

THE WAR IN UKRAINE THROUGH THE PRISM OF PRESIDENTIAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES, VIS- A-VIS MEDIA & CYBER WARFARE

Review Paper

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Abstract

The war in Ukraine is characterized by personal decision-making processes: President Putin who was born and raised in the Soviet-Union while witnessing its collapse, hence his prism is of reviving his country's status versus the west. President Zelensky of Ukraine is an actor who played the "role of his life" on a TV series, only to be elected genuinely for this position. The war catapulted his status as he visited his troops in the

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front waring uniform. Some key characteristics of the war are media (disinformation) and Cyber warfare (aimed at security, economic and national infrastructure). The solution for this catastrophic calamity, should not be based solely on imposing economic sanctions on Russia, but through using the services of an effective mediator as the Israeli PM Naftali Bennett, who visited Russia on March 6, 2022. His initiative can assist arriving at a common denominator of preserving the safety of Ukraine through imposing an immediate ceasefire on the one hand, while acknowledging Russia's red lines of not allowing Ukraine to be aligned with the west, on the other. Meanwhile, until the war will be halted, it is an imperative to define a humanitarian governorate under western control which will serve as a safe haven for the refugees.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Decision-Making, Media & Cyber warfare

Introduction

Ukraine and Russia have similar grassroots dated as far as the era of Vladimir I in 988 A.D. He was baptized to Orthodox Christianity in the city of Chersonesus which is located in the Crimea peninsula. His regal definitions were relevant to both nations: The prince of Novgorod and was also the great prince of Kiev. In their mutual history there was a Russian annexation of Western Ukraine dated to 1793. The ongoing war in Ukraine is practically a second round of the Crimea crises from 2014. Eight years ago, we witnessed Russian pressure on the Ukrainian government not to follow an agreement with the European Union of strengthening mutual political ties. As pro-Russian demonstrators, controlled airfields and occupied the parliament, President Putin sent forces designated according to Russia to keep the safety of Russian citizens. Two significant political actions, a parliamentary vote on March 6 to separate from Ukraine which was approved by a referendum on March 16th, had

defined the Crimea peninsula as de facto annexed to Russia, as the West did not respond firmly to this political act¹.

How to Characterize President Putin and President Zelensky's Decision-Making Processes

The decision to embark on a war in Ukraine, should be reviewed through President Putin's prism, whose army invaded the country. It will be most significant to relate also to President Zelensky's conduct, while the fighting intensified. President Putin spent his early years in the Soviet Union, witnessing the fall of the Berlin wall, and thus, became a part of a historical collapse of the Soviet empire. A rational decision-making process evolves calculating gains or losses of any possible theoretical outcome, as it is aimed towards arriving at the best calculated result one can choose. The decision maker provides an equivalent weight to various opinions, culminating with "Opposing" ones. His cabinet or council of experts backed by military personnel, convey their professional opinion. President Putin promotes his decision, based on the noted personal memories, hence, his rationale of making Russia great again.

The outcome of the decision-making process may not be the most calculated result of a thorough discussion, as President

¹ Barak Bouks. "How Does the War in Ukraine Differ from the Cold War or a Global Conflict?", The Jerusalem Post. Online Available March 1, 2022. Available At: <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-699056> (Downloaded: March 5, 2022); Britannica, Ukraine. "The Crisis in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine". Available At: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-crisis-in-Crimea-and-eastern-Ukraine> (Downloaded: February 27, 2022); Eve Conant. "Russia and Ukraine: The Tangled History that Connects- and- Divides Them", National Geographic History. Online Available February 18, 2022. Available At: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/russia-and-ukraine-the-tangled-history-that-connects-and-divides-them> (Downloaded: February 27, 2022).

Putin's decision has a surplus value over opposing or different possible outcomes².

President Zelensky can be characterized as a unique case of a “Stand Up Comedian” actor, who played the role of his life of a televised Ukrainian president, only to be elected literally as a genuine president of his country. Although the trigger for the outbreak of the war was inaugurating relations with NATO, Surprisingly, in 2019, President Trump refused to supply arms and supplies “Package” to Ukraine (according to the investigation which was ongoing at the US on different topics). Throughout COVID 19, his popularity was not high as he disputed some mayors, who have an autonomous ability to run their cities independently, according to governmental reforms from 2014. As the fighting intensified, President Zelensky was seen wearing combat uniform, visiting his troops, culminating with a picture of a lunch he ate among his soldiers. He did not leave Ukraine although he was offered a safe passage, and thus, increased his popularity³.

