

# **THE RESPONSE OF WESTERN STATES TOWARDS THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT**

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## **Abstract**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has been one of the most significant issues in global politics since 2014. The strategic location of Ukraine defines the roots of conflict that has shaped twofold understanding of the conflict. One is the Russian viewpoint of the conflict that dominates the cause of Russian invasion. On the other hand, there is a western perspective to understand the conflict that counters Russian policies towards Ukraine. The focus of the research paper is to understand the role of west in support of Ukraine against Russia. The situation in Ukraine has turned into proxy war, with several factions in the region receiving backing from both Russia and the West. This exploratory and analytical study has also delved into the strained relations between Russia and Western nations, which have been significantly affected by the prolonged proxy conflict in eastern Ukraine. This ongoing conflict has resulted in both countries experiencing continuous instability.

**Keywords:** Donetask, Luhansak, Crimea, Political instability, & Minsk Agreement

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**Introduction:**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has been framed as a geo-political contestation between major players of international relations. Ukraine and the western countries conceive it as a clash between Russian tyranny and the western democratic values and freedom. On the other hand, Russia consider it as a clash to preserve Russian territorial security and the attempt of the west to imbalance the security equation of the region. The conflict started with the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014, after the ouster of its anti-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich. The conflict then escalated and expanded into eastern Ukraine, resulting in an anti-Russian separatist movement in Donetsk and Luhansk regions that eventually led to a full-scale armed conflict.

Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, 2022, with 200,000 Russian soldiers entered the Ukrainian territory from the north of (Belarus), south of (Crimea), and east of (Russia). Moscow took a swift control of main city centers, including the capital Kyiv. The first week of the war prompted the illegal imprisonment of thousands of anti-war protesters all around Russia. Losing long-term control over Ukraine and allowing it to lean towards the West was seen by many nations as a significant blow to Russia's international standing. Putin characterized the escalating confrontation with Ukraine in 2022 as a part of a greater conflict with Western forces, that he believed were trying to destroy Russia. Therefore, the existing ideological and political perception towards each other were so strong between Russians and the west that it has an overwhelm influence on their security and strategic thought.

From a western standpoint, Ukraine is an important strategic partner in the region and has taken significant steps to modernize its military and enhance its capacity to work with NATO. The West<sup>1</sup> continues to support the restoration of Ukraine's national identity, territorial integrity and sovereignty. It opposes Russian claim of Crimea and other lands it has

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<sup>1</sup> According to Huntington, it includes the region of North America, South America and Western and Central Europe.

Hendrikson, Hollie. *Summary of "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order"*. <https://www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/huntington-clash> (accessed September 3, 2023).

Kapo, Adnan. *Mackinder: Who rules Eastern Europe rules the World*. February 8, 2021. <https://iges.ba/en/geopolitics/mackinder-who-rules-eastern-europe-rules-the-world/> (accessed October 5, 2023).

Nitoiu, Cristian. "Avoiding a New 'Cold War' The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis." 2016. [https://www.academia.edu/25830356/Avoiding\\_a\\_New\\_Cold\\_War\\_The\\_Future\\_of\\_EU\\_Russia\\_Relations\\_in\\_the\\_Context\\_of\\_the\\_Ukraine\\_Crisis](https://www.academia.edu/25830356/Avoiding_a_New_Cold_War_The_Future_of_EU_Russia_Relations_in_the_Context_of_the_Ukraine_Crisis) (accessed October 12, 2023).

seized militarily. The west supported the Minsk agreement<sup>2</sup> as a means of resolving the Donbas crisis before the 2022 invasion. The West and its allies have taken a number of measures to support Ukraine more and denounce Russia for its invasion in 2022. International sanctions on Russia now include a significant portion of its defense, banking, energy particularly oil and technology sectors along with the assets of influential oligarchs. Despite numerous attempts at discussions and ceasefires, the situation has had significant effects on the stability of the area, and international relations. The crucial question in this research is:

1. Does West have a predominant role in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict?
2. How the West responded the Russian Invasion in Ukraine?

