REASONS FOR "UKRAINE NATIONALISM" OF THE INVASION OF RUSSIA: THE CONFLICT AREA OF EUROPEAN CULTURE AND SOVIET HERITAGE

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Abstract

The claims of other states to the authority of the states in the geographies that determine the limits of their absolute and eternal power are perceived as threats to the concept of sovereignty. While the claims of states are sometimes for the protection of cultural heritage; sometimes this claim can turn into a geopolitical obsession. Russia's invasion attempt against Ukraine emerged as a military result of both the preservation of its historical heritage and a geopolitical obsession. This study aims to explain Russia's invasion attempt in Ukraine with the discourse of "denazification" through the lens of Ukrainian nationalism. The study concluded that the territory of Ukraine, which became a conflict area between European culture and Soviet heritage, was used by the "West" to keep Russia out of the political borders of Europe with artificial nationalism walls.

Keywords: Ukrainian Nationalism, Europe, Russia, Conflict, War

Introduction

Nationalism and national identity are connected to the factors that people who live within borders regard as separating them from other nations and uniting them (Shulman, 2002). The traditional civic and ethnic categories are determined by connection or separation, and these aspects are shaped by the historical memories of the elements inherent to the state. Thus, the most crucial step in the statehood process is completed and the nation's consciousness that would set it apart from other states is eventually formed.

Since gaining its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine has developed into the political process' geographic center, where intense national identity debates will set it apart from other states. While other former Soviet Union member countries in Eastern Europe accomplished this process with fully Westernized political programmes, Ukraine was unable to do so in both political and economic terms. For this reason, it has evolved into a region where

the Soviet legacy and European borders, symbols, myths, and national histories conflict harshly.

This study was conducted to describe the nationalist foundations of the war that Russia declared on the land of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 with nothing but denazificating purposes.The reason why European culture clashes with the Soviet heritage based on Ukrainian nationalism is questioned in this study, which conveyed the evolution of Ukrainian nationalism from the period between the First and Second World Wars to the present day along with the European political order.

I. Post-Brest-Litovsk Ukraine

Following the First World War, when Soviet Russia and Germany held their first official summit, which began on December 22, 1917, Lenin stated that they were in for a hard and stubborn process and that imperialism would use all its forces to fight against the Soviets. The peace process concluded as Lenin had predicted. Following the negotiations, Soviet Russia signed a peace treaty with Germany that resulted in its withdrawal from the First World War, with severe historical consequences. The young Soviet Union's unique position in both domestic and international affairs forced a retreat against Germany and the acceptance of harsh peace conditions (Wheeler, 1938).

As a result, with the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Agreement on 3 March 1918; Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and some parts of Belarus were left to Germany (Bekcan, 2013) and the independence of Finland, Ukraine (within ethnographic borders) and Georgia was recognized. (Map 1).

Map 1. The New Political Situation After Brest-Litovsk

Source (Wheeler-Bennett, 1940)

With this agreement, Russia was severely divided and encircled by German dependency chains. By eradicating any traces of Bolshevism from non-Russian countries, Germany justified its presence there and claimed that they were there only as rescuers rather than conquerors (Wheeler-Bennet, 1940, p. 97).

Along with being extremely difficult for Soviet Russia to accept, this agreement also provided the Allied Powers with a justification to impose an economic isolation measures on Russia (Bulatov, 2011, s. 34). Additionally, Germany and Austria each settled in the People's Republic of Ukraine, which they saw as a breadbasket to feed their starving populations (Kenez, 2006). A large German and Austrian occupation army marched to the Ukrainian People's Republic to collect the agreed food, following a secret protocol. With the help of the coup, the Germans replaced the Ukrainian Republic's administration with General Pavlo Skoropadsky, who was called a "hetman" and was a more peaceful conservative monarchist, to assure the situation would remain unchanged. As a result of the defeat of central powers in the war in the autumn of 1918, Ukraine had to be evacuated, and by 1919, the country had become the center of a brutal civil war between the pro- and anti-Bolshevik Whites and Reds. The Ukrainian Republican Army fought in both the red and the white armies since the Ukrainians saw this fight as a civil war. This was due to the Ukrainians recognizing the "Ukraine" vision in both armies (Yekelchyk, 2015, p. 42). On the Ukrainian mainland, the Bolsheviks defeated the White Army in 1920. After that, despite the Crimean Peninsula's ongoing resistance, the Ukrainian army withdrew toward the territories governed by Poland (Moffat, 2015).

There have been many attempts up to this point to construct Ukraine that have coexisted, been declared, or been extinguished (Ianevs'kyi, 2003). These are the Ukrainian People's Republic (7 November 1917 - 28 April 1918), which was a part of Russia first and later became independent, the Ukrainian State (29 April - 15 November 1918); West Ukrainian People's Republic (October 18, 1918 - January 21, 1919); Ukrainian People's Republic (26 December 1918 - 21 January 1919 and 16 July 1919 - 20 November 1920); The Ukrainian Soviet Republic (12 December 1917 - July 1918) and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (6 January 1919 - December 1919 and February - May 1920). Furthermore, local institutions can be added to the list. These were the Donetsk Soviet Republic and Kryvyi Rih (27 December 1917 - 19 March 1918), which was part of the Socialist Soviet Republic; Odesa Soviet Republic (January 3 - March 13, 1918); Tavria Socialist Soviet Republic (19 March-30 April 1918) and Galician Socialist Soviet Republic (15 July- 21 September 1920) (Kasianov, 1978, pp. 76-77).

