



■ **Dr. Mustafa El-Feki**

*The Writer and Political Thinker,*

*Former First Assistant to the Minister of Foreign affairs*



# The Arabs and the Russian-Ukrainian War

## Introduction:

*The period following The First World War and its end in 1918 witnessed the birth of new ideologies based on materialistic thought in its modern theories. Specifically, two ideologies emerged: the first one is (Communist Marxism), which represented by its founding fathers including Karl Marx, the author of “Capital,” and Vladimir Lenin, who laid the foundations of the communist state, later known as the Soviet Union, prior to Stalin’s rule (the butcher of minorities) within the Soviet bloc. Simultaneously, Adolf Hitler took the opportunity on the other side to establish a tight framework for the second ideology, raising an extremist nationalist slogan calling for the supremacy of the German race and the dominance of “Aryan blood” over others, all against the backdrop of Germany’s defeat in the First World War and the necessity for revenge, claiming that the Jews were among the reasons for its defeat.*

The purpose of this historical introduction is to draw attention to the fact that the birth of contemporary ideologies and nationalisms flourished shortly after the end of the First World War, which considered the first global war known to contemporary human. This led to an ideological division in Europe and beyond, presenting a clear difference between the governing political systems, until the Second World War came to highlight the role of the Allies and ended with the retreat of the Axis powers, witnessing the well-known demise of Adolf Hitler and Mussolini (*the Duce*) in Italy. Thus, we notice a continuous series of ascents and descents that are unparalleled in other periods of human history, therefore, ideology and nationalism converge around the concept of deeply entrenched belief with all its profound

effects and powerful consequences, because both represent in themselves a steadfast doctrine and profound thought. Here, we observe the following observations:

**Firstly**, nationalism is an expression of human cohesion around a sense of cultural commonality. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran: **“O humanity! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware”** This Quranic verse clearly indicates the absence of contradiction between religions and homelands, affirming that diversification - the birth of different peoples - clearly indicates that nationalism, in

its meaning and concept, is a massive human entity based on belonging and loyalty. If we take the example of Arab nationalism, we find that it was born in the embrace of Greater Syria since the reign of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, aiming to establish a state whose goal is governance and leadership, but its essence is doctrine. Nationalism is a broad human vessel that encompasses various ethnicities merging in the crucible of nationalism without racism or bias towards specific ethnicities or ideological thoughts. Thus, the definition of the “Arab” for us is anyone whose first language is Arabic, regardless of religious or sectarian beliefs, and without consideration of gender, color, or ideological belief. Here, the concept of nationalism differs in its clear connotation from the concept of ideology in its specific view. That is, nationalism may be shared but ideologies can be contradictory. It is also possible for the opposite to occur, where ideologies are unified under its banner while human groups assemble under them due to shared elements and stable factors, mostly based on cultural dimensions. Therefore, I am among those who believe that the most accurate expression of nationalism is the individual’s connection to their human community, meaning that the nation in itself is one of the aspects of human unity. There is absolutely no disagreement among religions on this matter, and the concept of nationalism as one of the pillars of nationalism does not contradict this meaning. Even Islam, the great religion, which spoke of the concept of the nation in its sacred book, is the same religion in which its Prophet - peace be upon him - looked at Mecca as he was leaving it during an early migration to Yathrib, addressing his beloved city Mecca: ***“By Allah, you are the dearest land to Allah, and if it were not for the fact that your people expelled me, I would not have left”***. This meaning establishes the concept of a human’s

connection to their homeland and embodies the meaning of nationalism in its clearest form, even on a smaller scale of the concept of the nation thereafter.

**Secondly:** Ideology can sometimes serve as a religious framework, but it is mostly a political cover. If we contemplate the conditions of the former Soviet Union, we find that the cover of the communist state overshadowed the different republics, which were formed from various nationalities. However, intellectual ideology and political doctrine were the broad framework for all parts of the major state, regardless of the factors of difference and sources of origin. The Russo-Ukrainian conflict demonstrates to us how the dissolution of the large Soviet Union has produced entities whose relationship has reached the point of armed conflict and bloody battles, as we witness today. Therefore, political ideology does not protect its parties from underlying causes of hidden conflict and sources of dispute, whereas national unity necessitates and provides a confirmed impression because it signifies the shared blood flowing in the veins and ethnicities of all parties. Nationalism is a vessel that protects its parts by virtue of the unity bond alongside the cultural commonality that converges in the crucible of the unified conscience, creating mutual feelings under one single nationalism. Let’s look at our Arab world, which is filled with numerous differences and disparities in opinions and stances in the face of many problems, however, it ultimately maintains the minimum level of unity, rejecting factors of difference and adhering to the deep roots of Arab nationalism and its powerful influence in both the East and the West.

