

The Geopolitical Chessboard: The Budapest Memorandum and Russia-Ukraine Relations

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Abstract

The US, UK, and Russian Federation, who met on December 5, 1994, in Budapest, Hungary, provided security assurances in conjunction with Ukraine's admission to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapons state. After long discussions, the parties signed the Budapest Memorandum, which declared that Ukraine would give over all nuclear weapons to Russia for destruction and hand over its third-biggest nuclear weapons, which it had inherited from the fall of the Soviet Union. The parties to the agreement pledged to refrain from using or threatening to use force against Ukraine, as well as to respect the country's borders and territorial integrity. Russia violated these commitments in 2014 when it annexed Crimea. This study delves into the complex structure of geopolitical events, with a focus on the memorandum's involvement in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, as well as how geopolitical strategies and interests interact with the Budapest Memorandum in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Tensions between the two countries increased, bringing together power conflicts, cultural ties, and historical relationships to produce the present situation. This study critically evaluates the initial promises of the Budapest Memorandum, its subsequent influence on Ukraine's security policies, and its relevance to contemporary challenges. This study also explores how the Budapest Memorandum influenced the strategic narratives of both sides and how other global powers and organizations played a role in mediating or exacerbating the conflict. This study examines primary and secondary sources using qualitative research methodology. This study examines the Russia-Ukraine conflict through realism and Halford Mackinder's Heartland theory.

Key Words: *Russia, Ukraine, Budapest Memorandum, Nuclear Weapons, NPT, NATO.*

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Introduction

Ukraine, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom signed the ‘Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances’ in December 1994.¹ Signatories made this diplomatic agreement to each other as part of the denuclearization of former Soviet republics following the fall of the Soviet Union. According to the memorandum, Ukraine committed to signing the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, removing all nuclear weapons from its territory during the Soviet era, and sending them to Russian disarmament facilities. Ukraine followed these commitments. Russia and the Western signatory states essentially reaffirmed Ukraine's sovereignty and geographical integrity as an independent state in exchange.²

Under security assurances from the US, United Kingdom and Russia, Ukraine became a Non-Nuclear Weapons State (NNWS) and joined the NPT in December 1994.³ Only the five countries listed in the NPT—Russia, France, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States—are permitted to own nuclear weapons. It is forbidden for any other NPT member, including Ukraine, to build nuclear weapons.⁴ Jonathan Masters said that Russia and Ukraine share strong cultural, economic, and political ties, and in many ways, Ukraine is essential to Russia's identity and global aspirations. However, the conflict will ruin their relationship forever.

The Kremlin's growing concern about NATO's post-Cold War expansion into the former Soviet sphere of influence culminated in Russia's invasion in 2022. Putin and other Russian officials have claimed that the US and NATO have frequently broken promises they made in the early 1990s not to extend the alliance into the former Soviet Union. According

¹ Kateryna Oliynyk, “The Destruction Of Ukraine’s Nuclear Arsenal,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/the-destruction-of-ukraines-nuclear-arsenal/29699706.html>.

² Ron Synovitz, “Explainer: The Budapest Memorandum and Its Relevance to Crimea,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 13:00:39Z, sec. Ukraine, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-explainer-budapest-memorandum/25280502.html>.

³ “Milestones: 1969–1976 - Office of the Historian,” accessed November 29, 2023, https://mfa.gov.by/en/multilateral/global_issues/global_security/nuclear_disarmament/.

⁴ Pawel Kopczynski, “The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty,” World101 from the Council on Foreign Relations, July 2023, <https://world101.cfr.org/global-era-issues/nuclear-proliferation/nuclear-nonproliferation-treaty>.

to Professor Paul Dobb, with Russia's annexation of Crimea and its involvement in eastern Ukraine in 2014, it violated the Budapest Memorandum, which sparked new debates over the validity and dependability of the security guarantees given. Russia's violation of the Memorandum showed its willingness to violate established legal and political rules in the name of its national identity as well as its strategic and economic interests. Russia persisted in its actions despite international condemnation and economic sanctions. If Russia continues its perilous course, the fate of the Budapest Memorandum could represent a turning point in the disintegration of the international order.⁵

Dr. Aldo Zammit Borda offers a critical analysis of the 1994 agreement guaranteeing the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Russia's breach of Budapest Memorandum brings to light the possible repercussions when strong governments decide to break their promises, prompting questions about the reliability and efficacy of security guarantees as well as the ramifications for international stability.⁶ This research looks at political aspirations, historical events, and regional factors to depict the complex chessboard on which Russia and Ukraine move. It sheds insight on the relationship between realpolitik and diplomatic guarantees by scrutinizing the promises made in the Budapest Memorandum and examining how it has affected the actions of both parties.

