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CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICS POWER: - AN ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

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Abstract

This paper examines the Russia-Ukraine war, its causes, effects, and international responses. Geopolitics helps predict future actions, with examples like China's Belt and Road, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the US-China competition. Russia's invasion stems from seeing Ukraine as within its sphere of influence, believing Ukraine should be close, not independent. Leaders like Putin view NATO as a threat. Russia aims to control Ukraine's energy, prevent its NATO or EU membership, and later shifted from land conquest to protecting its interests. Controlling land grants access to the Black Sea, vital for trade. The war involves geopolitics, history, and national interests, driven by Russia's desire to maintain influence and block Western integration, impacting Ukraine and the world.

Keywords

Geopolitics, Russia-Ukraine war, Territorial Integrity, International Law, War Crimes and ICC, UN Charter Article 2(4), NATO, EU Policy, Global reaction and narrative, Sanctions.

Introduction

Geopolitics is the study of place. How a country's geography influences its politics and international relations based on constraints such as resources, climate, demographics, transportation, military power, technology, politics, economics, agriculture or energy.

It makes us understand why events take place, why nations sign trade deals or go to war, why alliances are formed and rivalries are born. Nations need to secure resources, protect their territory including borderlands and manage their populations. The term geopolitics was first used by Swedish political scientist *Rudolf Kjellén*. His ideas formed what is known today as the perspective of Classical Geopolitics, that the power of a state relates to its geographic location and control over territory. Other important names in the field include American naval officer and historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan, English geographer, academic and politician Sir

Halford Mackinder and German General and geographer Karl Haushofer.

The world's regions are classified according to their geostrategic importance and that is clearly shown in the historic 1904 article titled "The Geographical Pivot of History" (1), it is also known: "The Heartland Theory", written by Sir Halford Mackinder. In the article the land mass that stretches from Eastern Europe to Asia, from the Volga River in Russia to the Yangtze in China, is regarded as a "Pivot Area", which, if controlled by a single political entity, would put it in prime position for global supremacy. It is through geopolitics that analysts attempt to predict the actions and decisions of nations or other forms of political power and forecast the future.

There are several examples involved in geopolitics as mentioned above; they all are how geography influences international politics. Wherein the key examples are China's Belt and Road initiative for trade routes, Russia-Ukraine territorial conflicts, and U.S. - China competition over technology and resources. However, this research paper is more about territorial integrity. Territorial integrity assures a state that its border and land must not be violated, divided, or taken by force by another state. Art.2 (4) of United Nations Charter prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity of any state. The modes of territorial integration which includes; a) lawful integration, which is done through treaties or consent, decolonization processes. Example: - German reunification.

b) Unlawful integration, which includes annexation through force. This violates United Nations Charter (Article 2(4)) and principal of territorial integrity. Example: - Russia's annexation of Crimea.

c) Consented / self-determination; wherein people have the right to choose their political status. Example: - Kosovo: declared independence from Serbia.

This research paper contributes in understanding, why did Russia invade in Ukraine? What were Russia's objectives and motivations after invasion? What was the impact on Ukrainians? What was the role of western and neighbouring countries? Who were the mediators and their role? What was the role of UN, NATO, EU and violation of International law? What actions were taken on Russia? What was the impact on world?

An Analysis of Russia-Ukraine war:

Background : Before 1991, Ukraine was the **Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR)**, a tightly controlled industrial and agricultural powerhouse of the USSR marked by rapid industrialization, the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, and strict political repression. After gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine transitioned to a market economy, faced severe economic instability in the 1990s, and began shifting toward Western democratic integration leading to conflict with Russia, including the 2014 Annexation of Crimea and the 2022 invasion. In 1991 when USSR collapsed and Ukraine emerged as an independent state with roughly the size of pre-Soviet Ukraine. In 1994 it agreed to give up its Soviet nuclear arsenal in exchange for **security assurances**: under the Budapest Memorandum Russia (and the US/UK) pledged to “respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine” and to “refrain from the threat or use of force” against Ukraine. Russia’s 1997 “**Treaty of Friendship**” also reaffirmed Ukraine’s territorial integrity. Throughout 1991–2013 relations were mixed, cooperation and gas disputes, with a growing pro-Western sentiment in Ukraine (e.g. Orange Revolution 2004, Euromaidan 2013). Ukraine sought EU and NATO ties.