**Thirdly:** The contradiction between nationalism and religion is nonexistent for all nationalities. We raise the slogan: ***“There is no contradiction between homelands and***



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*religions,”* which differs for ideologies, some of which may conflict with religious sentiment and undermine the spiritual institution, as happened during the years of the former Soviet Union. We still remember the Marxist phrase which says: *“Religion is the opium of the people,”* which is an incorrect statement that strikes Marxist ideology fatally. Here we see the return to the Orthodox Church in various republics of the former Soviet Union, alongside the Islam Hanif in its Muslim-majority republics. I personally prayed in the New Mosque in Moscow and have not seen its counterpart before in the magnificence of its construction, the precision of its organization, and the logistical services surrounding this towering Islamic building in the heart of Moscow. Thus, we see that nationalism has an advantage over ideologies, referring to the religious reconciliation prevailing within the unity of one nationalism, unlike the varying spiritual levels within a single ideology.

In conclusion, I aim to document the dialectical relationship between nationalism and ideology suggesting that the era of nationalisms, which had declined due to the intellectual division of the world after the Second World War, has returned to define the prominent features of the nationalist state, even if it has been undermined under a specific ideology for several decades. We are transitioning from an era of ideologies to an era of nationalisms, and the word *“nationalism”* is seen as a unique concept of the national state, considered the last fortress of international structure in our contemporary world. Nationalism is a specific concept of the nation-state, which we see as the last stronghold of international construction in our contemporary world, and the long arm of nationalities will continue to play a role in shaping the course of nations and defending the peoples, no matter how long ideologies persist, even if they are covered in religious garb for a

while. Nationalism is a human vessel that cannot be shattered all the time, and I still reiterate that the experience of the continuity of nationalisms under the ideological framework of the Soviet Union is the best evidence that ideology can be transient, but nationalism remains enduring. As an Arab nation, we appear to be in a state of cohesion – even if apparent – with a national logic that prevails over other affiliations and loyalties, whether they are patriotic or nationalist.

The former Soviet Union encompassed the scattered regions, states, and republics that revolved around it since the end of World War I. This integration was solidified by Moscow’s relative victory under international and European circumstances that allowed for the results of World War II. The Stalinist era was characterized by the strong grip of Russia over the states aligned under the Union. It became evident that these states had integrated into the Soviet Union organically until its dissolution in the early 1990s, when the Iraq-Iran war ended and preceded by the withdrawal of Russian forces from Afghanistan. The Soviet Union, with its iron grip, became weaker than before, and its cohesive unity underwent varied attempts, starting with the solidarity movement in Poland, in addition to the role endorsed by Pope John Paul II, who was also a Polish citizen, in addition the efforts from the West, represented by the vision of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who made the dismantling of the Soviet Union one of her major goals. We note that the composition of the Soviet Union with its multiple republics was complex and interwoven, so that the air transport network of the various Soviet republics became dependent on passing through Moscow, departing from it, or returning to it. This remained the case until the policy of perestroika - meaning reform - adopted by Gorbachev and subsequently by others who

departed from the Soviet Union's cloak to catch up the Western democracy and freedom as they envisioned. The Berlin Wall collapsed, and the myth of increasing Russian influence largely dissipated. The value of what we write here lies in our attempt to understand the underlying reasons behind the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, especially considering that Moscow's Caesar, an intelligence officer with extensive experience since his tenure as head of the Russian station in East Berlin, is now involved. Like many sons of the Russian military, I felt that the disintegration of the Soviet republics was a major insult to the largest state, the Russian Federation. Memories of the czars and their extensive history, especially Peter the Great, who is considered the ideal model for Vladimir Putin, accumulated in his mind. Therefore, I am convinced that the entry of Russian forces into Ukraine is a reaction to these suppressed emotions and a sense of humiliation resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, which led to a decline in Russia's status from being one of the two great powers to becoming a major European country. Many argue that it has become one of the Third World countries, albeit with a strong military arsenal that still gives it momentum and value in military forums and political meetings on the international stage.

