

Chapter 4

Power and leadership in the 21st century. Case Study: Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

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Abstract: The young 21st century is unfolding through a evolution of discourses and political ideologies in which the actions of what remains the main actor of the world order are framed and developed. States, which do not lose their realistic interest in the use and exercise of power to protect and impose their aspirations on the international system. This headed by national leaders with contradictory positions whose actions generate instability and conflicts in various latitudes. The current war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine is a clear example of the ideological, historical and economic struggle being waged on a global scale. Its consequences are already being felt not only in Europe, but also in the economy and trade dynamics of all continents. Consequently, the threat of war returns to the forefront of the agendas of the so-called First World countries.

Keywords: authority, strategy, geography, war, influence, leadership, power, realism.

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THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE NOTIONS OF WAR AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Sir Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" and the amalgamation of Glasnost and *Perestroika*, which led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, constitute a milestone in history that marked the beginning of a new era in the exercise of power and leadership in the political and strategic sphere on a global scale.

These events generated a massive movement of people across the borders of the Eastern bloc countries and the uprising of the nationals of the Soviet republics against the Moscow government. These facts eroded the power and leadership structure of the Russian giant. The world order went from bipolarity to unipolarity, as the advent of globalism put the capitalist power at the head of the system: the United States (USA). Who was the great beneficiary of the Soviet collapse and the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist structure.

However, at that time in history, neither American power nor leadership considered deploying a "Marshall plan" to "rescue" Russia - like the one carried out after the end of World War II, and whose "help" to the ruined European countries resulted in obtaining the undisputed supremacy of the US. during the second half of the twentieth century on the international stage-, but, on the contrary, a new global system of a transnationalist nature was staged, based on the economy, with a style of power and leadership of a limited nature (as the US considered that he could not continue to be "the world's cop"). Such a relatively "passive" position of the world hegemon, far from achieving a world balance, caused the emergence of several leaders with a desire for power and impulses to be able to dispute it, who resort to war or the threat of it to move away from the orbit and dominion of the US.

Clear examples of this imbalance are perceived in several parts. For example, in Southeast Asia: Kim Jong-un, de facto ruler and supreme leader of the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea since 2011 with his fervent opposition to the West (represented by US and its allies around the world) and Xi Jinping, president of the People's Republic of China since 2013, with his promise to completely unify China (this concerns, of course, the island of Formosa, which since 1949 hosted the *Kuomintang* nationalists who lost the communist revolution), which generates an atmosphere of maximum tension in which the US is stalling for its support for Taiwan and the government of its president Tsai Ing-wen (in power since 2016).

But the key event and object of study is the conflict in Eastern Europe (already escalated to a warlike confrontation since February 24, 2022) between the government of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, president of the Russian Federation, and the government of Volodymyr Oleksandrovich Zelensky, president of Ukraine. Which already has consequences at the regional level, for the countries bordering Ukraine, and on the continent, for the countries of the European Union (EU), and even on the world stage. Since its effects are already felt on all continents, due to the confrontation it causes between the States belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia, which, however, will also end up involving its political-military allies members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

To address the issue at hand, the situation between Russia and Ukraine will be analyzed in two key and fundamental areas: power and leadership. The first, to understand the behavior of the actors in the current complicated global context, and the second, to glimpse the actions of the leaders of both nations in the scenario of a conflict that is not recent. Power and leadership have confronted Russia and Ukraine for several centuries, as the differences began long ago, when the Russians first subdued the Ukrainians.

But why are two peoples with a similar genesis in history and who share a fertile region abundant in renewable and non-renewable resources as their "cradle", staunch enemies in the 21st century? The answer to this question is cardinal to understanding the development and evolution of a historical divergence that not only prevails, but threatens to generate a new confrontation of global scope with serious consequences for all humanity.

This analysis hypothesizes the following statement: *the use of the power-leadership combination by Russia and Ukraine, within the scope of the realistic paradigm, defines the maneuverability in war and state management of both countries as actors of the international system, delimiting their past, present and future actions and aspirations.*

Background to the Russian-Ukrainian dispute

The *Hetmanate* (first Ukrainian State) emerged in 1648, the product of a social and religious revolution that pitted the so-called Kievan Rus' against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had previously shared with the Principality of Moscow the Slavic territories abandoned by the heirs of Genghis Khan due to the decline of the Mongol Empire. In 1654, the Ukrainian Cossacks went to Tsar Alexander I to request his protection by signing the Treaty of Pereyaslav, but Russia applied a policy of land absorption that led to the Hetmanate rebelling against its "protector" being defeated in 1709. Empress Catherine the Great definitively abolished the Hetmanate in 1764, and the Russian army destroyed the Cossack bastions of the Dnieper River. And with the split of the Republic of the Two Nations (Poland and Lithuania), in 1795, the Tsarina took control of the lands of Ukraine. In 1876, Tsar Alexander II prohibited any type of publication in Ukrainian, through the "Ems" Law¹.