1. Causes of the Invasion

- **Historical & ideological context:** Russia has long viewed Ukraine as part of its sphere. Under its 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Russia pledged to respect Ukraine’s borders^[23] but Moscow’s policies have contradicted this, dating back to Soviet times. President Putin (and predecessors) has asserted a “one people” ideology, denying Ukrainian nationhood^[1]. The 2014 ousting of pro-Russian President Yanukovich and Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations were seen as existential threats. Russia’s 2008 statement that Ukrainian NATO membership would constitute a “red line”^[24] foreshadowed the crisis.
- **Security narratives:** Russian leaders portrayed NATO expansion as encirclement. In a 2022 policy address, Putin cited NATO’s eastward “drift” and alleged Western schemes to use Ukraine as an anti-Russian base^{[25][26]}. U.S. intelligence summaries also warned that Russian strategy included preventive **war** logic – believing that Ukraine’s eventual NATO entry would make a military option ineffective^[3]. Allied analyses note that Putin convinced himself Ukraine would soon have significant Western arms, so attacking early was seen as more opportune^[3].
- **Domestic politics and ideology:** Putin has used nationalism to bolster support. State propaganda elevated historical narratives (WWII “Great Patriotic War”, protection of “Russian World” speakers) to justify aggression. Polling shows Russian public support

peaked after the invasion[27]. None of Russia’s official war aims (like “denazification” or “NATO obstruction”) consistently received majority popular support[28], suggesting the narrative is top-down. The war also distracted from domestic economic woes and helped consolidate Putin’s power. Russia’s domestic policy crackdown (curbing dissent, media control) indicates elite-driven decision-making to prevent any internal opposition[27].

- **Economic factors:** While some analysts note Russia’s resource challenges (sanctions-weakened economy, need for new markets) as pressures, there is little direct evidence of economic incentives driving the decision. Pipelines (Nord Stream 2) were caught in geopolitics but Russia did not invade to seize foreign energy (Ukraine itself has minimal oil). In propaganda, Putin claimed Western “energy blackmail” (e.g. pipeline blasts blamed on the West[29]). More plausibly, Russia sought control over Ukraine’s energy infrastructure (gas transit) and agricultural wealth to deprive Europe of Ukraine’s export earnings, but these appear secondary to strategic goals.

In sum, Russia’s invasion was rooted in a combination of long-term geopolitical strategy and security paranoia. Official justifications mix claims of “self-defense” and “protection of Russians”[25][26], but international experts uniformly assess the war as an unjustified act of aggression (violating the UN Charter’s prohibition on force[30]).

Timeline

Title Key Events in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Year	Events
2014-02	Russian troops enter Crimea
2014-04	Conflict begins in Donbas (Eastern Ukraine)
2015-02	Minsk II ceasefire agreement signed
2021-11	Russia deploys ~100,000 troops on Ukraine border
2022-02-21	Russia recognizes Donetsk and Luhansk “people’s republics”
2022-02-24	Russia launches full-scale invasion of Ukraine
2022-03	UN General Assembly condemns Russians aggression (141-5 vote)

2022-07	Black Sea Grain Initiative signed (Ukraine–Turkey–UN brokered)
2022-09	Russia annexes four Ukrainian regions (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia)
2023-03-17	ICC issues arrest warrants for Putin and a Russian official (war crimes)
2024-03	UN holds world leaders summit on Ukraine aid (New York)
2026-02	US-Ukraine-Russia talks begin in Geneva (Swiss-facilitated)

2. Russia’s Objectives Post-Invasion

Russia’s expressed and likely objectives have shifted over time:

- **Territorial control:** Early in the war, Russia seized and later *claimed* as annexed Ukraine’s Crimea (2014) and parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson (2022). President Putin declared the inhabitants of those four regions “Russian citizens... forever”^[5]. The Kremlin now controls 20% of Ukrainian territory. Russia’s announcements on Sept 2022 emphasized defending these lands: “we will defend our land... with all forces at our disposal”^[31]. Analysts conclude Russia aims to consolidate permanent control over occupied areas (e.g. full annexation rather than temporary buffer).
- **Regime change:** From Feb–March 2022, Russia likely sought to overthrow Ukraine’s government. U.S. intelligence reported plans to decapitate Kyiv’s leadership. However, strong Ukrainian resistance blunted that goal. By late 2022 Russia appeared content to impose political influence without directly ruling Kyiv. Officially, Putin backtracked from regime-change rhetoric, speaking instead of “defending” against a hostile Ukraine^[32]. No credible Russian statement now openly calls for toppling Zelenskyy, suggesting this goal was either short-lived or secret.
- **Buffer and deterrence:** A strategic aim was to ensure Ukraine remains neutral that is outside NATO/EU. Russia likely seeks a neutral Ukraine or a pliant government that never joins the West. Controlling (or threatening) Ukrainian territory provides a deterrent against NATO. An *Institut für Die* analysis notes Russia’s historical emphasis on “buffer zones” – preventing adversaries from being at its border^[33]. By capturing

