# The Russia- NATO conflicting Signals in Ukraine:
## A realist and social-constructivist approach

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**Abstract ;**

Throughout history, the problem of peaceful change has been the central dilemma in interpreting international relations. This is characterized by an increasingly complex degree to the extent that the principal and dominant theoretical approaches in the field of international relations are incapable to provide an integrated explanation for all aspects of the conflicts, by showing that current conflicts are no longer analyzed and explained by material concepts only without reference to normative concepts.

The paper offers a realist and a constructivist perspective on the conflict and analysis whether these perspectives can explain why the conflict occurred and the dimensions of its settlement.

shall mean that, determining the competitiveness of the EU–Russian relationship in Ukraine towards the nature of the existing balance in the international system, which is currently based on the American priority, on this one hand, and managing the effects of the shift in the relative power between them, whether related to the military and economic dimensions or those related to ethnic, religious and cultural conflicts on the other hand.

Essentially, this difference and discrepancy in attitudes impeded resolving the conflict, after the escalating influence of external forces, at the expense of, the official government of Ukrainian.

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## 1. *Introduction*

The international reality witnessed several transformations since the end of the cold war the world shifted from a bipolar to a unipolar system and increased the pace of globalization, The number and levels of conflicts escalated.

As for theorizing, the end of the Cold War had somehow put the realist analysis of the International System at stake, whereas, Constructivism got a foothold in applique conflicts ethnic.

Indeed, the increased interaction between the EU and Russia in the territory in their shared neighborhood forces some theoretical challenges when employing International Relations one theory only in an analysis of the conflict Ukrainian.

From here, we will check the heuristic suitability of dominant Realist and constructivist approaches in the Ukrainian conflict is examined through an examination of their epistemological foundations and theoretical projections. both, Russian policy on the one hand and NATO policy led by the United States on the other.

considered as dimensions of the independent republic's issue from the Soviet Union as one of the issues that remains a necessary challenge for the successive Russian governments and their international and regional policies and internal, Especially In 2000, after the arrival of Putin to power. his government began to take on a new direction and radical change, to redefine Russia's international standing. ,we see that Putin is having a strategy stating that Moscow has to play a role in the most important issues and political files in Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa. in response to the geopolitical necessity, which imposes on its significance to play the role of an effective in order to preserve national security.

From NATO's point of view, Russia is the most significant and direct threat in the Euro-Atlantic area. However, NATO does not seek confrontation direct with Russia.

It all seemed so obvious after Ukraine sought to join the European security system (NATO), and Russia declared that such a step is a "red line" that cannot be ignored, that the alliance will encircle it from all the borders of the Black Sea, which is a geo-strategic field for Russia that enhances its regional and international power. Add to that, the dual characteristics of Ukrainian society reflected on each presidential election between identity, sovereignty, and shared historical memory.

From here, this research seeks to answer the many important research problems in dealing with the conflict Ukrainian:

In how far the current hostility between NATO and Russia is a result of the Ukraine conflict?

What the west's actual geopolitical interest is in preserving the sovereignty of Ukraine?

What lies behindRussia's policy in Ukraine After activating the identity dimensionprotecting the Soviet legacy. And how much should the US and western worry about that?

Constructivist and neorealist approaches answer these questions in different ways. as well as in conclusion, we make an initial attempt to extraction the structural changes, economic, politics..., that the invasion will bring about on all actors in future.

## I. Developments of realistic interpretation of international Relations

The realist school in international relations represents one of the main criteria in the interpretation of international behavior, by taking the nature of the theoretical approach to the study of relations between states, having revolutionized the assumptions of the ideal current.

The realist school consists of many theoretical trends: classical realism, neo-realism (structuralism), and neo-classical realism.

### 1- The historical roots of realism

The term "realism" was first used to formulate the philosophical doctrine that "universals exist outside of the mind" (Toledo, 2012, p52), and as such.

The roots of realism can be found in works compiled by Thucydides, Hobbes and Machiavelli laid the foundation for classical realism. In the following I will present some ideas that have been put forward:

The Greek Thucydides is considered the first pioneer of the realist trend in international relations, especially in what he presented in his book "The Peloponnesian Wars", In which he concluded the theory that with the presence of a dominant power, the emergence of a rising power (changingthe balance of power) will inevitably lead to a fierce war between the two powers. For example, Athena's challenge to Sparta in ancient Greece lasted a quarter of a century (Kindt,2022)

In fact, and after a long time, Machiavelli contributed to a large number of important discourses in Western thought-political theory most notably, and this is what John Burnett referred to in his saying: "Behind geopolitical rationality (Machiavellian)

hides the true reference to security".(Jonathan,2015,p159)

According to his point of view,that to be realistic, one must view history as "a sequence of cause and effect, the course of which can be analyzed and understood by intellectual effort, but not directed by the imagination".Machiavelli also argues about the idea of ethics in international relations: "morality is the product of power"( Johnson, 2007, p201).

