Impact and evolution of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict between 2014 and 2020 based on qualitative and quantitative power rating: Approaching Chang's power index

By

Carlos Enrique Álvarez Calderón
Escuela Superior de Guerra-ESDEG, Bogotá - Colombia
ORCID code: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2401-2789
Email: carlos.alvarez@esdeg.edu.co

José Manuel Barreto Correa
School of Intelligence and Counterintelligence-ESICI, Bogota – Colombia
Email: jose.barreto@esici.edu.co
ORCID Code: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6128-8931

Laura Arciniegas Londoño
School of Intelligence and Counterintelligence-ESICI, Bogota - Colombia
Email: lauritaarci@gmail.com
ORCID Code: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9614-935X

Abstract

The development of the following research article about the impact and evolution of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict between 2014 and 2020 based on the qualitative and quantitative power qualification is an approach to Chang's power index. It aims to measure the power conditions of the two States for the circumstances of war that have historically transformed the international order and control. For this purpose, firstly, a historical contextualization of the war scenario between Russia and Ukraine is developed, followed by the conceptualization according to Chin-Lung Chang's indications to build an evaluation of power. Finally, the Power Index (in the future PI) is calculated between the years 2014 and 2020, all this in order to establish the dependence, control and dominance of both states for the variables that make up the possibility of measuring state dominance in the international order. In conclusion, the quantitative activity of power is not a final condition to evaluate the total capacity of control of a State, which depends on a qualitative intervention following the conditions of soft power and sharp power established by its rulers.

Keywords: power index, hard power, conflict, territorial tension, quantitative evaluation.

Impacto y evolución del Conflicto Ruso-ucraniano entre 2014 y 2020 con base en la calificación cualitativa y cuantitativa del poder: acercamiento al índice de poder de Chang

Resumen

El desarrollo del siguiente artículo de investigación denominado "Impacto y evolución del Conflicto Ruso-ucraniano entre 2014 y 2020 con base en la calificación cualitativa y cuantitativa del poder: acercamiento al índice de poder de Chang", tiene como propósito medir las condiciones de poder de los dos Estados con respecto a las circunstancias de guerra que históricamente han transformado el orden y control internacional. Para ello, en primer lugar, se desarrolla una contextualización histórica del escenario bélico entre Rusia y Ucrania, seguido de la conceptualización acorde con las indicaciones de Chin-Lung Chang para construir una evaluación del poder. Finalmente, se calcula el Índice de Poder (en adelante IP) entre los años

2014 y 2020, todo esto, para establecer la dependencia, el control y dominio de ambos Estados con respecto a las variables que componen la posibilidad de medición del dominio de Estado en el orden internacional. Como conclusión, es claro que la actividad cuantitativa del poder no es un condicionante final para evaluar la capacidad total de control de un Estado. Esta, depende de una intervención cualitativa acorde con las condiciones de Soft power y Sharp power establecidas por sus gobernantes.

Palabras Clave: índice de poder, hard power, conflicto, tensión territorial, evaluación cuantitativa.

Introduction

This article explores the Russia-Ukraine war from Chang's (2004) Power Index (PI) analysis. The notion of "power" is probably the most important concept in Political Science and one of the most influential variables of analysis in Security and Defense Studies. Morgenthau (1964) states that "the concept of political power poses one of the most difficult and controversial problems in political science" (p.27), while Gilpin (1975) complains that "the number and variety of definitions should be an embarrassment to political scientist" (p.24). Keohane & Nye (1977) refer to power as "an elusive concept" (p.11), and Waltz (1986) considers power to be a fundamental concept in realist theories of international politics while conceding that "its proper definition remains a matter of controversy" (p.333).

And although numerous political and military thinkers have used the concept of power throughout histories, such as Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Aristotle, Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Clausewitz, among others, there has been no consensus in the academic community on how to define "power" and associated concepts, such as influence, coercion, etc.; and this lack of unanimity in the conceptualization of power persists to this day. However, in the first half of the 20th century, Baldwin (2016) points out that the conceptual vacuum regarding "power" began to be overcome with the contributions of Catlin (1927), Merriam (1934), Russell (1938), Lasswell & Weber (1947). But, the turning point in the analysis of power came with the publications of Lasswell & Kaplan (1950), Simon (1953), March (1957) Dahl (1957); therefore, for the analysis of power relations arising in the current war between Russia and Ukraine, it will start from the definition of Dahl (1957), who states that power is "the ability of A to get B to do something that otherwise B would not do" (p.202-203).

