



## Analyzing Russia-Ukraine war: The context, evolution, and global economic-cum-institutional implications

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### Abstract:

The Russia-Ukraine war is one of the significant geopolitical crises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with far-reaching political, social, and economic consequences. It begins with the legacy of the Cold War, highlighting the impact of NATO enlargement on shaping Russia's perceptions of security. It examines President Putin's strategic motives, based on nationalism, fear of NATO expansion toward Russian-speaking regions, and attempts to reaffirm Moscow's regional power. This study examines political, military, and economic aspects of the Russia-Ukraine war for both countries and the global world order. Ukraine has suffered vast displacement, infrastructure damage, and long-term losses of investment and trade, whereas Russia has been hit by sanctions, shrinking exports, and currency devaluation. The war has disrupted global food and energy supplies, exacerbated inflation, and rattled supply chains. Mediation by international bodies, such as the UN and the EU, has been largely ineffective. Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that the conflict is not merely a regional battle but also an economic one, reshaping global markets and altering political relations between countries. Sustained diplomatic engagement and strong international cooperation will be necessary to achieve lasting peace, and one cannot ignore the humanitarian and economic elements at stake.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the enduring characteristics of civilizational history has been war, and its profound impact on social, economic, and international systems for centuries. According to the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*, it is estimated that, to date, the world has witnessed 14,513 wars, resulting in the deaths of approximately 2,650 billion people over the last 5,500 years. Each was initiated for distinct reasons and led to different outcomes, yet together they suggest that war has played a central role in the construction of an international order. The demise of the Cold War system in the early 1990s ushered in a new phase of optimism, characterized by a “new world order” of liberal democracy, economic globalization, and relative peace among the major European powers ( Fukuyama, 2015). And yet the direction of post-Cold War geopolitics has confirmed that the end of ideological bipolarity does not mean that the springs of conflict have been removed. The most notable recent instance is the Russian-Ukrainian war, which commenced in 2014 with the Russian annexation of Crimea and became a full-blown invasion in February 2022. This is a war with the greatest implications for global security, the world economy, and, indeed, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the emergence of fifteen sovereign states, some of which then sought integration into Western political, security, and economic organizations. For Poland, the Baltic states, and ultimately other nations of Central and Eastern Europe, NATO was seen as a security assurance against future aggression; EU membership carried promises of democratization and modernization (Riste, 2001). From Moscow’s point of view, however, NATO expansion one after another, especially since Soviet leaders in the early 1990s were promised that the alliance would not “move an inch eastward,” was tantamount to encirclement and degradation of the Russian sphere of influence. This sense of strategic sideline-straddling was especially acute with respect to Ukraine, a nation historically, culturally, and strategically intertwined with Russia (Wintour, 2022.). The background and history of the war are complex and disputed. Geopolitically, the eastward expansion of NATO following the end of the Cold War is frequently presented as a cause of insecurity and bitterness to Russia (Goldgeier, 2019). Through a historical and cultural lens, Russian leadership (in particular under Vladimir Putin) has cast doubt on Ukraine’s independence as a sovereign state, treating it instead as an intrinsic part of Russia’s national identity (Kas’ianov, 2022). The economics and domestic policy are among the driving forces of this war, with Russia’s desire to control essential government routes or Ukraine's fertile arable land, as well as the Kremlin's use of nationalism for internal stabilization (Abay et al., 2023).

The consequences of the war aren’t limited to soldiers in combat. The price tag for Ukraine has been devastating, with tens of thousands of dead, millions displaced, much of the infrastructure destroyed, and an economy that contracted by more than 30 percent in 2022 alone (RAND, 2023). In its approach to energy dependence, the war in Europe has accelerated a process of re-evaluation that had already been underway and prompted an extraordinary diversification away from Russian gas, as well as a renewed focus on renewable energy and strategic autonomy

(European Commission. (n.d.). The interruptions in grain exports from Ukraine and Russia have exacerbated food insecurity, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. More broadly, for the international order, the conflict has amplified concerns about the fragile foundation of post-Cold War security arrangements and the brittle multilateral institutions, as well as the risk of nuclear brinkmanship (Al-Saidi, 2023).

