

BOOK REVIEW**DR PANAGIOTA MANOLI¹****Dynamics of the Ukraine War: Diplomatic Challenges and Geopolitical Uncertainties****VICTOR JAKUPEC****Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2024****pp. 120**

The book *Dynamics of the Ukraine War: Diplomatic Challenges and Geopolitical Uncertainties* by Viktor Jakupec was published exactly two years after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The 120-page monograph (ebook) is part of the Springer's series *Contributions to International Relations* and provides a realist account of the first twenty months of the war. The book consists of nine chapters (including the introduction) and focuses on the political complexities of the Russo-Ukraine war which are considered central to a subsequent resolution of the conflict. It discusses the uncertainties of the Russo-Ukrainian war which are manifested in various forms, including military strategies, political decision-making, and the unpredictable nature of conflict itself, the diplomatic efforts (and failures) and the competing political perspectives and 'threat' perceptions that constitute the political reasons that led to the Russo-Ukraine war. To analyse the broad-based discussions, several interconnected themes and topics are considered: the western strategies of military support to Ukraine and sanctions on Russia, the notion of *Zeitenwende* and the emerging alliances, the role of propaganda, and the reconstruction dynamics of Ukraine.

In conclusion, the book offers a projective analysis of the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war and the various potential scenarios for its resolution. It addresses the

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military stalemate, the lack of acceptance for a diplomatic solution, and the prospects of a frozen conflict. The author suggests that existential threats on all sides and territorial claims by both Ukraine and Russia ‘are likely to remain unresolved for a considerable time’, thus, determine the progress of the conflict. Being already in the fourth year of the war, both issues raised in the book -existential threats and territorial claims- remain open. Still, as the recent shifts of US policy and Trump’s initiatives for the end of the conflict indicate, threat perceptions are not adamant nor hindering a diplomatic solution if there is political will to an end to the war (which at the moment is lacking on Moscow’s side). As for the territorial claims, these consist of unilateral illegal annexations of Ukrainian territories by Russia, for which elements of a diplomatic solution have been aired. The author concludes with prioritizing the West’s assistance to Ukraine as a catalyst, claiming that ‘the West’s promise to support Ukraine “for as long as it takes” will eventually wane, leading to its termination, primarily due to budgetary constraints and domestic discontent with the war’. Indeed, this factor has been of utmost importance for the way war has developed so far and the way it will end. However, rather than the budgetary constraints and domestic discontent as key determinants of West’s support, it has been the ideology-driven policy choices of the Trump’s Administration that have shaped the US policy and led to variances among the Western allies.

The author applies a realist lens prioritizing state motivations, power politics, and strategic calculations over narratives and ideological approaches. In doing so it adds to a predominant literature on the geopolitical drivers of the conflict with analytical and prescriptive power. For a thorough, however, understanding of the complexities of the Russo-Ukraine war the reader would need to also consider non-material, cognitive and domestic-level factors.

Analysis stops around late 2023, so it does not engage with more recent developments on the military and diplomacy front, Western military aid escalation in 2024–25 and the changes in US policy. However, the *problematique* of the book and its observations on the political aspects of the Russo-Ukraine war are still valid especially when considering a sustainable way out of the conflict.

The book is dense and easily readable. Although it is more suitable for academics, policymakers, and students of international relations, it can be read by anyone with some basic background on international politics who is interested in understanding the political aspects of the Russian war on Ukraine