Well, the Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory in February 2022 has as its main antecedent the Maidan uprising between November 2013 and February 2014. Ukraine, after its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, had consolidated itself as a country that maintained a good initial harmony with Russia, given that it had been the largest and most influential Soviet republic (Patiño, 2017); however, later, a rapprochement towards the West was taking place to the point of elaborating in 2012 an association agreement between Ukraine and the European Union (EU). This situation made Russia uncomfortable, generating pressure to the point that when everything was ready to sign the association agreement between Ukraine and the EU in November 2013, the Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovych, suspended the signing of the agreement.

This decision caused hundreds of thousands of people to agglomerate in Kyiv's Independence Square (Otalora, 2019), forcing the departure of Yanukovych, who fled to Russia under the protection of President Vladimir Putin. As a retaliation to the events in February 2014 in Kyiv, the government in Moscow promoted a referendum in the Crimean peninsula to annex that territory to the Russian Federation; with a turnout of 82.7%, about 97% of voters opted for

the peninsula to be part of Russian territory (Gutierrez, 2017). However, the EU and the United States rejected the referendum's legitimacy, suspended Russia from the G8 and instigated the UN General Assembly to pass Resolution 68/262, which affirmed the UN's commitment to recognizing Crimea as an integral part of Ukrainian territory.

Following in the wake of the Crimea case, and in response to the actions of the international community, Russia promotes other referend between April and May 2014, forming two separatist republics in the eastern parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine (Sauvageot, 2017). The Ukrainian government launched a military operation to subdue the pro-Russian separatists and war was unleashed that escalated to the present day (Marples, 2022). The conflict was brutal in its beginnings and managed to stop temporarily thanks to the Minsk Protocol, organized by Belarusian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka at the end of 2014. The Protocol, brokered by the French and German presidents in the Normandy Format, was signed by Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine). However, the cessation of hostilities was short-lived and in 2015, a new agreement was signed in Minsk, which was partially fulfilled due to the actions of pro-Russian militias.

In August 2021, representatives of more than 40 countries and the European Union met at an international summit to discuss the future of Crimea and signed the Crimean Platform to demand the return of the peninsula to Moscow. Faced with this "undue" pressure, Russia began in November 2021 the deployment of more than one hundred thousand Russian soldiers just 100 kilometers from the Ukrainian border, and by December 2021, Putin's government communicated to the international community the Russian demands not to invade Ukraine; among the demands, the following stood out: 1) Ban the entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, including Ukraine and Georgia; 2) Order NATO to withdraw the military infrastructure installed in Eastern European states after 1997 (including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, etc.). According to Martinez (2018), these demands are today one of the red lines marked by Russia, as Putin wants to prevent NATO from extending its influence towards Eastern European and Central Asian countries. Nevertheless, in the face of NATO's impossibility or unwillingness to comply with such demands, Russia invaded Ukrainian territory on February 24, 2022, starting what Moscow has come to call the "special military operation in Ukraine."

According to Marples (2022), the Russian government has sought to justify the invasion of Ukraine with analogies that date back to the Russian Empire and Soviet periods. And several of these analogies correspond to narratives that have shaped Russia's strategic culture throughout its history (Alvarez & Fernandez, 2018). Götz & Staun (2022) define strategic culture as a "set of discursive expressions and narratives related to military and security affairs, which are shared by a country's political leaders and elites" (p. 482). In the view of these authors, the narratives that shape strategic culture are rooted in socially constructed interpretations of geography, history and domestic cultural beliefs. Accordingly, one of the most relevant assumptions shaping Russian strategic culture is its perceived vulnerability to external threats, supported by such narratives as 1) The defenselessness of the Russian territory, a product of being the largest country in the world, which makes it difficult to defend the whole country everywhere and at the same time (Alvarez, Gonzalez & Aponte, 2018); 2) Possessing a chaotic history of having suffered repeated invasions throughout its existence, which leads to its need to control the immediate geographical vicinity through buffer territories, and thus prevent potential external aggressors from breaching Russia's national security (Lo, 2015, p. 103); 3) Perception of insecurity vis-à-vis the West, the region from which a good part of its existential threats have come (for example, the Napoleonic and Nazi invasions of Russian territory in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century or the NATO

threat since the second half of the 20th century); and 4) The connection between internal and external threats, since the "color revolutions" in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005), which in Moscow's view, are orchestrations by the West to eliminate pro-Russian leaders in other states, particularly in the post-Soviet region (Götz & Staun, 2022).