Therefore, the central challenge of this research is the absence of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary narrative of the Russo-Ukrainian War that links its historical origins, geopolitical determinants, and global economic and humanitarian implications. Despite substantial scholarly and policy interest in the Russo-Ukrainian War, important aspects of its multidimensionality remain poorly understood, as the available literature is largely concentrated on the immediate geopolitical and military dimensions, as well as the humanitarian crisis and human rights abuses. This paper aims to examine the causes of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, develop arguments for each side's current stance, and assess the impact of the conflict on global economies. Additionally, it will investigate possible solutions and the organizations involved in the effort to stop this dreadful war. This investigation contributes several points to debates over the academic and policy implications of Russia's war against Ukraine:

- It offers a historical analysis of the war, placing it in the wider historical context of post-Cold War world politics, particularly as a consequence of NATO's expansion and Russia's ostracism.
- It adds relevance to economic research through an analysis of global spillover effects from the conflict, notably within energy security and food supply chains, as well as sanctions regimes.
- Considering the narrow and regional interpretations, this study shows the interconnectedness of the war with global markets, almost immediately turning it from a regional conflict in Eastern Europe into systemic shocks that have repercussions for countries across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.
- This study contributes to the role of international institutions and critically examines their response to dealing with the Russia-Ukraine war.

## **2. Russian rationale behind the invasion**

It is essential to recall that, before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was a member of the Soviet Union. Ukraine is often portrayed as divided into two spheres of influence, much as Germany was during the Cold War. It is divided between the ethnically Russian-speaking East and the ethnically Ukrainian-speaking West. These two individuals represent the conflict between those who want to entirely sever links with Russia and ethnic Ukrainians who want Ukraine to be an independent country, but also want to maintain ties with Russia. Viktor Yanukovich, who was pro-Russian, had rejected a plan in 2013 for Ukraine to establish deeper links with the EU. Viktor Yanukovich's rejection of the EU deal prompted residents of Kyiv to

take to the streets. Special security officers in Kiev had to put down irate protesters who were throwing rocks and other items at the police. A few weeks later, Yanukovich himself fled, calling the anti-Russian demonstrations a coup that claimed 82 lives in all. When a new administration was established, however, Putin became concerned that he would lose control of Crimea and Ukraine. As a result, he supported separatist insurgents in eastern Ukraine. A referendum was held for Ukrainians to vote on whether they wanted to stay in Ukraine or secede and become a part of Russia. According to Forbes, 123% of eligible voters participated, with 96.77% supporting Ukraine's triumph (Desnick, n.d.). The vote in Crimea was allegedly rigged to boost pro-Russian voting. Furthermore, armed forces presiding over the polling created widespread intimidation, raising further concerns about the authenticity of the vote. Following the referendum, Russia legally annexed Crimea and invaded, capturing government buildings and donning uniforms with no apparent insignia. Putin's actions have been met with international economic penalties and international criticism, and the annexation is a breach of international law and Ukraine's sovereignty. The invasion of Crimea was a careful calculation by Putin to keep himself in power, as his approval ratings had decreased in the years prior, and the DW states that the invasion helped boost “his approval ratings from 60 to over 80 percent” (Goncharenko, 2019).