coastal access, Russia also secures Black Sea leverage. The de facto goal seems to be reducing Ukraine’s military threat to Russian allies (for instance, by moving the front lines away from Russian territory).

- **Resource and economic gains:** Ukraine’s rich agriculture and industry may be a secondary prize. Control of fertile farmland, mineral resources, and energy transit routes (gas pipelines) could serve Russia’s economy. For example, Russia took over part of Ukraine’s energy grid and nuclear plants. Western sanctions on Russia’s own energy exports may have further incentivized securing Ukraine’s resources. Still, economists emphasize that Ukraine’s economy has been largely destroyed in war, so any resource gains come with huge costs.

In summary, post-invasion Russia openly declared annexation of territory and aims to force Ukraine into submission or neutrality. Security analysts infer additional goals of preventing Western influence and securing strategic advantages in the region[31][6]. Putin’s remarks framed the war as undoing a historical “rupture” of a greater Russia[32], indicating an enduring intent to integrate Ukraine into Russia’s orbit rather than simply demilitarize it.

3. Impact on Ukrainians

The human and socioeconomic toll on Ukraine has been catastrophic:

- **Casualties:** According to the UN, civilian casualties spiked again in 2025. UN monitors recorded **2,514 civilian deaths in 2025** (a 31% rise from 2024) and **12,142 injuries**[7], almost all attributed to Russian forces. Ukraine has also suffered huge military losses (estimates range from tens to hundreds of thousands of soldiers killed, wounded, or captured, though exact figures remain opaque). The war’s brutality is marked by reported massacres (e.g. Bucha, Maripol) and unlawful attacks on civilian infrastructure.
- **Displacement:** Over one-third of Ukraine’s population has been uprooted. As of early 2026, **3.7 million** people are internally displaced within Ukraine and **5.9 million** have fled abroad[10]. Poland alone hosts 1.1 million refugees[14]. The flow of displaced people (map and table below) has created major humanitarian challenges.

Impact	Figure (Source)
Civilians killed (2025)	2,514 (31% ↑ vs 2024)[7]
Civilians injured (2025)	12,142 (31% ↑ vs 2024)[7]

Internally Displaced Persons	3.7 million (2026) ^[10]
Refugees abroad	5.9 million (2026) ^[10]
Homes damaged/destroyed	2.5 million (13% of housing) ^[8]
Reconstruction need (2022–30)	\$588 billion ^[9]

- **Human rights violations:** Numerous reports document grave violations under occupation. The UN and NGOs (e.g. UN OHCHR, HRW) have found patterns of civilian killings, torture, sexual violence, and forced deportation by Russian forces. For instance, UN experts note widespread torture of Ukrainian detainees and coercive displacement of children to Russia^{[22][7]}. International bodies are investigating alleged war crimes: the ICC warrant^[22] and numerous documentation projects underscore systemic abuses.
- **Economic loss:** Ukraine's GDP has contracted sharply. Direct physical damage is estimated at **\$195 billion** (as of end-2025)^[34]. Infrastructure for housing, transport, and energy is devastated: by late 2025 roughly 14% of housing was lost^[35]. The World Bank/UN estimate Ukraine faces almost **\$588 billion** in recovery needs (nearly 3× Ukraine's annual GDP)^[9]. Domestic industry and agriculture have also been disrupted; mines and factories are idled or destroyed, and farmland in war zones remains unusable. Unemployment and poverty have surged in affected areas.
- **Social cohesion and governance:** The war has paradoxically galvanized national unity. Millions volunteer for defense or rebuild efforts, and public support for President Zelensky's government remains high. However, civil society faces strains: families are separated, war trauma is widespread, and regions formerly under occupation must reintegrate. Ukraine has declared martial law, censored pro-Russian media, and prioritized security governance. These measures are popular in wartime but raise concerns about postwar political balance. Corruption, a longstanding challenge is under scrutiny as billions in aid pour in; efforts to reform institutions are underway as a condition of Western support (e.g. EU accession talks).