Given these circumstances, Cardona (2017) expresses that there are a variety of geopolitical and economic implications for the conflict that has been ongoing since 2014 between Russia and Ukraine. To begin with, both states share historical, ethnic and cultural ties. In the regions in conflict, most of the population speaks Russian instead of Ukrainian, which is one of the reasons given by those who defend the annexation of these Ukrainian regions from Moscow. For their part, the European Union and the United States see Ukraine as a potential ally at a strategic and military level right on Russia's doorstep, and according to analysts such as Font (2019), Buffet and Barriga (2017), this is what Putin wants to avoid.

In this type of scenario, when there are antecedents of mode and place perceptible to the population and the international system, comparative needs arise to establish the possibility and environment of the actors, who, in theory, activate their warlike action because they have economic, human, demographic and territorial capabilities. Here, power must comprise tangible and non-tangible circumstances, understanding that the quantifiable is complemented by what is a perception (Ilgen, 2016). These variables, under the basic discernment of the reader, sustain an exponential advantage in the case of the Kremlin; but, even with its high values, the evolutionary behavior since its aggressive activation against Ukraine is not known, and this has forced the two parties to generate strategies either of sustainment, protection or attack.

Therefore, if the quantitative result of the power of Russia and Ukraine were known under proven concepts and valued as valid, it would be possible to develop a mixed approach analysis that would complement not only the quantifiable results of the conflict but also an analytical activation that justifies the dependence of the two warring parties to sustain the war scenario. Under these circumstances, and understanding that the activities and tasks of power depend on both quantitative and qualitative factors, what is the value of Russia's and Ukraine's hard power according to Chang's (2004) index and the conflict dynamics from 2014 to 2020?

The approach used to evaluate the PIs of Russia and Ukraine will have a mixed tendency in a Multilevel Concurrent Nested Design (DIACNIV). This, set out by Hernandez et al. (2014), allows the combination of qualitative and quantitative tools to analyze any phenomenon and its behavior. In the case of power and its numerical evaluation, it is clear that there is a need to contextualize the conditions to be analyzed and verify whether they can be quantified. In addition to maintaining a mixed approach, the research is qualified within the exploratory and applicative parameters, given that the data collected must be analyzed, processed and delivered to the readers as validated and clarified information.

Given these circumstances, as a starting point, the conditions of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine are contextualized, accompanied by the conceptualization that describes the form and methodology of analysis to calculate the "power" according to Chang's (2004) postulate. Chang's (2004) power formula is developed for the period from 2014 to 2020, a situation that will make it possible to specify the level of dependence, control and domination of the states concerning the visible, tacit and evident power, more precisely hard power. According to Álvarez et al. (2018), or hard power refers to "the ability of a State to influence the behavior of another, through the use or threat of the use of force, through military intervention, the application of economic sanctions or the withdrawal of financial, military, commercial or diplomatic aid or concession" (p. 204).

Application of the quantitative power assessment based on Chin-Lung Chang

In the application exercise of the following research, the model of Professor Chin-Lung Chang of Fo-Guang University in Taiwan has been selected. Chang (2004) analyzed a variety of concepts to measure power, establishing that the best way to do so is when three aspects are evaluated: i) the critical mass of a State, described as its population and territorial area; ii) the economic strength integrated by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and iii) the military strength in line with the investment in defense.