### **Geopolitical Perspective of Russia-Ukraine Conflict:**

International politics is shaped by the states' geopolitical standing in the world order. A structural element that bends the power distribution among states is the permanence of the placements of states and geographical positions of the United States, Russia, and other major powers. Geographical factors are important because they are the most enduring in determining a state's foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> Ukraine is crucial for the United States both economically and strategically, due to its size as the second-largest nation in Europe and its proximity to Russia. The US's influence in Ukraine, therefore, has the potential to advance closer to Russia's borders in addition to opening up a sizable market for American goods. As a result, the United States sees Ukraine as a suitable location for extending its presence closer to Russia in keeping with its long-standing policy of strategic struggle against Russia. In addition, US intends to continue its post-cold war policy of extending influence in the former Soviet Republic by supporting their democratic regime and their admission in NATO.<sup>4</sup>

The West has strengthened naval cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine while also bolstering its presence in the Black Sea. In this context, the expansion of NATO

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<sup>2</sup> This agreement includes consist a series of international accords designed to bring an end to the Donbas conflict between armed Russian separatist groups and the Ukrainian army.

<sup>3</sup> Güner\*, Serdar Ş. "Geopolitics, Geography And The Ukrainian - Russian War." *TPQ*. August 22, 2022. <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/1153/geopolitics-geography-and-the-ukrainian-russian-war> (accessed August 3, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Hamid dorj, Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabai. "Ukraine's Geopolitical Role in the New American and Russian Confrontation." *International Quaterly of Geopolitics* 15, no. 54 (September 2019): 1-30. [http://Ukraine's Geopolitical Role in the New American and Russian Confrontation \(iag.ir\)](http://Ukraine's Geopolitical Role in the New American and Russian Confrontation (iag.ir)) (assessed August 7,2023)

membership, particularly Bulgaria and Romania's membership in 2004 and the color revolutions in Georgia (2003-2004) and Ukraine (2004-2006) bought more assertiveness in Russia regional foreign policy landscape. On the other hand, the West's long-term strategic objectives are to contain Russia and reinforce NATO. The Western allies have emphasized that upholding democracy and the UN Charter were their top priorities. Therefore, Black sea is considered as a pivot in the Euro-Atlantic Security by both the competing blocs.<sup>5</sup> Here, it is interesting to link the heartland hypothesis of Mackinder to understand the geopolitical significance of this region. According to Mackinder, a renowned sociologist in the West, whoever held power in Eastern Europe, often known as the Heartland, would rule the entire planet. Ukraine is tremendously important from a geopolitical and strategic standpoint for all the major world powers, especially for Russia. Therefore, overall US along with the major European countries have built a strong coercive diplomatic rhetoric against the Russian, resulting in a rigid diplomatic communication between both camps. Whereas for Russians, the presence of west in the form of NATO and pro-western regimes in the littoral states of Black Sea is a direct threat and interference in their traditional sphere of influence<sup>6</sup>.

**Map 1.1:** Mackinder: who rules the Eastern Europe rules the World



Source: Adan Kapo, Mackinder: Who rules Eastern Europe rules the World , 2021, <https://iges.ba/en/geopolitics/mackinder-who-rules-eastern-europe-rules-the-world/>

The armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine is also perceived as a power contestation between Russia and the United States and its NATO allies as a result of two interrelated

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<sup>5</sup> Derviş, Kemal. *What are the West's strategic goals in the Ukraine war?* August 29, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-are-the-wests-strategic-goals-in-the-ukraine-war/> (accessed July 10, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Boris Toucas, "The Geostrategic Importance of the Black Sea Region: A Brief History," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/geostrategic-importance-black-sea-region-brief-history>

forces. First is the threat to Russia's security posed by NATO's expansion, which goes against the agreements made after the unification of Germany along with the idea of indivisible security. During these years, Ukraine was perceived as a part of US plan to undermine a strategic foe, frustrate Eurasian integration, and maintain the Unipolar order that had been established with the fall of the Soviet-Union. It is evident that Russia has re-emerged as one of the major challenge to Western-centric global order. This discourse got further endorsement with Joe Biden's speech on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at Warsaw. He stated that, "Today's fighting in Kyiv and Mariupol and Kharkiv are the latest battle in a long struggle. Hungary, 1956. Poland, 1956, and then again 1981, Czechoslovakia, 1968<sup>7</sup>." He further explained Russian relationship with US as a struggle between democracy and autocracy and accused Russia of framing enlargement of NATO as a source of destabilizing Russia. Here, it is pertinent to note that an overall synthesis of western mainstream media gives an insight that they have completely omitted the factor of NATO enlargement as a driving force of Russian invasion in Ukraine. Rather, the mainstream media has put the sole responsibility of war on Russia. This narrative building is very significant in shaping a global perception about the war and framing Russia as an aggressor<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, West has a major role in articulating the conflict in Ukraine as a source of a long-term struggle and competition between Russia and the west. In this context, it is significant to highlight that the United States has played a leading role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict within the Western bloc whereas most of the European countries have followed the stance and response of the United States in this issue.