To the facts enunciated are added the events that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century that were decisive in the future of Ukraine as a sovereign country. After the syncope of the tsarist empire, in 1917, the Ukrainian patriots took the opportunity to establish a revolutionary parliament, called the *Rada*, unified their territory, declared their emancipation, and signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the Central Powers to achieve the recognition of their sovereignty. With the end of the First World War, in 1918, Lenin granted autonomy to the Ukrainian territories, and that same year the People's Republic of Ukraine declared its independence for the first time. Curiously enough, no power of the time wanted to recognize its sovereignty, and the Bolsheviks changed their minds and invaded the young nation to annex it to the nascent Soviet state. In 1922, the victors in the Russian civil war proclaimed the Ukrainian Soviet Republic as one of the four founders of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). And initiated a process of Ukrainianization, which Stalin later turned into *Russification*, and whose outcome was two adverse episodes for the Ukrainian people. The so-called holodomorgenocide, between 1932 and 1933, and the mass deportation from Crimea of 1944².

The extensive chain of adverse events characterized by the traditional "breach of agreement" continued during the second half of the twentieth century. In 1954

¹ Summary made from the videos "The truth of the history of Ukraine and Russia" and "The true origins of Ukrainians", taken from the website "History misunderstood".

² Summary made from the videos "The truth of the history of Ukraine and Russia" and "The true origins of Ukrainians" taken from the website "History misunderstood".

Nikita Khrushchev transferred the Crimean Peninsula (Autonomous Republic since 1921) to Ukraine, but in 2014 Russia invaded Crimea and annexed it to its territory. In 1991 a first referendum was held to vote for the independence of Ukraine (that country's second declaration of independence), in the midst of chaos over the dissolution of the USSR. Although at that time Ukraine was able to retain Crimea, Russia retained control of the Sevastopol naval base.

And so it goes with events that occurred from the 1990s to the second decade of the 21st century. In 1994, the parties to the dispute signed the Budapest Memorandum, through which Ukraine handed over its nuclear arsenal to Russia in exchange for guarantees of its autonomy, to certify Ukraine's territorial integrity. In 1997, the parties in question signed the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (strategic partnership and recognition of the inviolability of borders) to ratify Ukraine's territorial integrity. In 2014, a second referendum was held - only recognized by Russia - to vote on the accession³ of the Crimean Oblast to Russia. In 2022, a third referendum was held, with results, according to Putin, favorable to Russia, to vote for the independence of Ukraine from the Lugansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts.

However, the aftermath of this whole network of events throughout history, far from pointing towards a reconciliation between the two countries, increased the differences between them. They reached, in fact, a "point of no return" with the beginning of the war, on February 24, 2022. And were also, therefore, the triggers of actions of a diplomatic and economic nature both of the countries in contention and of other States and supranational organizations with a common denominator: disrespect for the sovereignty, borders and, therefore, territorial integrity, of Ukraine. Although at the time the government of Boris Yeltsin accepted the results of the first referendum, the results of the second and third were not accepted by Ukraine or the international community - only Russia and its allies recognized them - which motivated the US. And the EU to gradually adopt economic sanctions against the Russian government. In short, Russia invaded Crimea in March 2014 and adhered to its territory. In February 2022 Russia launched a "special military operation" in Ukraine that ended up being an invasion (ongoing to date) and, finally, in September 2022, Russia annexed 23% of Ukrainian territory.

It could therefore be assured that the repeated breach of the commitments agreed between Russia and Ukraine is the main ingredient - linked to the

³ An Oblast (region) is a territorial administrative unit in countries such as Belarus, Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine.

aforementioned historical differences - that cements the eternal discord between the two European nations.

Power and War

Power is an inherent element in the existence of man that has always been present in the interaction of cultures and countries throughout the history of humanity; the advent of conflicts and wars is one of the consequences of its use towards other actors. Such disputes have affected the relationship between States and the drawing of their dividing lines, both on land and at sea. Therefore, power has an indelible relationship with war, as the latter is a resource to exert control or dominion over rivals and enemies, as well as a mechanism to put one's own interests before those of others.