Between 1917 and 1920, the Bolsheviks and the Soviet Union were unable to establish

a complete rule over all of Ukraine. The less reciprocal response of the Soviet power's Ukrainian social base can be seen as the reason for this situation. Despite having fewer supporters in the Ukrainian social base than the Soviet power base did, the goals and methods of the Ukrainian People's Republic in terms of domestic policy differed little from those of the Bolsheviks (Musial, 2015, pp. 324-325), according to later declarations made by the Soviet government. It can be demonstrated that this was the driving force behind Soviet Russia's attempts to annex Ukrainian territory.

Indeed, on November 15, 1917, the Bolsheviks issued the declaration of the "Rights of the Peoples of Russia" with the signatures of Lenin, Stalin, and Bukharin and promised all Russia's nationalities freedom of self-determination, including the right to secede and the creation of independent states, their refusal of the announcement of Ukrainian People's Republic can be considered as an indicator of this situation. The reason for this is Stalin's thoughts toward the Russian political system. In Stalin's apprehension of Federal Socialist Russia, Ukraine had occupied an important place not only ideologically, but also politically and economically. Especially in the post-war period, the re-establishment of the endangered food security, the coal and steel potential in the Ukrainian territories, and the superiority that Ukraine's Black Sea coast would provide to the Russian army contained significant advantages for young Soviet Russia and its rulers.

II. New Political Order in Europe After the First World War

One of the military breaking points of the First World War and the European political order was the Brest-Litovsk peace agreement signed between the Bolsheviks and Germany in March 1918. This agreement, which the Soviet Russian diplomat G. Chicherin described as *"a peace agreement that revolutionary Russia had to accept with a grit of teeth"* (Zhigalov, 2013, p. 8) was, before the Locarno Pacts, *"Europe has been divided into three basic elements today. By the British... Winners, losers and Russia... Despite Russia and perhaps because of Russia, we have to determine a security policy"* (Armaoğlu, 2021). What both Bolshevik Russia and its allied elements, which won despite its defeat, wanted to achieve in the post-World War I order, was that the war's responsibilities were so worn out that they would not dare to start a new war again, so that the destructive effects of the war on the countries would not be experienced again. In the post-World War I order, Bolshevik Russia and its allied forces, which won despite suffering defeat, aimed to ensure that the war's responsibilities were so worn out that no one would dare start another war and that the countries would not once more be subjected to the

devastation caused by the war.

The pre-war balance of the 5 countries changed under the new European political order, which reflects the heavy cost of the war in the peace agreements. With the idea of self-determination, newly established countries between the borders of Germany and Soviet Russia were prepared for conflict with one another even if they were intended to be weak against both states. Additionally, while the USA, which entered the war strongly at the beginning, relatively isolated itself from Europe, Britain became more detached in the new post-war era as well. Due to this, France, which was among the stakeholders of the new power balance, adopted a persistent fear of Germany (Kissenger, 2014, pp. 97-98).

The political efforts to prevent a new war, which places a priority on its security, have shaped France's political position in the new order of Europe (Lebedeva, 2019). The later balance of power and alliance were significantly shaped by France's political attitude. So much so that the establishment of the "League of Nations," which was considered to be a driving force in the system of interstate relations in a geographical sense, did not satisfy France's security concerns. For this reason, up until the Locarno agreement that was signed in 1925, France's foreign policy was centered on the European strategy, which prioritized its security concerns.

Moreover, the most important political development of the post-war period was the establishment of the League of Nations. This situation, in the process of producing policies for the continuity of peace, has revealed a new understanding of security, which the USA pioneered for its establishment, yet did not participate in. Even though this understanding required states to collaborate for this lofty purpose by targeting peace with idealism, it reflects an anarchic state system in which no state trusts the other and for this reason, each state works monolithically for its security, as E. H. Carr (2015), puts forward with the theory of realism. This situation has built a security system in Europe's new political order, where the collective actions of states are only visible as each state implements a new security policy in which it can establish peace in line with its policies.

As a result, Germany and Japan left this organization primarily because of the relatively restrictive but far from solution policies of the League of Nations. The USSR, which was struggling with a serious situation for recognition both within itself and in the international system, was kept out of European politics. The general behavior of France and England, which sought colonies with the colonization and mandate system, contradicted the philosophy of the Society (Polat, 2020, p. 1964). All these caused the newly established League of Nations to

become dysfunctional and the process leading to the Second World War accelerated.

Another factor affecting the security policies shaped in Europe after the First World War was the political opinion shaped by scientific thoughts. The "organic state" understanding, which especially affected the post-war political order of Germany, was transformed into a systematic form of political opinion by Ratzel (1844-1904) and Kjellen (1864-1922) with the intellectual legacy of Carl Vogt (1817-1895 and also used as a tool in government policies with Haushofer. Rival countries also contributed significant ideas to the discussion of Eastern Europe's Second World War strategy, with innovative approaches influenced by their systems of thought. Mackinder and Spykman were two of the most well-known intellectuals. Important arguments concerning the future of Europe were made in both classical Continental Europe and classical British geopolitics, and these arguments subsequently became state policies. Along with altering the fate of each state, these arguments have affected the future of Europe, Ukraine, and the USSR lands.