### **The Western Interest in Ukraine:**

Many American diplomats Henry Kissinger and the former Ambassador William Burns to Russia have cautioned that extending NATO to Ukraine might act as a trap for Russia. In February 2022 publication of German documents confirms that in 1990, Western nations gave Russia formal assurances opposing NATO expansion. However, NATO was able to disregard these guarantees due to Russia's submission following its debt default in 1998. NATO's objective changed under Clinton administration into an insufficient human rights and social justice policy. It was in 1999 when Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO.

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<sup>7</sup> Remarks by President Biden on the United Efforts of the Free World to Support the People of Ukraine, The White House, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2022, accessed at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/26/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-united-efforts-of-the-free-world-to-support-the-people-of-ukraine/>

<sup>8</sup> Florian Zollmann, "A war foretold: How Western mainstream news media omitted NATO eastward expansion as a contributing factor to Russia's 2022 invasion of the Ukraine," *Media, War and Conflict*, 2023, pp. 1-20, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/17506352231216908>

Then further seven nations from the former Soviet Union joined NATO in 2004. In this context, NATO's enlargement at the backyard of Russia has increased the security dilemma for Russians. In addition, the possible inclusion of Ukraine in the western camp would have significantly affected Russia's economic and geostrategic interest as well. Therefore, Russia bargained with the west very cautiously in the post-cold war period. From the western perspective, a robust and stable Ukraine is a pivotal counterbalance to Russia, forming the bedrock of what can be advocated as the new U.S. overarching strategy post the Cold War era. Therefore, in 1994, a consensus was reached in the Budapest Referendum between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia, stipulating that Ukraine's independence would be upheld in exchange for its commitment to disarmament. Two decades later, with the annexation of Crimea by Russian forces, the re-establishment and augmentation of Ukraine's sovereignty emerged as the central foreign policy goal for both the United States and the European Union. United States and its NATO allies significantly boosted their sanctions against Russia after 2022 invasion and provided Ukraine with more defense, economic, and humanitarian aid.

The leaders of the West have taken care to avoid taking any acts that they believe would intensify the conflict or otherwise exacerbate it, which in the worst-case scenario may pose a nuclear danger. Therefore, Western support to Ukraine is central in abstaining Russian expansion and influence in the region. For this, the preservation of norms of democracy, independence, liberty, and human rights are considered as solely defending the western style of living. Moreover, the war in Ukraine have also reinvigorated Euro-Atlantic states as a major political force in international relations. The restoration of Ukraine's territorial autonomy and unity remains a top priority for the United States. It categorically refutes Russia's claims on Crimea and other territories acquired by coercion.

Furthermore, on a tactical level, Russian defeat in Ukraine is a centerpiece in Western policy mainly because if Russia would win in Ukraine it would strengthen Russia to attack other states gaining NATO membership. From this point of view, the west considers it essential to support Ukraine on diplomatic, military, and economic front to deter Russia for future.

### **The Reaction of the West to Russian Assertive Regional Policy**

The political maneuvering of Putin in Crimea resulted in the Russian annexation of Crimea on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Later, on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014, Russian parliament ratified the annexation treaty and Crimea was integrated into Russia. This was a major event that consolidated Russia's position in Ukraine and subsequently Russian presence in the eastern Ukraine was a clear message that Russia would adhere to more coercive means to minimize