Key Features In The Conduct of the War

² Barak Bouks. Israel's Entrance to Lebanon. As a Development of The Rational Actor Model, Tel-Aviv, Israel: M.A (Thesis) Tel-Aviv University, The Political Science Department: Supervised by Professor Aharon Kleiman, 2003.

³ Britannica, Ukraine. "The Crisis in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine", Ibid; Hadas Sivan. “Vladimir Zelensky: The Jewish Comedian who is Leading the War in Ukraine” (Hebrew), Walla. Online Available February 24, 2022. Available At: <https://www.srugim.co.il/649570-%D7%95%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%93%D7%99%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%A8-%D7%96%D7%9C%D7%A0%D7%A1%D7%A7%D7%99-%D7%94%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%A7%D7%90%D7%99-%D7%94%D7%99%D7%94%D7%95%D7%93%D7%99-%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%95> (Downloaded: March 5, 2022).

Russian-backed separatists in the Luhansk and Donetsk enclaves, did not have a significant status at the outbreak of the war, until President Putin's acknowledgement of their governorates as independent entities apart from Ukraine, under Russian patronage. At that point they became key players in the conflict and may take an active part in promoting an advancement of Russian forces throughout Ukraine⁴. Both Russia and Ukraine, scrutinize any response on behalf of the West. Since August we had witnessed the withdraw of US forces from Afghanistan, President Biden's proclamation of concluding a withdraw from Iraq, culminating with his warnings not to invade the Ukraine on the one hand, while noting he is not interested in war on the other, and thus, the war is a consecutive test case relevant to a concrete western response following a thorough decision-making process.

Russian forces on the other hand, intervened in the Azerbaijan coup attempt last January, and are well trained since the beginning of this year. President Putin has vivid memories of the catastrophic disaster of Nazi Germany's armed vehicles bogging down in the Ukrainian mud, as the snow melted throughout March and April, hence, Russia's necessity to either advance the war machine or arrive at a ceasefire prior to the beginning of Spring⁵. As the fighting advanced, we were witnessing the capitulation of a key city as Charsons.

⁴ Andrew E Kramer. "Russian-Backed Separatists in the Luhansk and Donetsk Regions Once Got Just Passing Attention. They Loom Much Larger Now as Many Fear What May Come Next in Ukraine", New-York Times. Online Available February 20, 2022. Available At: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/20/world/europe/ukraine-russia-separatists.html> (Downloaded: February 27, 2022).

⁵ "What Do We Know of the Russian Forces? Forces? Documentation" (Hebrew), Haaretz (The Guardian). Online Available February 12, 2022. Available At: <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/europe/.premium-MAGAZINE-1.10607568> (Downloaded: February 27, 2022); News Agencies. "Mutual Fire and Accusations: Alert Across Conflicted Areas in Ukraine" (Hebrew), Y Net. Online Available February 18, 2022. Available At: <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/bj8qyt315> (Downloaded: February 27, 2022).

Russia branded it as a model city for an enlightened occupation, as the mayor remained in his position, while continuing to be in charge of civilian affairs, under the supervision of a Russian military commander. The mayor noted following the capitulation on March 3, he will meet the high commander in order to coordinate civilian affairs⁶.

Media and Cyber Warfare

Both Russia and Ukraine made use of media warfare. At the beginning of February, both sides underestimated the hazardous potential of this conflict, and did not portray as much as the western media the severity of an increasing tension. As an example, "Channel 24" of Ukraine, continued with its regular programming on February 15th, of talk shows, news and interviews in a calm manner. This may be explained in both countries will, to portray a coherent effective governance. As the crises worsened there were pro separatist reports of Ukrainian artillery, and thus, preparing public opinion to a necessity of Russian "Peace Keeping" forces. Both sides provided in accurate information regarding the number of casualties and the advancement of the Russian army or its actual success in achieving its goals. President Zelensky used the media, to increase his popularity as he changes his outfit from a suite (as in February 24th, proclamation) into a battle military clothing, while he visited his troops. This branding of him as a popular president among his men, increased significantly his popularity⁷.