Overall, for Ukrainian civilians the war means constant danger, mass displacement, and monumental economic disruption, even as society displays resilience. The immense human costs and material devastation underscore Ukraine's urgent need for international aid and protection.

4. Western and Neighboring Countries' Roles

Western nations and Ukraine's neighbors have largely sided with Kyiv. Key actions include:

- **Military aid:** Western militaries have provided Ukraine with large quantities of weapons and training. The United States has led with roughly **\$188 billion** in security and economic aid through 2025^[11]. Allies (NATO/EU) have given additional funds, equipment and training. A CFR tally noted that NATO members collectively have contributed more than U.S. funding^[36]. Major deliveries include U.S. F-16 jets and HIMARS systems, EU-made Leopard tanks, and MBTs transferred to Ukraine. Coalition programs like the Ukraine Defense Contact Group coordinate these efforts.
- **Sanctions:** The EU, U.S., U.K., Canada and others have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia. Measures target finance (exclusion from SWIFT, central bank asset freezes), energy (price caps, bans on oil/gas imports), trade (dual-use tech embargoes), and individuals (3,000 Russian officials/oligarchs sanctioned by UK^[37], 2,700 by EU^[37]). By mid-2025 these sanctions had effectively **frozen \$285 billion** of Russian central bank reserves and denied Russia access to \$450 billion in foreign currency^[12]. New sanctions packages continue (14th EU package mid-2024^[38], fresh U.S. limits on Russian oil companies in 2025^[39]).
- **Diplomatic support:** Western governments have consistently condemned Russia. NATO's heads of government declared the invasion "brutal and wholly unprovoked"^[2] and said Russia "fundamentally violated international law"^[30]. The EU's foreign ministers labeled Russia's aggression "unjustified" and a violation of the UN Charter^[13]. NATO and EU have strengthened their own defenses: deploying additional battlegroups to Eastern Europe, accelerating arms production, and welcoming new members. Notably, Finland joined NATO in April 2023 (becoming its 31st member) and Sweden in March 2024, directly influenced by security fears.
- **Refugee assistance:** European neighbors have absorbed the bulk of Ukrainian refugees. Poland, Germany, Czechia and other EU states offered temporary protection status, housing, and services. EU institutions allocated emergency humanitarian funds. Poland took in over 1 million Ukrainians^[14]. Many refugees are working and paying taxes in host countries, partly mitigating labor shortages there. Worldwide, UNHCR highlights that **over 9 million** people fled their homes^[10], with 5.9 million registered as refugees abroad.

- **Energy policy:** The conflict spurred an energy realignment in Europe. EU member states drastically cut Russian gas purchases (pipeline+LNG) from 40% of imports in 2021 to **13% in 2025**^[15]. The EU banned new contracts for Russian energy and agreed to phase out Russian oil by end-2027^[40]. As a result, Europe diversified: increasing LNG imports (especially from the U.S. and Qatar^[41]) and boosting renewables. Global markets responded with volatility: gas and electricity prices soared during 2022-23, then gradually eased as new supply routes matured.

Neighboring non-West countries have varied in response. Turkey has balanced support: officially backing Ukraine's sovereignty while maintaining ties to Russia. It leveraged its influence to broker agreements (see Section 5). Countries like China and India avoided direct condemnation; China mostly abided by sanctions like the grain deal terms^[42], while India became a major buyer of discounted Russian oil. Overall, most Western and regional states have supported Ukraine with aid and sanctions, shifting global alignments against Russia.

5. Mediation Efforts and Third-Party Roles

Several states and international actors have pursued peace initiatives or humanitarian deals:

- **Turkey:** President Erdoğan has offered to host and facilitate peace talks. After meeting President Zelenskyy in March 2024, Erdoğan said Turkey was “ready to host a summit” of Ukraine and Russia to end the war^[18]. Turkey co-brokered the *Black Sea Grain Initiative* in July 2022 (with the UN), enabling Ukraine to export millions of tons of grain despite the naval blockade^{[16][17]}. It also facilitated multiple prisoner exchanges; Zelenskyy publicly thanked Erdoğan for negotiating the release of Ukrainian captives from Russian custody^[43]. Turkey's unique geostrategic position (controlling the Bosphorus) and relations with both capitals give it leverage for future talks.
- **Switzerland:** The Swiss government has actively offered “good offices” as a neutral venue. In early 2026, Swiss officials hosted trilateral US–Ukraine–Russia talks in Geneva. Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis emphasized that Switzerland provides “the framework, offering its good offices... to achieve a just and lasting peace”^[19]. Although Switzerland is not a party to negotiations, it has a tradition of mediation and has already hosted smaller meetings (e.g. U.S.–Ukraine sessions on US-proposed peace plans^[44]).
- **United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar:** Gulf States have mediated prisoner exchanges. For example, in Jan 2024 Ukraine and Russia exchanged over 200 prisoners each in a swap brokered by the UAE^[45]. The UAE's foreign ministry confirmed its “strong friendly relations” with both sides enabled the exchange^[45]. Qatar likewise

helped arrange swaps of detainees and civilians. These efforts have reduced prisoner-hostage tensions, though no ceasefire has yet materialized.

- **Others:** At times Ukraine has appealed to Israel for mediation, citing shared democratic values, but no major talks have resulted. Pope Francis and other religious figures have called for peace. Indonesia convened a “Global South” summit in July 2023 focused on food security and non-West peace proposals (Zelenskyy’s 10-point plan was presented^[46]), though Russia rejected it. The United Nations itself has urged negotiations: UNGA Resolution 2623 (Sept 2023) called for a peace conference under UN auspices, but Russia vetoed parallel steps in the Security Council.

Overall, multiple diplomatic initiatives exist, but none has yet compelled a ceasefire or lasting agreement. Turkey and Switzerland stand out as willing mediators^{[18][19]}, and Gulf states have eased humanitarian issues through swaps^[45]. However, Russian and Ukrainian leaders have so far refused direct talks with each other (each blaming the other), limiting progress.

6. UN, NATO, EU Roles and International Law

The conflict has played out prominently in international institutions and legal forums:

- **UN Charter and Security Council:** Russia’s invasion clearly violates Article 2(4) of the UN Charter (prohibiting force against sovereignty). NATO leaders noted Russia “fundamentally violated international law, including the UN Charter”^[30]. In the Security Council, Russia repeatedly used its veto to block condemnations. After a Russian veto on Feb 24, 2022, the UNGA invoked the “Uniting for Peace” mechanism. On March 2, 2022, the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution (141–5, with 35 abstentions^[20]) demanding Russia withdraws its troops.
- **International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court ICC:** Ukraine filed cases against Russia. In March 2022 the ICJ (World Court) ordered provisional measures, directing Russia to “immediately suspend” military operations^[21]. Russia did not comply. The International Criminal Court, enabled by Ukraine’s 2014 acceptance of ICC jurisdiction, has charged Russian and Ukrainian officials with war crimes. Most notably, on March 17, 2023 the ICC issued arrest warrants for Putin and Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova for the **war crime** of illegally deporting Ukrainian children^[22]. This marks a rare case of an ICC warrant against a sitting head of state. Practical enforcement of these warrants is unlikely as long as Russia remains outside the ICC, but the action symbolically brands the invasion as involving serious crimes.

- **NATO:** The Alliance has been a key forum. NATO's heads of state condemned the invasion as an "unprovoked attack on an independent country"^[12] and invoked Article 3 (collective defense readiness, though Article 5 has not been triggered since Ukraine is not a member). NATO deployed extra multinational battlegroups to Poland, the Baltics, and Romania after 2022. The Alliance also held frequent consultations (e.g. boosting air defense over Eastern Europe). NATO leaders warn the war threatens European security: as of 2024 NATO's Strategic Concept labeled Russia as a principal adversary and pledged long-term support to Ukraine.
- **European Union:** The EU, though not a security alliance, has treated the war as a continental crisis. On March 15, 2022 the EU foreign ministers issued a joint statement condemning Russia's "unjustified aggression" and calling for "immediate cessation of military actions"^[13]. The EU swiftly approved candidate status for Ukraine, deepened trade ties, and committed €50+ billion in macro-financial aid. The EU's legal institutions have launched proceedings: Ukraine initiated cases at the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to collect Russian damages from frozen assets, and the EU is enforcing its sanctions through national courts and tribunals.
- **International law and war crimes:** Beyond deportations, numerous violations of international humanitarian law are documented. This includes deliberate targeting of civilians (forbidden by the Fourth Geneva Convention), torture, and use of banned weapons (e.g. cluster munitions, as reported by watchdogs). Ukraine and allies have gathered evidence for future prosecutions. In July 2023 the UN Human Rights Council extended its independent Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, affirming that violations may rise to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Justice for Ukraine project (a coalition of 30 states) assists in collecting evidence.
- **Other bodies:** The Council of Europe (including the European Court of Human Rights) has condemned Russia; Russia subsequently withdrew from the Council of Europe in 2022. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) set up special observers (though its Field Mission in Ukraine was terminated early in the war). Most international organizations have either suspended Russia's participation (e.g. G20 status) or condemned its actions.