Lebensraum (meaning "living space" in German), autarky and all-out war discourses (Cohen, 2015, p. 26), which became the political slogan of the Haushofer period, reflect the politics of space on how superiority can be established, together with the fundamentally changing understanding of war. In the same period, the domination-oriented doctrines of the Anglo-US geopolitics made it necessary for Germany to produce doctrines in accordance with its own dynamics and contributed to Haushofer's prominence. As a matter of fact, we can say that the understanding of Lebensraum, which emerged as a political reflection of the organismic theory of the state, which dominates the German political tradition and formed the philosophical foundations of Ratzel and Kjellen, was put into practice first as a state policy (doctrine) and then as a military strategy with Haushofer.

Based on this theory, Haushofer saw the organic expansion of Germany to the East and West as inevitable. As a result, he believed that Germany should dominate the USSR and destroy the British naval power. With this understanding of domination, Haushofer predicted that the natural spread of the German hegemony area would have to reconcile the USSR with Germany, and thus warned Germany against a two-front war with the USSR in the East and France in the Eest (Kelly, 2016, p. 51).

III. Ukraine before World War II

The North American media evaluated the occupation of Europe during World War II largely in terms of countries invaded by the Nazis, populations terrorized by the Gestapo, extrajudicial executions, and concentration camps. Again, according to the same media, "good"

people always fought against the Nazis, while "bad" ones cooperated with them. While this dimension of the war instilled in the readers the perception that the Nazis were universal and exclusive enemies, it is stated that the virtuous act was to fight heroically against the Nazis. The point to be emphasized here is that many Eastern European peoples, including Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Western Ukrainians, were persecuted not only by the Nazis but also by the Soviet troops (Boshyk, 1986, p. 6).

On the eve of the Second World War, Ukraine was partitioned between the Ukrainian SSR within the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. About five million Ukrainians lived in the Galicia and Volhynia region in Poland (Zeman, 1989, s. 80). Even though Ukrainians constitute 13.8% of the Polish population and are the largest minority in the country in the 1931 census, they were subjected to various restrictions due to Polish nationalism (Subtelny, 1991). This situation had a great effect on the ideas of the Ukrainians to establish an independent state. As the 1930s approached, the liberal UNDO, Ukraine's leading party, was suppressed by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). Founded in its place in 1929, the OUN (*Orhanisatsiya Ukrains'kykh Natsionalistiv*, Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) emerged in Poland in the late 1930s as *"the main political organization for Ukrainians"* (Marples, 1992). Additionally, this party, which fought for Ukraine's independence and acted with chauvinist and usually fascist tendencies, was parallel to the political organizations in the Eastern European countries of the period (Bilinsky, 1965, p. 87). The Ukrainian independence war continued against Poland, Germany, and Soviet Russia in the shadow of World War II, but these independence movements were focused on territories where Ukrainians were ethnically dense.

On August 23, 1939, the foreign ministers of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Viacheslav Molotov signed a non-aggression pact. With this pact, Hitler assured that the invasion of Poland would not result in a war against the USSR, and with a secret protocol assured Stalin that the Soviet army was free to invade the Eastern part of the post-Versailles Poland, where more than five million Ukrainians lived (Isajiw, et al, 2013, p 22). While the Molotov-Von Ribbentrop Pact was seen as a treaty of betrayal for the Polish, it was implemented as an agreement for the Ukrainians in which Western Ukraine joined the Ukrainian state (Snyder, 1999, p. 89). For the occupation of the part of the Polish occupation lines on the side of the USSR, *Pravda* newspaper, in its 14 September 1939 issue, wrote that there were eight million Ukrainians and White Russians in Poland and that the Polish government had mistreated these minorities, paving the way for the USSR to invade this place

three days later. While the USSR government described the invasion as "a sacred duty to extend a hand to their Ukrainian and Belarusian fellows living in Poland", the USSR press described this invasion as the "Great Liberation of the Ukrainian Brotherhood" (Map 2).

Map 2. Occupation of Poland by Germany and Soviet Russia

Source (Gross, 1988, p. 2)

The first Soviet invasion in 1939-1941 resulted in a mass expulsion of the Polish elite to Siberia and Kazakhstan and dealt a nasty blow to the state governance of Polish society. This situation was turned into an opportunity by the Ukrainian nationalists and the Polish in the new borders became a target (Snyder, 1999, p. 91). The reason for this is the oppressive policy of the Polish government on Ukrainian culture before the Soviet occupation. With the slogan "Poland for Polish", which it adopted just before the end of the First World War, Poland followed a policy of denial of political and cultural rights against minorities[1] that make up about 30% of its population and took drastic actions against Ukrainians, who constitute an important part of the minority (Subtelny, 1991). This policy of the Ukrainian government towards the Ukrainians was reversed with the opportunity that the Ukrainian nationalists seized with the Soviet occupation and became the reason for the massacres against the Poles (Budurowycz, 1983, p. 473).

VI. Soviet Occupation of Ukraine (September 17, 1939-41)

On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union started the invasion of Ukraine, which would

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[1] (Stanislawów (69.8% in 1928), Volhynia (68.4%), Tarnopol (close to 50%) Lwów (35.8%) and Polesie (17.7%)

last for twenty-one months, and had to withdraw with the "Barbarossa" operation. Although the motto of the Soviet occupation from then on was to "win hearts", the unprecedented rule of the Soviet regime, along with the increasing number of arrests and deportations, systematically destroyed almost all the cultural and economic institutions that Ukrainian society had preserved in the face of the oppressive policies of the Polish government (Marples, 1985, p. 159). Even though there was a widespread belief that the Soviet soldiers were welcomed by the local people in 1939, there were also opinions suggesting that the Ukrainians passively accepted the promise of "rescue from the oppression of Polish oppression", which was the main propaganda of the Soviets against the Ukrainians (Bilinsky, 1965, p. 85). The Soviet regime, which showed its desire to help the "Ukrainian and Belarusian brothers" at the beginning of the occupation, sent a Ukrainian general to the Galicia region, where the Ukrainians were densely populated, to legitimize the occupation, by providing preservation of the official language of Western Ukraine, the improvement of the education system, the Ukrainianization of the universities and the development of health services. The promise of expropriating the lands of the Polish large landowners and sharing them among the peasants was very significant (Doroshenko, 1975, pp. 741-744). Although this situation was a result of the Soviet mentality, it also caused the Ukrainian peasants, who were interested in farming as a line of business, to take a cautious stance against the Soviet regime.

