

COUNTERING RUSSIAN AGGRESSION: UKRAINE'S ROLE IN SHAPING REGIONAL SECURITY"

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Abstract

This study examines the Russia-Ukraine crisis through the lens of the regional security complex theory. The authors argue that the national securities of Russia and Ukraine are intertwined, and the policies of external powers have a significant impact on regional actors' concepts and behavior. The study finds that Russia's interest is to prevent NATO and the West from expanding into Eastern Europe, where a significant amount of Russia's gas is transported through Ukraine and exported to other European countries. The authors suggest that the West and NATO should refrain from convincing Eastern European nations to join the military organization and from engaging in political and economic activities in the region. The study proposes that sanctions should be targeted at deterring an offender rather than given sentimentally. The authors reaffirm that regional security is socially constructed rather than objective and that non-state actors play a significant role in shaping regional security. The study provides insights into the implications of the Russia-Ukraine crisis and regional security on global politics and emphasizes the importance of a nuanced approach in dealing with regional security challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

Russia has always considered Ukraine to be a part of its Motherland. This theory has some weight, given Kievan Rus" was imperial Russia"s cultural foundation from the 9th through the 13th centuries. Furthermore, until 1917, when a short-lived autonomous government was founded, Ukrainian territory had been a part of many empires, especially Russian empires. Under the banner of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Ukraine re-joined the now-Soviet Union in 1919. Despite Russian dominance for many years, many Ukrainian cultural leaders, including 19th century poet Taras Shevchenko, pushed for a free Ukraine. However, until the Soviet Union disintegrated and Ukraine could no longer be held, Russia was vehement about repressing any hint of Ukrainian nationalism.

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Despite cultural differences, Ukraine has always been an important part of Russian history, for better or worse. Ukraine became an independent state after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Relations between Ukraine and Russia have always been tight. The peninsula of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were the main points of contention. The problem of Russia's Black Sea naval fleet in Sevastopol was settled by the two countries agreeing to a long-term lease on the naval facility. However, until May 1997, Ukraine's ownership of Crimea, as well as Russia's unwillingness to publicly recognize Ukraine's sovereignty, remained difficult (Steward, 1997). The Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty was signed that year, and Russia formally recognized Ukraine as an independent state. Steward (1997) saw this treaty as „„dropping the cloak of common history between king and ruled““ at the time. Throughout the 1990s, Ukraine openly linked itself with the West and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), compelling Russia to accept their borders for fear of Ukraine being pushed too far westward (Steward, 1997). NATO expansion was a direct threat to Russia at the time, and they couldn't afford to have a satellite state join the alliance. NATO's abduction of Ukraine was a complete surprise, given that in the early 1990s, western officials called for a halt to NATO's expansion eastward near Russian borders, with a special focus on former Warsaw Pact members (Savranskaya, et al., 2017).

The post-dissolution shambles have undoubtedly inspired Russia's current special operation towards Ukraine. Nonetheless, the relationship between Ukraine and Russia between 1997 and 2014 is worth revisiting since it contrasts sharply with the post-2014 relationship. Leonid Kuchma was elected as the president of Ukraine in 1994, his administration tried to strike a balance between its newfound independence and the need to repair relations with Russia. His victories in the presidential elections of 1994 and 1999 highlighted the divide between those who desired a unilateral path forward and those who wanted to mend fences with Russia. The pro-Russian electorate triumphed, and Kuchma set out to mend fences. A proposal to construct a „combined economic space“ with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan was accepted in principle by the Kuchma administration in 2003.

Ivan (2020) is of the view that Victor Yanukovich, a Russian-backed Ukrainian presidential candidate, won the presidential election in 2004. However, in what is known as the Orange Revolution, supporters of pro-Western candidate Yushchenko revolted, requiring a re-election, which Yushchenko won. Russia, in particular, considered the color revolution as a ruse by the United States (US) to further destabilize the region (Cordesman, 2014). Yanukovich won the presidential election again in 2010, this time for the lengthy term. He reestablished links with Russia as the Russian-backed candidate. In 2010, his administration extended the lease of Sevastopol to Russia; he stated that the Holodomor, a famine-genocide perpetrated by the Soviet Union on Ukraine, should not be considered a genocide; and, perhaps most importantly, his withdrawal from European Union (EU) trade talks and announcement of his intention to join the Eurasian Customs Union was the final nail in his administration's coffin. Many Ukrainians protested Yanukovich's administration in early 2014 because of his continuous pro-Russian moves.

The violent and fatal protests were a direct result of Yanukovich's refusal to sign accords with the EU. He was concerned that it would have a detrimental impact on trade with Russia. Protesters pushed Yanukovich out of office, seeing the EU's ongoing rejection as a failure of his administration and government. The Ukrainian government was rebuilt. Ukraine's President, Oleksandr Turchynov, was elected shortly after the revolution, an election and presidency that Russia refused to recognize as legitimate (Myers, 2014). A few months later, Ukrainians elected Petro Poroshenko, a pro-western candidate, in a landslide victory over numerous opponents. His administration attempted to widen peace talks with Russia, but he publicly stated that military involvement was a possibility, calling separatists terrorists (RT International, 2014). Because of his escalatory and militaristic language, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine lasted throughout his presidency. Volodymyr Zelensky, a comedian turned politician, defeated incumbent Poroshenko in the Ukrainian presidential elections in 2019.