His study arises from the need to understand two criteria in line with the phenomenon of power. On the one hand, Chang (2004) seeks to measure the "power" of the world's supposed superpowers to determine their strategic implications. On the other hand, the author wishes to determine polarity in the international system. These implications, added to the criterion of the determining variables of power in quantitative views, should reflect, at least partially, how well certain worldviews or assumptions about the structure of the international system coincide on issues such as unipolarity (hegemony), bipolarity (two superpowers), and multipolarity (Álvarez, Ramírez & Castaño, 2018). In essence, this assessment is guided under the combination of application variables, thus:

$$IP(i) = \frac{\left\{\left[\frac{Pt(i)}{Pt(g)}\right] \times 100 + \left[\frac{At(i)}{At(g)}\right] \times 100 + \left[\frac{PIB\,t(i)}{PIB\,t(g)}\right] \times 200 + \left[\frac{GM\,(i)}{GM\,(g)}\right] \times 200\right\}}{3} \quad (1)$$

Where:
IP= Power Index **(i)**= Nation to be evaluated
(g)= Global **Pt(i)**= Total population of (i)
Pt(g)= Total population of (g) **At(i)**= Territorial area of (i)
At(g)= Total land area of (g) **PIB(i)**= Gross Domestic Product of (i)
PIB(g)= Total Gross Domestic Product of (g) **GM(i)**= Military Spending of (i)
GM(g)= Total Military Spending of (g)

The power supply of the variables determined by Chang (2004) is evaluated under the immediately preceding year, understanding that the current values may vary according to the international context's economic, social, military and political dynamics. In the case of GDP, since its exact value is unknown, Chang (2004) indicates the possibility of indicating the final value of energy consumption, a value that can be known through open sources and without restriction. However, the United Nations (2022) states that some nations have an absence of data, a situation that occurs when the political control regime does not expose the real values to international control entities. In specific cases, Venezuela is an example of data validation since its final GDP value has not been known since 2015, and military spending has only been reported until 2017 (World Bank, 2022).

Analysis of the variables determined by Chin-Lung Chang in the scenario of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

When considering the war scenario regarding the Russian-Ukrainian tension, it is possible to develop a quantitative analysis that exposes the relationship and intervention of power under the variables estimated by Chang (2004): i) military expenditure; ii) GDP; iii) territorial extension; and iv) population. This consideration should start from 2014, understanding that the most visible manifestations of the conflict begin on that date, achieving

a cross-sectional analysis for seven years. The values of each indicator will be extracted from the open databases provided by the World Bank (2022), guaranteeing the veracity and objectivity of the data. These are specified for the relational exercise in the following table:

Table 1 *Chang 2014-2020 variable data from Ukraine and Russia.*

Country	Year	Population	Territorial extension (Km^2)	GDP (USD)	Military Spending (USD)
Russia	2014	143.819.667	17.151.291	2.059.241.965.491	84.696.504.653
	2015	144.096.870		1.363.481.063.447	66.421.822.180
	2016	144.342.397		1.276.786.979.222	69.245.294.553
	2017	144.496.739		1.574.199.387.071	66.913.033.537
	2018	144.477.859		1.657.328.865.710	61.609.204.756
	2019	144.406.261		1.687.448.525.467	65.201.335.848
		144.104.080		1.483.497.784.868	61.712.537.169
Ukraine	2014	45.272.155	577.448	133.503.411.376	2.997.189.214
	2015	45.154.036		91.030.959.455	2.959.581.345
	2016	45.004.673		93.355.993.629	2.943.807.592
	2017	44.831.135		112.090.530.369	3.246.786.567
	2018	44.622.518		130.891.049.797	4.169.707.536
	2019	44.386.203		153.882.982.016	5.419.138.048
		44.134.693		155.498.989.150	5.924.200.880
World	2014	7.261.846.543	148.940.000	79.557.660.119.700	1.754.186.626.366
	2015	7.347.679.005		75.112.444.159.420	1.652.927.079.297
	2016	7.433.569.330		76.305.058.874.648	1.649.136.733.238
	2017	7.519.183.459		81.193.291.658.569	1.717.984.424.980
	2018	7.602.454.161		86.267.600.625.419	1.801.948.433.102
	2019	7.683.372.259		87.568.054.407.493	1.859.927.966.296
		7.761.620.146		84.746.979.120.045	1.928.852.478.358