This is what the supporters of the realists focused on in that period, saying: Leaders must assess their actions according to the outcome and not in terms of moral judgment.., as Hampshire noted this in saying: "Machiavelli argued that it was irresponsible and morally wrong to apply to political action the moral standards that are appropriate to private life … Machiavelli implied that morality in politics must be a consequentialist morality." (Gardner, 2010, p3)

Hobbes persisted in the same line of thought as Machiavelli, insisting that as a realistic thinker one must see things as they are and not as they should be.

Thus, these two thinkers lead us to the idea that the creation of the paradigm and of the realistic theories is actually an inductive process in which "theory does not create the practice but the theory of the practice". (Devetak, Burke, 2012,p219)

Hobbes was more interested in civil, political and moral thought in his basic book (Levitan), in which he treated the foundations of his conception of political society, and he also continued to emphasize the force factor rooted in human nature.By saying: "Man has a permanent desire to possess power, which is It only stops with his death."(pogson, 1651, p326)

Alternatively, Hobbes maintains that no one is secure and impenetrable in his anarchic system and people seek a greater standard of living, so he believes that people will be willing to give up their rights to do whatever they wish in favour of a moral system. However, there is no guarantee that if a person behaves morally others will do the same.

### 2- classical realism (Hans Morganton):

According to Hans Morgenthau's opinion, in his book 'Politics among Nations' published in 1948. Which formed the basic rules for political realism?Struggling for power is a distinctive feature of each international policy regardless of its declared objectives.

He also claimed that it is a futile effort to understand the dynamics of international relations without analyzing the human nature.

It means that politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature,the human nature constrains politics because human beings are egoistic to the extent that self-interests overcomes moral principles (Algosaibi,1965, p241)

It leads us to the idea that, the will to dominate and the drive for power are essentially characteristics of human nature. Consequently, "the behavior of the state as a self-seeking egoist is understood to be merely a reflection of the characteristics of the people that compromise the state".as politics is essentially a struggle over power.(Baylis, 2017 ,p148).

and upon it .The classical Realists believe that power is a central concept of foreign policy analysis of actors within a chaotic system is anarchical, where primary motivation of them is power and security,

Since the interests of a group of States are contradictory, it seems impossible to achieve conditions that would satisfy all States, the nature of this interstate competition is often described as a zero-sum game, because what one state gains another state loses.

The target of all state, in realist theory is to survive and maintain their territorial integrity. In fact, survival is the first step of their international policy agenda. The other goals which may involve the hegemonic expansion of a state or just the development of defensive systems come after the survival of a state.(Karatas,2012,p17)

### 3- Assumptions of the structural realist perspective :

Although, Classical realism has for many years remained a dominating theory which explains states behavior on the international arena and how international relations work as a system of interaction among independent states. However, Kenneth Waltz attempted to amend the defects of classical realism in his book (Theory of International Politics" from 1979).

Waltz made efforts to circumvent any philosophical discussions of human nature, replace it an analysis based on the objective nature of the international structure, a system-international level analysis.

All realistic theories share fundamental assumptions about the unified and rational nature of actors, the fixed and contradictory nature of state preferences, and the primacy of material capabilities. The competition for survival is based on the competition for material resources as Legro and Moravcsik write, intergovernmental politics is thus a continuous intergovernmentalbargaining game over the allocation and redistribution

of scarce resources" (Legro, Moravcsik , 1999, pp13-14)

Accordingly, the realists focused on the principle of relative gains in relations between states, which means that they compare themselves to other states. And as Kenneth Waltz summarized: 'When faced with the possibility of cooperating for mutual gain, states that feel insecure must ask how the gain will be divided. They are compelled to ask not 'Will both of us gain?' but 'Who will gain more?' (Alhammadi،2022, p152).

According to Grieco, neo-realists view international cooperation as 'harder to achieve, more difficult to maintain, and additional dependent on state power'. Finally, international institutions impact the prospects for cooperation only marginally. Yet, if dominant actors support international institutions, then their effectiveness raises. According to them, cooperation is hard to be achieved, as agreements cannot be centrally obliged(stelmakh,2016,p23).

However, this does not negate the possibility of countries choosing cooperation, threats, compromise or sanctions, depending on their capabilities.It appears that, Waltz recognizes the existence of non-state actors, but refuses them as comparatively unimportant. "Order is not imposed by higher authority but arises from the interactions of formally equal actors". The second defining factor is the diversity of its actors;the structure of the international system is changeable as a multipolar system works differently than a bipolar system. "Competition in multipolar systems is more complicated than the contest in bipolar ones because uncertainties about the comparative capabilities of states multiply as numbers grow". ( Jensen,2018, p13).

