

Answer to Question

The Reality of the Ukrainian Crisis, its Dimensions and Motives

(Translated)

Question:

On 20/12/2021, Al-Jazeera published on its website: "The Ukrainian army and pro-Moscow separatists exchanged fire, resulting in deaths on both sides... These developments come one day after the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Alexey Danilov announced that his country, for the first time in the country's history, prepared a detailed action plan, in which all agencies and sectors of the army would participate, in anticipation of any invasion by Russia, as he put it. Ukraine had accused Russia of mobilizing up to 100,000 soldiers near its borders in preparation to attack it by the end of next January... However, Russia denied that it is planning to invade Ukraine..." [Al Jazeera 20/12/2021] What is the reality of this crisis and its dimensions and motives? What is expected of this escalation, especially the Russian-American one?

Answer:

To get a clear answer, we review the following matters

1- Tsarist Russia took control of the territory of Ukraine during the sixteenth century, then the people of Ukraine took part in the Russian colonization of the rest of the regions and enabled them to colonize other people. To the level that the colonized people rarely distinguished between the Russians and the Ukrainians, especially that both of them were of the Slavic race. When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, Ukraine gained its independence in 1991. It became the second country in the space of the Soviet Union, with a unique location in the north of the Black Sea, with a large population of 40 million people, with an industrial structure not less than that of the Russian one, and with a nuclear arsenal representing a third of the Soviet legacy, before it was stripped of it by the US-Russia agreement with Ukraine in exchange for a US-Russian pledge to preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence. Ukraine has engaged in long and difficult negotiations with Russia regarding the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, most of which Russia inherited and has been stationed in the port of Sevastopol in Crimea within Ukraine under a lease agreement.

2- Russia's power failed to bring Ukraine back into its arms in every conflict with Ukraine, whether it was during the issue of sharing the Black Sea Fleet in the early nineties, or the long and wide gas pipelines that the Soviet Union had built inside Ukraine to transport gas from Russia's territory to Europe. What emerged after this issue of Russia's need for alternative lines such as the Turkish Stream through the Black Sea or the Northern Stream through the Baltic Sea to Germany, or in commercial matters where the Russian market desperately needs sugar and oils produced by the fertile lands of Ukraine, or the issue of Ukraine's membership in the various bodies established by Russia for the countries of the former Soviet system, or after that the emergence of Ukrainian tendencies towards the European Union and NATO, all of these Russian conflicts with Ukraine did not enable Russia to re-establish dominance over Ukraine over the past three decades despite Russia's military superiority.

3- Ukraine is Russia's front yard. Russia is not like Central Asia, for example, as a backyard in terms of location, national religious and historical bonds. It overlooks the Black Sea and controls it above its view from the Islamic Caucasian regions that Russia annexed throughout history. From the fertile lands of Ukraine, Russia finds its food security in basic commodities that protect it from the fluctuations of its relations with the West, from which it crosses to Eastern Europe, whether by gas pipelines or otherwise. Above all, Ukraine today represents the last buffer zone to resolve the historical complex of Russia, which is the fear of Europe from which it was invaded twice (Napoleon and Hitler), and if the weakness of the Soviet state forced it to abandon Eastern Europe

as a buffer zone, in facing the advancing of NATO towards Eastern Europe, it at least wants its neighbours Ukraine and Belarus to provide it with an area that isolates it from the dangers of NATO and advances of its military machine to the east. Russia today wants to prevent Ukraine from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or supporting it [and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov considered the US military support to Ukraine a "serious challenge to Russia's security." (Al-Ain Al-Ikhbarya, 13/4/2021)].

4- The West, especially America, realized the reality of this Ukrainian complex in Russian politics, and that Ukraine represents the weakest side of Russia, especially after the resurgence of nationalist movements in Ukraine intensified and its hostility to Russia took root. Therefore, Ukraine became, for two decades, a center of America and Europe's friction with Russia. Following the Orange Revolution that overthrew the pro-Russian President of Ukraine Yanukovich in 2014, Moscow responded in the same year by cutting off the Crimean Peninsula in the south from Ukraine and annexed it to Russia, which has strategic and huge military bases on the island. It was not satisfied with that, but pushed the Russian separatists in Ukraine to ignite the eastern regions and declare the independence of two provinces (Donetsk and Luhansk) to be called by the Russians as "Little Russia", and provided military support to it. All of this pushed Ukraine into the arms of the West. After that Ukraine demanded and insisted to join NATO in the hope that it would protect it from Russian aggression. The West started to bring it close to it, appearing as its defender. Ukraine started to get invited to European and NATO meetings, especially when the crises with Russia intensified without being a member of the European Union or NATO. America started arming it and providing it with billions of dollars in military aid, and it started training its army.

