

# AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF THE GEOSTRATEGIC AND GEOPOLITICAL STAKES OF THE UNITED STATES' INVOLVEMENT IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT THROUGH JOE BIDEN'S JULY 12<sup>TH</sup> ADDRESS TO NATO

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## **Abstract:**

*This article uses van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis theory to scrutinize Joe Biden's July 12th, 2023 NATO speech to uncover the United States' geopolitical and geostrategic stakes in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The problem explored is the dual narrative of US involvement framed as defending international norms while serving hidden strategic and economic interests. The objectives are to scrutinize Biden's rhetorical strategies, identify the motivations behind US support for Ukraine, and assess the conflict's global impacts. The analysis reveals that Biden's rhetoric frames Russia as a threat to peace and stability, while the US seeks to weaken Russia, bolster NATO, and benefit economically through defense contracts. The results of the analyses show significant economic disruptions and humanitarian crises. The article concludes that a balanced resolution incorporating concessions from both Russia and Ukraine is essential to address the conflict root causes and mitigate its global repercussions.*

**Key words:** *geostrategy, geopolitics, global economy, strategic interests, rhetoric.*

## **Résumé :**

*Cet article explore la théorie de l'analyse critique du discours de van Dijk pour explorer la déclaration de Joe Biden du 12 Juillet 2023 lors du sommet de l'OTAN, afin de discerner les enjeux géopolitiques et*

*géostratégiques des Etats-Unis dans le conflit Russie-Ukraine. Le problème abordé est la double narration de l'implication des Etats-Unis, présentée comme une défense des normes internationales tout en servant des intérêts stratégiques et économiques cachés. Les objectifs sont de scruter les stratégies rhétoriques de Joe Biden, d'identifier les motivations du soutien américain à l'Ukraine, et d'évaluer les impacts mondiaux du conflit. L'analyse révèle que la rhétorique de Joe Biden dépeint la Russie comme une menace pour la paix et la stabilité, tandis que les Etats-Unis cherchent à affaiblir la Russie, renforcer l'OTAN et bénéficier économiquement des contrats d'armement. Les résultats des analyses montrent des perturbations économiques importantes et des crises humanitaires. L'article conclut qu'une résolution équilibrée, intégrant les concessions de la Russie et de l'Ukraine, est essentielle pour traiter les causes profondes du conflit et atténuer ses répercussions mondiales.*

**Mots clés :** *économie mondiale, géopolitique, géostratégie, intérêts stratégiques, rhétorique.*

## **Introduction**

Countries are in daily search for power, peace, security, control and dominant positions. The salient search for power is manifested sometimes in the expansion of territorial coverage through both offensive and defensive strategies in order to protect political and economic stakes. The contemporary story of our world has been highly characterized by conflicts which run the gamut from World War I, World War II, Cold War (US and Russia) to the upset of many communist countries. Our world has been seeking for both social security and political stability through alliances such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and WARSAW Pact in particular. These alliances serve as a deterrent to aggression among members, as an attack on one member by a member of an opponent alliance prompts a collective response from the entire alliance, rather than just the nation that was attacked. Eastern Europe and Western Europe have more than once showcased such actions (Eastern Germany against Western Germany, Russia against Hungary,

and the most recent one in the pipeline is Russia and Ukraine). Country alliances also have to do with socio-economic power and dominant countries create such unions to be economically and financially powerful. **G4, G7, EU**, etc. are created to ensure that powerful countries stand still to face all socio-economic and financial challenges. The search for dominant positions and the whim to keep up top and leading roles culminate in trade war (Trade War between China and the US in 2018 affecting the global supply chain), protectionism and isolationism, to name some.

In the current work, the focus is on the war between Russia and Ukraine, whose outburst went back to 2020 right after the darkest days of Covid-19 pandemic. The reasons for the so-called invasion originally had to do with the restoration of Russia security borders. As NATO is thirsty of weakening a historical rival militarily and economically, the leading and active members delved into the support of Ukraine through the provision of highly heavy and destructive military arsenal of all kinds. Although NATO is made up of different countries, such top countries as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Denmark have been providing officially weaponry to Ukraine troops to counteract the invasion by Russia. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IFW), the United States has pledged and provided the most financial assistance to Ukraine for its fight against Russia. In reality, Joe Biden's administration has pledged the equivalent of more than €42 billion in military aid since February 2022 (to date 04/19/2024) putting it as the top supporting party compared to Germany (€17.7 billion), the UK (€9.1 billion), Denmark (€4.5), the European Union (5.6 billion). The extensive US involvement in this conflict is driven by several factors. These may include the imperative to prevent escalation, ensure the security of American citizens, stimulate economic growth domestically, weaken Russia military

proWess, compel increased defense expenditures by Russia, bolster US revenue through weapon sales to Ukraine, reinvigorate NATO and alleviate financial burden on the US within the institution's budget.