The issue of collective security constitutes a sticking point in the analysis of structural realism, they are skeptical of the value of international law or 'collective security', although they do occasionally endorse the creation of coalitions of powers (such in the Gulf War of 1990–1991) to punish or discipline a state that has acted in ways detrimental to their national interests or security. They regard war as a perennial tendency in human nature and argue that it cannot be abolished or controlled through law or moral suasion. (Devetak, Burke, op cit).

Instead, they think that statesmen will refrain from taking forceful action out of caution or out of fear of unjust punishment (the fundamental concept of "deterrence".

From the point of view of most realists, the balance of power can

create a reasonable balance among the international powers, which is minimize the possibility of the use of violence, If one state evolves extremely powerful, and poses a threat to the other states with its attitude and geographical situation, balance of power policies are likely to play a prominent part in world politics. We can see an instance of that situation after the Second World War when the United States began balancing against the Soviet Union which is even a militarily inferior power. In terms of power balance approach, Soviet Union's geographical situation which lies at the heart of Europe, and its aggressive foreign policy led to the balancing policies of the United States, as an effect, the period ended with the superiority of United States against Soviet Union.(Tayhani, op cit,p18).

After all these analyzes, we must present the most important criticisms of structural realism, which in turn resulted in the

emergence of new (corrective) theories, which we summarize in the following:

firstly:realism was not able to predict or explain a major transformation of the international system- the end of the Cold War in 1991.At that time, international politics underwent rapid change that pointed to a new era of limited competition between states and abundant opportunities for cooperation. This transformation prompted the emergence of an optimistic vision of world politics.

Secondly: Realists are also accused of focusing too much on the state as a solid unit, ultimately overlooking other actors and forces within the state, and also ignoring international issues not directly connected to the survival of the state.(Antnes,Camisao,2018,p2)

Thirdly:Francis Fukuyama stated, "it is quite possible to imagine anarchic state systems that are at peace", he sees no reason to associate anarchy with war, if there are enough democracies (Waltz, 2000,p8).

Finally, The balance of power is again seen as an opposing factor in realistic theory. It can also protect nations from occupation and reduce the possibility of war. But the balance of power can also heighten tensions in international relations and drive hostile nations to war. Realists argue that for some states and leaders committed to common cultures and practices, a balance of power can curb the tendency to war. But without a common culture and customs, the balance of power can be out of whack, making these states and leaders vulnerable to belligerent situations.(Lebow, 2007, pp. 57-58).

**4- Offensive and defensive realism**

Although the two branches sharethe same core assumptions, but proceed from different auxiliary assumptions about the implications of anarchy and the influence of unit-level variables, and have different opinions on how states secure their survival. It all created division between defensive and offensive realists.

- **Defensive realism:**

It seems to us that the most important aspect of this defensive proposition is the issue of the security dilemma, and it is a central concept in the academic study of international politics and foreign policy. First coined by John Hertz in 1950 and subsequently analyzed in detail by such scholars as Robert Jervis, Charles Glaser, and others.(Walt, 2022).

Robert Jervis defines the security dilemma as a situation "in which the means by which a state tries to increase its security decreases the security of others". (Jervis, 1951)

The security dilemma describes how the actions that one state takes to make it-self more secure-building armaments, putting military forces on alert, forming new alliances-tend to make other states less secure and lead them to respond in kind. The result is a tightening spiral of hostility that leaves neither side better off than before, arguing Waltz that "states will be obliged to act to create balances of power to prevent hegemony".(Geladze, 2015, p17)

- **Offensive realism:**

The contributions of John Mearsheimer in his book (The Tragedy of Great Power Politics), had a great impact in giving anti-Waltz analyzes (defensive), about how much power countries need, although,the common point among all realists, power is the

currency of politics, and states compete For her.

Mearsheimer argues that realism offensive is both a descriptive and a normative theory. It helps explain how the great powers have behaved in the past and how they will behave in the future.

At the same time, it is normative as it outlines how nations should best compete on the international stage. (Avetisova, 2015, p15).

And as such, Mearsheimer based his theory on five core assumptions:

Mearsheimer believe that states can never be sure of their survival, therefore, they always desire more power; the structure of the international system encourages states to pursue hegemony. (Mearsheimer, 2001,p12) On the other hand do not believe that states strive for status quo because the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals. In short, survival mandates aggressive behavior.(Ibid,p21).

States are rational actors and their main task is to seek opportunities that can maximize their power. (Avetisova, Opcit,p15) Although Mearsheimer recognized war as a legitimate instrument of statecraft, he did not believe that it was always justified(the Iraq War2003).

States ultimate goal is to maximize relative power in order to become a hegemon, which is their primarily goal. Arguing that their presence there was irrational.

Furthermore, a distant hegemon may also decide to engage another region, mainly when there is an unequal balance of power within the distant region. Before speculating on a distant hegemonic power, it considers if any other local great power is better suited to

meet the threat that prejudices the balance of power, Mearsheimer calls this buck-passing, and it's a recommended strategy before you're forced to intervene. In other words, great powers prefer to abstain a balance with other dangerous powers as it can affect them adversely. (Ibid, p18).

