



## **L'Ucraina e il nazionalismo russo in prospettiva diacronica**

*Giovanni Savino*

Il presente saggio esamina le posizioni storiche del nazionalismo russo d'inizio Novecento riguardo all'Ucraina, rilevando come Vladimir Putin e l'attuale leadership russa utilizzino alcune interpretazioni per legittimare l'intervento militare e contestare la legittimità dello Stato ucraino. Nel saggio si analizzano vari riferimenti storici e ideologici, dall'eredità dell'Impero Russo all'Unione Sovietica, mostrando come la narrazione russa attuale sia influenzata da un ventaglio di rielaborazioni e reinterpretazioni del passato per rafforzare la visione di un'Ucraina come parte integrante della Russia. Il saggio discute anche l'influenza di pensatori come Ivan Il'in e Aleksandr Solženicy'n nella formazione delle idee contemporanee russe, concludendo che l'attuale politica russa è un tentativo di riaffermare una presunta unità storica che, secondo il Cremlino, è stata spezzata dalla Rivoluzione del 1917 e dal crollo dell'URSS.

**Parole chiave:** Ucraina, nazionalismo russo, Vladimir Putin, identità, memoria

This essay examines the historical positions of early 20th-century Russian nationalism regarding Ukraine, highlighting how Vladimir Putin and the current Russian leadership utilize certain interpretations to legitimize military intervention and challenge the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state. The essay analyzes various historical and ideological references, from the legacy of the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union, demonstrating how contemporary Russian narratives are influenced by a range of reworkings and reinterpretations of the past to reinforce the view of Ukraine as an integral part of Russia. The essay also discusses the influence of thinkers like Ivan Ilyin and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in shaping contemporary Russian ideas, concluding that current Russian policy is an attempt to reassert a supposed historical unity that, according to the Kremlin, was disrupted by the 1917 Revolution and the collapse of the USSR.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, Russian nationalism, Vladimir Putin, identity, memory

## **Historical Roots of the Russo-Ukrainian War**

*Lara Piccardo*

Since 24 February 2022, an exhausting local war begins with huge global impacts: in addition to the disastrous consequences in terms of loss of human life and material damage, especially in Ukrainian territory, there are heavy repercussions in agriculture and food, energy, economic and political fields. Diplomacy is struggling and solutions seem far to be found. The reason for this diplomatic stalemate lies in the Russian elite's unwillingness to sit with conviction at the negotiating table and the lack of a minimum common denominator on which to start working. In addition to contingent problems such as Ukraine's pro-European positions and its hypothesized annexation to NATO, unwelcome to Moscow, the unresolved issue of Donbass, which has been dragging on for 10 years now, the annexation of Crimea, the question of energy supplies and gas pipelines, as well as broader international scenarios, which also involve Washington and Beijing (and not only), the profound reasons for the conflict lie in a complex and mix of ethnic, territorial, geopolitical and economic problems, which have increased in the area over the of history. Explaining and understanding them means providing a diagnosis not only of the war, but also and above all of the arcane causes that underlie it. The article reconstructs four salient moments of Ukrainian history, which represent as many fundamental turning points for determining the profound reasons for this war: the birth of Kievan Rus', in medieval times; the creation of several Ukrainian republics during the Russian Revolutions and civil war; some of the problems of independent Ukraine born with the dissolution of the USSR; finally, the emergence of the reasons for the Euromaidan crisis in 2013-2014. Each of these phases reveals, with different intensity, how Ukraine is subject to incessantly changing its dimensions, how fragile its identity is and how its independence has always been precarious.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, Russo-Ukraine war, historical roots, frozen conflicts

### **Casus Belli: NATO Enlargement to Eastern Europe as a Justification for Russian Aggression to Ukraine**

*Claudio Catalano*

Russia claims that the Ukraine crisis stemmed from NATO enlargement to Russia's neighbouring countries. The idea is that the United States and its Allies had broken a promise not to expand NATO and the European Union in Central and Eastern Europe, as stated by Russian President Putin at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. However, more interestingly, since the mid-1990s the debate on NATO expansion as a threat to Russia often resurfaces in Western political thought in periods of crisis with Russia. This article will uncover, by examining the historical events and documents, that there was never such a promise not to expand NATO, while the only existing promise made by NATO was not to deploy nuclear weapons in Central and Eastern Europe.

**Keywords:** Russia, NATO, European Union Enlargement, Cold War, NATO-Russia negotiations

### **Internal and External Factors of Putin's War on Ukraine**

*Mara Morini*

In literature it has been widely debated that domestic politics and international relations are often somehow entangled to the extent that it is quite difficult "whether domestic politics really determines international relations, or the reverse" (Putnam 1988:423). In this respect, the study of the Russian invasion in Ukraine can offer an opportunity to better understand the relationship between domestic and external factors that have determined Vladimir Putin's choice to attack the Ukrainian territory. So far, studies have interpreted "Putin's war" as a nostalgic choice based on the will to restore former imperial glories to unify the Russian peoples denying, at the same time, the Ukrainians' right to live in an independent State (Kuzio 2022; Zaporozhchenko 2024). Other scholars argued that the Russian invasion was mainly the effect to the Western policies – especially the NATO enlargement – perceived as a security threat by the Kremlin (Maersheimer 2014).