This article aims at analyzing the linguistic features of the speech delivered by Job Biden on 12 July, 2023 in Vilnius, Lithuania under the auspices of NATO with a view to pointing out the economic, geopolitical, geostrategic stakes of the Russo-Ukrainian war through the scrutiny of the discursive strategies and rhetorical techniques. As a topical issue of relevance, this article exposes the underlying reasons for the deep involvement of the US and its allies in the russo-ukrainian conflict, along with the extensive impacts on the global economy. This study aims to uncover the cloaked motives behind Russia's decision to invade Ukraine and to examine its impacts on global supply chain, which has already been weakened by Covid 19. It goes without saying that two power blocs are formed based on historical backgrounds. They can be stratified as communist-oriented governments among which Russia, China, North Korea, etc. and the democratic-capitalist countries (the US, the UK, most EU member states, etc.), which are leading the world with their different allies. As a critical discourse oriented analysis, this article sheds some insightful light on the biased ideology of misrepresenting others and accurately presenting oneself. It achieves this through analyzing interaction strategies, macro and local speech acts in order to uncloak the geostrategic and geopolitical implications of the speech's connotations and denotations.

1- What persuasive techniques and devices does the speaker use to effectively convey self-presentation and misrepresentation of others?

2- What are the reasons for the US involvement in the russo-ukrainian war under NATO umbrella and what are its impacts on the global economy?

## **1. Theoretical Framework and Method of Analysis**

### ***1.1. Theoretical Framework***

This article delves into the use and application of Critical Discourse Analysis (Henceforth CDA). Opening with the theory with a view to laying bare the tenets and core meanings of CDA, the researchers have also taken an interest in applying the theory to a speech articulated by Joe Biden.

#### ***1.1.1 Definitions of CDA***

For van Dijk (1998b:352), Critical Discourse Analysis is stripped as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context”. As made nude by van Dijk (1998b), CDA is perceived as an innovative perspective which aims to provide a different mode of theorizing and analyzing written and spoken texts in order to expose the discursive sources of unequal power relations, prejudices and bias as established by social agents. As for Wodak (2002:71), “CDA is a perspective which highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power in contemporary societies. This is partly the matter of how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse”. Simply put, CDA mainly uncovers inequalities between social actors, whether based on political, social, economic, cultural, religious or gendered grounds, which occur in contemporary societies. In Fairclough’s (1995a:132) words, CDA is the study of: often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b)

wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

In a nutshell, “the main aim of critical discourse analysis is to explore the links between language use and social practice” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:69).

CDA is stratified in three main trends and giving a short overview will be of pivotal usefulness. It is fair to mention that the **historical discourse approach** by Wodak (1996; 1999; 2001) focuses on the historical perspective of discourse in the process of interpretation and explanation. Secondly, it is worth stating that the **socio-cognitive discourse approach** by van Dijk (1993; 1995; 2001) is based on a cognitive view of discourse. Lastly, Fairclough’s (1992; 1995; 2001) social discourse approach draws on Halliday’s linguistic study of discourse/text. But, the researchers have discussed in minute detail Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach.

### *1.2 Method of Analysis*

After selecting the address, the analyst should identify all lexicons (positive and negative), interaction strategies, rhetorical appeals, macro and local speech acts before interpreting them. The interpretation provided emanates from the linguistic connotations and denotations of the macro-semantic structures. Inspiring from Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive framework with a special hinge on its linguistic realizations and strategies (1995b; 2006a), the fundamental elements of this configuration of meaning analysis can be abridged as follows:

- Overall interaction strategies
  - ✓ Positive self-presentation

- ✓ Negative other-presentation
- Macro speech act implying our ‘good’ acts and their ‘bad’ acts, e.g. accusation and defense.
- Semantic macrostructures: topic selection
  - ✓ (De-) emphasize negative/positive topics about Us/Them
- Local speech acts implementing and sustaining the global ones, e.g. statements that prove accusations
- Local meanings our/their positive/negative actions
  - ✓ Give many/few details
  - ✓ Be general/specific
  - ✓ Be vague/precise
  - ✓ Be explicit/implicit, etc.
- Lexicon: Select positive words for Us, negative words for Them
- Local syntax
  - ✓ Active vs passive sentences, nominalizations: (de)emphasize Our/Their positive/negative agency, responsibility
- Rhetorical figures
  - ✓ Hyperboles vs euphemisms for positive/negative meanings
  - ✓ Metonymies and metaphors emphasizing our/their positive/negative properties
- Expressions: sounds and visuals
  - ✓ Emphasize (loud, etc.; large, bold, etc.) positive/negative meanings
  - ✓ Order (first, last: top, bottom, etc.) positive/negative meanings. (Van Dijk, 2006a: 373).