Generally,Mearsheimer believes that great powers also seek to hinder other great powers to conquer specific regions that can enhance their economic growth. Such areas of the world are either industrial countries or underdeveloped countries that have natural resources that external states can take benefit from. Furthermore, if a great power does not become a dominant power of that region, it will do whatever to impede others to take over.Also,he describes fear as purely material as his definition of power is closer to military power. The main reason countries fear each other is mainly, because countries differ in their militaryforces, whichthey can use against eachother.                    .

Great powersbalance their power with countries with strong armies because strong armies area threat to their survival. (Mearsheimer, Opcit,pp.145-148). States can never trust other states intentions (However limited).

### 5- Neoclassical Realism Theory and Foreign Policy:

New lines of research and vigorous debates have emerged within realism .In the name of neoclassical realism, which incorporates both systemic and unit-level variables to explain the foreign policies of states.

In other word, neoclassical realism attempts to open 'black box' of Kenneth Waltz.

Neoclassical realists seek to explain both international outcomes and the foreign policies of individual states. Fared Zakaria writes, "A good account of a nation's foreign

policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influences, specifying what aspects of policy can be explained by what factors."

Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realists. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical.

Taliaferro emphasizes that "the relative ability of the state to extract and mobilize resources from domestic society" influences 'balancing strategies' that countries will choose"(Taliaferro,1999).

We explain it aswhen a government can mobilize all available resources and act without facing any form of coherent domestic public opposition, it allows the state to exert more influence abroad and pursue more aggressive foreign policies.

Conversely, a weak country's apparatus, which is highly likely to affect and weaken to a great degree respective state's relative power, can prevent countries from advancing their sphere of influence  As Coetzee notes "relative material power provides both opportunities and constraints for state behavior in the international realm."(Geladze, Opcite, p 18)

## II.    characteristic Features of theory Constructivism:

Early constructivist work in the early 1990s sought to establish a countervailing approach to the material and rational theories that dominated the study of international relations, after providing a corrective addition to realistic analyzes. In addition constructivist theorizing proved to be an exciting new avenue for thinking about international relations in the abstract.

### 1- Socialcontext:

Researchers of the constructivist tradition rather deal with the human mind, beliefs and predispositions than with the 'Real political'. This is because interactions on the global arena are seen as being produced by humans (policymakers, think-tank analysts, opinion leaders etc.) and could not be considered as an independent variable. There is no point in exploring the foreign policy of any state without a clear understating of the social and historical context the state operates in.

Thus, constructivism stressed the importance of the interaction between the actors instead of actors themselves They brought the concepts like  beliefs, and ideas linguistic context, and discourses , all of which actually elements  shape the relations between the actors .as J. Lergo says that "ideas are not so much mental as symbolic and organizational; they are embedded not only in human brains but also in 'collective memories', government procedures, educational systems, and the rhetoric of statecraft" (Lergo, 2005).

Broadly speaking in terms language and discourse the constructivists see "language as acts of arguing and persuasion that may cause a foreign policy decision maker to change his/her mind on an issue thatmake possible   certain   actions".(Behravesh, 2011,p3)

Consequently, constructivism looks at socially constructed values and rather than

seeking how the world is; they focus on what we make of it. Therefore, constructivism examines public opinion which is consisted of beliefs which is shaped by values that would include nationalism or religion. As defined by Kaarbo et al., public opinion is "the attitudes citizens have about particular foreign policy issues". (Tayhani, Ibid, p9)This can easily be observed in Russia politics during the 1990s when the anti-American sentiment of the public could easily shape Russia foreign policy today, and societal norms mean that the political elites are more likely to follow policies that chime with the beliefs of the population of the state. Wendt often refer to a change of (sovereignty' –Two hundred years ago 'sovereignty) did not require the acceptance of other states, but nowadays it does, On the other hand, countries should not violate the sovereignty of other countries, "behave in a status quo fashion toward each other's sovereignty." (Wendt,1999, p282).This will become clear with us in the subsequent paragraphs about the international community's view of Ukraine's sovereignty.

## 2- **An Alternative to Materialism**:

Teti, A constructivist thinker, argues that "if constructivism is anything, it is not just identities, but the fluidity of ontology that flows directly from the inter-subjectivity of mutually constructed identities." As for Identity is an important aspect of constructivism and is not fixed. It is always in flux and interdependent with social structures. Constructivism recognizes that social and national identities change over time and evolve through mutual interactions. While identity may not be the singular aspect of constructivism, it is central in that it is crucial for the formation of interests. (Rigby,2018, p22)

## 3- **Construction of state interests:**

Social symmetries of interest and external behavior Constructivists see that interest is formed through social symmetries, by being aware of its position in the international system, which Wendt calls "collective self-esteem," which takes two forms, a negative and a positive image, and it is they that determine the external behavior of states.