Despite its reform efforts in Ukraine, the Soviet regime simultaneously took steps to deprive Western Ukrainians of their means of political expression. While the increase in arrests and exiles along with the repression led the remaining politicians to flee to German-occupied Poland, the significant political parties of the centrist and relatively liberal Ukraine were dissolved (Subtelny, 1991). 1940 reflects a period when the pressure was felt even more. During this period, it was obvious that the restrictions have turned into acts of violence. At first, the Soviet administration exiled politicians, industrialists, landowners, merchants, bureaucrats, judges, lawyers, retired officers, and priests whom they thought were only related to the Nazi authorities, later this turned into completely arbitrary practice, and everyone who was vaguely suspected was started to be destroyed (Hryciuk, 2005, p. 2). By 1941, the most extensive deportation period of the occupation began, and thousands of people lost their lives in numerous massacres. With the onset of the German-Soviet war, the NKVD[2]-[3] (*Naródnyy komissariát*

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[2] PCIA (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)

[3] Established as the NKVD of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the organization was initially used as a police force and later in charge of maintaining order in the country's prisons and labor camps.

vnútrennikh del) murdered many of the prisoners it had detained on suspicion during the week of 22-29 June 1941, regardless of whether they were imprisoned for minor or major crimes or were already convicted, or simply awaiting questioning (Picture 1). Killings occurred in Lviv (about 1,500 victims), Sambir (about 1,200 victims), Stanyslaviv (about 2,500 victims), Zolochiv (about 800 victims), Chortkiv (about 800 victims), and Dobromyl (about 500 victims). Thus, approximately 10,000 prisoners in Galicia and approximately 5,000 in Volhynia, particularly in the towns of Rivne and Lutske, were killed so badly that they could not be identified (Subtelny, 1991).

Picture 1. The corpses of prisoners killed in the garden of Brygidki prison in early July 1941

Source. (Struve, 2015)

These tragedies, which the Soviets left behind during their retreat, caused the Ukrainians to act with a sense of vengeance as well as a sense of insecurity in their historical memories. Such that there were celebrations that are discussed even today during the entry of the German armies into Ukraine.

V. Germany's Soviet Invasion of Ukraine, 1941-44

Undoubtedly, the idea of "Lebensraum" lied in the ideological roots of Germany and its predecessor, Hitler's attempt to launch an eastward operation. This thought, which was a political manifestation of the organismic understanding of the state, bequeathed by the 18th century to the 19th century, defined the expansionism of the state, which was defined as a living being by Darwinian natural selection, as a vital necessity and an organic political thought system to support the state's way of life has created.

In this system of political thought, which is the basic ideology of expansionism in the German state system, there were three vital parameters for the occupation of Soviet Russia. The first of these parameters was the "inferior race" viewpoint of the Nazi ideology toward the Slavic People. This perspective formed a policy of Lebensraum based on gradually

denationalizing and destroying the Slavic peoples or employing them in the axis of German interests (Gross, 1979). Another parameter that led to the start of the invasion was the belief that the Soviet lands were the perfect place for agricultural colonization. Due to the conditions of his time, Hitler thought of the villagers as the center of national purity and power, while he believed that big cities increased corruption (Heim, 2016). Hitler assumed that the Soviet Union might help the German peasants maintain their fertility and conservatism because of this. The final concern was the belief that only physical conquest can bring about the establishment of the Nazi nation-state. Hitler viewed the growth of Germany as a natural consequence of the organic state. Hitler's view that Germany should expand its population outside of its borders provided the legal justification for the German people to claim and use Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe as their land.

In the same period, while Germany was creating its political thought system for the war, Ukraine continued to experience the nationalist-based traumas of the period between the First and Second World Wars. With the start of the "Barbarossa" operation, the territory of Ukraine became the largest Soviet republic occupied by the Germans. Until 1944, most of the war took place on Ukrainian land. In this geography, which represents 42% of the territory of the USSR (Map 4), more than 700 cities and towns and more than 28 thousand villages were destroyed and during the war, 1.4 million soldiers lost their lives at the front or became prisoners of war and with 600,000 Jews, totally 6.8 million people lost their lives. Additionally, more than 2 million people were sent to Germany as "slave workers" (Dawidowsicz, 1975; Prociuk, 1973).

There are many reasons for the rapid progress of Germany on Ukrainian territory or the withdrawal of the Soviet armies. The significant point to be emphasized here is the reaction of the Ukrainian residents against the occupation in the face of German progress (Picture 2). With the rapid withdrawal of the Soviet army, Stalin's plan to "destroy everything that cannot be evacuated", along with the factory and food stocks, about 45% of cattle on state collective farms came from Soviet Ukraine to Russia (Krawchenko, 1986). Moreover, with the departure of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the residents of Ukraine had to face the German armies alone. Also, the NKVD's killing of tens of thousands of prisoners during the Soviet withdrawal and the widespread destruction behind the withdrawal eliminated the already weak distrust of the Ukrainians towards the Soviet regime (Krakivski Visti, 1941).