The rationale for Putin's invasion of Crimea is now obvious. There is no doubt that Ukraine has been seeking to join NATO, has repeatedly sought full membership, and has been forging stronger links with the EU. Because NATO members Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania lie near the Russian border and bring democracy within reach of the Russian people, Putin worried that Ukraine would join the alliance. Since the former Sphere of Influence had vanished, Putin believed he would lose further control over both his people and other nations, such as Ukraine. Putin feared that Russia was becoming weak and wanted to show that Russia is still a world power, as he disliked that NATO had invaded and taken over Russia's sphere of influence. As The Guardian wrote, “it is clear that the outside world has consistently misread him” (Wintour, 2022). Putin has continuously proved that he will fight back against any encroachment or threats against Russia's stability and dominance, which makes him one of the most dangerous men in the world currently. One thing remains clear: Putin has increasingly become more dangerous and unpredictable, and, as Russia continues to lose control over its surrounding nations, Putin will take more drastic and destructive measures.

### **3. Russo-Ukrainian War as an economic phenomenon**

Since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and fighting intensified in eastern Ukraine, the economy has faced significant trade threats, disrupted industrial production, and a volatile investment climate. According to a CNN report, it was reported in 2025 that the conflict had caused humanitarian crises, with over 1 million Russian military casualties and 400,000 Ukrainian casualties (CNN, 2025). The Russo-Ukrainian War has had a significant economic impact, given that millions of people have been displaced, billions of dollars have been spent on

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damages, and Ukraine is currently experiencing a humanitarian catastrophe, to mention a small number of its far-reaching impacts (Sociálních Věd & Konopásek, n.d.).

Ukraine's economy could face long-term losses of \$524 billion, encompassing the total cost of reconstruction and recovery in Ukraine (World Bank et al., 2022, n.d.). There are several causes, including a sharp decline in foreign investment in Ukraine and a drop in overall economic activity due to the conflict. This is mostly because of disruptions brought on by military engagements and subsequent terrorist assaults against companies and employees. Companies have either completely left the nation or severely reduced their activities due to these instances. Due to security concerns arising from the conflict, customs inspections have become routine at Ukrainian borders with Russia and other nations; this has complicated the movement of commodities between different regions of Ukraine and hindered economic relations between surrounding nations (Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, n.d.). Additionally, the conflict has negatively impacted Russia's economy and international reputation, affecting not only large firms but also small businesses and the general public. Russia's exports have fallen by more than 50% since 2014, while Ukraine's GDP has decreased by 16% (Liadze et al., 2023).

### **3.1. Prospects and impact of war on the Ukrainian economy**

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the start of the conflict in the Donbas, Ukraine has experienced major economic turmoil marked by disrupted trade regimes, shrinking industrial output, and an increasingly unattractive investment environment. Such pressures have increased significantly following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, resulting in widespread infrastructure destruction, domestic displacement of millions of residents, and a severe contraction across a range of economic sectors (World Bank, 2025). Among the war's most severe consequences is its adverse impact on Ukraine's industrial and agricultural output, which underpins its national economy. The areas of Donbas and Luhansk, historically significant for coal mining, metallurgy, and heavy industry in general, have been hit hard by occupation, bombardments, and long-term warfare. The impact has been a precipitous drop in industrial output: Industrial production in 2023 fell by 36.9% in 2022, with a larger decline of 41.2% in the processing sector (Kolishnichenko, n.d.). Before the war, Ukraine was the world's fifth-largest wheat exporter and the fourth-largest corn exporter, a significant contributor to global food security (Janzen & Zulauf, 2023). But Russian blockades of Black Sea ports, along with the destruction of logistical networks and farmland, nearly halved grain exports in 2022.

The realignment of trade has further complicated Ukraine's economic prospects. Over time, Ukraine's economy remained heavily dependent on trade with Russia. Hence, geopolitical animosity and Western economic sanctions against Russia have prompted Kyiv to shift its economy toward the European Union. Although the EU has become Ukraine's key export destination, representing more than 63% of total exports in 2022, this re-orientation has been compounded by war-induced uncertainties as well as supply chain disruptions and

infrastructural devastation (Zubko, 2024). Foreign direct investment (FDI) has also declined significantly due to rising security risks, with an estimated 25% drop in FDI inflows in 2024, indicating a 17% decline from pre-war stock levels, which further erodes the long-term growth potential.

