

# Geopolitics of Natural Resources and the Ukrainian Conflict

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*Geopolitics is an approach to politics that stresses the features imposed on foreign policy by geographical location, environment, and natural resources. Geopolitics as a discipline contributes to the emphasis on continuity in contemporary political realism.*

*The focal idea of geopolitics is that **those who control the Eurasian landmass (Heartland) dominate global politics**. Regarding this idea, Ukraine has always been a significant part of Heartland. Therefore, many great powers have been fighting to impose their control over the territory of contemporary Ukraine (or part of it) from the Middle Ages up to today (for instance, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Sweden, Vikings, Ottoman Empire). Nevertheless, Ukraine up to 1923 (the creation of the USSR) was just a geographical notion but not a political-administrative subject.*

The pre-2014 Ukraine was a country covering a huge territory of East Europe from the Carpathian Mt. in the west to the Donets River in the east being bounded by the Black Sea in the south. The neighbors were and still are Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Belarus, Russia, Moldova, and Romania. After the dissolution of the USSR after Cold War 1.0, an independent (Greater) Ukraine took necessary measures in order to as possible as reduce its economic dependence on Russia as well as on other ex-Soviet republics.

For instance, such measures included an agreement to import the oil from Iran instead of from Russia. However, the exploitation of natural/mineral resources has been neglected while heavy industry, including iron and steel production, machinery, and transport production followed by aircraft, chemicals, and consumer goods, became an industrial priority. In essence, the food and textile industries are very important while grain is of crucial agricultural and export importance in the Ukrainian economy. However, in general, Ukrainian agriculture became very much damaged because of the 1986 nuclear catastrophe at Chernobyl as the large cultivating area became contaminated.

**Regarding politics, it is surely true that any Russophobic political regime in Kiev will continue to enjoy the U.S. financial, political, and military support no matter the results of the U.S. presidential elections this year in November.**

The question can be only of which intensity but not yes or no for the very reason that a **political administration of the U.S. is overwhelmingly controlled by the Deep State** that means at least concerning American foreign policy (especially regarding Israel) no matter from which out of two parties the President is or which party is having the majority in Congress (Republicans or Democrats). Such position in regard to both Russia and Ukraine can be explained by the need for the U.S. to support Ukraine for any price in the

long term for at least clear geopolitical reasons as many years ago a Polish-American notorious Russophobe **Zbigniew Brzezinski** wrote that unquestionable fact is that without the territory of (Soviet) Ukraine, any form of Russia simply cannot be an empire or, in other words, if Ukraine became subordinated to the Russian crucial influence or annexed by Moscow, Russia will in such case become once again an empire.

However, another reason for the American Russophobic policy in Ukraine is of a more global nature as Washington wants to fight any newly emerged (or potential) new world order in international relations led by Russia or/and China (for instance, formed around the framework of the BRICS+ countries or so). In other words, for American policymakers, any division of interest zones from the global perspective will harm America's dominant position (enjoyed after the end of the Cold War 1.0) in international politics as well as the economy for the very reason that it would reduce the global market for American products and financial investments.

Therefore, such geopolitical, economic, and financial interests of the U.S. are driving American policy in Ukraine to arm and train Ukrainian military and paramilitary troops in order to win the war against Russia (which, in fact, according to many authors, a putschist pro-Western regime in Kiev started in 2014 during and after the Euro-Maidan Revolution). Officially, the U.S. Army is not involved in the conflict but in fact, Ukrainian soldiers are fighting for different interests and benefits of the American administration and companies. Obviously, **Washington is waging a proxy war against Russia** on the territory of (Soviet) Ukraine but not for the reason that the Russian Special Military Operation (since the end of February 2022) threatened any kind of American national security but oppositely as the U.S. directly threatened the security of the Russian Federation, the existence of the Russian culture and above all of ethnic Russians in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine (including Crimea too). For the American administration, it is obvious that the return of Ukraine within the framework of the Russian predominant influence would, actually, mean the beginning of the displacement of the U.S. and its Western partners (the so-called Collective West) firstly from the biggest portion of Eurasia, and then probably from many countries of the Global South (predominantly from Africa). In this context, it can be said that the Ukrainian military and paramilitary detachments are fighting for the continuation of the post-Cold War 1.0 hegemonic position of the U.S. in global politics.

It is not hidden that many experts in international relations connect U.S. support for Ukraine against Russia to the very specific economic interests of different Western international, multinational, and financial companies. Nevertheless, the economy of Ukraine already after 2014 was put into the hands of Western companies and, consequently, it is why the Collective West, led by the United States, is not ready to peacefully hand over certain territories to Russia which historically belonged to Russia and being settled by Russian majority population. It is estimated, for instance, that around half of all arable land in Ukraine was sold to Western companies before 2022. Western sources openly claim that the conflict in Ukraine is a battle for very rich natural/mineral resources that this East European country possesses but, they can be out of Western exploitation as a huge part of them is already under Russian control (in the Donbas region, for example).