Furthermore, this study considers possible lessons learned and wider implications for international security frameworks in addition to bilateral ties. This paper ultimately serves as a bridge between the historical context and modern geopolitics by offering insights into how the Budapest Memorandum has impacted the narratives, strategies, and goals of nations that are involved in conflict. By analyzing the geopolitical chessboard of the Russia-Ukraine story, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise when diplomatic agreements interact with the continuously shifting dynamics of

⁵ Paul Dobb, "The Geopolitical Implications of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," accessed November 3, 2023, <http://www.aspi.org.au/report/geopolitical-implications-russias-invasion-ukraine>.

⁶ Aldo Zammit Borda, "Ukraine War: What Is the Budapest Memorandum and Why Has Russia's Invasion Torn It Up?," *The Conversation*, March 2, 2022, <http://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-what-is-the-budapest-memorandum-and-why-has-russias-invasion-torn-it-up-178184>.

international relations.

Conceptual Development behind Russia-Ukraine Conflict

This paper applies the most prominent and well-known school of thought in international relations, realism. The Peloponnesian War narrative by Thucydides is where it all began. Realism is a group of ideas that share certain common assumptions rather than being a single theory. For example, states are the key actors in realism theories; they rationally pursue their goals. The distribution of power is the primary factor influencing international outcomes in the anarchic international system.⁷

Competing interests are the main force behind international politics, with each nation-state making every effort to achieve its own objectives as much as is possible. States resort to war when peaceful means of accomplishing their objectives are unproductive. Russia has said that it opposes the neighboring country of Ukraine joining NATO, the transatlantic organization established at the outset of the Cold War to defend Europe against the Soviet Union. Russia views the military stance of these new Western allies at its borders, as well as the extension of NATO, as threats.⁸ Based on realistic assumptions, the Russia-Ukraine war can probably be interpreted as an effort to rebalance the power dynamics that had begun to favor the US and its Western allies.⁹

Realistic thinking can provide multiple explanations for a state's decision to take action, like Russia Ukraine war.¹⁰ “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island controls the

⁷ Alezay Gul, “Revisiting the Russia-Ukraine War through the Lens of Realism,” *Institute for a Greater Europe* (blog), May 2, 2023, <https://institutegreater europe.com/revisiting-the-russia-ukraine-war-through-the-lens-of-realism/>.

⁸ “In Nod to Russia, Ukraine Says No Longer Insisting on NATO Membership,” *France 24*, March 8, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220308-in-nod-to-russia-ukraine-says-no-longer-insisting-on-nato-membership>.

⁹ Daniel Drezner, “Can Realism Explain the War in Ukraine? - The Washington Post,” *The Washington Post*, March 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/03/03/can-realism-explain-war-ukraine/>.

¹⁰ Nicholas Ross Smith and Grant Dawson, “Mearsheimer, Realism, and the Ukraine War,” *Analyse & Kritik* 44, no. 2 (November 1, 2022): 175–200, <https://doi.org/10.1515/auk-2022-2023>.

world,” wrote one of the pioneers of geopolitics, Halford Mackinder.¹¹ He said that one of the essential components of the Heartland was Ukraine. The current Ukrainian situation is turning into an environment for a significant geopolitical conflict.¹² The second theory that applied on Russia Ukraine war is classical geopolitical theory Halford Mackinder's Heartland theory to analyze the geographical dynamic mechanism and temporal-spatial patterns of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

This study investigates the impact of Mackinder's Heartland theory on the geopolitical ideology and strategic maneuvers of the United States and Russia, drawing on an overview of the theory's fundamental ideas. It examines the unique aspects of Ukraine's Midwestern location as well as its involvement in the rivalry between East and West forces. This Research paper demonstrates that, despite substantial historical disagreements, the Russia-Ukraine conflict appeared to be a conflict between the two East Slavic nations. Because of its location at the crossroads of the Heartland and the Rimland, Ukraine has been the focus of the big powers' geopolitical rivalry.¹³

Budapest Memorandum's Historical Underpinnings

Twenty years ago, with the fall of the Kremlin's empire, a difficult situation developed with many nuclear weapons spread around multiple newly independent republics.¹⁴ Ukraine became the owner of the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, with around 1800 warheads, exceeding the combined arsenals of China, Britain, and France. However, Ukraine did not acquire operational control over this arsenal. The unexpected

¹¹ “Mackinder: Who Rules Eastern Europe Rules the World,” *IGES* (blog), February 8, 2021, <https://iges.ba/en/geopolitics/mackinder-who-rules-eastern-europe-rules-the-world/>.