His election represented a country tired of escalating tensions with Russia and the previous administration's failed domestic programs (Fox, 2019). Over the previous few months, Zelensky's policies have become increasingly clear: economic success and peace with Russia. Zelensky, on the other hand, will not just surrender to Russian aggression, as the main term of any peace agreement, according to Zelensky, is „„a full withdrawal, a full disarmament of all illegal units, and military formations (Shuster, 2019). Prior to the 2014 revolution, ties between Ukraine and Russia were tumultuous but often amicable under pro-Russian President Yanukovich. However, tensions have risen significantly since the 2014 revolution, which Russia regards as an illegitimate, US-backed coup (Osnos, et al., 2017). This battle has rekindled strained relations between the two countries and is a key defining element in Russia's present war against Ukraine. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the interest of Russia that has made it to carry out a special operation in Ukraine, examine how the international community has responded to the special operation carried out by Russia in Ukraine and ascertain the impact of the responses of the international community led by the US on regional security.

2. REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY

This study is anchored on the Regional Security Complex Theory, the proponents of the theory are Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde in 1983. According to the theory, international security should be analyzed from a regional standpoint in order to give a theoretical rationale for the creation of world regions. The security complex, according to proponents, is "a group of governments whose major security problems are sufficiently linked together that their national security cannot legitimately be examined apart from one another (Buzan, 1983). These regional security complexes are built on enmity and amity, two unique and persistent patterns of security relations between states. Amity refers to a wide range of relationships, from friendship to the expectation of protection or assistance. Enmity, on the other hand, denotes a distrustful and fearful relationship. These linkages may be the consequence of border or ideological disagreements, but they may also be the product of historical ties.

A few years later, in 1998, the regional security complex theory was modified and characterized as a group of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so intertwined that their security problem cannot properly be evaluated or treated separately. This meant that security is socially created rather than objective, and that nations can win support for designating something as an existential threat requiring emergency actions by framing it as such (Buzan, 2003). The new concept underlined the importance of non-state players in international relations and prioritized other security sectors rather than military security (McSweeney, 1999). Naturally, states are the primary targets of security, but in some areas, other units may play a significant role, if not outright dominance.

The relative intensity of inter-state security relations, patterns of amity and enmity, and distribution of power are thus fundamental parts of regional security complex theory (Buzan & Waever, 2003). Amity and enmity variables are useful study tools for determining which role (enemy, rival, or friend) predominate sufficiently to assign a system or subsystem an overall social structure (Jarzbek, 2019). Rivalry, friendship, and hatred among Gulf states are frequently the result of a power distribution in which states shift their alignments in response to changes in the allocation of power (Stivachtis, 2018). Following the 2003 Iraq war, as the Saudi-Iranian rivalry grew stronger and SunniShiite divides widened, a situation like this arose. However, history, culture, religion, and geography all impact amity and enmity patterns (Buzan, 2003). These patterns have an impact on ties that can bring governments together and determine collaboration, but they can also justify political or military intervention. Security complexes have been classified into three groups based on the frequency of amity or enmity patterns. The first is a conflict formation, which is defined as a pattern of security interdependence molded by fear of war and the expectation of violence being used (Buzan, 2003).

Relations between significant powers in the region are characterized by violence in a conflict formation. This circumstance indicates that states view each other as a potential danger and form alliances in order to alleviate the security challenge (Buzan, 2003). The second is a security regime, in which governments continue to see each other as a potential threat but take steps to alleviate the security issue and lower tensions. The third form is a multilateral security community, in which governments do not expect or want to engage in violent behavior from other parties. Proponents of the theory claim that by reducing an anarchic subsystem of states into a single actor, cooperation and integration processes can abolish the security complex (Buzan & Waever, 2003). Security is investigated as a social construction in the regional security complex theory, which indicates that the securitization process affects the security of individual member states by tying them together. The Copenhagen School's central premise is securitization. The distinctive process through which an inter subjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat (Buzan & Waever, 2003).

Securitization is a significant theoretical word for examining many aspects of regional security, such as dangers to particular states or the region as a whole. The global powers can permeate a regional security complex deeply. Penetration implies that an external power is involved in the region's security structure and plays a substantial influence in its formation. Penetration occurs when external powers form security alliances with regional security complex states. External powers adapt and internalize the function of regional entities in forming the regional social structure (Acharya, 2007). The policies of such an external power have an impact on regional actors' concepts and behavior. The relevance of the theory to the study is pertinent given the fact that the Eastern region of Europe where Russia is located is also where Ukraine is located and their security issues are linked together that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another, but with the West and NATO pushing close to the Eastern region, Russia is feeling insecure and will want to do whatever it takes to feel secured.