Picture 2. Local Residents Greet German Soldiers June 30, 1941

Source. (Struve, 2015)

With the occupation of Poland by the Soviet army in 1939, some Western Ukrainians went to the German-occupied Poland side and carried out political activities with German political and military leaders. This situation caused some West Ukrainian cities to warmly welcome the German army during the German occupation of Soviet Russia (Dallin, 1981). Particularly, the Germans' permission to establish the "Ukraine Central Committee" (*Ukriains'kyi tsentral'nyi kompit (UTsK)*) in Krakow led to the emergence of the Ukrainian nationalists' idea of Ukrainian sovereignty based on 'ethnic homogeneity'. This situation led up to the Ukrainians to take action to remove Poles and Jews from the "ethnographic lands" of Ukraine by serving in the German army (Khromeychuk, 2016).

The organization of Ukrainian nationalists under German auspices caused the idea of an independent Ukraine to flourish in militant political thought. This situation paved the way for actions that would serve Hitler's ideology during the German progress to take place in favor of other minorities living in Ukraine. These nationalist movements, whose influence will be felt in modern Ukrainian political history, have created their folk heroes. Such that these nationalist heroes were transformed into symbolic figures in the actions of Ukrainian nationalists against Russia in the history of modern Ukraine, enabling people to unite around these figures. The severity of the actions of the Ukrainian nationalists during the Second World War was realized under the nationalist ideology of mass deaths, which was defined as "massacre" in the historical sense. The famous historian Snyder (2003) explains the situation of Ukrainian nationalists by claiming that *"because the Ukrainian state had to be established [...] Ukrainian nationalists had a political reason to cooperate with the Germans and to encourage Ukrainian youth to join*

the bodies of Nazi power".

VI. The Post-Second World War European Political System and Ukraine

Even though the Second World War resulted in the unconditional surrender of the Germans, the winds of the political influence it brought with it are still blowing today. This war, which resulted in the emergence of two great powers in world politics, the USA and the Soviet Union, caused the 20th-century European political system to be reshaped. The effect of the Second World War in Europe, more than the destruction, was the gap in the balance of power created in the European political order. While England, France, and Germany easily filled the gaps that could occur in the political order in the pre-war period, in the post-war period there was no power left in Europe to do this. Therefore, the European balance of power politics became the scene of the political struggle between the Soviet Union and the USA. Thus, the political process after the Second World War took place on the ground that the USA would be allowed to have a say in the victory of the Soviet Union in Europe. As Kissinger (2014) states, "*Russia is close enough to Europe to share a common cultural repertory, but always far from the historical trends of the continent*".

The US and European nations, that were forced to comply with the Soviet Union's demands during the Second World War, were not particularly aware of the fact that the Soviets would use those demands as a political trump once the war was over. Iran's post-war political situation is the clearest evidence of this. A corridor through Iran was established in 1942 enabling the Soviet Union, which was at war with Germany, to get military supplies. Under the agreement, this corridor created by the occupation of Iran by the British and Soviet armies had to be emptied with the withdrawal of the forces within six months from the end of the war in line with Article 5 of the agreement. With the official end of the war on September 2, 1945, the United States and Britain, while withdrawing their troops from Iran, did not take any action until March 2, 1946, the date of withdrawal of the Soviet Union soldiers, and also provided support to local forces for the establishment of a communist regime in Iran. Therefore, the Soviet Union followed a policy of gaining economic benefits through Iran (Armaoğlu, 2021, pp. 322-324). This political and military crisis is the first political consequence of the Soviet Union's concrete distrust of the alliance. It is possible to understand the reasons for this attitude of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Such that the Soviet Union reinforced the Allied states' slow take on the Western Front, which they planned to open to relieve themselves on the battlefield, with the perception that they wanted to be worn out against the Germans. This situation turned the partnership, which was necessary during the war, into a limited

partnership in the post-war period, and when the partnership ended completely, the political manifestation of polarization began to be seen clearly in world politics.

The political system of Europe as a result of the Second World War reflects the policy-making process with the USA in the framework of complete distrust towards the Soviet Union. The USA is both the scriptwriter and director of this new political order. Such that the political idea of the balance of power during the Cold War period was that it could only be allied with the United States to get rid of the Soviet influence. This means that the political order policies created by the USA at its pole are unconditionally implemented by all stakeholders. The Soviet Union, located on the other side of the pole formed by the USA, was shaped by the policy of acquiring its justified political colonies after a war that emerged victorious with great destruction. When Soviet policies were allowed to penetrate to what extent, a certain challenge came up. Since Europe's worries emerge from Soviet ideology's absence of national borders. On the other hand, the USA has policies that attempt to contain this ideology within limited bounds. Due to this, if Soviet policies deviated outside the imaginary lines that the USA had set, a hot war appeared to have broken out.

The above-mentioned intellectual infrastructure regarding the political order of Europe after the Second World War, as Kissinger (2014) stated in the new political system of Europe, is reshaped *"with America at the wheel of this joint venture, rather than with the countries in the alliance acting in concert to maintain the balance"*. For this reason, every action against the Soviet ideology was supported underground, behind the borders that the Soviets wanted to be kept.