The increasing damage to energy infrastructure is another serious concern. Missile attacks on Ukraine's power plants, transmission lines, and fuel depots by Russia and its invading elements have disrupted electricity supply to the war-torn country, exacerbating energy shortages and production bottlenecks. Such damage to the human-built environment is estimated at over \$10 billion in the energy sector alone, resulting in adverse impacts on industrial productivity and household welfare (Cilliers, 2023). Complementing inflationary pressures, consumer prices rose by more than 25 percent in 2022, and currency fluctuations and food shocks have exacerbated the cycle of recession. The Ukrainian economy contracted by approximately 45% in 2022, one of the most severe recessions in modern times, according to the World Bank report (World Bank, 2022). Furthermore, the financial burden of reconstruction exacerbates Ukraine's bleak prospects. Initial estimates by the World Bank indicate that the costs of post-war reconstruction could exceed \$524 billion, approximately 2.5 times Ukraine's pre-war GDP (World Bank, 2022). Satisfying these needs will depend on unprecedented levels of international assistance, soft loans, and multilateral cooperation. Already, Ukraine is dependent upon external assistance; the IMF provided a \$15.6 billion loan package in March 2023 as part of an overall financial assistance package of \$115 billion promised by the country's international supporters (IMF, n.d.). Therefore, without systematic support from abroad and without implementing a comprehensive recovery and structural reform program, Ukraine is likely to suffer long-term economic debilitation, exacerbating the underlying weaknesses in the global economy. However, Ukraine's recovery trajectory will also depend on the length and severity of the war, as well as on how quickly security is restored and how effective post-war reconstruction proves to be.

### **3.2. Prospects and impact of war on the Russian economy**

The Russian economy has been similarly heavily impacted by the Russo-Ukrainian war. Initially, Russia's dominance in energy and strategic reserves has allowed it to withstand external shocks; however, combined with reduced trade, severe large-scale sanctions, and structural weaknesses, it has pushed the country into severe economic distress. As a result of these decreases, Russia's GDP has fallen by almost five percent since 2014 (Bayramov & Islamli, 1 C.E.). The influence of energy dependence on the Russian economy's path has been especially crucial. Russia, being a hydrocarbon-dependent economy, has traditionally derived over 30% to 50% of the federal budget revenues from oil and gas (Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, n.d.). Although sky-high energy prices around the world, in the wake of the 2022 invasion, temporarily inflated Russia's fiscal revenues, Western sanctions and a European Union embargo on seaborne crude have since greatly restricted its access to key markets. The G7's cap on oil prices, introduced in December 2022, also limited Russia's ability to build

foreign currency reserves. However, according to the IEA, Russian oil export revenues decreased by about 36% in 2023 compared with the previous year, posing a challenge to the sustainability of its fiscal model (International Energy Agency, 2023). Furthermore, Ongoing inflationary pressures, combined with an increasingly weak Ruble, which fell by over 40% against the U.S. dollar in 2022, have reduced consumer buying power and led to declining living standards, indicating that the Ruble has lost nearly half of its value (Dallasfed.Org, n.d.). According to the World Bank, 25% of households experienced a decline in their incomes, while for 20% of households, the income decline was 10%, deepening poverty and inequality at the bottom end of society (Re: Russia, n.d.).

Sanctions have also opened a “technology gap” with potentially long-lasting implications for the Russian industry. Control over the import of high-end chips, machinery, and aircraft accessories has weakened industrial modernization and innovation capabilities. Industries such as the automotive and aerospace industries, which rely largely on Western advanced technology, saw production falls that exceeded 60% in 2022 and 24% in 2023 (Tadviser, n.d.). Meanwhile, the exit of multinational firms from Russia, estimated to be at least 1,000 in number by Yale CELI, has led to extensive job losses, weakened competition, and lower foreign direct investment inflows (Yale School of Management, 2022). This flight of capital, cushioned by a brain drain, has compounded the damage to Russia’s long-run economic prospects.

