasus, Dar Al-Tali'a Al-Jadeeda, 1st Edition, Damascus, 2005, p 134.
4. File: International Security Accession of Sweden and Finland, Change in the Balance of Power, European Center for Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence Studies, Germany and the Netherlands, May 29, 2022, p. 10.
5. Hamid Shihab Ahmed, Crises Threatening Global Security in 2022 (Pre-War Russian-Ukrainian Crisis), as a Model, Sprin Journal for Arabic-English Studies, India, Volume 1, Issue 3, July 2022, p. 104.
6. Hisham Mohamed Bashir, The Role of Political Geography in the Russian-Ukrainian War, Journal of Politics and Economics, Cairo, Issue 17, January 2023, p. 85.
7. Iman Rajab, European security arrangements in light of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Dimensions of Impact and Future Paths, TRENDS Research and Studies, August 9, 2022, <https://trendsresearch.org/ar/insight>.
8. Jeffrey William Christiansen , NATO expansion: Benefits and consequences , University of Montana 2001 , p.47-48 .

9. Mohsen Hassani, *Expanding NATO after the Cold War (A Study in Russian Strategic Perceptions and Options)*, Dar Al-Jinan for Publishing and Distribution, 1st Edition, Amman, 2012, p. 16.
10. Muhammad Ali Jawad, *Kosovo and the required lesson*, *European Studies Bulletin*, No. 33, Center for International Studies, University of Baghdad, 1999, p. 31.
11. Muhammad Mutawa, *Interpretation of US-European and Russian Policies Towards the Ukraine Crisis*, *Arab Politics Magazine*, Beirut, No. 13, March 2015, p. 9.
12. Netherland's Ministry of Defense, *Army unit for EU rapid intervention capability in 2025*, April 6, 2022: <https://english.defensie.nl/latest/news/2022/04/06/army-unit-for-eu-rapid-intervention-capability-in-2025>
13. Osama Farouk Mokhaimer, *The Impact of the Russian-Ukrainian War on European Security: A Study of Changes in the Concept and Issues of Security after the Cold War*, *Journal of Politics and Economics*, Cairo, Issue 17, January 2023, p. 21.
14. Steven Kull, *Americans on Expanding NATO (A STUDY OF US PUBLIC ATTITUDES)*, February 13, 1997, p.1, <https://fas.org>
15. Talib Hussein Hafez, *The New Roles of NATO after the End of the Cold War*, *Journal of International Studies*, No. 46, Center for Strategic and Political Studies, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, 2010, p. 139.
16. Yasser Ismail Muhammad Al-Dafrawi, *Security Council Authorities and Obstacles to Achieving Peaceful Coexistence in International Relations - The Russian-Ukrainian War as a Model*, *Journal of Legal and Jurisprudence Research*, Cairo, Issue 40, January 2023, p. 105.
17. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *A Plan for Europe: How to Expand NATO*, *Foreign Policy*, Jun.-Feb 1995, www.foreignaffairs.com.
18. Zuhair Bou Amama, *The Security of the European Continent in American Foreign Policy after the End of the Cold War*, Dar Al-Wissam Al-Arabi for Publishing and Distribution, 1st Edition, Algeria, 2010, p. 406.