Politicians of Joe Biden’s caliber skillfully utilize phraseological manipulations of linguistic properties to elevate their own standing while undermining others. To be more affectionately and powerfully effective, they employ ethical, emotional and logical appeals to persuade their

audience. According to Aristotle, persuasion can be lifelike and achieved:

- by means of **ethical proofs (ethos)** through establishing credibility through adopting religious persona, displaying knowledge, competence, and awareness, appearing to be a man of authority, experience, character, and good will.
- by means of **appeal to emotional proof (pathos)** through arousing different feelings in the audience, creating positive emotions in the audience, using descriptive language, teaching, delighting, and moving the audience.
- by **means of appeal to logical reasoning (logos)** through providing reasons, facts, past events, and statistics, and the use of doctrine, definitions, cause and effect patterns, and anecdotes.

As stated above, this section has disclosed the methodological perspective and the process of data analysis. The speech under analysis has been methodically scrutinized and the linguistic properties dealing with self-presentation and others' misrepresentation, rhetorical techniques and devices, geostrategic and geopolitical implications have been identified. Following Van Dijk's (1995b; 2006a) socio-cognitive framework, the aforementioned properties have been quantified, categorized and tabularized and stand for the backbone to the analysis and interpretation.

## **2. Identification and Analysis of Persuasive Strategies and Devices**

The analysis of ethical, emotional and logical proofs has been carried out within the speech at play; however, due to page limit constraints, it cannot be displayed herein. The table beneath provides clear-cut details for a better understanding of the statistical data.



<b>Persuasive devices</b>		
<b>Ethical proofs</b>	<b>Emotional proofs</b>	<b>Logical proofs</b>
24	25	37
Total	86	

From the table above, it can be stated that the speaker made use of discursive and persuasive strategies to rhetorically and technically convey his message to an audience beyond Lithuania although he whispered in that speech: “Hello, Lithuania!” Evenly, he made use of 86 rhetorical appeals with the sole aim of making complex truths palatable to listeners, despite the weighty implications behind these seemingly straightforward statements. Of the 86 rhetorical appeals, 24 are of the category of ethos. These are fundamentally used to make the audience accept the content of the discourse because the bearer is the president of the US. He incarnates a world-oriented authority since he is speaking as the top citizen of a superpower having taken the lead in this conflictual case. The audience can deduce a certain level of credibility, trustworthiness and responsibility via Joe Biden’s speech. The discourser materializes it through: “We are steeled for the struggle ahead. Our unity will not falter. I promise you”. Aristotle posits that “a speaker's authority, trustworthiness, and moral character can enhance persuasiveness”. As it can be construed, both Lithuanians and the international community are first and foremost attached to this speech because it is uttered by the US president. It then stands to reason that “by adopting a religious persona, displaying knowledge, competence, and awareness, and appearing as a man of authority, experience, character, and goodwill” (Aristotle), the speaker really achieves and establishes ethos.

In addition, the speaker has also exploited the emotional dimension of the listeners by drawing their attention to facts or deeds of the adversary which can ignite their anger, hatred, positive emotions to react in relation to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Having showcased Russia as the devil to be chased and outcast, the audience is more inclined to manifest their disguise and revenge against the people of Russia. This feeling is more aroused through the following quote: “because you lived so long with freedom denied, many of you who are older know better than anyone how precious the right to determine your own future is, precious to people everywhere — everywhere — not just in Ukraine, but **Belarus, Moldova, Georgia** —”. Joe Biden succeeded in bringing to the forth that emotional appeal. In the words of Aristotle, “by creating positive emotions, using descriptive language, and teaching, delighting, and moving the audience, a speaker can strengthen their argument through pathos”. As advocated by Aristotle, the speaker used his rhetorical technique to incite the audience to actions and reactions.

Finally, the speaker has delved into the use of facts, figures, historical details, and sterling logical reasoning to rally, bring on board and convince a lot of partners to join them in the global fight against one and only enemy. It is expressed as follows: “Ukraine remains independent. It remains free. And the United States has built a coalition of more than 50 nations to make sure Ukraine defends itself both now and is able to do it in the future as well.” The relative diplomatic success of the Summit on Peace in Ukraine in Switzerland uncovered the lobbying and strategic reasoning that prevailed in its organization, with participation from more than 100 delegations of Heads of States and Organizations. To be more elucidative, “we all want this war to end on just terms — terms that uphold the basic principles of the **United Nations Charter** that we all signed up to: sovereignty, territorial

integrity. These are two pillars of peaceful relations among nations”. On the whole, the speaker combined ethical, logical and emotional proofs to convince all allies to legitimate their support for Ukraine despite the inhumane interests and covert advantages that the US is gaining from the massacre (in terms of incalculable losses in infrastructures and human lives) in both Russia and Ukraine.

### 3. Identification, Analysis and Interpretation of Positive Self-presentation and Negative Representation Resources

The discourser uses both positive self-presentation (“us-words”) to highlight unity, strength and shared values, and negative representation (“them-words”) to depict adversaries and challenges. Beforehand, those us-words and them-words are tabulated and displayed beneath.