3. METHODOLOGY

Given, the problem of this study, the paper adopted the Ex Post Facto (After the Fact) research design. Materials for this paper was sourced through secondary sources of data which included here are textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, official documents from the government, internet materials, among others. Content analysis was used to analyse data so generated. This is with a view to identify logical sequence of data as well as trends.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At this point, figure and tables was presented that help to address the two objectives raised. In other words, this section is aimed at establishing an empirical link to the analysis of Russia-Ukraine crisis and regional security.

5. THE INTEREST OF RUSSIA IN UKRAINE



Figure1. The interest of Russia in Ukraine

Source: Computed by the author based on data from <http://www.diva.portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1326906>

Figure 1 showing the interest of Russia in Ukraine, putting a stop to NATO expansion to the East, military interest in Ukraine, diplomatic interest in Ukraine and economic interest in Ukraine.

6. RUSSIA’S INTEREST TO STOP THE EXPANSION OF NATO TOWARDS EASTERN EUROPE

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) gained great power status about fifty years ago. The victory of the USSR, along with the country’s massive military might, has been hailed as a triumph. However, the Cold War triumph by the US and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in the destruction of Russia's territorial integrity, which led to economic disintegration and political instability inside the country (Webber, 1993; Sakwa, 2015). Simultaneously, NATO enlargement sponsored by the United States began to expand eastward, bringing nations like the Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia into the fold. During the Cold War, some of the new member states were in a military alliance with the USSR, such as the Warsaw Pact (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland), while others were post-Soviet republics, such as the Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania).

This infuriated Russia, especially as NATO moved to gain control of the Baltic region (Mearsheimer, 2014; Sakwa, 2015). Despite Russia’s warnings that NATO should not expand eastward, the expansion has proceeded. In 2008, NATO stated that Ukraine and Georgia will join, posing a strategic threat to Russia, especially after Gorbachev, the USSR’s leader, had guaranteed that NATO would not expand to the east (Sakwa, 2015; Mearsheimer, 2014; Ruhle, 2014). Russia’s reaction to Ukraine's and Georgia's enlargement was based on geopolitical considerations, whereas maintaining a military installation so near to Russia’s frontiers would jeopardize the country’s strategic security interests (Mearsheimer, 2014; Weaver, 2013). In relation to Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has frequently mentioned NATO, the European-North American military alliance. Ukraine is now one of three nations that have showed interest in joining the treaty, which Russia opposes vehemently. Ukraine is still considered a key part of Russia's sphere of influence.

Ukraine, like Belarus, acts as a geopolitical buffer between Russia and the West, but Russia views Ukraine as an important cultural and historical partner. Ukraine's NATO declaration dates from 2008 and is unlikely to be

adopted anytime soon, but the treaty's eastward expansion has long been a thorn in Putin's side. Vladimir Putin criticized the organization at his annual end-of-year press conference on December 23, 2021. Putin was quoted saying „Any further NATO expansion to the east is unwanted“. He has made repeated demands for a freeze on NATO expansions since then, but to no avail (McGee & Chernova, 2021). Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, on the other hand, says that an assault on one NATO member constitutes an attack on all NATO members. Despite its significance, NATO has only used Article 5 once, in reaction to the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001. However, because Ukraine is not a member of NATO, it would be a breach of NATO's principles to launch an armed strike on Ukraine's behalf.

7. RUSSIA MILITARY INTEREST IN UKRAINE

Ukraine, like Georgia, has been the target of Russian military aggression. As previously stated in this study, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, a process that was expedited because Russia already possessed a military presence on the peninsula (Grant, 2015). The annexation is neither recognized or legitimized by the majority of states and entities in the international community, who continue to regard the Crimean Peninsula as part of Ukraine. Russia's relationship with the West has also deteriorated as a result of the annexation (Bebler, 2015). The fall of pro-Russian president Janukovytyj and fears that the new regime might utilize the Crimean Peninsula as a NATO base prompted the annexation of Crimea. The annexation fueled pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, who were backed by Russia. On the one hand, pro-Russian separatists and Russian soldiers clashed with Ukrainian paramilitary nationalists and the national army, while on the other hand, pro-Russian separatists and Russian soldiers clashed with Ukrainian paramilitary nationalists and the national army.

The fighting mostly took place in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Sutyagin, 2015). Ukraine committed roughly 11,000 troops to eastern Ukraine in 2014, while Russia deployed about 40,000 troops to the border with eastern Ukraine, where the hostilities are taking place (MacMahon, 2014). The Russian and pro-Russian forces have superior military capabilities and continue to control Crimea, Luhansk, and Donetsk. The Ukrainian regime, like Georgia's, has been unable to reclaim control of its regions, and Russia continues to use them as a strategic card to fulfill its foreign policy goals. Russia, on the other hand, is still unable to establish a stable and amicable relationship with Kiev, as it continues to exert authority over regions in southern and eastern Ukraine in protest of the present pro-Western leadership. Russia also strengthens the reliance of local pro-Russian regimes on Russian help. Russia can preserve its current position while simultaneously pressuring Ukraine to accept reintegration, allowing Russia to exert long-term influence over Ukraine's foreign and domestic policies (Malyarenko & Wolff, 2018).