For Max Weber, power is the probability of imposing one's will, within a social relationship, even against all resistance and whatever the basis of that probability. For Michel Foucault there is an interrelationship between political power and economic power. In the Hobbesian tradition, the interaction of States is based on war and this is inevitable because it is considered intrinsic to the nature of the human being. (Langa, 2016)

Making war as a way of implementing power has long been related to a third element. Geography, since its valuation establishes the importance of preserving one's own territory and justifies the need to conquer the space of others, in favor of survival and national aspirations. Even now, in the 21st century, the power-war-geography triangle is still present in the planning and action of leaders and rulers around the world.

Putin and his methodology for exercising power

On the last weekend of July, Russia annually celebrates its Navy Day, the main event being a naval parade involving ships from the Pacific Ocean, Baltic Sea and Black Sea fleets. In 2022, this commemoration was held on the 31st of that month, in St. Petersburg, the second most important city in Russia, located at the mouth of the Neva River and a relevant seaport on the Gulf of Finland. At that military parade, Putin gave a speech in which, in addition to issuing threats and warnings to the

West. He clearly exposed to his countrymen his new defense capabilities (for war) and Russia's new strategy.

From the former imperial capital, Putin pointed out that the US is its main rival for its interest in wanting to dominate the oceans and that NATO is one of the greatest threats to Russia. In addition, it enunciated the Kremlin's strategic objectives and established Russia's global maritime ambitions in the Arctic Ocean, the Black Sea, and the Sea of Azov. (France24, 2022)

It is clear, then, that Russian policy sets the strategy from its priorities and interests, and is based, among other aspects, on the changes generated relative to the current war with Ukraine. In accordance with his political position, the highest Russian dignitary focuses on the use of power to impose himself at the regional level and ascend to the first step of the international order. A position that Putin considers it belongs to Russia in its own right. And for achieving this, he is willing to use the mechanisms that the power-war-geography triangle gives him for this.

This, at the cost, even, of amending history. "In July 2021, Putin wrote a public letter describing that Lenin's creation of the Socialist Republic of Ukraine had been a historic mistake and that the Russian and Ukrainian people were the same" (Torres, 2022, p. 154).

Putin and his methodology for exercising power

On August 24, 2022, Ukraine's Independence Day, a "parade" of land military assets seized and destroyed by Ukraine in the war with Russia was held on Khreshchatyk Street in Kiev. At that time, Zelenski addressed his nation - as he usually does through messages on the web - adopting a nationalist position that emphasizes what he points out as a "turning point" that occurred six months ago, on February 24, 2022 and heroically exposing a national interest. Territorial integrity, which is a clear strategic objective for his government. His words highlighted the elements of Ukraine's national policy, at the head of the president.

This flag has to be hoisted in all the places where it has the right to be; in the Dombas, in Crimea [...] For us, Ukraine means the whole of Ukraine. The 25 regions, without concessions or commitments [...] Dombas is Ukraine and we will recover it no matter how hard this road is; Crimea is Ukraine and we will recover it no matter how difficult this road is. (El País, 2022)

The importance of nationalism in the Ukrainian collective is significant, given that it is a nation that has suffered several violent episodes that have decimated its population.

Historically there are several cases that prove it. "In 1840, the country was divided between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires; this did not prevent culturally traditional people from fighting for the recognition and identification of their language" (Pinto, 2015, p. 9).

Thus, Ukrainian politics considers priorities and vital interests to recover territorial integrity and maintain nationalism - the latter, revitalized in the wake of the war -. Therefore, the Ukrainian president's strategy focuses on the use of power in keeping his country together and in the power-war-geography triangle, where war is only a defense mechanism.

Leadership and War

A strategic leader, and even more so an institutional leader - insofar as he or she must ensure the durability of the organization to which he or she belongs - needs to find [...] a balance between the group and the mission. (Aznar, 2017, p. 11)

It is here that the characteristics and elements of leadership are combined, which determine the actions of political leaders in their role as current rulers in an environment rarefied by the complex reality of a clearly multipolar and extremely unstable international system. In addition, leadership is a dynamic social phenomenon that is put into practice throughout the "spectrum of conflict" (peace, tension, crisis and war)⁴ by leaders who hold power. And so it also evolves, since lessons learned and new learning arise from all adverse situations that generate changes in the leadership construct.