Source: *Own elaboration according to World Bank data (2022).*

Table 1 shows the data of the variables that make up Chang's power assessment formula. For its part, it is necessary to indicate that the territorial extension of both Russia and Ukraine was modified precisely in 2014; Ukraine lost 26,100 km^2, and Russia increased the 26,100 km^2 of Crimea. Therefore, without making an association in Chang's formulation, Russia holds an advantage in all variables over Ukraine, as it maintains a superiority of 17 million Km^2 in the territory, 100 million more inhabitants, 1 trillion dollars more in GDP and 80 million dollars more in military spending. When formulated in the equation that determines Chang's (2004) power index, these values yield the data in Figure 1.
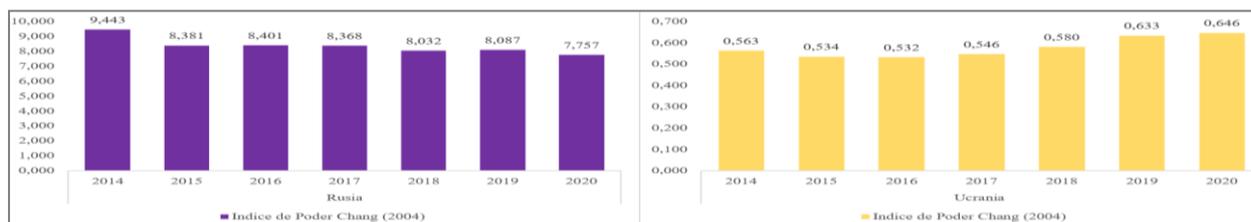
Figure 1 *Value of IP Power Indexes of Russia and Ukraine 2014-2020*
Source: *Own elaboration based on data from World Bank (2022) and Chang (2004).*

There is a significant and noticeable difference when comparing the IP-Power Indexes between Russia and Ukraine. The contrast of Russia's average PI (8.35) with that of Ukraine (0.57) is 7.77 points. Here, it is clear that Russia sustains a much higher PI than Ukraine. However, the behavior of the two indexes in each year, being high or low, evolves in the case of Ukraine and decreases in the case of Russia. When identifying the PI results, the Kremlin starts with a value of 9.44 in 2014, which decreases by 1.06 in 2015 (8.38), gets rises in 2016 by 0.019 (8.40), falls back by 0.032 and 0.033 for 2017 and 2018 (8.36-8.032), increases by 0.055 in 2019 and closes with a decrease of 0.32 (7.75). The volatility of the previously described values depends on the behavior of the variables, which, in theory, were neither conserved nor increased as expected.

For Ukraine, even with a relatively low PI, this nation evolves; if it decreases, the decrease percentage is lower than that of the Russian nation. Indeed, 2014 started with a PI of 0.56, decreasing in 2015 and 2016 by 0.029 and 0.003. After that, the evolution of the PI is determined upwards since, for the year 2017, it grows by 0.014 (0.546), 2018 by 0.034 (0.580), 2019 by 0.053 (0.633) and closes 2020 with an increase of 0.013 (0.646).

On the other hand, the conditions of the exercise force the actor with the highest IP to dominate the type of relationship, and in this case, Russia directs the absolute action through the qualifying conditions of hard power. Indeed, by establishing that the power dimensions of this relationship are sustained by (economic) means and dominance, it is clear that Russia exerts direct influence. This situation, it is possible to argue with the difference and the values of the IP of the Kremlin, which in the seven years exceeds the IP of Ukraine by about 7.7 points.

Likewise, the variables that make up the formula established by Chang (2004) will always be greater for Russia, given that the amount of population, territorial area, GDP and military spending is and will be greater, while, for Ukraine, precisely because it has a territory with a smaller extension, less population, less GDP and less military spending, it will continuously have low indexes, making the Russian power over the Ukrainian one dominant and highly strengthened.