N°	POSITIVE “us-word” (Positive self-presentation)	N°	Negative ‘them-words’ (Negative Representation)
1	Transformational power of freedom	1	Soviet tanks
2	Strength of a people united	2	Decades of oppression
3	Symbol for Europe’s future	3	Soviet occupation
4	Heroes	4	Putin’s craven lust for land and power
5	Flame of liberty	5	Putin’s brutal war on Ukraine
6	Light of Lithuania	6	Atrocities including crimes against humanity
7	Unbroken diplomatic relationship	7	Inhumane attacks by Russia
8	Stronghold of liberty and opportunity	8	Putin’s doubts about staying power
9	Proud member of the European Union and NATO	9	Unchecked aggression
10	Bonds between Lithuanians and American people	10	Coercion and exploitation
11	Standing together to defend our territory	11	Instability and inequality
12	Sacred oath		
13	NATO: A bulwark of global security and stability		
14	United stated stepped up		
15	Defend their liberty and		

	sovereignty with incredible dignity		
16	Ukraine: Remain independent, remain free		
17	Build a coalition of more than 50 nations		
18	Commitment to our values, our freedom		
19	Fiercest champions of Ukraine's right to a future		
20	Precious right to determine your own future		
21	Defend the basic rules of the road		
22	Rights and freedoms		
23	Peace and prosperity, liberty and dignity		
24	Anchor to global stability		
25	Greater peace and greater prosperity		
26	Common purpose, collective action		
27	Rule of laws		
28	Shared seas and skies open		
29	Highest aspirations for ourselves and for others		
30	Secure supply chain		
31	Address the existential threat of accelerating climate change		
32	Unlock the enormous potential in low-and-middle income countries		
33	Shared responsibilities		
34	Shape the direction of our world		
35	Never give up, never lose hope		
36	Stand for what is right, true, and freedom		
37	Prospects of the future		
38	God bless the protectors of freedom		

While positive words tallied 38 occurrences to eulogize the stance of the US and UE and to exalt their actions and initiatives, 11 negative expressions/phrases or words have been used to depict Russia's reasons for attacking Ukraine, its closest neighbor linked with historical and secular facts.

### ***3.1. Categorization of Positive Self-Presentation (“us-words”)***

The positive self-presentation resources are categorized in three rubrics reflecting unity and strength, shared values and achievements, pride and hope.

#### **1. Unity and Strength**

- “You showed the world that the strength of a people united cannot be denied.”
- “The bonds between Lithuanian and the American people have never faltered.”
- “We stood together.”
- “Our commitment to Ukraine will not weaken.”
- “We will stand for liberty and freedom today, tomorrow, and for as long as it takes.”

#### **2. Shared Values and Achievements**

- “America never recognized the Soviet occupation of the Baltics.”
- “We rallied the world to support the brave people of Ukraine.”
- “Our unity will not falter.”
- “We need to take the same spirit of unity, common purpose, determination.”

#### **3. Pride and hope**

- “The light of Lithuania: you kept it strong”.
- “We’ve brought the Transatlantic Partnership to new heights.”
- “I’ve been more optimistic about the prospects of the future”.

### ***3.2. Categorization of Negative Representation (“them-words”)***

The negative representation resources are categorized in

two rubrics reflecting adversaries and challenges, negative actions and consequences.

### **1-Adversaries and challenges**

- “When Putin, and his craven lust for land and power, unleashed his brutal war on Ukraine.”
- “Putin will wrongly believe that he can outlast Ukraine”
- “Unfortunately, Russia has shown thus far no interest in a diplomatic outcome.”

### **2. Negative Actions and Consequences**

- “Putin thought our unity would shatter at first testing”.
- “Putin still doubts our staying power”.
- “Faced with a threat to the peace and stability of the world”.

### ***3.3 Analysis and Interpretation of Positive self-presentation***

Referring to the above classifications, the utterances are scrutinized one at a time for this method fosters a strict and clear follow-up and shuns confusion.

**“You showed the world that the strength of a people united cannot be denied.”** Biden emphasizes the collective strength and unity of Lithuanians to neutralize their former invasion with the help of Germany during World War II. Although Lithuania was under the Soviet Union, the control of Russia came to an end on December 26, 1991. It is worth stating that the power of a country lies in its union, commitment and unflinching desire for independence and freedom to the letter. “And together, with your brothers and sisters in Estonia and Latvia, you helped end the era of division through the power of connection. The Baltic Way, not the Berlin Wall, became the symbol for Europe’s future”. This symbolized and marked the epoch of unity, connection, collaboration and free settlement.