The uncertain future demands new skills from the leader that were not considered in the same way in previous centuries. It is not enough to touch something on the capabilities of the person, the context or the degree of commitment (Cuesta, 2022, p. 11).

And it is that leadership and its relationship with another social phenomenon such as war, demands and demands that leaders understand the nature of the conflict - which at present is a mixture of classic and asymmetric elements in

⁴ Concept defined by the Colombian Navy in the Plan de Desarrollo Naval 2042. First edition. 2020.

increasingly complex scenarios - to effectively exercise their authority, in favor of the fulfillment of their interests - which, of course, must be aligned with the wishes of the collective - and retaining the support of the population.

In the case of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the leaders of the two sides denote a strategic leadership with different nuances. The leadership-war-influence triangle is oriented towards the achievement of an ultimate end that justifies decisions within the framework of the conflict.

Putin and his techniques of employing leadership

Putin's profile narrates that the Russian leader is a lawyer and politician of the United Russia party, president of the Government of Russia on two occasions (1999-2000 and 2008-2012) and president of the Russian Federation from 2000 to 2008 and from 2012 to the present. His father was a militar -he served in the navy- he served from 1975 to 1990 as a strategic intelligence officer of the intelligence agency and secret police KGB, of the Soviet Union. His qualities characterize him as an individual with a remarkable cult of his own personality and with rooted religious beliefs of an orthodox type.

Putin is a leader with a vision, a future project for Russia, consisting of his country regaining influence and, if possible, control over the territories that were once part of the USSR. Its strategy is based on ensuring internal stability by strengthening the role of the state in all Russian territories. (Ballesteros, 2014, p. 4)

Putin's leadership style denotes strength and vigor, with clear and specific statements of his intentions, which show the desire to impose himself in the global context, since his vision revolves around placing Russia at a higher level as an indisputable world power.

Putin strongly criticizes some former Russian leaders who, in his opinion, condemned the Soviet Union to its disintegration [...] Lenin destroyed the Russian world and did not form a real Russia [...] Gorbachev and Yeltsin are the authors of the dismemberment of the true heart of Russia. In that sense, he admires more the tsars like Catherine the Great or Ivan the Terrible. (Paul, 2022)

This behavior aims to display an ideal authoritarian figure in which the leadership-war-influence triangle will allow *Mother Russia* to resume its leading role.

Putin and his techniques of employing leadership

Zelensky's profile refers to the leader as a Ukrainian actor and politician of the People's Servant party, a law graduate of the Kiev National Economic University, sixth president of Ukraine since independence in 1991 and with a family of Jewish origin. He was a well-known comedian who rejected the ban on Russian artists in Ukraine. At the end of 2018, without yet exercising politics, he was the main candidate for the presidency of his country. His qualities define him as a subject that denotes courage and authenticity, of a high emotional charge and unconventional style that impassions his fellow citizens and convulses the world.

Dear Nation, during my lifetime I have done my best to make Ukrainians laugh. I felt that it was not just my job, but my mission [...] I assure you that, in order for our heroes to stop dying, I am prepared to do everything. I am not afraid to make difficult decisions [...] A president is not an icon or an idol. A president is not a portrait [...]. (MAS Consulting, 2022)

Zelensky's leadership style borders on the utopian, on thinking the unthinkable, succeeding in attracting the country's social conglomerate to new directions and horizons previously considered an illusion. Since the enormous influence of the Kremlin in Ukrainian politics is not something from which it can be easily detached. In this ideal, the leadership-war-influence triangle inclines it towards greater rapprochement and greater interconnection with the West: the EU and NATO.

In September 2020, the new national security strategy of Ukraine, promoted by Zelensky, was approved, precisely with the aim of being a member of NATO; although the military alliance has not yet accepted Kiev among its members, it has been said that as an independent country it is free to join it. (BBC, 2022)

Of course, Putin is adamantly opposed to it, considering it a clear threat.

Power-war-geography trilogy

To analyze power, it has been related to the concepts of geography and war, in a trinomial that will be framed in the realistic paradigm, which is one of the basic paradigms that remain valid in the 21st century. Realism and its theories tend to examine (from the social sciences and international relations) the behavior of States.

Often the one with the most power is the one who sets the terms. According to the realistic approach, this logic does not explain the entire history of humanity, but a considerable part of it does (Jordan, 2022, p. 2).

It should be noted that in Realism the power-war-geography triangle fits perfectly, because among the parameters that condition “what normally is” in politics there is one that is called *strategic behavior*, governed by the national interest of a State.