However, the evolutionary behavior of the indexes in the two nations has a variety of particularities, not to mention the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic as the most important one. In the first place, it is possible to perceive that the Russian nation maintains a tendency to decrease the final value of the IP, while Ukraine has been progressing; Russia went from directing more than 80 million USD in military spending to decreasing it to 60 million USD. Likewise, the GDP's result decreased by approximately 700 million USD from 2014 to 2015, closing in similar figures in 2020. This behavior is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 *Investment in military spending 2014-2020 by Russia and Ukraine.*
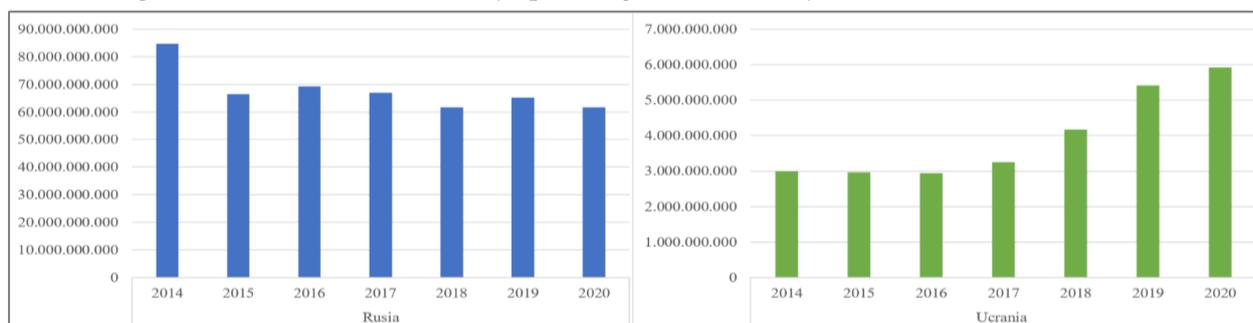
Source: *Own elaboration according to World Bank data (2022).*

In the case of Ukraine, military spending maintained a steady growth from 2014 to 2020, exceeding figures from 2 billion USD to five billion USD. Likewise, the GDP in 2014 closed with a value of 133 billion USD, and, even with decreasing in 2015 and 2016 to 90 billion USD, it recovered the GDP value since 2017, ending in 2020 with more than 155 billion U.S. In this sense, Russia has decreased in the values of military spending and GDP since 2014, while Ukraine has evolved and exceeds the closed value in this same period. In interventions such as those given by Baqués (2015), Ukraine's priority is to defend itself from war actions issued by Russia. Since the loss of Crimea in 2014, Ukrainian leaders have expressed the need to seek strategies to protect the Kremlin's interests, which today materialized in the tension and conflict declared by Vladimir Putin. The accuracy of this variation is set out in Figure 3.

Figure 3 *Russia-Ukraine GDP performance 2014-2020*
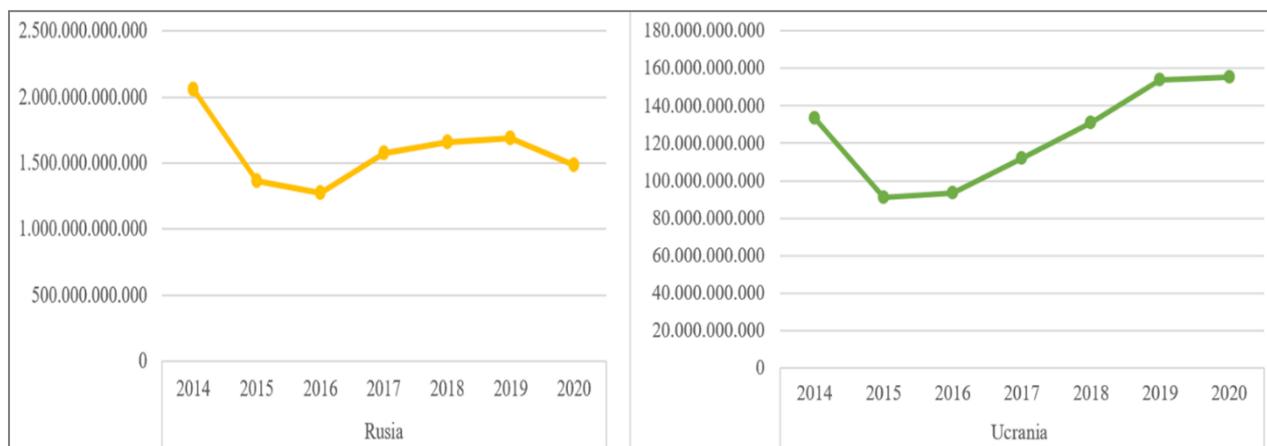
Source: *Own elaboration according to World Bank data (2022).*

On the other hand, the values of demography and territorial extension had an average variation in the two nations, also dependent on the annexation of Crimea. For Russia, the impact of this annexation maintains a geostrategic one, given that it is a pivot that allows the connection to warm waters, that is to say, to the Black Sea. At the geopolitical level, Russia gains control over the other neighboring states, known in its foreign policy as the former Soviet territories, achieving a better gas supply and presence in the Middle East; demographic activity increases in legal and nationalism issues; however, Tsukame (2016) indicates that there is a large amount of Ukrainian population adept to Russia and its customs, so portals such as Deutsche Welle (2016) and Ámbito (2014) congratulated this annexation as a conservation and protection credit to the Russian dynamics.