Negative self-image occurs when the state-society complex feels belittling and insulting by others, and he explains this by saying: "Groups cannot tolerate this image for long, and they will compensate for their needs for self-esteem and imposing the respect of others on them by adopting a hostile policy towards them".(Wendt,Op cit,p246) And the positive self-image is when the values of mutual respect and cooperation between oneself and the other prevail, and constructivists in this context attach importance to other countries' recognition of the sovereignty of a country.

Wendt emphasized, that "the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature". (Ibid)

Collective identity considers the relationship between the self and the other as its logical conclusion, namely identification. Collective identity is a unique combination of role identity and type identity. Waltz assumes that the only interest of states is survival . Wendt instead believes that national interests include the four objective interests of survival, autonomy independence, economic well-being and collective self-esteem. (Chul ,2012)

### 4- The chaos:

Alexander Wendt, the leading thinker of constructivism in international relations, claimed in his 1992 journal article, "Anarchy is what states make of it". On the issue this, Wendt says: "Social interaction between countries can also lead to more friendly and benign cultures at the expense of chaos."Wendt , Opcit, p p.246,247)

He also claimed in his analysis, about linking chaos to conflict that anarchy is not necessarily a self-help system or a system of power politics, as neo-realists would argue, believed that anarchy does not necessarily lead to conflict, because states can cooperate.

The reason for this, as wrote, is that the way states act toward each other depends on the signification they construct about them. For instance, states would not act in the same way toward a friend as toward an enemy, since "an enemy is threatening and a friend is not" (Ibid, p362).

### 5- Mutual influence of Structures and Agents:

Constructivists constantly defend the importance of interactions between actors rather than focusing on the nature of the actors themselves. In this regard, they recognize the role of non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations, alliances, and others in shaping global politics. But the role of these actors is not fixed and stable, because its interests are linked to the identity; latter is which is not a natural thing, but rather changes with time.(Changing security concerns).

According to Wendt, the second implication of actors relates to "the nature of rational behavior"; because rivals, unlike enemies, are less concerned about potential threats to their security and survival, they tend to prioritize "absolute gains" over "relative losses," which are largely feared by adversaries who make Foreign politic decisions based on high risk-aversion ."

Third, while armed might remain a viable alternative for conflict resolution in the Lockean world, it does not dominate "all decision-making," as it does in the Hobbesian world, and so "is less of a priority", simply because, as Wendt puts it, "threats are not existential." (Behravesh, Op cit, p4)

Alternatively, the constructivist theory has also faced scathing criticism, mostly concentrated on:

Similarly, treating social norms as static independent variables led to calls for constructivists to define the conditions under which normative and non-normative influences on behavior are likely to be the most important in determining behavior.

To be clear, constructivists have been quite good at demonstrating the replacement of one norm with another. However, this focus did little to advance understanding of how norms themselves change without necessarily being replaced. (Hoffmann, 2017)

The neoliberal scholar Robert Keohane criticized Wendt's for a wrong orientation of neoliberalism, i.e. he incorporated neoliberalism into materialism. Moreover, constructivist scholar Martha Fennimore pointed out that Wendt's theory ignored the influence of international organizations. (Mengshu, 2020, p3).

## III. The Ukrainian conflict as a Clash of Approaches:

### 1- Realism analyses to conflict Ukraine:

Putin's policy has revived the idea of political realism, considering that the interest of states is the main driver of their behavior using various forms of hard and soft power, focusing on both international and domestic variables based on the expected maximization of benefit.

Ukraine has undoubtedly been and remains on the front line among many issues, prompting international actors to use all kinds of force to control it.

The exercise of soft power was more evident in:

Since President Putin came to power (2000), interest in using soft power has increased, especially after the transformations in the regional neighborhoods (Georgia and Ukraine), and after the overthrow of the two pro-Moscow governments.

Russia hastened that its political borders must coincide with its cultural borders, given the principle of history and a common destiny, activating the Commonwealth project, and establishing alliances with some regimes and governments in the region. Moscow also monopolizes the media field, especially RT, ORT channels, at the expense of the local channels of those countries, which made it a consumer market for the most prominent influences on the trends of international and local public opinion after 2013, in order to give a legitimate cover for its intervention in Ukraine, which it considers one of its most important religious symbols (the Orthodox Church) represented by the Eastern Slavic race, which was put forward in the concept of Russian national security In 2000, the idea of spiritual security in the face of the Catholic Western threat.

Russia has also developed what is known as "sovereign democracy", (Lipman, 2006) which has gained wide popularity among the elites and the people, especially after the outbreak of the so-called color revolutions.

From another perspective, Russia's use of hard power was obvious means were: the military intervention, interfering in elections, and manipulating lucrative energy contracts.