In realism “States try to increase their respective share of power. This desire, in addition to deriving from the will to power of the individuals who are at the head of the State, is explained by the fact that a greater share of power guarantees the achievement of the rest of the interests (security, economic prosperity, ideological, etc.)”. (Morgenthau, 2006)

However, there are several branches of contemporary Realism: classical realism, structural realism or neorealism (offensive or defensive) and neoclassical realism. Although they all share fundamental premises (power is the primary currency and to guarantee security power is maximized) and seek to determine the meaning of what power is for, up to what level of power is sufficient, and what the actor is willing to do to obtain it. All the aforementioned types of Realism differ in the level of analysis they incorporate: the individual, the State or the international system (differential parameter established by the precursor of neorealism, by Kenneth Neal Waltz).

Neorealism employs the third level of analysis (the structure of the international system) and is therefore a useful resource for examining both power and competition to obtain it and war as a social phenomenon, and for intuiting the behavior of the opponents under study.

Neorealism is based on five assumptions of the international system. The first one: the great powers are the main actors in world politics and operate in an anarchic system. The second one: all states possess some offensive military capability. The third one: States can never be sure of the intentions of other States. The fourth one: the main objective of States is survival. The fifth one: States are rational actors, they are able to devise sound strategies that maximize their prospects for survival. (Mearsheimer, 2022, pp. 3.4)

By analyzing Russia’s behavior (a country that seeks to “be a power” of the system) and Ukraine’s (a country that seeks to “survive” in the system) it can be confirmed that both countries -each on their own terms- are using the five assumptions enunciated in the materialization of power. One intends to maximize it:

Russia, through the use of offensive structural realism. And the other one, intends to preserve it: Ukraine, through the use of defensive structural realism.

In offensive structural realism - which defines the use of power and war by Russia - a great power will always try to increase its own power instigated by distrust in other actors, because for that power the basic way to guarantee its security lies in maximizing its power by collecting a percentage of it that is higher than that of others. To do this, the strategies to be employed - and here geography comes into play - would be war (high cost) and blackmail (low cost) to incorporate "terrestrial or maritime" territory of the adversary, to obtain "*commodities*"⁵, in order to create security areas "buffer zones", etc.

In defensive structural realism - which defines Ukraine's use of power and war - weaker countries opt for restraint and self-restraint as ways to preserve their security, as they tend to reach and maintain an appropriate (or limited) level of power that allows them to stay in the system. For this, the strategies to be used - here geography comes into play- would be cooperation and partnership (both low-cost) with other countries or international organizations that share similar interests (to preserve their own "terrestrial or maritime" territories, in order to maintain control over "*commodities*" and create alliances with other actors in the system, such as "States or supranational organizations", etc.).

However, in return for the aforementioned, Realism does not promulgate violence or conflict. "Realist theories recommend the balance of power (internal and external), rather than war, when it comes to maintaining or altering the distribution of relative power for one's own benefit" (Jordan, 2022, p. 4).

Moreover, structural realism, by not including Waltz's first two levels of analysis, "ignores cultural differences between states, as well as differences in the type of regime, mainly because the international system creates the same basic incentives for all great powers" (Mearsheimer, 2022, p. 2).

Due to these circumstances, the aspect of neoclassical realism is incorporated, whose pioneer is Gideon Rose, to fully understand the reason for the struggle between Russia and Ukraine. Since neoclassical realism incorporates the three levels of analysis (individual, state and international system) without opposing offensive/defensive structural realism, considering power and its distribution in the international system together with the power capacities of the actors, such as independent variables, and state behavior, such as the dependent variable, and a series of intervening variables (perception of decision makers, degree of consensus, etc.).

⁵ A *commodity* is a tangible material that can be traded, bought or sold; it is usually a raw material for manufacturing refined products. They can be energy, agriculture, metals, livestock, finance...".

Russian perspective

Russia reveals its power-geography-war triangle in its clear desire to obtain politically valuable territories for its national interests.