the presence and influence of NATO near its borders. In this respect, the response of the west to deal with this issue was limited to condemnation. There was strong backing for Ukrainian sovereignty and its territorial integrity in the early months after the invasion of Crimea and war in the east, as well as opposition to Russian aggression. But there were still opposing viewpoints. This initial stage lasted for roughly six months before the complexity of the issue and other difficulties, such as the Greek financial problem and the European migrant problem, took center stage and diverted focus from Ukraine. In 2016, opinions towards Russia had once again changed in response to growing resistance to its activities in Ukraine. President Barack Obama of the United States started issuing a series of executive orders on March 6, 2014, imposing sanctions against Russia, specific Russian businesses, and specific Russian people for “violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine”, and also for stealing the financial resources of the Ukrainian people.” The Council of the European Union adopted a variety of diplomatic measures in March 2014 to support Ukrainian “sovereignty and territorial integrity.” In response to Russia's veto of a Security Council resolution affirming Ukraine's sovereignty and respect for its existing territorial boundaries, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on March 27 urging all “States to stop and avoid from moves aimed at either partial or total chaos of the national unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.” European Union sanctions against Russia were put in place by July 2014 and afterward connected to the execution of the Minsk Pacts. After a passenger plane operated by Malaysian Air was shot down in July while flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, widespread support for sanctions in Europe increased. Over eastern Ukraine, 283 people lost their lives, including 80 children. The tragedy was connected to a mobile Russian missile launcher that was transported from Russia to Ukraine and promptly taken out of service after the plane was shot down. A Dutch safety Board investigation (which includes a report from a joint committee of the Netherlands and Malaysia) concluded in October 2016 that MH17 was shot down by a Buk missile developed in Russia. In the early stages of the conflict, many other nations, including also imposed sanctions on Russia like Australia, Japan, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, etc. Turkish security is threatened by the Russian advance, and Turkey is just as impacted by the Russian-Ukrainian crisis as any other NATO member. Over the years, Turkey and Russia have had a complicated relationship. Russia is Turkey's main security concern, aside from the Kurdistan insurgency, which is primarily internal. Turkey and Russia have experienced détente

despite typically taking opposing sides in conflicts, for instance following World War I and after 1991.<sup>9</sup>

However, the sanctions imposed by Europe were not all-encompassing. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that Russia has been supplying gas to strongly reliant nations like Finland and Germany. Russian countersanctions, such as a ban on food imports, have been implemented in response to a number of the sanctions. Russia may also claim that its actions are being supported.

Alexander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus, emphasized that Ukraine had not used force to retake Crimea: “By acting in that manner, the current Ukrainian government has essentially admitted that Crimea is not part of their territory. If the territory was theirs, why didn't they fight for it?” During the second phase of 2015, such viewpoints grew in popularity. The creation and implementation of Minsk II with Russian participation was the main focus in the West. Ukraine faced demands to provide Luhansk and Donetsk “decentralization.” Additionally, the public's support for Ukraine decreased due to reports of corporate and political corruption as well as worries about neo-fascism. More and more, the takeover of Crimea was viewed as an end in itself and a righting of a historical wrong.

The renewed focus on Russia at the beginning of 2016 signaled another shift in the way the world views certain issues. On February 4, 2016, the European Parliament passed a comprehensive resolution directed at Moscow and opposing international law violations ranging from violations of the territorial integrity of Ukraine to the torture of Ukrainian prisoners in Russian-controlled jails. A United Nations General Assembly resolution denouncing Russia's abuse of human rights in Crimea was adopted in December 2016. In December, the US extended its sanctions, and in January 2017, Ukraine filed a case with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Russia, requesting temporary measures to safeguard citizens of Crimea and eastern Ukraine from Russian aggression.<sup>10</sup>

### **Western Diplomatic Assistance and Economic Support to Ukraine:**

The West offered diplomatic assistance to Ukraine and also provided military support to Ukraine. As response to Russian invasion, western governments have sanctioned Russia

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<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey, James F. *What does the Russia-Ukraine conflict mean for Turkey?* Atlantic Council IN TURKEY, February 25, 2022. [http:// www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/turkeysource/experts-react-what-does-the-russia-ukraine-conflict-mean-for-turkey](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/turkeysource/experts-react-what-does-the-russia-ukraine-conflict-mean-for-turkey) (assessed April 25,2023)

<sup>10</sup> O'Connell, Mary Ellen. "The Crisis in Ukraine 2014-." SSRN. June 21, 2017. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2990658](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2990658) (accessed May 12, 2023). (Jeffrey 2022)

diplomatically and participated in diplomatic attempts to find a peaceful conclusion. To bring about a peaceful conclusion to the crisis, Western nations have been actively participating in diplomatic efforts. They have taken part in several frameworks, including the Minsk Agreements, which seek to secure a ceasefire and an ongoing political settlement, and the Normandy Format<sup>11</sup>, which also includes Ukraine, Germany, Russia, and France.