5- Russia has been under harsh Western sanctions (European and American) since its annexation of the Crimea, so it tried to compensate it by increasing its economic relations with China. It extended pipelines to China to transport oil and gas, and opened for China a land corridor (railway) to transport Chinese goods directly to Europe, i.e., it cooperated with it in the framework of China's great project the "Silk Road", and on top of that, it began to dispose of its stock of US bonds and dollars and largely freed its trade of dollars. Although Russia is not a commercial giant like Europe or China, America saw that Russia defies American economic hegemony and boldly incites other countries to do so. This is evident in most Russian commercial contracts, especially with China, by adopting local currencies as a substitute for the dollar. This was a threat to America, added to it the recent accusation that Russia is raising gas prices, to be a new economic dilemma for Europe.

6- Russia considers the great dimensions and advantages of Ukraine in terms of history, hegemony, economy and security, i.e., the buffer zone from NATO, and thus it considers it a red line, (Putin warned NATO against deploying its forces and weapons in Ukraine, saying: "Expanding NATO's military infrastructure in Ukraine" is a red line for Russia and it will lead to a strong response." However, US President Joe Biden said that he does not respect the red lines of any party regarding Ukraine. (Noon Post, 4/12/2021), for all that, while managing the current Ukrainian crisis, Russia is not about to abandon Ukraine and leaving it an easy prey for America and NATO, especially after it tried and endured Western sanctions, and above that, it believes that America's main concern today is confronting China, meaning that America will not make Ukraine become a member in NATO because of the necessary American resources to defend Ukraine; as this will weaken the American preparations in the Far East to confront China... Just as Russia does not value Europe, which is less militarily powerful and dependent on Russia to a large extent in matters of energy supply, meaning that Russia feels that the international circumstance is favorable for it to achieve success in a Ukraine. Therefore, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told his American counterpart, Anthony Blinken, that Moscow needs (long-term security guarantees at its western borders that would stop the expansion of North Atlantic Treaty Organization - NATO - to the east... adding, "which must be considered an imperative requirement"), as quoted by the Libyan Bawabat Al-Wasat on 2/12/2021.

7- This is the reality of the demands from the Russian side that stand behind this crisis in Ukraine. Russia believes that the West is increasing its armaments in Ukraine, and that the West can push Ukraine after strengthening its army to eradicate Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, and can then push it to war in Crimea. And all this is dangerous for Russia, the Russian Chief of Staff, Valery Gerasimov, said: [The supply of aircraft, drones and helicopters to Ukraine will push Kiev to take dangerous steps... But any provocations by Kiev to resolve the situation in Donbass by force will be suppressed. (RT, 9/12/2021)]. Thus, the current crisis reveals that Russia aims first to not to question that the Crimea is part of it, but rather it wants that as a *fait accompli* with international American and European recognition. The second goal is for eastern Ukraine to become outside the authority of Ukraine and part of Russia, and the third most effective goal is to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and that it needs guarantees for that, especially after the joint military exercises between NATO and Ukraine in the Black Sea, where Russian President Vladimir Putin said at the time (that the recent exercises conducted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the Black Sea exceeded all limits, and saw that the West does not take his country's warnings seriously enough. In a speech to foreign policy officials in Moscow, the Russian President indicated that the flight of NATO strategic bombers 20 kilometers from his country's borders exceeds all permissible limits. He said, "Our Western partners are escalating the situation by providing Kiev with modern lethal weapons. and conducting provocative military maneuvers." (Al-Jazeera Net, 18/11/2021)

8- America responded to Russia's demands to hold a summit between Russian Presidents Putin and American Biden. The summit was held on 7/12/ 2021, and the Ukrainian crisis was its main topic, but it was not the only one. During the summit, it appeared that Russia is asking America to recognize the red lines it is drawing in Ukraine. It also surfaced that America warns Russia of economic sanctions if it invades Ukraine, and America has nothing more than that. The US President confirmed on the day after the summit that US military intervention in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine is not an option, and America threatened ahead of the summit and in the words of many officials with sanctions that Russia has never seen anything like it before, and it talked about preventing the flow of Russian gas in the Northern Stream line to Germany, and that it is talking with the Germans in this regard. The most it can do is to cut off Russia and its central bank from the system of foreign remittances, although much of Russia's trade is not in dollars.