¹² Kılıç Buğra Kanat, “The Ukrainian Crisis as a New Chessboard of Global Geopolitics,” *Daily Sabah*, March 17, 2014, <https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/kilic-bugra-kanat/2014/03/17/the-ukrainian-crisis-as-a-new-chessboard-of-global-geopolitics>.

¹³ Alexander Brotman, “Ukraine and the Shifting Geopolitics of the Heartland,” *Geopolitical Monitor* (blog), September 21, 2022, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/ukraine-and-the-shifting-geopolitics-of-the-heartland/>.

¹⁴ “Soviet Union - Countries, Cold War & Collapse,” *HISTORY*, March 20, 2023, <https://www.history.com/topics/european-history/history-of-the-soviet-union>.

presence of these nuclear weapons in several independent governments gave rise to serious worries regarding nuclear proliferation.¹⁵ The US, UK, Russia and Ukraine held talks for two years to resolve the problem and protect the nuclear stockpiles of the former Soviet Union in response to this catastrophic situation. The outcome was an agreement known as the Budapest Memorandum, which on December 5, 1994, was approved by all four nations.

To minimize any possible dangers of nuclear proliferation, the Memorandum sought to gather and safeguard the nuclear weapons that remained following the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially in Ukraine.¹⁶ The guarantors reaffirmed their adherence to prior political and legal duties when they signed the Budapest Memorandum.¹⁷ One such requirement was found in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, a political instrument. Thirty-five nations signed the Helsinki Final Act to conclude the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was held in Helsinki, Finland.

The complex Act tackled a number of important international issues and had a profound impact on U.S.-Soviet relations and the Cold War.¹⁸ The guarantors in the Memorandum promised to uphold Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and existing boundaries. It was Ukraine that requested the essential inclusion of the words 'existing borders' in the Memorandum, as it sought clear and unquestionable recognition of its sovereignty over all of the land that had previously been a part of the Soviet Union, including Crimea.¹⁹ This was a key point of dispute because Russia had previously confirmed Ukraine's borders as being exclusively within the Commonwealth of Independent States via earlier

¹⁵ "The Helsinki Process and the OSCE," CSCE, February 1, 2016, <https://www.csce.gov/about-csce/helsinki-process-and-osce>.

¹⁶ "Throwback Thursday: The 1994 Budapest Memorandum," Default, accessed July 12, 2023, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/throwback-thursday-1994-budapest-memorandum>.

¹⁷ Mariana Budjeryn, "Was Ukraine's Nuclear Disarmament a Blunder?," *World Affairs* 179, no. 2 (September 2016): 9–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0043820016673777>.

¹⁸ "Milestones: 1969–1976 - Office of the Historian," Office of the Historian, 2000, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/helsinki>.

¹⁹ "Constructive Ambiguity of the Budapest Memorandum at 28: Making Sense of the Controversial Agreement," Default, accessed July 11, 2023, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/constructive-ambiguity-of-the-budapest-memorandum-at-28-making-sense-of-the-controversial-agreement>.

accords, such as Article 5 of the Belavezha Accords.²⁰ Ukraine considered this stance to be limiting given Russia's substantial sway over the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Since Ukraine's sovereignty over its entire territory was established, the Budapest Memorandum served as the first international agreement to address and resolve this issue. It also provided crucial guarantees in the face of changing geopolitical realities.²¹ The parties to the Budapest Memorandum reiterated their adherence to UN Charter Article 2(4), which forbids using force or threatening force against Ukraine's political independence or territorial integrity. Furthermore, the parties agreed to promptly request assistance from the UN Security Council in the case that nuclear-armed violence was directed towards Ukraine.²²

Ukraine: A Geopolitical Flash Point

Russia and Ukraine have deep cultural and historical ties that have grown over time. This linkage resulted from their trading relationships and geographic location.²³ However, in the last few years, Ukraine has gained recognition as an independent state with a distinct governmental structure from Russia. Though their sovereignty was challenged on February 24, 2022, when the Russian government ordered military soldiers to enter Ukrainian territory.²⁴ With this move, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The boldness of this invasion and its impact on neighbouring sovereign states sent shockwaves across the global community.²⁵ Although Ukraine is physically located in the disputed heartland, its ideological, military, and geopolitical ties to its Western neighbours are growing. With

²⁰ "The Belavezha Accords Signed," Presidential Library, 2010, <https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619792>.