**“We rallied the world to support the brave people of Ukraine.”**

Joe Biden highlights collective action and support for Ukraine, framing “us” as proactive and supportive. Ukraine’s support is established thanks to western countries’ weaponry and coordinated diplomacy. The unprecedented summit on Peace in Ukraine hosted by Switzerland in June, 2024 (attended by about 100 delegations from countries and international organizations) to preserve the integrity of Ukraine has been a soothing diplomatic success. Nonetheless, Russia insisted on occupying four (4) provinces and Ukraine should renounce to be part of NATO before any peace-making process can be launched. The final communique was signed by 80 countries whereas some noted countries did not. Among those that did not sign the final communique are Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, United Arab Emirate and more significantly BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). It can reversely be argued that: “countries voted to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine during a United Nations General Assembly session on March 2, 2022. The resolution entitled “Aggression against Ukraine” (A/RES/ES-11/1), was adopted with 141 countries in favor, 5 against and 35 abstentions (RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty; The New Voice of Ukraine). The comparative analysis of these statistics shows that there is a radical slump in the supporters of the US diplomacy and its allies since there were about 80 favorable delegations during the summit on Peace in Ukraine on June 16, 2024 down from 141 nations that voted to condemn Russia at the inception of the so-called invasion (March, 2022).

**“Our unity will not falter.” “We need to take the same spirit of unity, common purpose, determination.”**

Joe Biden called upon an infallible and indefectible vision, commitment, infatuation and dedication with the sole aim of defeating Putin and dissuades any other nation willing to violate the territorial integrity of any nation being member of their alliance. It stands to reiterate that the attack of one member state by any adversary equates with the attack of the whole union or alliance and a due response must ipso facto follow. Any nation testing the strength or solidity of the alliance resilience should be responded accordingly as demonstrated by the international support that Ukraine received from its various allies, with the US topping and leading others. It is judged sound to quote Joe Biden when he argues that the occurrence of Ukraine’s invasion made them reacted worldwide: “The United States stepped up. NATO stepped up. Our partners in Europe, and then the Indo-Pacific stepped up. All across the world they stepped up. And we’re ready — we were ready because we stood together”. This demonstration of a unitary solidarity behind Volodymyr Zelensky is a proof that the unity of the partners is far beyond breaking at first testing. Members’ countries of the alliance work together on collective defense, crisis management and cooperative security. It is actually in such a context that they all stepped out to collectively defend Ukraine against an abysmal and resurgent Russia.

**“The light of Lithuania: you kept it strong”.**

Biden’s discourse in Lithuania (Lithuania is not only a member state of the Baltic States but it is also affiliated with NATO) is symbolic of a people that suffered the annexation of Russia, the Soviet Union influence and dominance as led by



Russia. Despite the Soviet forces, Lithuania succeeded in getting their independence at the price of sacrifices of heroes and Martyrs thanks to their commitment to their nation's sovereignty. The "light" means the hope and aspiration for freedom and independence that never wavered among Lithuanians even in the face of severe oppression during the Soviet occupation when the Lithuanian culture, language and tradition were suppressed. This hope came true with the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence in 1990.

### **We've brought the Transatlantic Partnership to new heights."**

Referring to a political, economic and security relationship between America (US and Canada) and European Union, the Transatlantic Partnership, which took shape after the World War II with a powerful institution such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, aimed at providing collective security against the threat of Soviet expansion. The DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) of the Transatlantic Partnership has never faltered in face of the adversity of their traditional threat, Russia. Thus, the enduring shared interests and values continue to provide a strong foundation for cooperation. They are more interested in leveraging partnerships to tackle emerging global issues such as technological innovation, climate change, global health, human rights and geopolitical instability. The Transatlantic Partnership remains objectively a pivotal weapon of global politics, economics, security, stability and peace in an increasingly complex international landscape. From the words of Joe Biden, there is a strong hope because the transatlantic Partnership has adapted agilely, addressed efficiently and overcome brilliantly threats such as terrorism, cyberattacks and the strategic challenges posed by Russia and a near-neutral assertive China.

**“I’ve been more optimistic about the prospects of the future”.**

Joe Biden is more than optimistic in that he banks on the strength of the Transatlantic Partnership through their overt involvement in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Leveraging on support provided to Ukraine in ammunition and warfare materials, Joe Biden thinks that Vladimir Putin will be disarmed in the long run. Their hope lies in their diplomatic relationship, their persuasion power and their resolve in taking up all challenges posed by Russia and its allies. The future prospects are positive because they are implementing global politics and are addressing such issues as global peace and instability as well as the fight against climate change.

### ***3.4 Analysis and interpretation of negative representation***

Considering the above classification (3.2), each utterance is examined independently as this method ensures a clear-cut follow-up, while avoiding clarity defects.

**“When Putin, and his craven lust for land and power, unleashed his brutal war on Ukraine.”**

By uttering the abovementioned, Joe Biden damagingly depicts Putin, emphasizing his inimical greed and brutality. It is unconceivable and inadmissible that an independent country be invaded by another independent country in an era when international laws, treaties, resolutions and conventions govern and guide civilized nations. United Nation Charter, Article 2 (4) states that: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations”. This article represents the cornerstone of international laws and

prohibits the use of force and ensures respect for territorial integrity and political independence of all UN member states. In the same vein, United Nations Charter, Article 2(1) emphasizes the principle of sovereign equality of all its members. As it can be argued, “the Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members”. All member states being equal under international laws, their sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected, but not breached. However, the unsaid dimension of Biden’s quote is that Russia historically perceives Ukraine as one of its territories since Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire. More importantly, the separatist movement of eastern Ukraine is led by pro-Russian inhabitants. As such, a significant portion of Ukrainian population speaks Russian and has cultural ties to Russia. Putin hinges on the protection of Russian speakers and ethnic Russians in Ukraine whose lives were jeopardized in the Donbass region to lead its attack in 2019 before the escalation in 2022. For Gierczak (2020:12), Russia and her supporters argue that they are trying to protect people who identify themselves as Russians from the oppression which they could face due to being a minority.