8. RUSSIA DIPLOMATIC INTEREST IN UKRAINE

Maintaining influence over Ukraine is one of Russia's foreign policy priorities, and many political elites regard Ukraine as a vital element of Russia's own character. Russia uses collective heritage and cultural commonalities to try to bond Ukraine to a „shared future“ with other post-Soviet republics. Former Russian ambassador to Kiev, Mikhail Zurabov, has declared that Ukrainians and Russians are both citizens of the same country (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko, 2012). Furthermore, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev remarked in an official address to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko in 2009 that „for Russia, Ukrainians have been and remain not merely neighbors, but a brotherly people since the dawn of time“. As a result, Medvedev saw it as Ukraine's responsibility to preserve strong ties and close collaboration with Russia (Medvedev, 2009).

At the same time, Russia tries to isolate Ukraine from the West, preventing it from joining the EU or NATO. Russia sees Ukraine's NATO membership, as well as Georgia's, as security threats. On his official travels to Kiev, Russian President Vladimir Putin has vigorously advocated for Ukraine's membership in a Russian-led customs union in order to prevent Ukraine from establishing a tighter economic partnership with the European Union or

applying for EU membership (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko, 2012). In relation to Ukraine, Russia’s diplomatic means are inextricably linked to its economic means of power. In the confrontations between Russia and the EU, the Ukrainian leadership has been divided and has attempted to settle them by employing metaphors such as „„building a bridge between the European Union and Russia at the same time as they integrate with the EU““ (Janukovytyj, 2010). The Russian administration, on the other hand, would propose that Ukraine serve as Russia’s bridge to the European Union through tighter integration with Russia (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko, 2012).

9. RUSSIA ECONOMIC INTEREST IN UKRAINE

Russia has long been Europe’s primary natural gas and oil supplier, as well as a major supplier of oil to post-Soviet countries. Many countries, like Ukraine, are significantly reliant on Russian gas supplies, allowing Russia to control natural gas pricing to a large extent. Russia cut off gas supplies to Moldova and Ukraine in 2006 because the two countries couldn’t agree on price. A significant portion of Russia’s gas is carried through Ukraine before being shipped to other European countries. Russia restored gas supplies after many European countries complained (Gelb, 2007). In 2012, the Eurasian Customs Union, led by Russia, accounted for 29 % of Ukraine’s total external trade, while the EU accounted for 33 %, and Ukraine felt reliant on both the EU and Russia. Ukraine has been caught in an economic and political bind, as signing an association agreement with the EU would prevent the nation from joining the Eurasian Customs Union, and vital commerce with Russia would be lost.

Russia recognized the dilemma and recognized that Ukraine was internally divided on the issue, so it offered benefits from a closer economic relationship with the Eurasian Customs Union while threatening to cut off trade if Ukraine chose closer economic cooperation with the EU instead, which would be disastrous for the Ukrainian economy. Ukraine has no choice but to pick a side (MacFarlane & Menon, 2014). EU supporters began to demonstrate in Kiev after pro-Russian president Viktor Janukovytyj signed an agreement with Russia. When parliament deposed Janukovytyj (Nilsson & Silander, 2015), Russia retaliated by seizing control of the Crimean Peninsula (Grant, 2015).

10. RESPONSES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY LED BY US AGAINST RUSSIA

Table1. Sanctions given by the international community against Russia

Countries and Unions that sanctioned Russia	The outcome of the sanctions given to Russia
Canada, European Union, Japan, United Kingdom and United States.	Cutting important Russian banks off from the worldwide Swift payment network, which enables for seamless and quick money transfers across borders.
Europe	Many European countries have closed their airspace to Russian airlines.
European Union, United Kingdom and United States.	President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have been sanctioned personally.
Germany	The Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline in Russia has been suspended, despite the fact that it was a huge investment by both Russian and European corporations.
European Union	Limit Russian access to finance, technology, and defense by targeting 351 Russian MPs.
United Kingdom	The assets of major Russian banks have been frozen.
United States	Ten of Russia’s largest financial institutions have been singled out for attack.
Union of European Football Association	The Champions League final will not be held in St Petersburg this year.

Source: Computed by the author based on data from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659>

Table 1 showing countries and unions that sanctioned Russia and the outcome of the sanctions; Canada, European Union, Japan, United Kingdom and United States cut important Russian banks off from the worldwide Swift payment network, which enables for seamless and quick money transfers across borders. Many European countries have closed their airspace to Russian airlines. President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have been sanctioned personally by European

Union, United Kingdom and United States while for Germany the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline in Russia has been suspended, despite the fact that it was a huge investment by both Russian and European corporations. European Union has limited Russian access to finance, technology, and defense by targeting 351 Russian MPs. The assets of major Russian banks have been frozen by the United Kingdom. Ten of Russia's largest financial institutions have been singled out for attack by the United States and Union of European Football Association has stopped the Champions League final as it will not hold in St Petersburg this year 2022.

11. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO END THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

European Union, United States, United Kingdom, Japan and Canada are Cutting off key Russian Banks from the International Swift Payment Network

The US, its European allies, and Canada decided on Saturday to delist key Russian banks from the SWIFT interbank messaging system, a dramatic action that will cut Russia off from most of the global financial system. In a joint statement announcing the severe punitive move, the world powers noted, “this will ensure that these banks are separated from the international financial system and undermine their capacity to function globally” (The White House, 2022). Due to Moscow’s exclusion from Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), Russian banks will be unable to securely communicate with banks outside of the country. Following advancements in Iran’s nuclear program, the country was kicked out of SWIFT in 2014. SWIFT is a Belgian-based independent company that acts as an internal messaging system for over 11,000 banks and financial institutions in over 200 countries and territories. SWIFT said in a statement that “any decision to impose penalties on nations or individual organizations rests completely with the competent government bodies and applicable legislators” (SWIFT, 2022).

As a Belgian company, we have a legal obligation to follow all relevant EU and Belgian regulations. The group stated that it is looking for information on the entities that will be impacted by the new effort (SWIFT, 2022). Shmyhal (2022) stated that we appreciate your support and sincere help at this terrible time, this is something that the Ukrainian people will never forget, keep the line intact, we have arrived on our turf. Furthermore, the US and its partners indicated that they will apply stringent measures to prohibit Russia’s central bank from using its international reserves in ways that might undermine sanctions.

This will demonstrate that Russia’s ostensibly sanctions-proofed economy is a sham. “Russia’s \$600 billion-plus war chest of foreign reserves is only powerful if Putin can utilize it” (Collins, Mattingly, Liptak, & Judd, 2022). The individual, who spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to disclose new information about Washington's position, said the sanctions' impact on Russia will be felt immediately (Taylor, 2022). “You will see an immediate chilling effect descend over the Russian banking system, even beyond what has already happened” a senior government official predicted (Taylor, 2022). “We have now targeted all ten of Russia's top financial institutions, which together hold roughly 80% of the country's total assets” “China is not coming to the rescue”, the person said when asked if the US had any indication if China, the world's second-largest economy, would financially support Russia in the face of crushing sanctions (Taylor, 2022). “China is prohibiting certain of its institutions from providing credit to support energy purchases from Russia”. “This implies that, as has been the case for years, China has tended to respect the force of US sanctions” (US Embassy in Chile, 2022).

The European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States all want to restrict the selling of “golden passports”. They are a loophole, that allows wealthy Russians with ties to the Kremlin to become citizens of other countries and have access to particular financial systems. “We will go after their boats, luxurious apartments, money, and capacity to send their children to prestigious western universities” (US Embassy in Chile, 2022). The announcement comes after Russia was hit with a slew of global sanctions for its unjustified attack on Ukraine. The US, UK, and EU issued penalties against Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on February 25, 2022. The Biden administration threatened sanctions in the weeks preceding up to the invasion in the hopes of discouraging Putin from future violence against Ukraine.

European Nations Shut off its Airspace to Russian Airlines

European countries, one by one, announced that their airspace will be closed for three months, including Germany. Due to airspace restrictions over Ukraine, Russian flights have few options for westbound travel. On Sunday, scores of flights were canceled at Moscow’s Domodedovo and Sheremetyevo airports, including planes to Paris, Vienna, and Kaliningrad. Airlines, based in Russia, said on Facebook that it will be canceling flights to many of its European destinations until at least 13th March, 2022. Aeroflot, Russia’s largest airline, has announced that it will suspend flights to Latvia and Romania until at least 26th March 2022, as well as its Prague and Warsaw routes until 28th March, 2022 (Agency Report, 2022). In the meantime, Russia has retaliated by imposing tit-for-tat restrictions on nations that have banned its aircraft.

United States, European Union and United Kingdom impose personal sanctions on President Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

On the second day of Russia's special operation on its neighbors, the statement was made. Leaders are rarely subjected to such retaliation. Only the presidents of Syria and Belarus, for example, have ever been sanctioned by the EU. The US, for its part, has issued sanctions against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro as well as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. It’s unknown how important Mr. Putin’s and Mr. Lavrov’s assets are in the US, EU, UK, and Canada, and what effect the sanctions will have in practice. They demonstrated the West’s „total incapacity“ in international policy, according to Russia. After a debate at the United Nation Security Council, Russia vetoed a draft United Nations resolution condemning the invasion of Ukraine (Dervis & Ocampo, 2022). India, China, and the United Arab Emirates all voted no, while 11 other members voted yes.

Russia’s Nord Stream 2 Gas Pipeline, a Major Investment by Russia and European Companies has been Halted by Germany

After Russian President Vladimir Putin acknowledged breakaway parts of eastern Ukraine and ordered soldiers into the region, Germany halted certification of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline scheduled to carry natural gas from Russia straight to Europe on 22nd February, 2022. Scholz (2022) is of the view that his country would not accept the recognition of two self-proclaimed pro-Russian separatist districts in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas, and that the situation with Nord Stream 2 needed to be reassessed. Continuing, Scholz (2022) said he would request Germany’s Economy Ministry to take action to ensure that this pipeline cannot be certified at this time, and that Nord Stream 2 cannot operate without this certification. In light of what has transpired in the previous few days, the competent departments of the Economy Ministry will do a new assessment of the security of our supply (Scholz, 2022).