9- By scrutinizing the issue, we find that Russia is dragging itself into a crisis that it can bounce back against it. America can push the Ukrainian president to provoke Russia so that Russia has no room or choice but to invade Ukraine, gets stuck in the Ukrainian mud and gets in trouble with Europe. Ukraine is not a member state of NATO for America to come to its defense. If Russia makes a mistake and invades Ukraine, it will provide America with all the justifications for subjugating the European countries and bringing them back under the American cloak under the pretext of standing in line against Russia's aggressiveness, which is incompatible with the multipolarity of internationalism advocated by Russia. There is also an angle that Russia does not see. As an American pressure on Russia in the event of its invasion of Ukraine, America will have a new tool to dismantle the emerging alliance between Russia and China. It can put pressure on China and threaten it via its trade with America in order to distance itself from Russia that is attacking Ukraine: If China surrenders and distance itself from Russia, then America will have achieved a great goal, and if Russia surrenders to various types of sanctions and withdrew from Ukraine after its invasion, America's demands will pursue it in eastern Ukraine, and even in the Crimea, depriving Russia of any gains from its invasion of Ukraine, rather it will lead it to calamities, this is in addition to America inciting the countries of Eastern Europe and getting them to provide strong and effective military support to strike Russia in Ukraine, and perhaps the experience of Russia's exhaustion in Afghanistan is not far to remember. For all this, Russia is playing a dangerous game around Ukraine that could become a big trap for it and turn against it, i.e., like a fool who does not realize the consequences of his action.

10- As for where things are heading, the answer is as follows:

a- The European countries are seeking to cool the situation and prevent Russia from invading Ukraine, and they want to smooth relations with Russia to reduce its risks and ensure the continued flow of Russian energy resources to Europe at reasonable prices. France, Germany and Italy call for Russia to engage in negotiations with Ukraine to resolve the crisis, including (German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that his country wants to improve relations with Russia. The Minister stressed that achieving this requires progress in resolving the conflict in Donbass. (RT, 23/11/2021), but Britain may seek to escalate the tension out of political opposition to the European Union, which it exited! [The British Army Chief of Staff, General Nicholas Carter, said that there are greater risks than at any time since the Cold War, of war between the West and Russia. (Al Jazeera Net, 13/11/2021)], and he further said, ["We have to be careful" about the possibility of an outbreak of Conflict in the region. General Nick Carter told the BBC that he really hoped there would be no war with Russia, but added that NATO should be prepared for this possibility. (BBC, 5/12/2021)], and such statements from Britain are to confuse more than being harbingers of an actual war.

b- But the most decisive factor is America's position, as it controls many threads of the Ukrainian government, and for this reason Russia sent a letter requesting security guarantees, which it sent to America and not to any other country on the grounds that the alliance countries follow its steps, even if America was late in responding regarding security guarantees, especially the subject of Ukraine's accession to the alliance, this delay worries it: ["In Moscow, Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said that Moscow needs a quick American response to its proposals because the situation is difficult and subject to complication and escalation.." (Al Jazeera, 20/12/2021)], and so on.

- **If America decides to give Russia security guarantees in Ukraine** without agreeing with it on China, then Russia's side will be dominant in this crisis. Giving these guarantees reveals further weakness of the American position because America would have succumbed to Russia's demands and listened to Europe's demands to ease the situation, and this is unlikely except if a Russian concession takes place, to break its ties with China in the interest of America.

- **But if America decides to implicate Russia and push it to war in Ukraine**, then Russia will have fallen or been entrapped in its plan.

- **By contemplating these matters, it is more likely that the heated war** between Russia and Ukraine is not expected to happen unless **new developments take place, which Russia is deceived by, and the war begins and it becomes involved in it!** The lack of anticipation of war does not prevent the occasional skirmishes in eastern Ukraine...

Likewise, it is not expected that America will obtain a complete severing of Russia's ties with China... In return, Russia will not achieve its three goals... Rather, it is possible, and in the capitalists' way of compromise, that America will soften its positions towards Russia's three goals in exchange for Russia's easing its ties with China... And then Russia removes its army from the Ukraine border, and leaves empty handed!

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