²¹ "Territorial Integrity," CSCE, accessed July 25, 2023, <https://www.csce.gov/issue/territorial-integrity>.

²² "UN General Assembly Calls for Immediate End to War in Ukraine | UN News," United Nations, February 23, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133847>.

²³ Eve Conant, "Russia and Ukraine: The Tangled History That Connects—and Divides—Them," History, February 24, 2023, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/russia-and-ukraine-the-tangled-history-that-connects-and-divides-them>.

²⁴ Samuel Charap and Miranda Priebe, "Avoiding a Long War: U.S. Policy and the Trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict" (RAND Corporation, January 25, 2023), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA2510-1.html>.

²⁵ "Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed August 24, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia>.

Sweden and Finland expected to join NATO, Putin's conflict in Ukraine has simply served to hasten the process and bring about the same risks he predicted regarding the alliance's expansion. Therefore, it is possible that the heartland will become not just unchallenged but also connected by treaty to Western-led institutions that Putin views as essential dangers to Russia's existence. According to Mackinder's theory, Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, is part of the Heartland. Therefore, controlling this region is geopolitically significant for Russia to global dominance.²⁶

Motivations Behind Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Russia defended its actions by citing its national security interests, characterizing the popular uprising that overthrew Viktor Yanukovich, the president of Ukraine, as a "coup" supported by the CIA that aimed to fully encircle Russia and eventually lead to Ukraine's membership in NATO.²⁷ Before Russia launched a full-scale invasion in February 2022, President Zelenskyy proposed an alternative course of action: the nation's withdrawal from the NPT. Regarding the hostility of Russia, Ukraine had a strong legal case to withdraw from the NPT in accordance with Article 10 of the Treaty, which states that 'each party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the authority to withdraw from the Treaty if it determines that unforeseen circumstances, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have endangered the supreme interests of its country.'

This is particularly significant in light of the Ukrainian Parliament's objections to the NPT which stated that any use of force or threat of force by a nuclear power against Ukraine would be viewed as "extraordinary events endangering its supreme interests."²⁸ Russian actions continue to be in line with the realist theory that nations make decisions based on

²⁶ Michael Hochberg and Leonard Hochberg, "'Confining the Enemy'—Halford Mackinder's Theory of Containment and the Conflict in Ukraine," 2023.

²⁷ Hayes Brown, "Oliver Stone Says Ukraine's Revolution Was Actually A CIA Plot," BuzzFeed World News, December, 2023, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hayesbrown/oliver-stone-says-ukraines-revolution-was-actually-a-cia-plot>.

²⁸ "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – UNODA," accessed April 10, 2023, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text/>.

rational cost-benefit analysis and act in their own best interests.²⁹ Russia has various geopolitical reasons for wishing to integrate Ukraine into its boundaries.

Despite having distinct governmental regimes, both nations have a shared cultural past. Natural resources, such as gas and oil, which are found in Ukraine and provide a significant portion of the EU's customer base, are a major factor in the possible annexation.³⁰ This indicates that Russia, a non-member of the European Union, finds control over Ukraine to be strategically useful. Putting more emphasis on Russia is also necessary because China and the US are currently at the centre of global attention.³¹ Ukraine was created during the Cold War by the Soviet Union, which was a major adversary of the United States. Out of the fifteen Soviet republics, it ranked second in terms of population and power, only surpassed by Russia.

The Black Sea Fleet and some of the nuclear weapons were located there, and it served as the hub for the union's military, defence industries, and agricultural production.³² Due to Ukraine's critical role in the union, the nation's 1991 decision to sever ties was a significant blow to the declining superpower.³³ Sevastopol is one of the best naval stations in the Black Sea because of its warm water port, natural harbour, and substantial infrastructure. Although Russia has a lease on Sevastopol that expires in 2042, the latest events have made Russia more worried that its access may be endangered in the future. The Black Sea Fleet based at Sevastopol, is a powerful symbol of Russian strength and gives Russia the ability to project power in and around the Black Sea. The Black Sea region is strategically important, providing access to the Mediterranean and beyond. Control over Crimea, which has a

²⁹ "Realism and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis," *Pakistan Politico* (blog), March 22, 2022, <https://pakistanpolitico.com/ukraine/>.

³⁰ Vanessa Ratten, "The Ukraine/Russia Conflict: Geopolitical and International Business Strategies," *Thunderbird International Business Review* 65, no. 2 (2023): 265–71, <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.22319>.