Germany has been chastised for failing to act decisively in response to Russia’s threat to Ukraine, but Scholz stated that Europe faces „„tough hours““ ahead, adding that „„almost 80 years““ after the conclusion of WWII, we may see a new conflict in Eastern Europe (Scholz, 2022). It is our responsibility to prevent such a catastrophe, and the German Chancellor said he once again appeal to Russia to contribute its fair share (Scholz, 2022).

The European Union Targeted 351 Russian MPs to Limit Russian Access to Finance, Technology and Defence

The EU announced further sanctions against Russia on February 24, 2022, naming Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and 351 members of the Duma as targets for undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity. On the 24th of February 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted a package of measures in response to the Russian Federation's decision to proceed with the recognition of nongovernment-controlled areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as independent entities, and the subsequent decision to send Russian troops into these areas (Council of the EU, 2022). The penalties are in response to Russian actions, not the bigger military operation that began on March 3, 2022, which is expected to result in harsher consequences. The resolution was formally ratified on February 23, 2022, following the political agreement obtained by EU foreign ministers on Tuesday. 23 people have been barred from entering the EU, and their assets in the EU have been frozen as a result of the ruling (Wessing, 2022).

According to the judgment published in the EU Official Journal, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Deputy Prime Ministers Dmitry Grigorenko and Marat Khusnullins, and Economic Minister Maxim Reshetnikov are all on the blacklist. It also includes the chief of staff of Russian President Vladimir Putin, six commanders-in-chief, bankers, and oligarchs, as well as other military leaders and important figures leaders in propaganda for the state (Wessing, 2022). The EU also prohibits EU companies from providing payments to three banks that support or benefit from Russian operations in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as the so-called "troll factory" in St. Petersburg, which is responsible for a disinformation campaign against Ukraine. A total of 351 Russian State Duma members have been blacklisted for recognizing the independence of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, which is a breach of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty (Wessing, 2022).

The United Kingdom Froze Major Assets of Russian Banks and its National Airline Aeroflot is Banned from Landing in the UK

Boris Johnson said it's time to squeeze Russia out of the global economy, piece by piece, as he unveiled a broad set of sanctions against Moscow, including the freeze of all major Russian banks' assets and a ban on hi-tech exports (Archyw, 2022). "Putin will be condemned in the eyes of the world and history: he will never be able to wash the blood of Ukraine from his hands", Prime Minister David Cameron warned MPs as he unveiled the sweeping package of measures (Freidman, 2022).

We will continue on a remorseless quest to squeeze Russia out of the global economy piece by piece, day by day, and week by week, "Johnson said, referring to dramatic falls in Russian stock markets and the value of the Rouble since the invasion of Ukraine. He had previously attempted and failed to persuade fellow G7 leaders to exclude Russia from the SWIFT global payments system, though his spokesperson said he would press the issue further in the coming days. Johnson identified ten immediate measures that the UK would take (Politi, 2022). All significant Russian banks' assets in the UK will be frozen, including VTB, the country's second-largest bank with £154 billion in assets.

United States Target Ten Russia's Biggest Financial Institutions

The US President Joe Biden criticized Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine and issued a new round of sanctions aimed at crippling Russia's economy. The moves are a step up from the first round of sanctions imposed by the US on 22nd February, 2022, when Putin acknowledged the independence of two eastern Ukrainian regions (Aljazeera News, 2022). Unlike the previous wave of sanctions, which were aimed at smaller banks, the new measures are aimed at Russia's two largest banks and are intended to do more economic harm. According to US President Joe Biden, the US and its allies will impose export restrictions and prosecute wealthy oligarchs.

However, he went on to argue that the US structured these sanctions to have the greatest long-term impact on Russia while having the least impact on the US and its allies (Aljazeera News, 2022).

St Petersburg a city in Russia Stopped from Hosting Champions League Final and Russian Grand Prix

As a result of the invasion of Ukraine, Russia was stripped of hosting the Champions League final by UEFA on Friday, with St. Petersburg being replaced by Paris, and Formula One cancelled this season’s Russian Grand Prix in Sochi (Russell, 2022). Manchester United has also suspended Russian state-owned airline Aeroflot as a sponsor, blaming “events in Ukraine” after the company was sanctioned in the United Kingdom (Russell, 2022). Even though Gazprom is still a Champions League sponsor, the final will no longer be held at the St. Petersburg stadium named for the Russian state-owned energy company. After a decision by UEFA’s executive council, the final of the European men’s football season will be held on 28th May 2022 at the 80,000-seat Stade de France in the Saint-Denis suburb of the French capital (Russell, 2022). It came after talks between UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin, the European Commission, and French President Emmanuel Macron in recent days, following worries over Russia’s ability to maintain such a renowned event following its aggression against another European country (Russell, 2022).