Despite its many failures, Russia has sought relief from the crisis by redirecting its focus to Asian markets, including China and India. Bilateral transactions between China grew by over 29.3% in 2022 and 38.7% in 2023, with Chinese companies filling the void left by Western vendors of electronics, automobiles, and consumer goods (bne IntelliNews, 2025), (Global Times, 2023). Therefore, the combination of declining energy revenues, cutbacks in foreign investment, technological isolation, and demographic headwinds suggests an extended period of stagnation rather than recovery. In the absence of significant diversification, structural reform, and access to cutting-edge technology, Russia risks being trapped on a trajectory of economic stagnation that will undermine its geopolitical aspirations.

### **3.3. The impact on global economies**

One of the most concerning supply chain issues arising from the Russia-Ukraine war is the scarcity of food, particularly in low-income countries in Africa. Approximately 75% of the world’s sunflower oil supply, over a third of the world’s wheat production, and a quarter of the world’s barley production are produced in Ukraine and Russia (Γαλάνη & Galani, 2022). Ukrainian farmers are unable to work their fields due to Russian sanctions, which are creating a perfect storm that calls for new forms of government and business collaboration to avert a humanitarian catastrophe (Ben Hassen & El Bilali, 2022). The war’s knock-on effects are endangering the world’s supply of essential foods, such as wheat, and raising the possibility of a global famine. A sharp rise in inflation has accompanied the war in Ukraine, driven by rising costs for food, energy, and other commodities. Inflation had already been rising throughout

2021 due to increased demand driven by the economic recovery and the continuous disruption of various value chains (Prohorovs, 2022). Since food and transportation account for a sizable portion of their consumption costs, the poorest Africans are most affected.

The war has severely disrupted international food supply lines, particularly those of cereals and oilseeds. Russia and Ukraine are the world's largest suppliers of wheat, maize, and sunflower oil, providing nearly 30%, approximately 20%, and more than 75% of global exports, respectively (Paulson et al., 2022). These exports have been restricted by the war, which has included Black Sea port blockades, devastated farmlands, and disrupted logistics. The U.N. World Food Program (2023) reports that the export collapse has created a "global hunger crisis," particularly severe in North Africa and the Middle East. There were also steep price surges in countries like Egypt and Lebanon, which import more than half of their wheat from the Black Sea region. In addition, volatility in grain markets has increased risks for low-income African countries, including Somalia, Sudan, and Ethiopia, where food security was already declining due to droughts and climate shocks. The war's worldwide impact on agricultural markets is not confined to cereal markets: the disruption of fertilizer exports from Russia and Belarus has also put food production in distant locations under pressure, leading to declining yields and higher input costs (Zhang et al., 2023). It has transformed the war into a global food emergency of tremendous humanitarian significance.

Among the markets hit hardest and most directly by the conflict are energy. Russia is one of the world's largest oil and natural gas exporters, and prior to the invasion, it supplied more than 40 percent of Europe's natural gas. Western sanctions and Moscow's own export restrictions have caused significant disruptions to the energy supply, resulting in sharp price increases. The International Monetary Fund documented that global energy prices increased by more than 40% in the months following the invasion, and this rise was a major driving force behind inflation in both developed and developing regions (IMF Annual Report, 2023). Furthermore, the war has interrupted the flow of raw materials key to manufacturing around the globe. Ukraine is a significant supplier of neon gas, which is required for semiconductor production, and Russia serves as a primary producer of nickel, palladium, and aluminum. Such shortages have caused disruptions in both the automotive and electronics industries (Alper, 2023). Car manufacturers in Europe and Asia have suffered steep declines in production due to shortages of wiring harnesses, steel, and rare metals from the region. The urgency of diversifying supply chains has hastened a move toward regionalization and reshoring of production, altering global trade dynamics in ways that could outlast the conflict.