³¹ "The European Union and the Russian Federation | EEAS," EEAS, November 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/russia/european-union-and-russian-federation_en?s=177.

³² "The Black Sea's Role in Russia's War on Ukraine – DW – 09/14/2023," accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/the-black-sea-plays-a-key-role-in-russias-war-on-ukraine/a-66517223>.

³³ Ratten, "The Ukraine/Russia Conflict."

significant Russian naval base in Sevastopol, is crucial for Russia's geopolitical and military ambitions in line with Mackinder's theory.³⁴

According to realism, there is a security dilemma in which strategies made by one state to strengthen its security may be viewed as a threat by other states. Since Ukraine has attempted to be in line with more Western organizations, such as the EU and NATO, during its three decades of independence, any actions deemed as improving Ukraine's security may be viewed by Russia as a threat to its own security. The conflict between the two countries is deeply ingrained in history. Still, Kyiv found it difficult to strike a balance between its international strategy and its severe internal conflict. The more nationalist Ukrainian-speaking population in the west largely supported closer connections with Russia despite the fact that most Russian-speaking people in the east preferred stronger ties with Europe.³⁵

A 2001 survey estimated that eight million ethnic Russians, primarily from the country's east and south were residing in Ukraine. Moscow used its responsibility to safeguard these individuals as justification for its actions in the Crimea and the Donbas in 2014. Putin asserts that Russia is preventing a genocide against the Russian-speaking people of Ukraine. Russia's position internationally would suffer greatly if it lost control of Ukraine and enabled Ukraine get closer to the West.³⁶ When the Soviet Union annexed Crimea in 1954, Nikita Khrushchev wanted to enhance the "brotherly ties between the Ukrainian and Russian people." But many Russian nationalists, both in Crimea and across Russia, have been demanding that the peninsula be retaken since the union collapsed.³⁷

For a long period of time, Russia was Ukraine's main trading partner, but relations have drastically gotten worse recently. China eventually traded more goods and services with Ukraine than did Russia. Prior to annexing Crimea, Russia attempted to include Ukraine into

³⁴ "Crimea's Strategic Value to Russia | The Post-Soviet Post | CSIS," CSIS, March 2014, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/crimeas-strategic-value-russia>.

³⁵ Dibb, "The Geopolitical Implications of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine."

³⁶ Mary Wood, "What Does Russia Really Want in Ukraine? | UVA Today," February 22, 2022, <https://news.virginia.edu/content/what-does-russia-really-want-ukraine>.

³⁷ Mark Kramer, "Why Did Russia Give Away Crimea Sixty Years Ago? | Wilson Center," Wilson Center, 2014, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/why-did-russia-give-away-crimea-sixty-years-ago>.

the Eurasian Economic Union—which consists of Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia as a unified market.³⁸ Moscow used Ukrainian pipelines to provide gas to clients in Central and Eastern Europe, but for a long time, Moscow paid Kyiv billions of euros in transit fees annually. Russian gas continued to flow through Ukraine in the early months of 2023 despite the ongoing hostilities between the two.³⁹ Especially after its favorite candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, was elected, Russia was keen to maintain its political influence in the former Soviet Union and in Ukraine. The 2004 Orange Revolution popular movement saw the defeat of him by a reformist rival.

The Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, which resembled a Kremlin election defeat, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 preceded this setback for Russia's interests in Ukraine. After all, Yanukovich won the 2010 presidential election in Ukraine in spite of popular discontent with the Orange regime.⁴⁰ International politics are mostly driven by competing interests, similar to realism, with each nation-state trying everything within its power to pursue its own goals. Putin has often described the EU's and NATO's eastward expansion and promotion of democracy as a danger to Russia's "core strategic interests." This served as the main driving force behind Russia's decision to take over Crimea and damage the Donbas region.⁴¹

The Breach

One prominent Ukrainian jurist has described the Budapest Memorandum as 'assurances without guarantees.'⁴² Russia started a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24

³⁸ Georg Zachmann, Marek Dabrowski, and Marta Domínguez-Jiménez, "Ukraine: Trade Reorientation from Russia to the EU," Bruegel | The Brussels-based economic think tank, November 29, 2023, <https://www.bruegel.org/blog-post/ukraine-trade-reorientation-russia-eu>.

³⁹ "The Russia-Ukraine War and Its Ramifications for Russia," Brookings, accessed July 17, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-russia-ukraine-war-and-its-ramifications-for-russia/>.

⁴⁰ Sustainability (IDOS), "The impact of Russia on governance structures in Ukraine," accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.idos-research.de/en/discussion-paper/article/the-impact-of-russia-on-governance-structures-in-ukraine/>.