Between October and November 2021, Russia began a massive buildup of troops and military equipment along its border with Ukraine. And additional forces were dispatched to Belarus (ostensibly for joint exercises with Belarusian personnel), and Russian-occupied Crimea. Accordingly, the number of Russian forces in Ukraine alone was estimated at 190,000 soldiers, which means entering into a preemptive war. (Britannica,2022)

Like I did before, in February–March 2014, Moscow has engaged in a form of preclusive imperialism that has sought to preclude Kiev, backed by NATO and the EU, from projecting power into the region, by means of evicting the Russian Black Sea Fleet and using Sevastopol as a base against Russian interests(Gardner, 2016, p52)Putin dismissed these accusations and claimed that an accompanying Russian naval buildup in the Black Sea was a previously scheduled exercise(Britannica,2022),but it is clear, this falls within the framework of a show of force in order for the opposing west party to feel fear and confusion, (defensive realism).

Traditionally, geopolitics focuses on the particularistic interests of nation states to influence the course of international politics and justifies intervention beyond national

borders from a realistic perspective. Brenda Shaffer explains that "energy interests, especially in tight international market conditions, influence the mapping of geostrategic interests".(Stelmakh, Op cit, p25).

Fact, there is not in fact a significant conceptual difference between the policies of the West and Russia concerning Ukraine. The policies of both of them have been motivated by their national interests and geopolitical imperatives, although the Western powers don't admit it.

Classical geopolitics defined Ukraine as a part of the so- called 'Heartland'. In the words of Mackinder it was suggested that: 'Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland, who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island, who rules the World-Island commands the world'.(Ibid, p24)

In the words of another geopolitical advocate. Zbigniew Brzezinski's famous dictum that: "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire". (Vasif, 2017, p26) Which leads us to say that, its strategic position in the Black Sea would benefit Russia in order to gain further dominance as well as a greater influence in the competition field?

The second dimension is related to energy, Energy talks between Ukraine and Russia included a pattern of negotiation: Russia threatened to raise gas prices, while Ukraine automatically raised the issue of transit fees. The only difference is that Russia's advantageous geographical position in energy supplies has further turned into tools of foreign policy. Russia is one of the powers that have used its energy wealth and influence to increase its regional influence

with weaker neighbors. Its rise as an energy powerhouse was particularly noted during Putin's tenure, Russia has shown its willingness to use gas as a political weapon along with trade arguments over price, especially during the 2006 and 2009 gas conflicts with Ukraine. Furthermore, its strong position on the Energy Charter Treaty has prompted Russia to develop its own energy market principles.(Stelmakh, Op cit, p25)

On the other hand, Ukraine is trying to move to protect its interests and use all available coercive and diplomatic means, and in order to reduce Russian influence, President Yushchenko has taken a series of measures, like refused to launch the negotiations on the extension of Russia's deployment of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea which was to expire in 2017 .He also insisted on giving Ukraine member-ship in NATO. ( Kurth, Kempe, 2017,p53)

It is clear that the US administration's options in managing the Ukrainian conflict are limited so far, so it is trying to put energy sector reform at the heart of its relationship with Ukraine, . Doing so would constitute a low-risk, high-reward strategy for Washington to counter Moscow's influence at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) border without overcommitting to military options and antagonizing Russia. Moreover, by helping Ukraine reform its energy sector also may create opportunities for trade in energy equipment and services, advancing its strategy of U.S. energy dominance. (Sagatom, Zaslavskiy, 2018, p5).

As for the third factor supported by the neoclassical realist theory, which is related to the internal factors and their impact on the

foreign policy of states, it finds its echo in all the actors involved in the Ukrainian conflict. Therefore, understanding the conflict within Ukraine without turning to local factors is superficial and inadequate. Which we will try to explain accurately :

Historically, the impact of the Treaty of Pereyaslav on the current structure of Ukrainian society, it formed a dual characteristic of Ukrainian society.(Western and Eastern Ukrainians), also, The dual of Ukrainian society was reflected in every presidential election in Ukraine on the internal security stability, and economic reform in the country, where the victory of the European-backed Viktor Yushchenko, and the ouster of Yanukovych forced Russia to intervene militarily against Ukraine in order to secure its interests and repel the western advance on nearly the outside (Expanding its influence in the east).Especially after the West exerted oligarchy pressures on the government and its policy (forming the Mediterranean Union), which actually did not succeed. (Murray, 2022).

Practically speaking, the West did not see the conflict coming, because it supports a wrong view of international politics, because Western leaders ignore or ignore Russian security concerns also the impact of the Treaty of Pereyaslav on the current structure of Ukrainian society. . NATO governments must also realize that the foundations of European security have changed for the worse through Putin's new imperialist policies and that the West It requires a new strategy for dealing with Moscow.

We can also provide an explanation for Putin's seemingly contradictory behavior: after the annexation of the three Baltic republics that were originally Soviet republics to NATO, as well as countries from the Warsaw Pact, Putin did not show dissatisfaction with the situation, because he was keen to establish a relationship between his country and NATO that included balanced security guarantees For the two parties, just as he had not completed the process of building the internal Russian power that supports his foreign policy, i.e. Putin's realization of the principle of costs and burdens.