#### **4. Addressing the conflict: role of international organizations**

The Russia–Ukraine War has tested the ability of multilateral bodies to deter aggression, protect civilians, and maintain stability in the international system. These efforts have involved a broad range of international actors, financial institutions, humanitarian organizations, and ad hoc coalitions, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

#### 4.1. United Nations: mandates, politics, and humanitarian action

The United Nations (UN) has played a central role in the international diplomatic, political, and humanitarian response to the Russia–Ukraine war. But its history has been one of stark disparity between ambitious mandates and operational constraints. Under the UN Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. However, in the war between Russia and Ukraine, this mandate has been weakened significantly due to the veto power of Russia, which is one of its permanent members involved in the conflict. When the Council sought to adopt resolutions in February 2022 opposing Russia’s intervention, Moscow vetoed them, effectively preventing the body from taking collective enforcement measures (United Nation, 2022). That paralysis has laid bare the built-in flaw of the veto system, because when a permanent member itself is the aggressor, the institution created to maintain global peace becomes paralyzed. The Council instead confined itself to behind-the-scenes discussions and non-committal statements, highlighting the political constraints that restrain international law enforcement mechanisms (Murithi, 2022).

In the absence of Security Council action, the UN General Assembly (GA) emerged as a key global platform for condemnation and solidarity. The “Uniting for Peace” procedure was invoked, and the GA held an emergency special session, which adopted a Resolution in March 2022 that overwhelmingly rebuked Russia’s aggression and called for a withdrawal of its forces from Ukraine (United Nation, 2025). Although such resolutions had strong symbolic and moral value, they were non-binding. However, even without direct enforcement, the GA demonstrated the international community’s shared resolve against the prohibited use of force and its ability to maintain political pressure on Russia. Even with the Council paralyzed politically, UN agencies and offices have continued to work on humanitarian fronts. OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and other agencies have scaled up relief operations inside Ukraine and in neighboring host countries, including delivering food, shelter, protection, and health assistance, as well as tracking displacement and humanitarian needs (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.).

Thus, the U.N.’s role in the Ukraine war mirrors broader structural limitations that go well beyond this particular conflict. Two key limitations stand out:

- **The Veto Impasse:** The veto power of the five permanent members, especially when exercised by a defiant state, is eroding the credibility and legitimacy of the Security Council. This has sparked a fresh round of arguments about the necessity for reform of the Security Council, although such reform is politically impossible due to vested interests (Okada, 2023).
- **Operational Limitations in Warzones:** Ongoing fighting, disputed areas, and security risks have severely limited humanitarian access to Ukraine. UN relief efforts rely on negotiated deals with warring parties, safe humanitarian routes, and ongoing

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international funding. Delivery at scale has been patchy and highly dependent on conditions (Lepskiy & Lepska, 2023).

#### **4.2. The European Union: sanctions, aid, and political leadership**

The European Union (EU) has played a key role in responding to the political, economic, and humanitarian fallout of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Although NATO has borne the brunt of the security-military dimension of this conflict, it is up to the EU to utilize its institutional power, economic weight, and political integration tools to ensure that Russia pays as well as to ensure that Ukraine withstands. This twofold policy, punitive vis-à-vis Moscow and supportive of Kiev, reflects the EU's effort to combine coercive diplomacy with constructive state-building, and thereby to assert itself as a political, economic, and normative force in a developing crisis (Shahidani & Azin, 2024).