⁴¹ Smith and Dawson, "Mearsheimer, Realism, and the Ukraine War."

⁴² James Lowell, "The Brookings Institution," n.d.

February 2022, but, by July, the attacks had weakened in intensity and focus. Between August and November, Ukrainian counteroffensives recaptured a significant amount of territory.⁴³ According to Russian policy, treaties are merely agreements made between governments and do not impose any long-term duties in the case that one of the parties changes. However, governments ratify treaties and other agreements on behalf of states, as established international law suggests.⁴⁴

The United States and UK promptly brought the Russian infringement before the UN Security Council, in accordance with the terms of the Memorandum but Russia refused to participate in the signatory consultations. Despite Russia's veto of the Security Council resolution condemning Russian movements in Crimea in March 2014, Yuriy Sergeyev, the former Ukrainian ambassador to the UN, asserts that any uncertainty regarding the illegality of Russia's land grab has been removed by the UN General Assembly's expressing support for Ukraine's territorial integrity.⁴⁵

The realist example for Ukraine's support recognizes Mearsheimer's observation about the tragic structural nature of world politics, specifically the possibility of a protracted period of great-power competition between China and Russia, as well as the persistent threat that Russia, under Vladimir Putin, poses to peaceful and stable relations in Europe. It recognizes that Ukraine's will and creativity present an opportunity to, in the words of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, "weaken Russia" and shift the global power balance in favor of the United States and its allies.⁴⁶

⁴³ "Russia-Ukraine War: Will There Be a Spring Counteroffensive? | Russia-Ukraine War News | Al Jazeera," accessed July 12, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/1/russia-ukraine-war-will-there-be-a-spring-counteroffensive>.

⁴⁴ "The Budapest Memorandum and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis - War on the Rocks," accessed July 12, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/06/the-budapest-memorandum-and-the-russia-ukraine-crisis/>.

⁴⁵ "Budapest Memorandum at 25: Between Past and Future," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/budapest-memorandum-25-between-past-and-future>.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Mankoff, "The Realist Case for Ukraine - Foreign Policy Research Institute," accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/the-realist-case-for-ukraine/>.

Failure of Budapest Memorandum in Russia Ukraine War

According to Ukrainian authorities, Ukraine is entitled to a security choice under the agreement since Russia is not keeping its half of the pact and Ukraine has already fulfilled its obligation by handing over its nuclear weapons. Ukraine wants guarantees of legal security sufficient to thwart Russian aggression. The Kyiv Security Compact is one feasible strategy that explicitly presents itself as an opponent to the Budapest Memorandum.⁴⁷

In reaction to Russian invasion, the US and the UK did not take any concrete step. Both countries provided Ukraine with assets, military equipment, and training while enforcing more severe penalties against Russia.⁴⁸ However, because of fear of Russia, they have chosen not to take part in direct involvement, such as creating no-fly zones over Ukraine.⁴⁹ While this restricted reaction strictly adheres to the requirements of the Budapest Memorandum, it conveys the idea that Ukraine was left to defend itself against an inappropriate opponent possessing nuclear weapons.⁵⁰ The fundamental realist notion that governments and its leaders react according to self-interest, particularly its survival.

With Russia involved in a horrifying battle that violates the Budapest Memorandum, many people today believe that it was a severe diplomatic mistake. Andriy Yermak, the head of the Ukrainian Office of the President, summed up the general agreement when he referred to the text as ‘ill-fated’ and ‘never again.’ The end of the Budapest Memorandum.⁵¹ The primary problem with security guarantees is that their dependability depends on the

⁴⁷ Ian Davis, “The Proposed ‘Kyiv Security Compact’ and the Western Network of Advisers and Consultancy Firms Helping to Steer Ukraine’s Foreign Policy Choices | NATO Watch,” *natowatch*, September 2022, <https://natowatch.org/default/2022/proposed-kyiv-security-compact-and-western-network-advisers-and-consultancy-firms>.

⁴⁸ Timothy Garton Ash, Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, “United West, Divided from the Rest: Global Public Opinion One Year into Russia’s War on Ukraine,” *ECFR*, February 22, 2023, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/united-west-divided-from-the-rest-global-public-opinion-one-year-into-russias-war-on-ukraine/>.

⁴⁹ Mankoff, “The Realist Case for Ukraine - Foreign Policy Research Institute.”