On the mainland, first of all, is the coastline of the Crimean Peninsula, where the ports of Yevpatoria, Sevastopol, Yalta and Feodosia are located. Secondly, on the other hand, there is the basin of the Dnieper River, which originates in Russia and into which the Pripyat, Zaporizhka and Desná rivers flow, and where Kiev and the ports of Cherkasy, Kremenchuk, Dnipró, Zaporizhka and Kherson are located. As well as the nuclear power plants of Chernobyl, officially "inactive", and Zaporizhka, "the largest in Europe with six nuclear reactors and a nominal generation capacity of 6,000 megawatts of power" (DW, 2022). In addition, in the last kilometers of the Dniester, before flowing into the Black Sea, there is a large estuary with a succession of reservoirs. Thirdly, there are regions of Ukraine rich in mineral-energy resources: in the east, the Luhansk and Donetsk "Donbas" Oblasts; in the west, the Lviv Oblast; in the center, the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast; and in the south, the Zaporizhka Oblast. Fourthly, there is a chokepoint⁶: the Kerch Strait, located between the Crimean and Tamal peninsulas, is the entrance to the Sea of Azov and, therefore, the entry and exit route of Russian ports located in that area.

On the maritime side, first of all, there are the natural resources (oil and gas reserves) located in Ukrainian waters, both in the Black Sea and in the Sea of Azov. Secondly, although Russia has more than 60 sea and river ports distributed in the Baltic Sea, the White Sea, the Barents Sea, the Kara Sea, the Laptev Sea, the East Siberian Sea, the Bering Sea, the Sea of Okhotsk, the Sea of Japan, the Caspian Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. In the last two Russia has nine maritime terminals relevant to its economy and maritime trade, for allowing it to exit to the Mediterranean Sea, through the Turkish straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles.

Ukrainian Perspective

Russia reveals its power-geography-war triangle in its clear desire to obtain politically valuable territories for its national interests.

On the mainland, in the first place, there is the Crimean Peninsula -regain territorial control of the 27,000km² of the Crimean Oblast- which, according to Cuenca

⁶ Achoke point is a key geographic point for global maritime traffic and international trade

(2019), "is a geopolitical enclave that Russia chose in 2014 to invade and annex" (p. 1) and the four ports located there: Yevpatoria, Sevastopol, Yalta and Feodosia—. Secondly, there is a *chokepoint*: the aforementioned Kerch Strait -recovering its western side, where there are iron deposits, and retaking control of the port of Kerch, which is currently under Russian control- which is the only access route to the Sea of Azov and, therefore, the entry and exit route of the Ukrainian ports located in that area.

In the maritime part, in the first place, there are the aforementioned *commodities* that Ukraine owns both in the Black Sea and in the Sea of Azov. Secondly, maritime communications lines⁷ (SLOC) of ten Ukrainian ports; two of them are located on the Sea of Azov, and eight on the Black Sea.

Leadership-war-influence trilogy

To analyze leadership, it has been associated with the concepts of war and influence, in a trinomial that will include some constructs exhibited by Maximilian Karl Emil Weber in his theories of domination and legitimacy that retain validity and applicability in the 21st century. For Weber, leadership is a vast and complex subject, in which there is *trustworthy authority*, which can be characterized by three configurations: *rationally or legally, traditionally, and charismatically*.

According to Max Weber, every historical relationship between rulers and ruled contains elements that can be analyzed on the basis of three pure types of domination (charismatic, traditional, and legal) and the State is the institution that employs domination by attributing - legitimately or not - the monopoly of physical coercion. (Hernández, 2011)

It should be noted that what Weber stated is articulately coupled to the leadership-war-influence triangle, because it determines the ability of a subject to be at the forefront of a process or an organization and to have a decisive influence on situations related to their interests.

For Weber, leadership 'is a function that a social entity occupies in a certain circle or space. The leader must be able to make sound decisions around collective needs or interests. In seeking to understand power and differentiate it

⁷ Maritime communications lines (SLOC) is a term that describes the main maritime routes between ports that are used for trade and logistics, and by navies or navies around the world.

from leadership, Weber posited a distinction involving the ability to force people to obey or do something. ' (Khamlichi, n.d.)

Based on this, an assessment of the leadership exercise of the leaders of both parties can be done Russia and Ukraine; their presidents, although they share the use of legal leadership also called "bureaucratic", exercise command in very different ways.

Putin could be considered a traditional leader, as his way of being could be pointed out as deeply rooted in the history, customs, and socio-cultural tradition of Russia. His methodology at the time of exercising leadership aims to resemble that of a political predecessor object of his admiration: Tsar Peter the Great. On the contrary, Zelenski could be pointed out as a charismatic leader, because his way of being denotes enthusiastic and passionate performances that generate great empathy with his leaders; it does not require oppressive mechanisms to generate obedience. His personality generates respect, trust and voluntary motivation in his followers.

Leadership is also "a complex process of a social, historical and psychological nature that, according to historical circumstances, has been transmuted. As a status, role or function, it is a social category located at the center of social and organizational dynamics " (Méndez & Rojas, 2009, p. 30).