The EU has brought in several waves of sanctions against Russia's financial system, trade flows, technology access, and political elites since the start of the Crimea crisis in 2014 and more intensively following a full-scale February 2022 invasion. Measures were to be phased in until 2024-25, and they would build to include freezing the assets of Russian banks and keeping vital institutions out of the SWIFT payment system; banning exports of high technology; restricting imports from Russia, including coal, oil, and steel; and taking aim at oligarchs by stripping them of their ability to travel abroad or seizing properties (European Commission, n.d.). These sanctions were not only meant to hinder Russia's ability to feed its war machine but also to send a symbolic message of political isolation, an effort to delegitimize Moscow on the world stage. The sanctions regime is based on the EU's wider foreign policy strategy of conditionality and deterrence, by which it attempts to effect behavioral change through economic rather than direct military means. However, their effectiveness remains contested (Jakupec, 2025). In doing so, they have reduced Russia's access to Western technologies and financing, but also accelerated Moscow's pivot eastwards, where its growing cooperation with non-Western powers, such as China, India, and Iran, has become most urgent in the wake of increased sanctions pressure. So, while symbolic, their imposition (or lack thereof) betrays the EU's ability to act in unison and serves as a reminder of the limits of economic compulsion in a multipolar world (Jakupec, 2025).

Although it has been highly involved, the EU's approach has encountered several limitations. Its decision-making structure is fundamentally flawed, with any of the 27 member-states having a veto over foreign policy. This has frequently hindered the acceptance of packages of sanctions or humanitarian pledges, as divisions within the bloc, particularly between Western and Eastern member states, have widened regarding the extent and escalation of punitive action (Rosefielde & Bernstam, 2024). Russia has also been able to use the weapon selectively; for example, countries that rely heavily on Russian energy supplies (like Hungary) have resisted some embargoes, adding another layer of complexity to the E.U.'s unity (OSW Center for Eastern Studies, n.d.). Sanctions have also imposed concrete costs on European economies.

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The sudden surge in energy prices, inflationary pressure, and supply chain disruptions has examined the political efficacy of member states and triggered misgivings about the long-term viability of EU policies. Public unhappiness in member states, especially among susceptible households hit by soaring energy and food prices, threatens to undermine agreement on enforcing sanctions (Nguyen et al., 2022). The EU is therefore tasked with a difficult balancing act: maintaining political cohesion while dampening the domestic socio-economic consequences of its foreign policies.

### **4.3. NATO: deterrence, assurance, and the boundaries of collective defense**

NATO's role in the Russo-Ukrainian War has been to maintain a non-provocative yet visible stance against Russia. Unlike the EU, which employed economic and political levers, however, NATO's primary tool was military deterrence and reassurance to its member countries. Since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, and especially after the full-scale invasion in February 2022, NATO has faced the challenge of both deterring Russian aggression credibly while not getting involved in a direct escalation to all-out war (Jones & Daniels, 2025). Its response is, then, both the strengths and shortcomings of collective security in a nuclearized multipolar world.

After Russia seized Crimea, NATO began a slow but steady turn in its posture of forces. In 2016, the Alliance established an Enhanced Forward Presence in Eastern Europe by stationing multinational battlegroups in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. They were not offensive battle groups, but tripwire forces intended to convey the Allies' commitment and prevent Russian forces from entering the NATO homeland. These efforts continued to expand after February 2022, with more battlegroups being built up in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary, and NATO put its Response Force on a higher level of alert. The commitment to extended-range missile defense, augmented air policing missions, and rotational exercises also solidified this deterrent architecture (BBC News, n.d.). There were two reasons for these deployments. First, they wanted to assure Eastern European allies, many of whom have borders or historical connections to Russia, that NATO remained committed to its defense obligations. Second, they sought to muddy the Russians' strategic thinking by making a Russian assault on a NATO member automatically trigger a response with more military power than the attacker faced in that country, thereby encouraging the fight against collective-defense Article 5 (Kiesewetter & Zielke, 2016).