"I think that the Russian Federation has very well understood that NATO has, of course, no ulterior motives by air-policing its airspace," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said, according to the Associated Press, adding that NATO has a solid relationship with Russia. "I think that NATO and Russia will further build on this partnership"(Ricks, 2004, p2).

But after the issue of NATO expansion reached Ukraine, whose history overlaps with Russian history and Russia is geographically close and even spoke to its president about reviving the Ukrainian nuclear option in exchange for guarantees of its security. President Putin considered that the security threat to his country had exceeded the threshold of danger (Zevelev,2012, pp.5-7).

## 2- Constructivism: A review of the justifications for the move of the international forces in Ukraine:

The existing conflict in Ukraine was based on several ingredients related to the constructive interpretation, which was justified by the Russian side of the intervention there, which was the beginning of the Donbas region with the support of the separatists and the independence of Dontesk and Logansk from Ukraine from one side,

based on the linguistic, identity and nationalism.

## 1- Russia and Ukraine's 'Other': Nationalism and Common history:

The Russian president believes that it is time to correct history from Gorbachev to Yeltsin, who was the result of wrong decisions and estimates, Russia lost its international prestige and prestige, even if this was accompanied by the use of force.

The historical view of the Russian leadership also examines that Ukraine is an extension of Russia and a cradle for the establishment of its state, so changing its loyalty from Moscow to the West poses a real threat, not only at the level of national security, but also for the common memory to define the Russian presence as a state and a nation together. This holistic tendency of Putin went up from the level of conflict and partly, the sovereignty of Ukraine after imposing disarmament and its interference in its political decisions.

Against such an environment, Ukrainian nationalists learned to perceive Russia as Ukraine's true other, i.e. a nation as close to being Ukraine's opposite.

In this vein, constructivist scholars argued that the clash between NATO and Russia and its former countrieswas based on how, respectively, they conceived each other.

The perceptions of Russia's 'betrayal' of Ukraine at the birth of Ukrainian national sovereignty have led to the development of what John Morrison describes as a 'permanent inferiority complex and a lack of confidence in negotiating with Moscow' on the part of the Ukrainian political elite who cannot stop fearing 'that any agreement with Russia is a potential trap, however favorable to Ukraine it terms might appear.' Thus,

Ukrainian elites were among the first to reject the terms of the Novo-ogarevo.(Molchanov, 2015,p2)

To make it clear, Even the agreement that was at the time of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in order to establish the Commonwealth of Independent States and then the idea of regional affiliation and attract Ukraine to join the customs union and provide Russia with many loans and facilities and fix gas prices to the level of 30%, all of this was met with distrust and Ukrainian doubt in Russia's intentions, Especially since these deals coincided with a delay in negotiations with the European Union, which supports the idea of a conspiracy to undermine the country's sovereignty and freedom of international association.(Thomas, Kevin ,p30), clearly, such portrayal supports the constructivist perspective on the issue of the other (friend or foe) as the main driver of states' behavior. Since then, Officials Russia called the European choice a betrayal and accused the EU and USA of supporting the rebels, and they also considered NATO as a potential threat to Russia as it was during was Cold War .

In contrast,The Baltic States seem to have chosen to play the role of a permanent opponent of Russia in European politics, it also worked to strengthen US influence in the Russian neighborhood rather than that of a bridge between the EU and Russia. as had hoped for the latter, Moreover, these countries sought to play the role of mentors to governments in the other former Soviet republics.to overcome their geographically peripheral status and avoid political marginalization, also, After 2014, things changed and Ukraine was seen as a hostile

power that posed an existential threat, unlike before, which Russia considered an ally.(Morello, 2014, pp.11-10).

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### 2- Language and identity

Culture and language have deep symbolic relationships, functionally, each complementing the other.

The linguistic, cultural and religious differences are so deep that it is difficult to speak of a united country, but rather of a divided country. Cultural and ethnic diversity is not exactly the problem, but the problem is when those differences are deep, and when they are linked to a larger conflict, which is the struggle of international axes for influence and control.

Zelensky's liberal government,which since coming to power has launched an offensive against the Russian language and culture.

Procedurally, the Russian government had restricted the use of the Ukrainian language in media, and in education,Although, The official language in Ukraine is Ukrainian but Russian is still the most widespread; other languages spoken in Ukraine are Romanian, Polish, and Hungarian. The struggle over the issue of language is still raised in every election and constitutional changes (Wilczewska, Sakwa, 2015, p209),which means that government institutions are unable to control the frequencies of the state's social formation.

Putin stated that his actions were to protect the Russian population from the increasing violence arising during the Ukrainian revolution.