As for this process to generate empathy, leadership has two nuances: *power* and *authority*, which set the tone in the performance of the political driver, who holds the highest position in a specific society (for the matter at hand, the nations of Russia and Ukraine).

Putin could be considered as a leader with a "power" profile – whose practice is intimidation – because he has the following characteristics "he borrows from the desire to have more to be more. He belongs to the order of individualistic privacy, expresses strength. He is strengthened in contempt and exclusion, exercises through the imposition that dominates. He rejects difference, operates from the logic of individualism. He coheses through fear, inspires fear and terror". (Cáceres et al., 2013)

While "power" forcibly imposes the will, "authority" achieves the same thing, but through personal influence and persuasion.

Zelenski could be pointed out as a leader with a profile of "authority" – whose practice is law – because he demonstrates the following characteristics: "he

was born from the will of the community that wants to be governed by the best, belongs to the order of the relationship that says reference to the person. He expresses transcendence, he is conferred by the community aware of personal merits. He exercises through the dialogical word generating consensus. He seeks convergence in diversity, he operates from the logic of pluralism and complacency, he unifies by agreement. He respects freedom and promotes growth". (Cáceres et al., 2013)

However, to glimpse the leadership-war-influence triangle of both Russia and Ukraine, another concept must be added to stitch together the evaluation of the perspective of each of them: the *new institutionalism*, which is understood as "a set of theoretical and applied efforts that assume the importance of political institutions, which incorporate various approaches and methods, constituting the return of institutions to the main research agenda of political science" (Caballero, 2007, p. 10).

In addition, the new institutionalism "represents a heterogeneous set of approaches [...] It is based on notions such as individual, actor, roles, identities, behaviors, rules, regulation, environments, structures, (limited) rationality, among others" (De la Rosa, 2022, p. 28).

Russian perspective

Various constitutive elements can be identified in Putin's type of leadership. For example, *symbols*: his image reflects a defiant position vis-à-vis the other actors of the international system. In war, his aspiration is that the victory over Ukraine be a historical milestone, just as the episodes called the *Great Patriotic War* were at the time: that of Tsarist Russia against Napoleonic France and of the USSR against Nazi Germany. The use of the "Z" in military media and, in general, in all means of communication, means the abbreviation "towards victory". The *meaning* is also involved: recovering the imposing nature of what he considers "Mother Russia" is the aspiration that determines the desired strategic political end state; one of the culminating points of his expansionist policy is the firm determination to recover the extension of the former USSR. As for *beliefs*, his firm desire is to resurrect the inspiration of the greatness of the red flag of the Soviet era; the territory of the so-called "Kievan Rus" is part of the Russian *heartland*.⁸

⁸ The *heartland* (cardinal region, continental heart, pivot area or world island) corresponds to the theory of the English geographer and politician Halford John Mackinder.

In addition to this, Putin's leadership model can be considered transactional, because the relationship with his followers is practically reduced to a simple exchange. In which, based on the goals, roles and tasks imposed by him as a political authority. His work is almost completely limited to verifying and check its compliance and execution, giving little value to the considerations of his subordinates. In addition, it can be related to Zaleznik's definition of leadership, since, inevitably, it requires the power to influence the thoughts and actions of his followers. As far as the new institutionalism is concerned, Putin's leadership rests fully on his personality and Russia's institutionality unfolds almost exclusively under the personal vision and parameters imposed by the Kremlin leader. Moscow's fate rests on the strong personality of its current leader, who does not seem to give up power in the short or medium term.

Ukrainian Perspective

In Zelensky's type of leadership, the aforementioned constituent elements can also be identified. As for symbols, his image radiates a firm desire to detach himself from the Russian orbit and fully integrate into Western culture, of a capitalist nature. In war, his greatest aspiration is that the victory over Russia be a historical milestone that cuts off the eternal streak of defeats suffered by Ukraine in a long chain of confrontations between the two and although not as popular as the "Z" of Russia. The emblem of Ukraine is a mallet, which embodies the highest authority of the Ukrainian Cossack leaders. As for the meaning, this is to restore and maintain trust in the public institutions of the State. In addition, regaining control of the 25 Oblasts that make up Ukrainian territory is the aspiration that determines the desired strategic political end state. One of the highlights of its policy is the full and permanent entry into all regional economic and social organizations of the "Eurozone" and political and military establishments such as the EU and NATO, to consolidate its sovereignty and disconnect from Russian influence. As for beliefs, his firm desire is the rebirth of the Ukrainian people under the banner of freedom. Moreover, he desires to bury the aspirations of submission and domination that the nostalgics of the Soviet era still maintain.