Western nations provided financial aid to help Ukraine's economy stabilize and support its government. Ukraine has received financial aid packages, loans, and grants to help it tackle its economic problems. According to Frank, the United States stands out as the primary contributor to military aid, having committed a substantial \$24.37 billion (22.86 billion Euros). The United Kingdom takes the second position with a commitment of 4.13 billion Euros (\$4.40 billion). Notably, the UK has played a significant role as one of Ukraine's major arms providers. Germany occupies the third position, for military aid outflows, following the US and UK, with a total commitment of 2.34 billion Euros (\$2.49 billion) up to this point<sup>12</sup>.

### **Military Support:**

The West has also offered military support to Ukraine, although on a lower scale than Russia has done about the separatist forces. Training, advice, intelligence exchange, and the supply of lethal and non-lethal weapons are all included in this assistance. Under the Trump administration in 2018, the US became the first NATO partner of Ukraine to approve the transfer of Javelin anti-tank missiles, constituting a sizable provision of defensive deadly weaponry. The majority of Ukraine's military aid comes from the US. As of this writing, the United States has contributed \$54.4 billion in military aid since the Biden administration's inception. Of that amount, \$53.7 billion had been given since February 2022. The most recent funding amounts are a result of the significant aid packages that the US administration has revealed since Congress passed a \$60.8 billion financing package for Ukraine at the end of April 2024, following several months of delay<sup>13</sup>.

Additionally, in 2019, Ukraine acquired numerous Bayraktar drones from Turkey. The UK supplied lethal weapons in 2022, which encompass three M270 long-range multiple launch

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<sup>11</sup> In response to Russia's military actions, a diplomatic gathering known as the Normandy format was established in June 2014. Its goal is to find a peaceful end to the crisis.

<sup>12</sup> Falk, Thomas O. *How much money has the West spent on the Ukraine war?* Al-Jazeera, December 27, 2022. [http:// How much money has the West spent on the Ukraine war? | Russia-Ukraine war News | Al Jazeera](http://How%20much%20money%20has%20the%20West%20spent%20on%20the%20Ukraine%20war%3F%20Russia-Ukraine%20war%3F%20News%20Al%20Jazeera) (assessed June 20, 2023)

<sup>13</sup> UK Parliament, House of Commons Library, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9477/> (assessed 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024)

rocket systems, anti-tank missiles, artillery guns, air defense systems, armored fighting vehicles, and anti-structure explosives the dangerous weaponry that the UK has contributed.<sup>14</sup>

Together with the US and Germany, the UK is one of the major donors to Ukraine. Since February 2022, the UK has committed £12.5 billion in help to Ukraine, of which £7.6 billion is for military aid. In 2024–2025, £3 billion will be allocated for military aid.

Moreover, UK is supplying air defense systems, tanks, and long-range precision strike missiles, among other weapons, both lethal and non-lethal. Although the UK has promised to train Ukrainian fast jet pilots, there will be no supply of combat fighter aircraft.

Operation Inter flex is a training program that the UK is hosting with cooperation from other allies. To date, more than 30,000 Ukrainian personnel have received training from UK. Along with this, through its pre-existing Comprehensive Assistance Package, NATO has supported the delivery of humanitarian and non-lethal aid and has assisted in coordinating the Ukrainian government's requests for assistance. NATO decided in July 2024 to collaborate with the US-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group and assume a more active role in coordinating military training and assistance among its partners. A funding of €40 billion for Ukraine military assistance was another commitment made by the allies<sup>15</sup>.