The invasion of February 24, 2022 connotes the restoration of its influence since Russia further views Ukraine as part of its historical sphere of influence. Any loss of Ukraine to Western alliances (NATO and the UE) can be apprehended as a significant strategic setback. According to Gierczak (2020), Russia considers Ukraine’s efforts to join the European Union as a threat to the Russian economy and also territorial integrity due to the spread of the “Western ideology” closer to its borders.

In the circumstances that led to the collapse of the Russian Empire and the independence of the Soviet Union member states, it was made clear that the closest countries bordering Russia should not be part of NATO. Put it differently,

“the entry of former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO would violate a solemn “pledge” made by the governments of West Germany and the United States in 1990 not to bring any former Communist states into the alliance”. Anatolii Adamishin, Soviet deputy foreign minister in 1990, reiterated in 1997 that “we were told during the German reunification process that NATO would not expand.” In the same dynamics, former US defense secretary Robert McNamara averred that “the United States pledged never to expand NATO eastward if Moscow would agree to the unification of Germany.” But with the passage of time, this solemn promise has not resisted the interests of some political figures. Thus, “the Clinton administration reneged on that commitment ...when it decided to expand NATO to Eastern Europe.” After the Baltic States joined the alliance in 2004, NATO is planning on accepting Ukraine and Georgia, all of which emanate from the Soviet Republics. Russia needs a buffer zone of friendly or neutral states along its borders to enhance its security against perceived threats from the West. According to Mearsheimer (2014: 77), the war in Ukraine understood from a realist perspective, is an effect of “the EU’s expansion eastward and the West’s backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine.”

By controlling or influencing Ukraine, Russia aims to hinder NATO from gaining further strategic depth in Eastern Europe. However, Mearsheimer (2014: 79-80) revealed that: “West’s final tool for peeling Kyiv away from Moscow has been its efforts to spread Western values and promote democracy in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, a plan that often entails funding pro-Western individuals and organizations.” Losing Ukraine is quite dangerous and can increase the vulnerability of Russia.

The other unstated aspect of Biden speech is that the strategic security concerns of Russia are not deprived of logos.

Essentially, Russia needs a control over the Black Sea access. The annexation of Crimea ensures that Russia can maintain access to the strategic Black Sea and its naval base at Sevastopol, which is crucial to its protection. “On February 27th and 28<sup>th</sup> [2014], [when] pro-Russians seized important buildings in the Crimean capital, Simferopol, and within days they organized a referendum...” (Blidaru, 2018: 52). As a result, the referendum in Crimea yielded surprising turnout and results with 83% of the Crimean population of which 97% voted “for” integration into the Russian Federation (CBS News, 2014), which reassured Vladimir Putin in his fight.

### **“Putin thought our unity would shatter at first testing”.**

Joe Biden portrays Putin as someone who underestimates their (“our”) unity and resolve, framing Russia (“them”) as inimical and divisive. It is crystal clear that the diplomatic negotiations prior to the outbreak of the conflict did not take into serious consideration the desire of Russia to restore safety measures. The resilience of Ukraine is due to the raising of financial, logistic, mercenary and weaponry supports that it gains from NATO and the US mainly (they are outstandingly leading a proxy war and avoiding direct confrontation with Russia). The unity of alliance cannot shatter but the consequences of the war are multifariously impactful on all actors and continents (humanitarian crisis with millions of civilians’ displacement, destructions of infrastructures, economic instability and geopolitical tensions).

### **“Putin still doubts our staying power”.**

Joe Biden is revealing Vladimir Putin’s skepticism about Ukraine’s supporters’ endurance, perseverance or long term commitment to a cause of global stability and respect for territorial integrity. After more than two years (being in June 2024) of interminable fight with incalculable disasters (human

and material), Volodymyr Zelensky's resilience symbolized that staying power of the US and others. Inversely, Putin has assessed his staying power and due to the high stakes at play for Russia's future, it can be a non-ending war if the conditions of Russia are not taken into serious account as made known in the diplomatic summit on peace in Ukraine on June 15-16, 2024, which resulted in the absence a titanic protagonist.

**“Faced with a threat to the peace and stability of the world”.**

Peace makers such as the US, the UK and EU can perceive Russia as accountable for the global instability. Biden satirizes Putin as being the troublemaker and peace breaker. Concerning this threat to peace, the response of peace makers has just been the sturdy opposition to the massacre of Ukrainians by a militarily powerful Russia. Owing to peace, stability, geostrategic and commercial reasons, the US should step up to sustain Ukraine and restore peace.