Regarding the new post-war political order of Europe, no policy was followed where Ukraine was considered an independent country. For this to happen, the disintegration of the Soviet Union will be expected. Instead, at the Yalta conference in 1945, Stalin made Britain and the USA accept the will to annex almost all of Galicia and Volhynia, where the majority of Ukrainians reside, into Soviet territory. Thus, the Curzon Line was accepted as the border between Soviet Ukraine and Poland, and Lviv, which has an important place in the Polish culture, was left within the Soviet border. The official argument of Stalin in the creation of this border is that the Ukrainians should unite with their brothers in Soviet Ukraine (Subtelny, 2009, p. 484). But Stalin was also aware that possession of Western Ukraine would provide a significant strategic advantage over Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and more importantly, over Eastern Europe.

After this process, the Ukrainian territories were tried to be radically Sovietized with

artificial population planning under the Soviet administration, and the Russian population in the region was artificially increased significantly. Thus, while the East-West Ukraine dichotomy ended in a political sense, the multinational Ukraine structure was converted into a dual-nation structure, the influence of which continues to the present, with the settlement of large-scale Russian minorities. However, the eventual inclusion of Ukraine in the Soviet Union did not prevent the American-led bloc from engaging with Ukrainian nationalists (CIA Archive, 1950).

VII. The Dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Founding of Modern Ukraine, and Conflict

Towards the end of the 1980s, the central government of the Soviet Union began to lose its influence on the peripheral republics based on two different parameters. These parameters created a "bottom-up" and "top-down" type of pressure that could directly or indirectly affect the Soviet administration. In bottom-up cases such as the Baltic republics, Georgia and Armenia, the public exerted pressure on the elites through mass demonstrations and ballot boxes, allowing the ideas of independence to be expressed effectively. In the top-down type of pressure, due to the weakness or absence of pro-independence mass attitudes, especially in Central Asia, the elites chose to negotiate with Moscow for more economic dominance and were able to make a gradual progress. When the Soviet Union collapsed, these states accepted independence as mandatory. The political condition of Ukraine, on the other hand, expresses a more complex situation than both parameters. Ukraine has pursued a limited strategic policy for independence due to the weakness of mass nationalism and limited pressure from above. While initially, the communist elites adopted the path to renegotiate the Treaty of Union, which would re-establish the Soviet Union as a voluntary federation, after the failed August 1991 coup by the Soviet rigoristic, who aimed to reverse the reform process, the Ukrainian communist elites strongly opposed the renewal of the Union and, together with the opposition, firmly implemented the exit from the Soviet Union (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 60).

After its independence, Ukraine, like all other countries in the post-Soviet geography, entered a new political process with the post-Communist transition period. In the post-Soviet period, while some Eastern and Central European countries completed this transition period with European integration between 2004-2007, Ukraine could not complete the transition phase, despite taking significant steps in the political and economic fields. The main reason for this was the Ukrainian idea in Russia's political opinion. Indeed, even though the Russian ruling and civil elites were forced to accept the independence of the *"brother"* republics, Ukraine had a special significance and value in the cultural and geopolitical mind of Russia. Besides, it was

unthinkable for many Russians that *"Little Russia"* - Ukraine - was not a part of Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in his speech that he recognized the separatist governments in the East of Ukraine, *"Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us, it is an inseparable part of our history, culture and spiritual space. These are not only our comrades, relatives, colleagues, friends, but also our relatives, people with blood and family ties with us"* and explained the extent of Ukraine's relationship with Russia.

The strong but intangible Ukrainian geopolitics in the Russian thought system of the period created a series of social, economic, and cultural family ties that deepened during the Soviet period. Such that the elites of the political and administrative bureaucracies of both countries were led by leaders who were Ukrainian or came from Ukraine (Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Konstantin Chernenko, and others). While the political management of this family bond is Moscow, the economic management reflects Russia's integration with Ukraine (Magocsi, 2010, p. 726). Indeed, the emergence of Ukraine as an independent actor from the Soviet Union is not an expected situation in the outside world. US President George H. W. Bush, in his speech in the Kyiv legislature on August 1, 1991, three weeks before the independence of Ukraine, stated that freedom and independence are not the same thing and that the USA will not help those who support "suicidal nationalism" by saying: *"Americans will not support those seeking independence to replace a distant tyranny with a local despotism"* (Daahlburg, 1991). This speech, where it was understood that Ukraine was not included in the US geopolitics as an independent country, was later named "Chicken Kyiv". As a political consequence of the separation of such an intertwined structure, Russia made it a part of its policy not to recognize the official borders of Ukraine until 1999[4]. However, the 1999 agreement demonstrated that separation rather than integration is now widely accepted and that both countries are aware of this situation. However, because the agreement's final separation could not guarantee complete control of the strategic Soviet legacy, which was unable to be resolved, it led to the relations between the two nations being constructed on an unstable basis in the following political process.

The emergence of Ukraine as an independent country and the signing of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and the 1999 Friendship Agreements, which will keep Russia beyond

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[4] On May 31, 1997, the second President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma, and the first President of JRussia Boris Yeltsin signed the "Friendship Agreement between Ukraine and Russia". The agreement entered into force on 1 April 1999 and both states pledged to 'respect each other's territorial integrity and accept the inviolability of borders between them' (Article 2). Full text of the agreement https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=08000002803e6fae

its borders in the future, have begun to be perceived as a strategic mistake by Russia, with Putin's rule. Since many examples justify Russia's reservations in its way. For example, with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the full integration of the satellite states, which the Soviet Union was under geopolitical pressure on Europe, with Europe and NATO, caused the concern that Ukraine would follow similar policies. Brzezinski (2019) stated that without even the Baltic States and Poland, only Ukraine and the Soviets could continue their effort to become the leader of the Eurasian empire over the non-Slavic peoples in its south and southeast. Considering the opposite, the fact that an independent and Western-oriented Ukraine will destroy Russia's influence on Europe and create the effect of losing control of the Black Sea over Crimea emerges. Brzezinski (2019) similarly expressed the opinion that the loss of Ukraine significantly limited Russia's geostrategic options.