### **Sanctions Imposed on Russia by the West:**

Sanctions are stringent measures employed by one country against another to deter aggressive actions or international law violations. They represent some of the most severe actions that a country can take in the absence of direct conflict, and they can be quickly put into effect. As part of the economic sanctions, Russia has been excluded from major global financial services. In addition, £222 billion assets of Russia's central bank have been frozen. The basic purpose of these sanctions was to put an economic and political pressure on Russia by limiting their global economic engagements and the capital flow. Since 2022, approximately, 16,500 sanctions have been imposed on Russia by United States, European Union, UK, Australia, Japan, and Canada<sup>16</sup>. In February 2024, US President Joe Biden declared that Russia would be the focus of 500 new sanctions, which would specifically target

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<sup>14</sup> Mills, Claire. *Military assistance to Ukraine since the Russian invasion*. Research Briefing, London: House of Common Libraray, 2023. [http:// CBP-9477.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](http://CBP-9477.pdf (parliament.uk)) (assessed 14 October, 2023)

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., UK Parliament, House of Commons Library, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9477/> (assessed 10th September 2024)

<sup>16</sup> BBC, "What are the sanctions on Russia and have they affected its economy?" 23 February 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659>

its war machine. Additionally, the UK has put new restrictions on Russian energy, metal, and diamond exports.

The European Union has imposed penalties on two hundred individuals and organizations that it claims are assisting Russia in obtaining armaments or removing Ukrainian children from their homes. Furthermore, companies and people involved in the export of North Korean arms to Russia are subject to the sanctions<sup>17</sup>.

### **Diamond Export:**

In the UK, the purchase of diamonds from Moscow has been prohibited, while the EU and the US have introduced identical legislation to outlaw Russian diamonds the year before. The US reported that Russia earned more than £4 billion from diamond exports in 2021. According to Think Tanks, significant portions of Russian diamonds are sent to countries like India for polishing, making it challenging to trace their Russian origin after re-exportation. Mr. Merket<sup>18</sup> suggested that the current US restrictions have not yielded substantial benefits and proposed potential solutions like incorporating laser engravings on gems, such as diamonds, or implementing three-dimensional scanning to establish origin. Furthermore, both the US and the UK implemented restrictions on gold exports to Russia in the previous year, resulting in an estimated cost of £12.6 billion (\$15.4 billion) in 2021.

### **Economic Sanctions:**

The Invasion of Ukraine in 2023 by Russia was resisted by an unprecedented economic force from the West. Western countries have imposed restrictions on Russia's financial access, resulting in the blocking of the central bank of Russia's assets in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the European Union (EU). The UK companies also blocked financial assets of Russian banks and abstained them from collecting funds. In addition, major Russian banks had to withdraw from the international financial Swift messaging system<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, it caused delays in transactions related to Russian gas and oil. UK also imposed sanctions on trade, immigration, finance, shipping, and aircraft and freeze financial assets and property of designated persons<sup>20</sup>. According to the sources in the UK administration, the

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<sup>17</sup> What are the sanctions on Russia and have they affected its economy?, 23 February 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659> (assessed 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024)

<sup>18</sup> International peace Information Service Think Tank

<sup>19</sup> Swift is an extensive messaging network utilized by financial institutions to facilitate fast, precise, and secure transmission of information, including instructions for money transfers.

<sup>20</sup> Russian Sanction Guidance, 1<sup>ST</sup> March 2024, Government of UK, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/russia-sanctions-guidance/russia-sanctions-guidance> (accessed March 30, 2024)

financial sanctions imposed the by West have reduced Russia's \$604 billion in foreign exchange reserves to \$350 billion (£275 billion).<sup>21</sup>

**Energy Sanctions:**

The eleventh-largest economy in the world, Russia enjoys a structurally advantageous position due to its role as the leading commodity-based exporter among developing nations. The Western nations anticipated a potential economic collapse in Russia, with escalating prices and widespread withdrawals of funds from banks following the invasion of Ukraine and the initial imposition of sanctions. Nevertheless, in contrast to these predictions, the International Monetary Fund suggests that Russia's economy might experience a growth of 0.7% in the year 2023. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Russia is currently exporting more than eight million barrels of oil per day, which is the most it has exported since April 2020. India and China are the two largest importers. The IEA claims that Western sanctions caused the Russian revenues from its natural gas and oil exports to decline to £6.5 billion (\$8.1 billion) per month in April 2023 from £18.2 billion (\$22.5 billion) a month<sup>22</sup>.

Russia's income from gas and oil has been reduced by Western countries. The EU ceased purchasing Russian coal and stopped the imports of refined oil. All imports of Russian gas and oil were declared illegal by the US and the UK. Germany prevented from launching the Nord-Stream two gas pipeline from Russia. The G-7 agreed upon an acceptable price of \$60 per barrel of oil for Moscow crude oil in December 2022. They cautioned importers that if they pay more, insurers will refuse to guarantee oil shipments. Because the EU gets about 40% of its gas from Russia, no sanctions have been put in place.