In all, the conflict has prompted unprecedented unity in Western institutions. Multilateral bodies have repeatedly affirmed Ukraine's sovereignty and called out Russia's aggression as illegal^{[13][2]}. The legal trajectory is ongoing: Russia faces international isolation, pending cases, and an emerging consensus that its conduct breaches core norms of state conduct.

7. Actions against Russia

In response to the invasion, states and international actors have undertaken sweeping punitive measures:

- **Economic sanctions and asset freezes:** Western governments instituted wide-ranging sanctions. Major Russian banks were cut off from SWIFT (global payments), key firms banned from high-tech imports, and luxury goods exports halted. The EU and G7 imposed price caps on Russian oil. By 2025, these measures effectively **froze about \$285 billion** of the Russian Central Bank's foreign reserves and denied Russia access to roughly \$450 billion in funds^[12]. Hundreds of Russian state-owned enterprises and individuals (including Putin) are blacklisted; as of late 2025, the UK had sanctioned 3,280 Russians, and the EU over 2,700 individuals/entities^[37]. Russia's currency plunged, and its GDP has contracted under the strain of sanctions.
- **Diplomatic expulsions:** Western and allied states expelled numerous Russian diplomats. In spring 2022 and subsequent waves, dozens of countries removed hundreds of Russian embassy staff suspected of espionage. For example, the EU alone expelled nearly 100 diplomats in 2022. These expulsions reflect Russia's increasing diplomatic isolation. Similarly, Russia retaliated by expelling Western envoys.
- **Legal cases:** Beyond international courts, Ukraine launched legal actions for damages. In May 2023 it filed claims with the International Court of Justice under environmental conventions and with arbitration tribunals under bilateral treaties. Individual lawsuits against Russia (e.g. by businesses or states for breached contracts) have also been initiated. Some advocates push for international seizure of seized Russian assets to fund Ukrainian reconstruction, though this raises complex legal questions.
- **Seizure of assets:** Governments froze personal assets of oligarchs – yachts, mansions, bank accounts – estimated at tens of billions. Several Western jurisdictions passed laws allowing forfeiture of these assets to support Ukraine. Central bank reserves held in the EU/US (\$300B) remain immobilized; part of this is now being used (with lender approval) to finance Ukrainian aid (for instance, a \$20B World Bank loan to Ukraine backed by frozen funds^[47]).
- **Military support to Ukraine:** Parallel to punitive measures, allies have armed Ukraine extensively (see Sec 4). In 2023 the US Congress and EU budgets have included separate funds for Ukrainian reconstruction and defense. Joint training missions by

NATO countries (Poland, UK, Canada, etc.) have prepared thousands of Ukrainian troops. Although not a “sanction”, this bolsters Ukraine’s capacity to push back.

- **International isolations:** Russia has been suspended or expelled from many forums. The Council of Europe revoked Russia’s voting rights in 2022, leading to its departure. International sports and culture bodies banned Russian participants. The UNGA has routinely voted against Russian membership on thematic committees. These symbolic actions further cut Russia off from the international community.

Collectively, these measures aim to pressure Russia economically, politically, and militarily. Analysts estimate they have deprived Russia of a substantial portion of its war funding and signaled that aggression will incur heavy costs^[12]. However, debates continue over the optimal pace and scope of sanctions (some worry about retaliation, others push for tightening, e.g. on secondary sanctions to punish third countries dealing with Russia^[48]). As of 2026, the embargoes and freezes remain in place with periodic renewals (EU sanctions have been extended every six months since 2014, most recently into 2025^{[49][50]}).