While NATO has stopped short of deploying combat forces to Ukraine, it has provided significant military support within the limits set by Ukraine's non-membership. This assistance has taken various forms, including intelligence sharing, arranging the delivery of arms, training missions, and logistical support for Ukrainian forces (Pszczel, 2024). Before 2022, NATO had already supported Ukraine in reinforcing its defense institutions, preparing its command structures, and enhancing cyber defense through the Comprehensive Assistance Package. Following the escalation, these forces were intensified, with NATO alliance countries

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coordinating the largest-ever supplies of advanced weaponry, including anti-aircraft guns and missile launchers, armored vehicles, and eventually state-of-the-art tanks and long-range precision munitions (Eastern European and Transatlantic Network, n.d.). Yet both remain politically separate from Article 5 responsibilities. NATO has so far refrained from taking part in direct combat, aware that this could be seen as an escalation by Russia, which might involve the Alliance in a fight against a nuclear-armed state. So, NATO's tightrope walk has been one of providing Ukraine with full material and institutional support while marking the absolute limits to collective defense.

At the core of NATO's response is a fundamental limit to Article 5: collective defense strictly applies to member states, not partners like Ukraine. This has informed NATO's caution, in law and politics, against taking sides. Even as it has given Iraq tons of material assistance, the Alliance repeatedly declares that it is "not a party to the conflict". Such a pose may help contain risks of escalation, particularly with Russia casting NATO support as Western aggression and engaging in nuclear saber-rattling again and again (Donaldson, 2017). But that restraint has also sparked arguments about credibility and deterrence. Some observers argue that NATO's refusal to intervene directly may only embolden Moscow, as it could imply that acts of aggression toward non-members will not elicit a strong collective military response (Stewart, 2022). Others argue that NATO's calibrated response is the prudent one, so as not to blunder into a wider war poking at the structure of Euro-Atlantic relations altogether.

## 5. Conclusion

The war in Ukraine is one of the largest and most serious geopolitical conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, undermining the political system, international law, and global socioeconomic stability. This proposed study examines the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, its causes, and the roots of these issues, which are rooted in Cold War legacies, NATO's eastward expansion, and Russia's determination to reassert its sphere of influence. The Russo-Ukrainian War had a significant impact on the international economy, as well as the economies of both countries. The economy of Ukraine has suffered significantly because of the conflict, while Russia has been affected by lower oil prices and the effects of international sanctions. At the same time, the global conflict has contributed to inflationary pressures, disrupted food and energy supply chains, and reshaped trade relations. Nations reliant on Ukrainian grain and Russian gas, whether in Africa, South Asia, or Europe, have also been exposed to such vulnerabilities, highlighting the extent of modern economies' interconnections. These ripple effects make it evident that the Russo-Ukrainian war is not merely a local conflict, but a systemic crisis with far-reaching repercussions for global governance, multilateralism, and international security. Additionally, trade volume between the two countries has also declined significantly. Although foreign aid has provided some relief, Ukraine still has a long way to go before its economy can fully recover. Foreign organizations must make significant contributions to the endeavor to end the bloodshed and restore peace to the region. The disagreement between Russia and Ukraine

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must be resolved for the economies of both countries, as well as the global economy, to grow and remain stable.

In policy terms, this confrontation highlights three pressing concerns. The first concern is the need for Ukraine-led humanitarian and recovery frameworks that are both comprehensive and coordinated with those of Western allies and international financial institutions, aiming to circumvent a prolonged period of indebtedness. The second concern is that the international community needs to consider alternative approaches to diplomacy that balance pressure through sanctions with credible offers of incentives for de-escalation to prevent a new round of violence, while the third concern is that institutionalized responses are needed to safeguard global food and energy security and protect vulnerable countries from the worst impacts of geopolitical crises. Furthermore, this study highlights new areas that suggest academia should further examine the long-term implications of sanctions on Russia's economic and political development, as well as the viability of Western military and financial assistance to Ukraine, beyond their implications for global governance and multipolarity in general. Therefore, the Russo-Ukrainian war is not only an example of the limited function of any bilateral peace process but also a referendum on the capacity of the international system, interdependent global economies, and international organizations to maintain peace and security.

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