**Shift in Russian Economic Policy:**

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, 37 nations of the West have imposed different sanctions on Moscow including financial, energy, technology, travel, and shipping, avionics, and commodities sectors. The Russian economy and its potential for future development have been affected by sanctions. Russia had been slowly turning its attention towards Asia. This includes encouraging diplomatic and economic ties with Asian nations including China, India, Pakistan, and Japan. Russia and China's trade relations increased by 29% in 2022 and by 39% in 2023. India has grown to be the single largest importer of Russian

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<sup>21</sup> MULDER, NICHOLAS. *THE SANCTIONS WEAPON*. Document. IMF, June 2022. [http://TheSanctionsWeapon\(imf.org\)](http://TheSanctionsWeapon(imf.org)) (assessed June 11, 2023)

<sup>22</sup> *What are the sanctions on Russia and are they hurting its economy?* May 25, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659> (accessed August 22, 2023).

seaborne crude oil, purchasing more than 1.4 million barrels every day in 2023. China and Hong Kong have emerged as Russia's primary sources of the microchips it began collecting before the war. Russian imports more modern chips (semiconductors and electronic circuits) with an increase of 36% in 2022. International gas prices have increased since the Ukraine crisis, largely because the EU decided not to buy Russian gas supplies. At the moment Pakistan's current concern is to secure energy sources in the longer term. The 'Pakistan Stream pipeline, which was developed by Russia and is currently under construction, will assist in transporting Pakistan's energy and gas resources'.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, the recent developments illustrate that Russian economy have a major impact of war in Ukraine BUT Russians have been able to seek some sidestep sanctions as well. For example, states like China, Turkey, India, Bulgaria, and Serbia have circumvented sanctions and have sold good to Russia. In addition, Russian dark fleet, exporting the oil mainly to China and the Asian markets has been central in breaking the G-7 cap on Russia<sup>24</sup>.

### **Recent Developments**

The recent diplomatic signaling from west to Ukraine to target inside Russian territory has escalated war of words between Russia and the western powers. In addition, Russia issued a nuclear threat. In a recent statement by Russian President Putin on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024, he stated that, "If someone thinks it is possible to supply such weapons to a war zone to attack our territory and create problems for us, why don't we have the right to supply weapons of the same class to regions of the world where there will be strikes on sensitive facilities of those countries?"<sup>25</sup>. Germany and US have mainly signaled Ukraine to strike inside Russia by using their weapons. This kind of military adventurism would increase the probability of conflict escalation and a possible asymmetric retaliation by Russia.

### **Findings**

- The security dilemma that exists between the West and the Russians has evolved due to geopolitical and ideological factors.

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<sup>23</sup> Mulder, Nicholas. "Asian economic heft keeps Russia's economy afloat." *East Asia Forum Economics, Politics and Public Policy in East Asia and the Pacific*, J (What are the sanctions on Russia and are they hurting its economy? 2023) June 11, 2023, [http:// Asian economic heft keeps Russia's economy afloat | East Asia Forum](http://Asian-economic-heft-keeps-Russia-s-economy-afloat-East-Asia-Forum)

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Roth, "The 'dark fleet' of tankers shipping Russian oil in the shadows," *The Guardian*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/aug/19/the-dark-fleet-of-tankers-shipping-russian-oil-in-the-shadows>

<sup>25</sup> George Wright, "Putin warns Russia could provide weapons to strike West," 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn44r9zjnpjo>

- Russia miscalculated the resilience and resistance of Ukrainian government. In addition, the loyalty of the people of Ukraine towards their government was also not well articulated. On the other hand, NATO did not calculate Russian security apprehension while expanding eastward. The military actions taken by the West against Russia in Eastern Europe are crucial for the peaceful resolution.

### **Conclusion**

The confrontation between Russia and Ukraine has brought to light the intricacies of international relations by emphasizing the collision of geopolitical interests, security issues, and power struggle between Russia and United States, who is leading the western camp. The West, has been crucial to the outcome of the conflict. The West has constantly denounced Russian behavior and backed Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. There have been numerous diplomatic initiatives and conversations centered on the suggested resolutions to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine but so far Russians have been able to develop a strategic leverage in containing the enlargement of NATO on their eastern side.