**In 2015**, Putin's forces managed to annexing the Crimean Peninsula. It was a dream that had tantalized the imagination of the Russians, linked to their desire to secure the borders of the Russian Federation, assert its access to the seas, and utilize its complete capabilities to regain control over other areas. Ukraine became the regional space available to Moscow, for which blood was shed and body parts were scattered in a military confrontation that neither side has been able to win or declare victory in until now. Therefore, we expect the period of military confrontation to be prolonged, and these battles

to turn into a quagmire that drains Russian capabilities and weakens Moscow's role for the coming years, which is a Western American goal that is not hidden from anyone.

**Now**, within direct analysis, let's make some observations about the developments and repercussions of the Ukrainian-Russian war and the stance of Arab countries towards it:

**Firstly:** It seems that the Russians' expectations were differed from what ensued afterwards. They may have imagined it would be a quick military excursion where the Russian army achieves a splendid victory, annexes some parts of Ukraine to ensure the safety of its borders and its regional integrity. But things turned out differently, and we were surprised by the extent of the Ukrainian forces' resistance, putting them in a military stalemate. The notable point here is that the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO was part of the upcoming scenario. Arab capitals received news of the fighting on the Russian-Ukrainian front with a lot of concern and embarrassment as most Arab countries are connected to Moscow and Kiev. This embarrassment stemmed from the difficulty in taking a unified stance, considering that Russian intervention, from the Western perspective, and its crossing of borders, makes the situation akin to an external invasion of a neighboring independent state. On the other hand, the Russians see themselves as maintaining their territorial boundaries, engaging in a preemptive operation before NATO forces come to their borders. Putin has reiterated several times that the hostile West is the one who came to them, and that he did not go to them as evidence of the possibilities of aggressive intentions towards Russian territories under the pretext of preempting any hostile action from the other side. The war has been going on for nearly two years now, and the surprise has been the Ukrainian resilience and intense resistance to





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the Russian attack, something that was unlikely in the Russian military mindset and intellectual military coordination of the war leaders when they made the decision to go to war.

**Secondly:** The Western - European and American - reaction was characterized by a massive package of sanctions on the Russian Federation, and I believe that this was one of the significant reasons for the escalation in the confrontation. The political and military situations did not necessitate this kind of provocation, which the Russians responded to with further military escalation and continued fighting on all common fronts. Strangely, European countries and the United States of America rushed to provide the latest and most advanced weapons and types of equipment to the Ukrainian side. The President of the Republic from the capital, Kiev, and from other tours, addressed international parliaments, including the US Congress, seeking more military support and economic assistance for his country. At a time when Ukrainian power stations were being destroyed and displaced civilians were suffering the horrors of war, a situation that Europeans had seemingly forgotten, however what transpired brought back memories of the First World War with current circumstances resembling some periods from over a hundred years ago. President Biden stood on the other side of the ocean to pour more fuel on the fire and seek to support the Western Ukrainian movement at the expense of the weakened Russia with continuous military operations that neither side seeks to end.

**Thirdly:** Just as the positions of European countries towards this conflict varied, the British stance was more stringent, the German one could have been more moderate, and the French conducting diplomatic tours between the two parties. Also, there was a division in the international community. Iran supported

Moscow, and China adopted a generally accepting stance towards Moscow's policy but was relatively reserved about the invasion at this time. Meanwhile, India played on the crisis ropes to achieve the greatest economic gains amid the conditions of war and the energy crisis. When Arab countries entered the fray, their roles oscillated significantly. The UAE's position differed from that of the Gulf States. Here, we must frankly point out the difficulty of the countries' positions in general and the ongoing sense of embarrassment resulting from the conflicting economic interests with the complex political ties on the other side, along with the various forms of the energy crisis. In addition, the food grain war, if you will, played a role in increasing the intensity of the conflict, enhancing the potential for making clear decisions in absolute support or necessary endorsement of one of the sides. For example, Israel has a large lobby of Russian-origin Jews and Ukrainian-origin Jews on the other side, so its role appeared from the beginning as a positional role without getting involved in long-term positions. This is a game that Israel always masters, the game of quick maneuvering on tight ropes in any major crisis. We must ask ourselves, isn't it true that the Russian-Ukrainian war has stolen the spotlight from the brave Palestinian struggle against the inhumane and illegitimate Israeli practices, which can currently be classified as genocide against humanity?

The Arab stance on the Russian-Ukrainian war has largely maintained a degree of neutrality and balance and used the energy card - especially Gulf countries led by Saudi Arabia - to highlight the importance of the Arab role in this current and ongoing conflict, which carries risks that extend to the point of hinting at the use of nuclear weapons.