⁵⁰ “Ukraine War: What Is the Budapest Memorandum and Why Has Russia’s Invasion Torn It Up?,” accessed July 12, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-what-is-the-budapest-memorandum-and-why-has-russias-invasion-torn-it-up-178184>.

⁵¹ “Constructive Ambiguity of the Budapest Memorandum at 28.”

guarantors' perception that implementing their commitments will promote significant national objectives. And even while defending Ukraine is vital to the interests of major European countries, it is quite difficult to imagine them fulfilling their commitment to do so.⁵²

Outside Europe, the Budapest Memorandum's failure to offer any defence against Russia has a global impact. The president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, recently said at the Munich Security Conference that Ukraine “will have every right to believe that the Budapest Memorandum is not working and all the package decisions of 1994 are in doubt,” if “consultations among the Budapest Memorandum signatories” did not take place or their outcomes do not guarantee security for our country.⁵³ The day after President Zelenskyy expressed disappointment with NATO for failing to provide concrete dates for his country's planned NATO membership, the G7 issued a resolution outlining long-term security guarantees for Ukraine. The proclamation aimed to prevent further Russian aggression.⁵⁴

Global Powers Role in Mediating the Conflict

The United States continues to place a high premium on the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It denies Russia's claims to Crimea and the other lands it has seized under coercion. The Minsk agreements were welcomed by the US as a potential means of ending the conflict in Donbas. Ukraine and the separatists supported by Russia came to a 12-point cease-fire agreement in September 2014. The terms included exchanging captives, providing humanitarian relief, and removing heavy armament. The failure of the Minsk I Agreement in the Russia-Ukraine war can be attributed to a combination of

⁵² Brian Bonner, “Ensuring Ukraine’s Postwar Security,” *GIS Reports* (blog), November 29, 2022, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/ukraine-war-security/>.

⁵³ “Ukraine and Taiwan: What Two Case Studies Tell Us About the Effectiveness of Security Assurances,” *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, May 7, 2022, <https://www.jtl.columbia.edu/bulletin-blog/ukraine-and-taiwan-what-two-case-studies-tell-us-about-the-effectiveness-of-security-assurances>.

⁵⁴ Amanda Macias Turak Natasha, “G7 Signs Declaration of Security Guarantees for Ukraine; Kremlin Warns West Is Making a ‘Dangerous Mistake,’” *CNBC*, accessed July 14, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/07/12/russia-ukraine-live-updates.html>.

incomplete implementation, disagreement on key issues, the involvement of external actors, and a lack of robust enforcement mechanisms. Realists believe that states utilize perceived advantages as the basis for their strategic calculations.⁵⁵ The self-proclaimed republics backed by Russia and Ukrainian military continued to carry out armed operations of a lower caliber even after the ceasefire agreement was signed. They then became more intense.

In February 2015, the second agreement (Minsk II) was signed by the leaders of the separatist-held regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as representatives from Russia, Ukraine, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), particularly with regard to the extent of the "special status" granted to the self-proclaimed republics.⁵⁶ The subsequent Minsk II Agreement, faced implementation issues, disagreements over local elections, and continued violence persisted. Both parties utilized each other's inability to carry out these clauses as justification for the other's non-compliance with the agreement resulted in failure of Minsk II.⁵⁷

By a variety of means, Western countries and their allies had increased aid to Ukraine in an attempt to dissuade Russia from attacking in 2022. The US sent Ukraine more than \$50 billion in aid by February 2023; this help included state-of-the-art military equipment such as tanks, drones, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, and drones with several NATO countries provided similar help.⁵⁸ Sanctions on Russia have grown significantly, targeting not only the country's assets but also those of powerful oligarchs and other individuals, as well as a significant amount of its energy, banking, defense, and technological industries. Not only did the US and several European governments deny Russia access to its enormous

⁵⁵ "Ukraine-Russia Crisis: What Is the Minsk Agreement?," Al Jazeera, February 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/what-is-the-minsk-agreement-and-why-is-it-relevant-now>.

⁵⁶ Mark Trevelyan, "What Are the Minsk Agreements on the Ukraine Conflict?," *Reuters*, February 21, 2022, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/what-are-minsk-agreements-ukraine-conflict-2022-02-21/>.

⁵⁷ Lidia Powirska, "Through the Ashes of the Minsk Agreements," Harvard University, May 18, 2022, <https://epicenter.wcfia.harvard.edu/blog/through-ashes-minsk-agreements>.