**The question is: How are natural resources (probably crucially?) important in the current war between NATO and Russia on the soil of (Soviet) Ukraine?** It can probably be understood from the fact that being aware of the bare reality that the existence of a client (East European) political regime depends mainly on the support (in a variety of

forms) by the foreign (Western) powers, the officials of the Ukrainian authorities since 2014 invoked the argument of significant reserves of rare minerals in order to secure the constant support of Western bosses even officially claiming that some 5% all the global reserves of critical raw materials are located in (pre-2014) Ukraine. They claim, for instance, that around 500.000 tons of lithium reserves are located in the Donbas region. Ukraine is one of the top 10 producers of titanium, iron, kaolin, manganese, zirconium, and graphite. According to relevant Western sources, (pre-2014) Ukraine has about 20.000 deposits of 116 different mineral resources, of which only 3.055 deposits were active before 2022, or only about 15% out of all. In other words, if Western companies want to exploit such natural resources their governments must support the Kiev regime in the war against the Russian minority in East Ukraine and Russia herself.

According to some estimations, the territory of Ukraine before 2014 (Soviet territory) possess circa up to 20% of the world's reserves of all titanium ores. It must be noted that titanium ore is necessary for the aerospace, medical, automotive, and shipbuilding industries from a global perspective. In addition to having at least 500.000 discovered reserves of lithium needed for the production of car batteries (in fact, lithium reserves are larger), **Ukraine is among the top 5 global producers of gallium, which is necessary for producing semiconductors.** The territory of pre-2014 Ukraine had large reserves of beryllium, which is used for the production of atomic energy, aerospace, military, and electronics industries.

Additionally, **Ukraine has significant reserves of zirconium and apatite, which are needed for the production of atomic energy.** In other words, according to some statistics, Ukraine ranks third in the world in terms of zirconium oxide reserves, just behind South Africa and Australia having also some 20% of the world's graphite reserves. Ukraine has significant reserves of non-ferrous metals: copper (fourth place in Europe), lead (fifth place), zinc (sixth place) and silver (ninth place). Finally, Ukraine has significant reserves of nickel and cobalt as well.

Why Ukrainian natural resources are important to the Collective West which is supporting and financing the Ukrainian-NATO war against Russians and Russia from 2014 onward? It can be understood from the very facts that

- 1) today China controls up to 90% of the world's total production of rare earth minerals, from extraction to processing, and
- 2) the EU imports 40% of all critical minerals exactly from China.

Taking into consideration Ukraine's rare natural/mineral reserves, Ukraine can greatly help Western economies to gain a greater level of independence from both China and Russia in the field of energy.

Nevertheless, in the first place out of all other natural/mineral resources in Ukraine, **titanium is mostly interesting for U.S. policymakers regarding the current military conflict in the country.**

It has to be stressed that the largest deposits of titanium ore in Ukraine are still under the control of the Kiev regime. **Significantly, Ukraine has huge reserves of titanium (second place in the world) while at the same time, the U.S. is forced to import around 90% of titanium for its economic purposes. Titanium is unavoidable in the**

**aerospace industry and the production of commuting aircraft**, and therefore, as an example, American Boeing provides up to 30% of its needs for titanium from Russia (in 2021, Russia was the world's second exporter of titanium after China), but mainly processing ore from Ukraine and after February 2022 (the beginning of the Special Military Operation-SMO) from Africa and Asia. However, during Russian SMO, some of the most important mineral deposits in East Ukraine came under Moscow's control.



**The Donbas region is of prime importance regarding Ukrainian mineral and other natural resources and, therefore, is primarily well known for its huge coal reserves**, which is why it is estimated that Russia currently controls 80% of Ukraine's coal production. In the part of the Zaporozhie area that is annexed to Russia, there is one of the largest iron mines in former (Soviet territory) Ukraine. The Sea of Azov has significant oil and gas reserves. **Both Zaporozhie and Donetsk areas possess two of the three largest lithium deposits in former Ukraine**, which have not been exploited so far. However, the crucial point is that Russia would be among the top global producers of lithium having control of the Donetsk and Zaporozhie areas and their lithium reserves. Therefore, many Western experts linked the future of Europe's energy question with the Ukrainian recapture of Donbas for the very reason that this region possesses some of the largest lithium (and other) deposits in Europe.

**In conclusion, the case of Ukraine makes clear that the issue of the exploitation of rare metals is, in fact, of a geopolitical nature**, backed by the real fear of the Collective West of losing global economic-political dominance. Consequently, to get exploitation of several critical natural/mineral resources, the Collective West is ready to fight Russia till the last Ukrainian (mobilized by force) soldier.

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