Prior to the formal war proclamation of President Putin, a series of Cyber-attacks culminating in February 15th, were aimed at Ukrainian infrastructure as a result the operation of central governmental banks was disrupted (as an example

⁶ "Y-Net Morning Show with Alexandra Lukash & Attila Somfalvi", Y Net. Online Available March 3, 2022. Available At: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Urw5pxzbOrE> (Downloaded: March 9, 2022).

⁷ Channel 24 Broadcast (Ukrainian News Channel), February 24 & 28, 2022.

"Private Bank", users received SMS messages noting there is a malfunction in the bank's ATM machines. The Bank issued a formal notification, it is a false message). Additional DDoS attacks targeted the ministry of Defense, and military forces (as was acknowledged by The Ukrainian Strategic Communication Center and Security Information and Reuters, yet, no accusation was made towards the identity of any attacker)⁸.

We can only draw parallel from previous test cases, in order to note similar patterns of Cyber-attacks, which may refer us to the attacker. Some Cyber-attacks were aimed against Estonian governmental websites, political parties and prominent newspapers between April 25th- May 4th 2008. These attacks led to an intensive investigation by Estonian legal authorities. As a result, a young student (Dmitry Glushkevitz) was found guilty and sentenced to a limited fine, notwithstanding, this verdict related to blocking the entrance of the prime-minister's party's website, regardless of the other attacks. The sophistication of these attacks required skills and resources being possessed only by a country. One has to note, that these attacks followed two years of protests between the years 2006-2007, relevant to a decision of re-locating a monument commemorating grave of fallen Soviet soldiers form WW2, yet, no accusations were made towards Russia⁹.

⁸ Barak Bouks. "How Does the War in Ukraine Differ from the Cold War or a Global Conflict?", *Ibid*: Walla News. "American Sources: We Are Ready to Respond to Cyber Attacks on Ukraine", (Hebrew). Online Available February 16, 2022. Available At: <https://news.walla.co.il/break/3489234> (Downloaded: February 27, 2022); "Ukraine Defence Ministry Website, Banks, Knocked Offline", Reuters Europe. Online Available February 15, 2022.

Available At: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-reports-cyber-attack-defence-ministry-website-banks-tass-2022-02-15/> (Downloaded: February 27, 2022).

New-Media: Tweeter Pages from February 15, 2022: Anastasiia Lapatina@lapatina; Defence of Ukraine@DefenceU ! ; Liveuamap@Liveuamap; Lukasz Olejnik@lukOlejnik; NetBlocks; Woofers@NotWoofers

⁹ News Agencies. "Cyber War In Estonia" (Hebrew), Globes. Online Available January 27, 2008. Available At:

Instead of Conclusion: How This Crises Can be Resolved?

Western economic sanctions on Russia are ongoing, yet, meanwhile the West did not intervene militarily, although it is an imperative to define a humanitarian governorate under western control serving as a safe haven for refugees. Time is of a significant essence as the Ukrainian army continues to resist the incoming Russian troops, albeit capitulation of some key cities. There is significance in embarking on a new diplomatic effort, culminating with the urgent visit of the Israeli PM Naftali Bennett to Russia and Germany, on March 6. Its influence on the Ukrainian public opinion, can be proven through Ukrainian TV commentators relating to Israel, as their TV telecast was relayed through a shelter due to a severe shelling¹⁰. The war in Ukraine will have implications on summarizing a new agreement with Iran and other war prone global arenas as Syria, on which Russia will want to proclaim that these other arenas are still significant. Israel should take into consideration more Iranian activity in the surrounding countries, in a case that there will not be a coherent western security stance towards Iran. We may witness a signature of a ceasefire agreement, yet, only while the sovereignty of Ukraine would not be ignored on the one hand. On the other hand, Ukraine cannot be aligned with either NATO or the European Union, according to what President Putin defined as his red line ¹¹.

<http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000302698>
(Downloaded: March 12, 2022); Anneli Regas. "Estonia Convicts First 'Cyber-War' Hacker: Prosecutors", The Sunday Morning Herald. Online Available January 24, 2008. Available At: <https://www.smh.com.au/technology/estonia-convicts-first-cyberwar-hacker-prosecutors-20080124-1nro.html> (Downloaded: March 12, 2022).

¹⁰ Channel 24 Broadcast (Ukrainian News Channel), March 8, 2022; Barak Bouks. "How Does the War in Ukraine Differ from the Cold War or a Global Conflict?", *Ibid.*

¹¹ Barak Bouks, *Ibid.*

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