In addition, with a population of over a million Russian-speaking citizens in Crimea, Putin focused on the nationalistic sentiment within Crimea to constitute his claim. . And claims that Russia is acknowledging the will of the people of Crimea in the referendum of March 2014, adhering to international norms and laws. Furthermore, according to the federal constitutional law of Russia, admission of a foreign state into the Russian Federation shall be affected by mutual agreement of Russia and the interested state, valid in this instance.(Polglase, 2019, p5)

Contrary to the realist perspective of power politics, constructivismfocuses more than a state's identity, and interests, consequent by social norms, which can explain the conflict in Ukraine.

Political leaders in Ukraine failed to create a common national identity acceptable to the Ukrainian majority that could contribute to the country's independence away from political and ideological quarrels, which led to increased tensions and the failure of cultural efforts to "Ukraineze Ukrainians." In light of this sharp division, war became possible and opportunities opened,to obtain greater gains and guarantees for Moscow. (Byshok, Kochetkov, 2014,pp.140-141)

Not to mention, Ukraine was a vital area of influence of many powers Russia, the European Union, Poland, That is, the formation of Ukrainian identity can be understood from the other. as a response to the complexity of its position vis-à-vis Poland, Russia, the European Union, and, perhaps most importantly, vis-à-vis itself. Poland would feel more comfortable if Ukraine served as a buffer EU member state between Poland and Russia. Polish initiatives seemed to treat Ukraine

instrumentally as a means of increasing Poland's security. At the same time, the Ukrainians face Russia's willingness to maintain its post-imperial state. Moreover, ideological differences that permeate the Ukrainian society hinder the emergence of a strong and unified national identity.

Russia has exhibited the principles of social constructivism to hold that their claim to Crimea is within the boundaries of international laws. Putin has used a sense of Russian identity in Crimea to justify Russian annexation. For centuries, Crimea was part of Russia, also emotional associations to a specific territorial identity influence how people view policy choices. And Putin defends his actions believing that Crimea's cultural links and Eastern Ukraine to Russia are stronger than they are to Ukraine and that they identify culturally as Russian.   In contrast States such as European Union, the US, and Ukraine address the fact that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is against international laws and norms, adding to the instability in the international system.( Polglase , Op cit, p4).

**Conclusion**:

All that said, conflict Ukrainian is not easy to include it within an existing interpretive pattern, nor can it be dealt with as a transient event whose consequences can be predicted, and nor can it be explained With reference to the military power and interests dimensions alone, the lines between concepts of war and peace, domestic and foreign policy, and state and non-state actors are becoming blurred. And it is not by reducing it to Russian imperialism to the revival of the Soviet legacy, nor to the insistence of NATO and the United States to restrain Russia and maintain a unipolar regime.

Fundamentally, Russia's foreign policy is consistent with offensive realist theoretical claims; which were dictated by suspicion at western intentions, however, it uses ideology as a cover for this, but this does not mean that it does not care about the common history and identity with Ukraine, because it is considered a matter of "existence". And on the other hand to different condition of policy run by Russia, the United States stays in and supports NATO as a favor not to Europeans but to itself, motivated by self-interest and strategy, as well as to maintain the international balance of power, something that translates into maintaining sizable U.S. ground and air forces in Europe. It is also constantly trying to invoke collective identity in its relations with NATO within the framework of collective security and common memory.

It seems to me that,although there are different aspects of interpretation that seem contradictory, in reality, they are complementary.It means entangles politics and ideology when it comes to explaining hybrid conflicts.

Certainly, the impact of the conflict in Ukraine will be felt by governments, financial institutions, and even societies across the world on several levels, no one can predict how long the conflict will last:

-   The conflict is threatening the core principle underpinning international relations in post-World War II, relating to a threat to international peace and security. It is evident in the dispute between the Russian government and the West. The loss of NATO in Ukraine requires a much-sustained effort in the area of deterrence, but and new failed state will be on the border of the EU,thus,   potentially   the   weakness

frustrating the alliance's broader security agenda (Eurasia) and eventually endangering security in the other region.

- Food security is one of the dimensions of the security complex, and the decision to use food as a weapon was Moscow's decision, to put pressure on the Ukrainian government and major powers, after Putin's decision own decision to ban grain exports to members of the Eurasian Economic Union. This means that the Russian military intervention in Ukraine threatens global supplies of grain.

Borders are no longer able to guarantee protection, threats have become intertwined.

- Economically: About a third of the Ukrainian industrial and agricultural production was destroyed, due to the attack on the Black Sea ports by the Russian army and militias.

As for Russia, after imposing economic sanctions on it, inflation reached its highest levels due to the decline in the value of currencies and the imbalance of confidence with foreign financial institutions, not to mention the freezing of their assets in the European Union countries. Also, on the part of the European Union, it faces many economic challenges mainly related to oil and geostrategic threats to import it.

-Certainly, the Ukraine conflict will affect the global governance of immigration systems in the coming years, and not to mention the Covid-19 crisis, whose repercussions countries are still affected byof its repercussions at all levels.

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