Table2. NATO and US responses in terms of positioning troops close to Ukraine

Countries	NATO troops	United States Troops
Estonia	1, 150	-
Latvia	1,650	-
Lithuania	1,100	500
Poland	1,060	5,400
Romania	4,000	1,000
Bulgaria	200	200

Source: Computed by the author based on data from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56720589>

Table 2 showing countries where NATO troops and United States troops are positioned close to Ukraine in the Eastern part of Europe. NATO troops in Estonia 1,150 troops, Latvia 1,650 troops, Lithuania 1,100 troops, Poland 1,060 troops, Romania 4,000 troops and Bulgaria, 200 troops. The United States has no troops in Estonia and Latvia while in Lithuania 500 troops, Poland 5,400 troops, Romania 1,000 troops and Bulgaria 200 troops.

12. RESPONSES OF NATO AND US IN TERMS OF POSITIONING OF TROOPS CLOSE TO UKRAINE

NATO has around 4,000 troops in multinational battalions in countries like Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland, backed up by tanks, air defense, and intelligence and surveillance units. The light military presence, described by NATO as combat-ready, is intended to act as a trip wire, triggering reinforcements in the event of a Russian assault. NATO also has an air policing operation in these countries, which is administered from the Ramstein airfield in Germany and patrols the skies of the four countries. Four multinational standing naval units, including the Baltic Sea, patrol NATO allies and international waterways. NATO has a multinational land force of up to 4,000 troops in countries like Romania and Bulgaria. More troops have been provided by France.

Soldiers from the United States are also stationed at different bases in Romania and Bulgaria. Allies also send fighter detachments to Bulgaria and Romania on a regular basis to assist with national air policing.

Impact of the Sanctions issued by the International Community on Regional Security

Despite the fact that the US and its allies have slammed Russia’s economy in reaction to the invasion of Ukraine, they have withheld the most destructive weapon in their arsenal: a comprehensive oil and gas embargo. Blocking energy exports and payments to Russia is seen as the final stage in the West’s growing sanctions campaign against Russia. An embargo would jeopardize the country’s already precarious economic situation. Oil and gas sales

provide for around half of Russia's total revenue, with Western Europe accounting for the lion's share. President Vladimir Putin would be put under a lot of strain if that income was cut off from the Russian economy. However, it would cause even more suffering for the Russian people at first.

And the suffering inflicted on regular individuals may have the unintended consequence of galvanizing support for their leader.

However, the larger reason is that Western countries, particularly the Biden administration, are striving to strike a delicate balance between punishing Putin and avoiding major economic and political consequences at home. Cutting off Russia's energy supply would have serious ramifications for US friends in Europe, as well as Americans, at least in the short run. The disruption of global energy markets, as well as the ensuing rise in oil and gas prices, would undoubtedly add to already high inflation. And, on the eve of the US midterm elections, government efforts to combat the fresh explosion of inflation risk causing a recession. Despite the fact that the US is virtually energy self-sufficient, it is the world's greatest producer of oil and liquefied natural gas, and crude oil prices are determined on a global scale. Putin's invasion of Ukraine came at a time when energy supplies were tightening and prices were rising.

Oil companies have been trying to keep up with pent-up demand from consumers in the US and worldwide as economies recover from the protracted epidemic. Because of the financial impact on consumers and his own low approval ratings, US President Joe Biden would almost probably try to mitigate the impact of an embargo by announcing the US's strategic plans reserves and pressuring major oil producers like Saudi Arabia to increase output. Western allies may even rush to complete new nuclear armaments accord with Tehran, releasing a million or so barrels of Iranian oil per day that are currently restricted. It's worth noting that Russia is one of the world's top three producers of oil and natural gas, and while its exports only account for 5% of the global market, removing that supply completely might result in a doubling of energy prices (Gagnon, 2022). Already, in the last month, the benchmark for petroleum prices has risen above \$100 per barrel, an eight-year high. In mid-February, Americans were spending \$3.53 per gallon on average, a \$1 more than a year before. Longer term, however, a Russian energy embargo might fundamentally change the global market along geopolitical lines. Russian oil and gas may be permanently diverted to China, India, and other Asian countries.

According to Krane (2022), we are on the verge of seeing a financial iron curtain re-emerge. Continuing, Krane (2022) claimed that if trade barriers between Russia and the West are reinstated, and Russia reorients itself toward friendlier countries like China, it may be a disastrous turn of events, with Europe bearing the brunt of the consequences. Russia, on the other hand, has long served as Europe's energy supply backbone. It is connected to Europe geographically. It has excellent east-west trading routes with Europe. And it's a tremendous loss for these two to lose each other as commercial partners (Krane, 2022). China, the world's second biggest economy, is an important wild card. Although Russia and China look to be having their best ties in decades, some commentators believe Chinese President Xi Jinping was taken aback by Putin's assault of Ukraine.