What it is still missing in literature is an analysis, which combine the main domestic reasons - *i.e.* Putin's personality and ideology, the institutional design, the legacies of the historical and cultural traditions – as well as the role played by the external factors (NATO, EU, the US) in determining Russia's reaction against Ukraine. Consequently, this article aims at describing the main reasons why Putin decided to attack Ukraine and challenge the West trying to analyze both the domestic situation and the international environment, which constitutes the political background of the Russian war.

Such an approach will allow a wider overview of the multiple factors – domestic and international –, which provoked the war bearing in mind that some of the findings in this study should be seen as suggestive rather than conclusive.

**Keywords:** Putinism, Ukraine, Russian Foreign Policy, Eurasia

### **The Russian-Speaking Minority in Ukraine and the Russian Invasion**

*Cecilia Frego*

Various ethnic and linguistic minority groups live within the borders of Ukraine. The management of these minorities has led to tensions, which seemed to be resolved partly due to Ukraine's adherence to international treaties ensuring their protection. Among these diverse minority groups, the Russian-speaking population needs special attention. By Russian-speaking, we mean anyone who uses Russian as their preferred language, regardless of their ethnic background and political preferences. The presence of such a high number of Russian speakers became problematic from 2014 onward, when the use of the Ukrainian language took on a more pronounced political significance, and the divide with the rest of the Russian-speaking world became more apparent. This divide was evident through Ukraine's political choice to align with the Euro-Atlantic world and Russia's annexation of Crimea. The situation became even more complex following the Russian attack on February 24, 2022, which exacerbated tensions and moved away from the prospect of a peaceful resolution. In the first part of the article, a definition of Russian-speaking minorities is provided, with data justifying the choice to focus on the linguistic factor instead of relying solely on ethnicity. The second part historically explains the presence of minorities in Ukraine. The third part analyzes the situation of Russian speakers from the time of Ukraine's independence to the present by examining the Ukrainian constitution and regulations related to minority management. It also considers the reports, comments, and opinions of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Committee of Experts on the Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The goal was to trace how the situation of Russian speakers in Ukraine changed over time, with a particular emphasis on issues arising from the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

**Keywords:** minority, language, Russian-speaking, Ukraine, protection

### **The Road to Strategic Autonomy: Reflections from the Russia-Ukraine War**

*Matteo Mazziotti di Celso, Mattia Sguazzini*

Since 2016, the European Union (EU)'s ambitions to become more autonomous from the US have sparked intensified debate. Academics hold contrasting perspectives on the EU's potential for achieving strategic autonomy. The prevailing view suggests that the EU's road to strategic autonomy is hindered by two main challenges: strategic cacophony – *i.e.*, the presence of continent-wide divergences across national threat perceptions – and severe military capacity shortfalls. The Ukrainian war acts as a proving ground to explore the consistency of these assertions, as the EU reacted to a conventional military threat to its security. In this article, we analyse in detail the EU's response to the conflict, with a focus on three key aspects: the initiatives undertaken by both the EU and individual member states aimed at undermining Russia and supporting Ukraine; the public opinion's stance on major issues concerning the war; and the adaptation of military policies. Across all these facets, the article analyses cross-country and cross-time variations. The initial analysis reveals that the strategic cacophony persists but has not prevented the EU from implementing a substantially cohesive response to the war, at least for now. Regarding military deficit, the analysis shows that many European countries, especially in the South, have not reacted by addressing their military capabilities shortfalls. The article contributes to the debate on the strategic autonomy of the EU by providing empirical analysis that allows for robust assessment of the leading hypotheses developed within this scholarly discourse.

**Keywords:** strategic autonomy, European Union, European defence, Russia-Ukraine war

### **L'America Latina fra Unione Europea e Cina. Verso una de-occidentalizzazione?**

*Tiziana Bertaccini*

L'articolo apre uno spazio di riflessione sulla tensione generata dalle narrazioni anticoloniali latinoamericane che soggiace alla relazione con l'Unione Europea. Durante questo millennio le narrazioni anticoloniali proposte dai governi di alcune sinistre latinoamericane hanno riprodotto l'immagine di un'Europa come potenza imperialista e una narrazione della storia opposta a quella proposta dall'Europa. Nello spazio lasciato vuoto dall'allontanamento fra le due regioni si è inserita la Cina che, libera da un passato coloniale, si considera parte del sud globale identificandosi con le sfide e gli obiettivi dei paesi meno sviluppati, trovando affinità ideologiche in America Latina dove potrebbe essere un'alternativa all'egemonia occidentale.

**Parole chiave:** America Latina e Unione Europea, Cina e America Latina, narrazioni anticoloniali

The article's purpose is to reflect on the turmoil produced by Latin American anti-colonial narratives directed towards the European Union. From the start of the 21st century anti-colonial narratives proposed by some left-wing Latin American governments have generated an imperialist image of Europe, opposed to the historical narrative proposed by Europe itself. China, freed from a colonial past, has taken advantage of the estrangement between Latin America and Europe. It considers itself part of the global south, aligning its goals and challenges with those of less developed countries. This alignment has led to ideological similarities with Latin America, presenting a possible alternative to Western hegemony.

**Keywords:** Latin America and European Union, China and Latin America, anti-colonial narrations