VIII. The Origins of Contemporary Ukrainian Nationalism

After the collapse of multi-ethnic empires at the end of the First World War, eugenics-based thinking has taken an important place (Turda, 2007) in political thought in European countries (Turda and Weindling, 2007; Felder and Weindling, 2013). Eugenics has become a viable policy for young states or nations that are in the stratification process, especially since it is closely linked to the modernization policies of developing nation-states. Contemporary Ukraine's far-right nationalism has also shaped its sentiment on eugenic discourse built on historical ethnicity and identity.

The eugenics-based policies of different nationalist ideologies in Europe and the organizations that made these ideologies a political element enabled the Ukrainian nationalists of the period to establish ideological devices that would act with national and ethnic consciousness. Eugenics, which started to enter Ukrainian nationalist thought at the beginning of the twentieth century, gradually led to the questioning of the more moderate branches of nationalism (Rudling, 2019), thus bringing the figures who adopted radical ideas and are now declared as "heroes" to the fore[5].(Rudling, 2021) Particularly, the partial invasion of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939 brought West Ukrainian Nationalist activism to the forefront and organized it. Other nationalist organizations united around Bandera, particularly in the organizing process that began with the release from prison of Stepan Bandera

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[5] On January 22, 2010, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko awarded the "People's Hero" medal to Stephan Bandera, a controversial figure described as a Ukrainian ultranationalist. Yushchenko, in his speech at the Israel Foreign Relations Council in Jerusalem in November 2007, stated that the national memory should be transferred to the institutions he entrusted, and claimed that the Ukrainian nationalist organizations did not commit any crime.

(1909–1959) and Mykola Lebed (1909 or 1910–1998) – both serving life sentences for terrorism and murder. The Polish city of Kraków soon became the organizing center of Ukrainian nationalists. In parallel, the German armies also supported these organizations and Ukrainian nationalists took part both under German uniforms and as militia forces in preparation for Operation Barbarossa (Picture 3) (Struve, 2015). Most of the Ukrainian nationalists in the German army and the members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) took part in various police and militia formations, cooperated with the security and intelligence agencies of Nazi Germany, and indeed there is a large literature study revealing that they took part in the Nazi genocide, especially in aid (Katchanovski, 2013; Khromeychuk, 2015).

Picture 3. Ukrainian Militia serving under the German Army (The person on the militia card is seen in the left picture (with a hat) in the middle and is the second person on the right)

Source. (Struve, 2015, p. 304)

In contemporary Ukrainian history, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) took place among the central political issues in post-Soviet Ukraine as a new political discourse, especially after the "Orange Revolution" (Katchanovski, 2015). Between 2005 and 2010, when Viktor Yushchenko was in power, he initiated efforts to legitimize the OUN and UPA together with his bloc "Our Ukraine" party and other nationalist organizations. The main discourse during this period described the OUN and UPA as a mass liberation movement fighting against both the Soviet Union and Germany for Ukraine's independence. As a result, the leaders of both organizations were declared national heroes. As a continuation of this policy, UPA High Commander Roman Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera, the leader of the main faction of the OUN (OUN-B) were awarded the title of national hero respectively in 2007 and 2010, (Katchanovski, 2013). Thus, individual figures were created that would unite the Ukrainians under national feelings during the Westernization

process and prepare them for new fights with the heroism of past struggles.

When it comes to the Euromaidan events (2013-2014), a large number of new political and social phenomena have emerged in Ukraine, precisely based on the ideas of the figures characterized as heroes. The most organized one is the "Azov" battalion, named after the Sea of Azov, which emerged as a relatively spontaneous and government-supported voluntary armed unit in the late spring of 2014, in connection with the start of Russia's covert paramilitary intervention in Eastern Ukraine (Umland, 2019). While the Azov battalion is not the only volunteer unit with a far-right past, it is the most unusual archetypal organization among Ukraine's new armed units.

The Azov battalion has turned into a military structure that includes members from national movements, including football hooligans, and members of ultra-nationalist and right-wing organizations. Later in 2014, the organization, which took part in the operations against the pro-Russian separatist regions and was successful, was affiliated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (Golubov, 2014).

The first emblem of Azov consists of the Latin letters "I" and "N" (National Idea) superimposed on each other, resembling the old symbol of the Social-National Party of Ukraine and the official logo of the SNA/PU. The emblem, besides its literal meaning, is a mirror image of the "wolf hook" (Wolfsangel in German) used by the SS division "Das Reich" and the Dutch SS division "Landstorm Nederland" during the Second World War. The Black Sun image on the emblem is the symbol of the "Nation Idea" and expresses the political behavior of the Azov Battalion, which is quoted in the history of Ukraine. Azov's wolf hook is more than coincidentally similar to far-right symbols of other countries and other eras (Umland, 2019).