Throughout this speech, the speaker made use of “us-words” to project to his audience the virtue common sense, rationality, worldly shared values and collective awakening for the salvage of a people. On the contrary, the speaker exploited “them-words” to blatantly distort the adversary of Ukraine and highlights the negative actions and intentions of the latter. This discriminative distinction helps to strengthen a positive self-image of the speaker towards his audience while tarnishing that of the opponent/adversary.

#### **4. Geostrategic and Geopolitical Stakes for the Us and Russia**

The outbreak of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia overshadows various stakes but a deeper analysis can reveal both geo-strategic stakes and geo-political stakes. In

terms of geo-strategic ones, the US involvement in this conflict aims at firstly preserving NATO's security. Its objective is to reinforce NATO's Eastern Europe flank in order to daunt Russian aggression and reassure its allies. The reinforcement NATO's Eastern Europe flank will make it possible for Eastern Europe to face any adversity no matter who the adversary is because "the EU and the US perceive Russian offensive as evidence of Putin's neo-imperial foreign policy, which threatens the Baltic States" (Gierczak, 2020:13). The reassurance of its allies means that NATO was a bit more fragile and this war comes apropos to revitalize the military might of NATO. By supporting Ukraine, the US manifests its engagement and dedication to the overall security of Europe.

The other geo-strategic stakes are the containment of Russian and expansion of NATO-inclined countries to surround Russia for a potential surrender. Truthfully, the US seeks to contain or restrict the influence of Russia in Europe and shun another Soviet Union, which means a reassertion of the control of Russia over its former soviet states. If this control of Russia comes true, it will engender a new world order and disempowers a modern Russia proud of its military might. The US strategy not only aims to limit Russia's power and its capacity to challenge the US armed forces with sophisticated weapons but it also indirectly compels Russia to use its military power, thereby weakening its troops and depleting its prudential weapon reserves.

Being a superpower encompasses having an economic, political, military and cultural influence. Thus, the US intends to maintain and expand its military presence in Eastern Europe. The reason behind this ambition is to have a strategic and rapid deployment of troops in case of attacks. Its widespread network of military bases and alliances will ease a rapid response to a global threat and crisis as US and UE opponents are getting multiplied all over the world. In Europe, "the U.S.

contributions to the Alliance's response were enabled by the substantial forces that we had already stationed in and deployed to Europe, including robust prepositioned equipment and stocks, as well as substantial investments in infrastructure and military mobility (...) (<https://www.defense.gov/>).

Concomitantly, Vladimir Putin has also been seeking for military cooperation as the case of Russia-North Korea defense pact, which proves his willingness to engage in a full military cooperation with Pyongyang. It is worth recalling that this pact was signed on June 19, 2024 to fight together against the US hegemony. This treaty of mutual defense, whereby any attack of Russia or North Korea by another nation means the attack of both nations, yearns for overthrowing the intentions of the US as far as weakening the economic and military might of Russia as revealed in the Cold War (a period of geopolitical tension between the United States together with its allies and the Soviet Union together with its allies, Russia being the head country). Given that alliances have the same objectives, the aim of articles 5 and 6 of NATO is "to deter and defend against any threat of aggression against the territory of any NATO member state". It is subsequently the objective of Russia-North Korea defense pact. All things being equal, the true ambition of the US is to have global representative military bases. This global military presence provides securities to its allies through its global security architecture, NATO.

**The geopolitical stakes** are of pivotal importance as the US is using resources, location and physical characteristics to influence the global politics and international relationships. The US is worldly known for its democratic tradition and one of the oldest nations using a bicameralism model of Democracy. Since 1991, Russia has had three Presidents: Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999), Vladimir Putin (1999-2008) and Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012) and Vladimir Putin (2012-present). On the contrary, the US has had six presidents from almost the



same period: Georges H. W. Bush (1989-1993), Bill Clinton (1993-2001), Georges W. Bush (2001-2009), Barack Obama (2009-2017), Donald Trump (2017-2021) and Joe Biden (2021-present). By analogy, these terms mean that a candidate can serve two consecutive terms and there is no limit to the total number of non-consecutive ones s/he can serve in RUSSIA, while in the US, a president can serve a maximum of eight years (two terms) either consecutively or non-consecutively. The US supports Ukraine as a democratic nation, which is fighting against autocratic aggression and imposition of a pro-Russian government as Vladimir Putin did it in the Crimea region. As Ukraine is a democratic nation, this concurs with the US values and its global strategy of promoting democracy and human rights. This mobile strengthened US implication. According to the Ukraine Constitution, especially from Article 1, Ukraine is a sovereign and independent, democratic, social, law-based state. The necessity to defend Ukraine national sovereignty gains ground in Article 5 of the Constitution, which defines Ukraine as a republic.