⁵⁸ Kemal Derviş, "What Are the West's Strategic Goals in the Ukraine War?," Brookings, August 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-are-the-west-strategic-goals-in-the-ukraine-war/>.

foreign reserves, but they also banned Russia's central bank from participating in the financial messaging system, Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) and prevented certain Russian banks from joining. Furthermore, many prominent Western businesses have stopped doing business in Russia.⁵⁹

Since Germany withdrew its regulatory permission of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in February, Russia also lost the highly anticipated pipeline as a consequence of the invasion. Throughout its development, the pipeline faced opposition from a number of parties, including lawmakers from the US and Ukraine, because it would give Russia more political clout over both Ukraine and the European gas market.⁶⁰ But there are different impressions from the latest round of summits hosted by the US, the EU, the G7, and NATO. It doesn't seem like the talks between leaders of states and governments are producing the expected results. Over time, the West's assessment of its cohesiveness and power may turn out to be inaccurate.⁶¹

The US utilised a range of tactics to contain Russia, including its exclusion from G-8 in 2014,⁶² sanctions, and enlisting the assistance of its European allies to carry out US orders. Obama refused to offer Ukraine substantial military assistance, even when it came to supplying deadly defence weaponry like the Javelin anti-tank missiles that Congress had authorised in 2015. To its credit, even though the fighting had already come to a standstill, the Trump administration gave Ukraine the Javelins and expanded additional security assistance after taking office in early 2017. But neither Obama nor Trump presented the

⁵⁹ Ulrich Speck, "The West's Response to the Ukraine Conflict: A Transatlantic Success Story," n.d.

⁶⁰ Holly Ellyatt, "Nord Stream 2 Cost \$11 Billion to Build. Now, the Russia-Europe Gas Pipeline Is Unused and Abandoned," CNBC, March 31, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/31/the-nord-stream-2-pipeline-lies-abandoned-after-russia-invaded-ukraine.html>.

⁶¹ Stuart Coles et al., "Seven Ways Russia's War on Ukraine Has Changed the World | Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank," February 20, 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/02/seven-ways-russias-war-ukraine-has-changed-world>.

⁶² Karen Mingst, "The Group of Eight (G8) Industrialized Nations," Council on Foreign Relations, January 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/background/group-eight-g8-industrialized-nations>.

backing in terms of the Budapest Memorandum's security guarantees.⁶³ President Joe Biden of the United States and other Western leaders have made it quite evident that their nations will not use force to defend Ukraine from Russia. Furthermore, the US and other European nations have depleted their arsenals without a clear plan to maintain high levels of military help going forward after rushing supplies to Ukraine ahead of its counteroffensive.⁶⁴

Conclusion

Within the geopolitical chessboard of ties between Russia and Ukraine, the Budapest Memorandum is a complex and valuable piece of information. Ukraine expected to receive guarantees of sovereignty and territorial integrity in exchange for peaceful disarmament when it signed the agreement in 1994. But in light of Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014 and the current situation in Eastern Ukraine, major questions have been raised about the effectiveness and enforceability of such agreements. A strategic decision made on the chessboard can have far-reaching consequences because of the way power dynamics, national interests, and historical grievances have altered the geopolitical landscape. Aside from creating tensions with Ukraine, Russia's actions have called into question the notions of territorial integrity and the inviolability of international accords.

With the geopolitical chessboard always shifting, the international community has to address the questions brought up by this breach of the Budapest Memorandum. Global cooperation, dialogue, and diplomacy would be required to find a solution that sustains international law, maintains regional stability, and respects Ukraine's sovereignty. It is necessary to re-evaluate the efficacy of these agreements and the mechanism in place to maintain them in light of the historical lessons from the current circumstances.

⁶³ Mariana Budjeryn, "Impeachment Backstory: The Nuclear Dimension of US Security Assistance to Ukraine," November 13, 2019, <https://thebulletin.org/2019/11/impeachment-backstory-the-nuclear-dimension-of-us-security-assistance-to-ukraine/>.

⁶⁴ Eric Ciaramella, "Envisioning a Long-Term Security Arrangement for Ukraine," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed July 14, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/06/08/envisioning-long-term-security-arrangement-for-ukraine-pub-89909>.

Encouraging diplomatic talks, upholding international law, and fostering mutual understanding between Russia and Ukraine are all necessary for effectively navigating the complex relationship between the two nations. The Budapest Memorandum is a reminder that despite challenges, effective diplomatic framework and global collaboration is essential for navigating the intricate geopolitical chessboard and finding lasting resolution to conflicts. One must be willing to participate in dialogue, accept changes, and work towards shared objectives in order to establish stability and cooperation in pursuit of a safer and peaceful society.

Disclosure Statement

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