The far-right nationalism, which has been present in irregular and semi-regular units since 2014 and serves as the primary driving force behind accredited organizations set up, especially in Western Ukraine, reveals a hybrid structure that originally comes from the Second World War for its political thought infrastructure. Indeed, the analysis of the 2009 and 2013 KIIS Surveys shows that public attitudes towards OUN-B, UPA, and Bandera are particularly strong in Western Ukraine and stronger in Galicia and Volhynia. The same study revealed that the OUN-B leader was least popular in the Crimea and Donbas areas (Katchanovski, 2015). The military behavior of the organizations that evolved as a result of this political thought in

Ukraine's developing political process also varies depending on the country's regions.

IX. Russian Discourse on Ukrainian Nationalism and the War

With the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the "denazification" policy continued with propaganda aimed at the liquidation of the structures organized with the memories of the Ukrainian nationalist organizations OUN, UPA, and OUN-B, which are notorious for killing civilians, having an antisemitic ideology, and cooperation with Nazi Germany. Putin, on the other hand, defined OUN leader Stepan Bandera as "collaborating with the Nazis" and "war criminals" and viewed the proclamation of Bandera as a national hero as an attempt to "erase the names of true patriots and victors from the memory of younger generations".

Putin's "special operations" expression towards Ukrainian nationalism is based on criticism of the gradual cultural cleansing policies of both the people and the government in the process of constructing a national identity during and after the events called Euromaidan or the Revolution of Honor (Революція гідності; Revoliutsiya hidnosti). The previously heroic Stepan Bandera was brought to the public arena by far-right organizations with the Maidan events, and the process continued with the Ukrainian government's implementation of restrictions on the Russian culture. The fact that far-right nationalist groups were able to carry out actions that could take down the government with the support of the public with their historical symbols, and the police measures to remove Russian culture from the territory of Ukraine formed the "background" of the Russian aggression.

After 2014, a successful struggle against separatists in Eastern Ukraine started due to the far right's improved access to weapons (Umland, 2021). The Azov Battalion's conquering of the strategically significant region of Mariupol is the most important result of this struggle. While the state's support for these organizations increased as a result of the military victory of a group that makes up the extreme right's armed wing, it also expanded participation due to public sympathy for these groups, particularly in Western Ukraine. For people residing in the Eastern part of Ukraine and surrounded by the Russian culture, it is evident that the reverse cannot be claimed.

State-based ethnocentric policies have also been put into place in Ukraine at the same time that the extreme right has risen and become more powerful. The most important political step for this was the implementation of restrictions on the Russian language (Kabanen, 2021). TV channels that operate in Ukraine and broadcast in Russia had their program restricted before

being completely banned (Aref'ev, 2018). Additionally, the presence of Russians in Ukraine was greatly restricted from social life by the implementation of a comprehensive law in 2021.

Although both the legitimacy of ultra-nationalist groups and their military successes and the ethnocentric practices of the Ukrainian government are phenomena that can be explained by the use of exclusive authority specific to Ukraine's domestic politics, they form the basis of Russia's propaganda for military action against Ukrainian nationalism. Additionally, for Russia, the belief that the Ukrainian lands historically coexisted along with the Soviets caused both phenomena to be perceived as a threat of cultural extinction to the Russian people living in Ukraine, and this situation has been discussed as the main argument for the war.

Conclusion

The e4, d4 and e5, d5 squares on the chessboard represent an important strategy area that allows central control of the game. Without taking control of this area, the success of the attacks is very unlikely. Therefore, a player with this position aims to put pressure on the opponent by making his moves through this region and provides an important strategic advantage at the point of winning the game. Therefore, the aim of most maneuvers in the game is to capture this area, which will give the player a strategic advantage. As a result, the player who captures this central area (e4, d4 and e5, d5) wins the game by gaining the advantage and putting pressure on the opponent as (s)he wishes.

The geographical position of the territory of Ukraine represents the central squares (e4, d4, and e5, d5) on the chessboard of Eurasian geopolitics. Therefore, the states that control the Ukrainian lands can put pressure on the states they see as their rivals and can bring this pressure to victory during a war when necessary. However, Ukraine can't use this power by itself. In geopolitical terms, Ukraine can only create security effects on rival states with the control of different states. The social axis that the Ukrainian society wants to belong to is the most important factor that determines who will use this power. More specifically, the state(s) controlling Ukraine's geopolitics may create security pressure on the rival state(s). Therefore, Ukraine's geopolitical position represents the central point of Eurasian security. The geopolitics of Ukraine, on the other hand, can be governed by which axis the Ukrainians want to exist as a whole. Therefore, the national feelings of the Ukrainians have become the most important political tool to be governed by the states in Eurasian geopolitics. Thus, most of the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution and 2013-2014 Euromaidan protests have turned into interstate political

showdowns filled with historical nationalism.

Russia's geographical position and historical influence in the region have been viewed as a national security danger due to Ukraine's strong nationalist intention to detach sharply from Russia based on "language and culture" and the political practices of this intention. With its policy of localized instability in Ukraine's Eastern lands and in the regions connected to it with national feelings, Russia has thereby created a gap for itself in the country's political system.

On the other hand, the USA and European countries supported the European national identity of the Ukrainians politically, culturally, and militarily, using the "terra incognita" condition of the Ukrainian history. Therefore, a struggle for existence has emerged, which will create a paralytic effect, where Russia's geopolitical obsession is used and carried out over identities. The main policy here is to build a "Western" Ukraine, which is sharply detached from Russia, blends with European nationalism, but also exists with its historical dynamics. For this reason, the war has turned into a field of struggle where the Ukrainians as a nation prove themselves to belong to Europe.

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