The politics of the US and its allies (UE) is to secure the energy supplies in Europe as Ukraine is a strategic transit partner. The US aims to maintain the continued flow of energetic resources and navigating European dependency on Russian gas. The worst thing that can happen in case of annexation of Ukraine by Russia, Vladimir Putin can decide to suspend the supply of energy as a response to its suspension from of SWIFT system. Motivated by the restoration of territorial integrity of Ukraine, the US opposed against Russia's annexation of Crimea and its different perspective in Eastern Ukraine. This initiative of Russia is a violation of international norms and to avoid a repeat, nations should fight to maintain the global order and prevent similar actions by other superpowers or powers worldwide. By supporting Ukraine after sanctioning Russia, markets for US businesses

can be opened and an increase of the US influence can be effective in the region. Using its geographical advantages, this conflict is an opportunity for the US to come back on the international scene (“America is back again”, Joe Biden, 2020) to reaffirm its global leadership and demonstrate its role as a protector of the international order where its interest matters. To be convincing, their position in the Israel-Hamas conflict leaves much to be desired because of their relative and covert neutrality. Actually, Israel is viewed as a historical and key ally of the US in the Middle East. As such, they share strategic interests which should be protected no matter the collateral victims and damage. This almost neutral position is due to the existing strategic alliances and shared values, which influence its approach to the conflict.

## **Conclusion**

The speech of Joe Biden in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2023, has been the focus of this paper with the sole aim of unveiling the objective and subjective reasons for the immersion and absorption of the US in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. This has been made possible by means of persuasive devices analysis through ethical, emotional and logical proofs, positive self-presentation and negative representation, which culminated in the revelation of the geostrategic and geopolitical stakes of the two superpowers (Russia and the US). First, the US set forward the breach of international treaties alluding to territorial integrity, freedom of choosing political regimes, democratic values, reiteration of its global influential diplomacy and politics, and the maintenance of the international order thanks to its super powerful potency and that of its European and Asian allies. These reasons can rightfully and publicly justify the US implication in this long-lasting conflict. In addition, the subjective reasons behind the

US support for Ukraine reinforce its presence in Eastern Europe to counterbalance Russian power, and one of the ways to get it done is its military basis in Ukraine. Actually, Ukraine's stability is vital for Eastern Europe security. Through its global diplomacy, the US aims to dissuade and counter authoritarian regimes.

However, the US did not reveal its subjective interests. Actually, US defense contractors benefit from a prolonged conflict as they will be supplying arms and equipment to Ukraine and thereby create opportunities for American businesses. In terms of intelligence operation, the conflict provides opportunities for the US to gather a lot of information against Russia with the sole of purpose of destabilizing Russian efforts to overthrow the regime of Kiev. Moreover, by unveiling its state-of-the-art weapons, Russia offers an opportunity to the US to test and enhance its cyber warfare capabilities.

On the whole, while Ukraine and Russia are losing human, financial, and technological and natural resources, the US is gaining a lot since the funding of conflict went back to US contractors which supply Ukraine with arms and in parallel feed the US economic system. Actually, senior U.S. officials said this week that “they believe the number for Russia is closer to 200,000. That toll, in just 11 months, is eight times higher than American casualties in two decades of war in Afghanistan” (New York Times, 2 February 2023).’ These dynamic statistics (from February 2021-January 2022) will be evolving with the passage of time. According to UNHCR in March 2023, due to electricity and water shortages in the cold winter months, nearly 18 million people in Ukraine were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and about 14 million people had to leave their homes. One of the mind-blowing statistics was provided by then United Nations. “On the anniversary of the Russian invasion, the United Nations

reported more than 20,000 confirmed civilian casualties of the war, although it seems that human losses in the fighting areas will certainly exceed 100,000 victims”. More evidently, Ukraine has suffered the greatest losses. As of December 2022, direct documented damage to Ukraine’s infrastructure as a result of Russia’s invasion was estimated at \$138 billion. Ukraine’s GDP has shrunk by a third. A total of 149.3 thousand residential buildings were destroyed in 2022 (<https://www.reuters.com>).

The subjective and covert motivations illustrate a complexity of interests driving the US involvement in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The global consequences of this war have been the rise of the energy cost (fuel, electricity, etc.), cereals and lots of products which upset and affected the socio-economic stability. It high time Russia and Ukraine found their own solutions instead of external solutions through the use of Ukraine to serve the interest of the US, EU and NATO. It is actually improbable since Ukraine is looking for ways and means to join NATO, which Vladimir Putin is dead set against. As Biden put it in an interview granted to CNN on July 09<sup>th</sup>, “I don’t think there is unanimity in NATO about whether or not to bring Ukraine into the NATO family now, at this moment, in the middle of a war”. For him, the war needs to end before the alliance can think of adding Ukraine to its ranks. It can be envisioned paths of peace through different concessions and conciliations by both parties ensuring and guaranteeing the security of each party instead of rendering vulnerable a party to the detriment of another.

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