On the Ukrainian side, the loss of territory, the threat from Moscow and the need for protection attached to organizations such as the EU and NATO arise from inherent dependencies such as sharing the longest European border with Russia, being a material justification for which Russia has generated a variety of interventions; even so, there are internal factors of concern for Ukrainian stability. Here, Diaz (2020) argues that, from 2000 onwards, the two ideological strands in Ukraine became evident. On the one hand, the inhabitants of the West longed to be part of the EU, as it has the prestige of being a generator of wealth. But, on the other hand, the inhabitants of the Ukrainian east, many of Russian descent, demanded a rapprochement with Russia to become stronger. Baqués (2022) indicates that this tension became a scenario of a struggle between two giants of the East with a problem ideologized to the extreme that revived a tense climate that had not been seen since the Cold War.

Conclusions

Many measures of state power are defined in terms of the material capabilities of states but ignore important differences in the actor's ability to convert material resources into political power or military effectiveness. Here, it is important to justify both material and qualitative behavior, understanding that their union is a measure of a nation's performance in the face of differences in the susceptibility of a political system to war threats, risks, and weaknesses, among others. Precisely, in the case of Russian-Ukrainian tension, Ukraine seems to be weaker due to the significant difference in variables such as demography, territorial extension, military spending and GDP; however, Moscow's constant determination to achieve its objectives has forced it to maintain a survival strategy materialized in the growth of variables related to the PI.

On the other hand, the importance of state power for the functioning and historical development of the international political system has been amply demonstrated in scenarios of warlike tension. Here, the outcome of conflicts first determines whether it is strong enough to be one of the essential actors of the system. For their part, only the main actors do not depend on their international political decisions and on their existence on the patience of one or more great powers. In Ukraine, it is evident that even with the decisions of protection, support and support of international bodies, its stability depends on the territorial neighbor with which it shares its largest border extension: Russia.

Also, changes in the power position of states are responsible not only for their long-term destinies but also for the origin, development and collapse of the archetypes of international systems; for several decades, Russia shaped the world performance by the race for hegemony. Compared to the situation of international recognition of Ukraine, it overshadows Ukrainian abilities and Russia is perceived as the country with the greatest impact. These characteristics will make the variables that intervene in evaluating the PI proposed by Chang (2004) determinant to place Russia as a preponderant actor in the conflict scenario.

However, the poor performance of the Russian armed forces at all levels of the war in Ukraine, from the strategic to the tactical level, reveals that holding certain power capabilities does not necessarily guarantee victory in war or the satisfaction of political-strategic objectives. At the strategic level, Russia's major strategic intelligence failure in planning the war appears to have been based on the illusion that the Ukrainian government would easily surrender to Moscow's greater war capabilities (Gould-Davies, 2022). At the operational level, according to Dalsjö, Jonsson & Norberg (2022), three deficiencies stand out: 1) Poor logistics for troop movement and resupply in a highly mobile offensive operation; 2) Difficulty in establishing and exploiting Russian air supremacy over Ukraine, as Russian Aerospace Forces and missile units were widely expected to eliminate Ukraine's air force quickly and air defenses, dominate the skies, and support the ground offensive; and 3) Russia failed to coordinate ground and air operations in a mutually supportive manner. Finally, at the tactical level, Moscow has been clumsy in combined arms operations, and urban combat tied up and depleted significant Russian forces, as happened in Grozny and Aleppo, leading to Russian forces being limited to resorting to massive amounts of indirect fire to level the centers of resistance.

Thus, despite a pro-Russian PI, it is unclear at present how the Russian-Ukrainian war in eastern or southern Ukraine will conclude or how recent Ukrainian military successes will affect the future course of the war. However, the conflict between the two states has and will

continue to have fundamental implications for the international system (Crocker, 2022). While the future of Ukraine depends on the outcome of the war, this conflict will also decide Russia's position as an aspiring world power and the political future of President Putin himself.

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