8. Global Impact

The Russia–Ukraine war has had far-reaching economic and geopolitical effects worldwide:

- **Energy markets:** Europe’s pivot from Russian oil and gas reshaped global energy flows. In 2022–23, cuts in Russian supply helped push global oil prices near \$130/barrel before moderating. Europe accelerated importing LNG from the U.S. and Middle East^[15]. Russia turned to Asian buyers (China and India) for its oil, often at discounts. The EU’s decision to ban pipeline gas by 2026^[51] and to phase out Russian oil by 2027^[40] signals a permanent shift. This diversification has increased investment in renewables and new pipelines (e.g. Southern Gas Corridor from Azerbaijan).
- **Food and agriculture:** Ukraine is a major exporter of wheat, corn, and vegetable oils. The 2022 invasion and initial naval blockade cut those exports sharply, contributing to a spike in global food prices (the UN called it a driver of a global food crisis^[16]). The Istanbul Grain Initiative temporarily relieved pressure (allowing ~25 million tons of grain by end-2023^[52]), but its collapse in mid-2023 and the wide-scale destruction of Ukrainian farmland have kept global grain markets tense. Countries in Africa and the Middle East that relied on cheap Ukrainian wheat faced shortages and had to find alternatives. Fertilizer exports (Ukraine and Russia both large suppliers) were also disrupted, which could affect future harvests.

- ***Inflation and economic knock-on:*** Energy and food price rises fed global inflation trends in 2022–2024. Many central banks cited the war as a cause of higher import costs. Emerging markets felt particular strain: higher debt servicing and currency pressure were exacerbated by war-related shocks. The IMF and World Bank provided emergency financing to vulnerable countries (e.g. under the IMF’s Resilience and Sustainability Trust).
- ***Developing world responses:*** Many Global South countries adopted neutral or ambivalent stances. In votes at the UN, dozens of states (35 abstained on the March 2022 resolution^[20]) hesitated to condemn Russia, wary of repercussions or aligned interests. China remained Russia’s key diplomatic partner; while it called publicly for dialogue (see Reuters quoting China’s support for extending the grain deal^[42]), it has not joined sanctions and in 2023 surpassed the EU as Russia’s top export market. India expanded imports of Russian oil and military equipment. Several developing countries (e.g. in Africa and Asia) leveraged both Western and Russian ties for economic aid or military purchases, complicating a simple East-West narrative.
- ***Geopolitical realignments:*** The war prompted shifts in alliances and security doctrines. NATO’s expansion (Finland, Sweden) and deeper EU defense collaboration (permanent joint structures and a proposed “European Defense Union”) mark a new era of European security integration. The conflict has also accelerated talk of “democratic” coalitions to counter authoritarian influence (e.g. France’s D10 concept, which gained visibility with US involvement in Geneva talks^[53]). Meanwhile, Russia has drawn closer to non-West partners (notably China, with whom it conducts joint exercises and trade) and sought alternative international forums (e.g. reviving the BRICS summit in 2022). Energy and climate policy have been reshaped: Europe’s green energy investment surged to reduce dependence on Russian hydrocarbons.
- ***International norms:*** The precedent of one major power invading another has unsettled global security assumptions. Nations in regions like East Asia (e.g. Japan, South Korea) and the Middle East have watched closely for implications on their own territorial disputes or alliances. The UN Charter’s prohibitions are under strain, prompting renewed debate on collective security. The war has underscored debates in international law on intervention, sovereignty, and responsibility to protect.

In sum, the Russia–Ukraine war has disrupted world markets and politics far beyond Eastern Europe. While sanctions have curtailed Russian influence to some extent, they have also contributed to short-term price volatility globally. The conflict’s wider legacy may be a more

bifurcated international system, with Western institutions more cohesive against aggression, and an array of countries recalibrating their foreign policies to navigate between Moscow and Washington.

Sources: This analysis draws on official documents (e.g. Putin’s speeches^{[25][5]}, NATO and EU statements^{[2][13]}), UN and NGO reports (UNHCR displacement data^[10], UN casualty tallies^[7]), legal documents (ICJ orders^[21], ICC warrants^[22]), and expert studies (think-tank reports on war motives^{[3][6]}). Data are taken from monitoring sources (World Bank reconstruction needs^[9], Council on Foreign Relations aid tallies^[11], EU and UK sanction databases^{[12][37]}, etc.). All facts are grounded in cited, reputable sources to ensure a comprehensive, evidence-based account.

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