Lardy (2022) believes that Xi believes he has been duped by Putin. He's been thrown into a precarious predicament. As a result of this, Beijing's support for Russia may be limited. And if an embargo is imposed, China may be unable to go beyond its existing energy purchases to compensate for lost shipments to the West. Instead of dividing Western allies, as Putin intended, the Russian invasion has resulted in extraordinary unity and almost instantaneous agreement on a wide range of financial sanctions and export bans, prompting an increasing number of Western companies to avoid doing business or investing in Russia. The majority of the sanctions against Russia are effective, particularly the measure freezing a large portion of the Russian central bank's \$630 billion in foreign currency reserves. The West has tried to suffocate Russia's financial sector by kicking several Russian

banks out of SWIFT, an international messaging system that connects over 11,000 banks to communicate and process payments.

However, transfers involving Russia's energy exports are largely exempt from SWIFT and other sanctions targeting Russian lenders. Furthermore, the action against Russia's central bank does not prevent the government from exporting and earning revenue from energy sources, or from gaining access to those monies. Concerned that increasing oil and gas prices will bolster Putin's war fund, Ukrainian officials have called for a complete embargo on Russian energy, which accounts for approximately 40% of Europe's natural gas and much more for nations like Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria. So far, there appears to be little appetite for such a move. However, Russia may still cut off Russian energy supplies to punish the West for the other sanctions. To avoid being criticized by voters, some European politicians may even want Russia to make that decision. At the very least, it has to be his fault (Hackenbroich, 2022). The question now is how much sacrifice and suffering regular people are willing to bear if the crisis continues.

On both sides of the Atlantic, this is true. Europe is nearing the end of its peak natural gas consumption season, which may provide some relief. On March 3, 2020, the US and other International Energy Agency members announced that they will cooperate in an unusual coordinated release of 60 million barrels of strategic oil stockpiles to help offset interruptions caused by Russia's invasion. Then there's the problem of Russia's reaction. Embargoes are difficult to lift. And, in the long run, a nuclear power's economic collapse is not in the West's or global security's best interests. Halff (2022) claimed that, in the long run, destabilizing the Russian economy would be counterproductive. We may discover that we need to stabilize Russia's oil and gas sector in order to maintain the country's economic and political stability. However, whatever the conclusion of this dispute, it is extremely likely that it will have a important impact on the energy market and the entire world.

13. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study showed that Russia's goal is to prevent the West and NATO from growing into Eastern Europe, which has led to the inclusion of nations such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the military alliance. Furthermore, Russia's military interests have led it to acquire regions such as Crimea so that NATO forces will not utilize it as a military base, as well as Donetsk and Luhansk, where Russia has supported separatist groups fighting Ukraine's pro-Western government. The findings of the study also revealed that Russia's foreign policy priorities include maintaining control over Ukraine, which is a key aspect of Russia's own identity, as it aims to connect Ukraine into a „„shared future““ with other post-Soviet countries. The findings of the study also revealed that Russian gas is transported through Ukraine to other European countries.

The findings of the study revealed that the international community sanctioned Russia by removing important Russian banks from the SWIFT interbank messaging system. European countries, on the other hand, have shut down their airspace for three months. Following Russian acknowledgment of the breakaway portions of eastern Ukraine, Germany halted accreditation of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which was meant to carry natural gas from Russia straight to Europe. UEFA has stripped Russia of the right to host the Champions League final in St. Petersburg.

Despite the international community's economic sanctions on Russia in response to the invasion of Ukraine, the study found that the most effective weapon in the international community's armory, a complete embargo on gas and oil, has been kept back. However, as cutting off Russia's energy supply would have serious ramifications for US friends in Europe, in addition Americans, at least in the short run. The findings also revealed that Russia is one of the world's top three oil and natural gas producers, despite the fact that exports account for only 5% of the worldwide market, removing that supply completely may result in a doubling of global energy prices. If these

trade barriers between Russia and the West are fully erected, and Russia reorients itself toward friendlier countries such as

China, it may be a very devastating turn of events, with Europe bearing the brunt of the consequences. The findings of the study also revealed that the West attempted to reshuffle Russia's monetary system by excluding some Russian lenders from SWIFT; however, SWIFT and other sanctions targeting Russian lenders generally carve out exceptions for transfers involving Russia's energy exports, and action against Russia's central bank does not, in and of itself, prevent the nation from exporting and earning income from energy supplies, or from accessing those funds.

14. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Russia's interest in Ukraine is to halt the West's and NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe, in addition to maintain influence over Ukraine, which is an important part of Russia's own identity, as it attempts to bind Ukraine into a „common future“ with other post-Soviet countries. The study also concluded that Russia was sanctioned by withdrawing important banks from the SWIFT interbank messaging system, and Germany blocked approval of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which was meant to conveyance natural gas from Russia straight to Europe. Finally, concluded that the impact of international community sanctions on Russia's financial system, which resulted in the suspension of Russia's lenders from SWIFT, was determined to exclude transfers involving Russia's energy exports.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that;

1. The West and NATO should avoid persuading countries in Eastern Europe to join the military organization and should stay out of Eastern Europe's political and economic affairs.
2. The international community, led by the United States, must always ensure that sanctions are not imposed out of sentimentality, but rather to deter an offender.
3. The sanctions imposed on Russia should be reconsidered so that Russia does not turn to friendly countries like China, as this might be a very disastrous turn of events, with Europe bearing the brunt of the consequences.

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