In addition to what was mentioned before, Zelenski's leadership model can be considered transformational, because it maintains a fluid relationship with his followers using the media and social networks. Through which he decisively influences the values, attitudes and beliefs of his subordinates maintaining a permanent

motivation to achieve exponentially increasing levels in the performance of all people in favor of the achievement of the proposed objectives. Furthermore, it can be related to the definition of leadership of Kouzes and Posner. Since its influence is supported by the exercise of authority that attracts and motivates his followers to stand up to move forward with the vision of the leader that is shared by his subordinates. As far as the new institutionalism is concerned, Zelensky's leadership is supported by aspects such as communication, exemplarity, influence, a sense of belonging, courage and commitment. In this context, the political institutions of Ukraine develop under a vision of the future that recognizes a defined horizon with defined limits and room for maneuver. Kiev's fate lies in a leader who is fully aware that morality is an indispensable asset and who asserts that the future of Europe depends on the outcome of the war.

Conclusions

The answer to the initial question must be approached from both sides. Regarding the Russian perspective: from the corner of power, Putin fervently wishes to reverse the humiliation of his people due to the disintegration of the USSR, since, for him, Kiev is a creation of the Russians. From the corner of leadership, Putin has the idea of gathering all the *Russian speakers* who geographically belonged to the great territory established by what he considers "the tsar of the tsars": Peter the Great, in the so-called Russian world *Russkiy Mir*. In that order of ideas, Russians and Ukrainians belong, then, to the same original Russian people. Regarding the Ukrainian perspective, the opinion is completely different: from the corner of power, Zelensky vehemently wishes to maintain the territorial cohesion of his country, which has long wanted to preserve its traditions, culture and folklore with a national identity outside of Moscow. That is because, for the Ukrainian leader, Kiev already existed when the Russians arrived. From the corner of leadership, the war turned Zelensky into a visionary who aspires to subdue a superior enemy. And for this, he uses a dialectical discourse that has managed to maintain the hope and motivation of his people to resist the Russian onslaught by infecting his leaders with the idea that they can achieve a victory that will allow them to disconnect from the domination of Russia.

The geographical position of Ukraine is of great geostrategic importance and is part of Russia's eternal political ambitions on Eurasian soil. The mining-energy resources and *commodities* reserves in the territory and coastlines of the Sea

of Azov and the Black Sea, together with the importance of SLOC) through both bodies of water to and from the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, make Ukraine a Russian national interest.

The war between Russia and Ukraine revolves around Moscow's desire to control the geography of Kiev in order to maximize its influence in Europe in the political, economic, and social spheres. Although it is true that this phenomenon causes enormous human and material losses, along with great adverse economic impacts. It has been used and will continue to be used for reason to guarantee one's own security, to keep current and potential rivals "at bay" and to obtain a higher position or status in the hierarchy of the international system.

As long as the leaders of the powers aspiring to be the new hegemon - in this case, Russia - do not satisfy their political appetites in the scenarios or spheres of domination of their interest - in this case, Ukraine -. The war will continue, because if the interests maintain their intrinsic relationship with geography. As it has happened historically, and whose tendency will most certainly be maintained over time, their relationship with power and leadership will be perpetual. In the current war, Russia is likely to lose more than it can gain from great political and military attrition, and Ukraine is likely to gain more than it can lose from just grabbing the world's attention.

Leadership is not just power: leadership also requires authority, which is the moral force. Power alone is not enough to achieve goals, to satisfy interests, or to execute a particular strategy. Authority is the differentiating factor that complements the role of a leader, because thanks to it the need to resort to force (like any form of violence) to achieve respect, trust and voluntary motivation will be practically minimal. Moreover, leadership requires the support and legitimacy given by institutions (political actors with an influential role in national decisions), because in the new institutionalism the role of the State directly impacts society.

Finally, the hypothesis proposed at the beginning of this study is summarized in a proposal consisting of the use of the neoclassical theory of the realistic paradigm. This starts from a structural analysis and uses means that allow analyzing the particular uncertainty of the international system (structure composed of units that interact with each other), with a systemic approach (explanation based on the concept of systems, the interaction between their parts and their relationship with the environment). To analyze and understand the behavior and performance of Russia and Ukraine in the international system; through the proposed and developed conjugation of the concepts power-war-geography and leadership-war-influence.

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