The Russia Ukraine Crisis

Ukraine has long played an important, yet sometimes overlooked, role in the global security order. Today, the country is on the front lines of a renewed great-power rivalry that many analysts say will dominate international relations in the decades ahead.

In October 2021, Russia began moving troops and military equipment near its border with Ukraine, reigniting concerns over a potential invasion. Commercial satellite imagery, social media posts, and publicly released intelligence from November and December 2021 showed armor, missiles, and other heavy weaponry moving toward Ukraine with no official explanation.

By December, more than one hundred thousand Russian troops were in place near the Russia-Ukraine border and U.S. intelligence officials warned that Russia may be planning an invasion for early 2022. In mid-December 2021, Russia's foreign ministry issued a set of demands calling for the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to cease any military activity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, to commit against further NATO expansion toward Russia, and to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO in the future. The United States and other NATO allies rejected these demands and warned Russia they would impose severe economic sanctions if Russia it invaded Ukraine. The United States sent additional military assistance to Ukraine, including ammunition, small arms, and other defensive weaponry.

In early February 2022, U.SPres ident Joe Biden ordered around three thousand U.S. troops to deploy to Poland and Romania—NATO countries that border Ukraine—to counter Russian troops stationed near its border with Ukraine and reassure NATO allies . Satellite imagery showed the largest deployment of Russian troops to its border with Belarus since the end of the Cold War . Negotiations between the United States, Russia, and European powers —including France and Germany—did not result in a resolution. While Russia released a statement claiming to draw down a certain number of troops, reports emerged of an increasing Russian troop presence at the border with Ukraine.

In late February 2022, the United States warned that Russia intended to invade Ukraine, citing Russia's growing military presence at the Russia -Ukraine border. Russian President Vladimir Putin then ordered troops to Luhansk and Donetsk, separatist regions in Eastern Ukraine partly

controlled by Russian-backed separatists, claiming the troops served a "peacekeeping" function. The United States responded by imposing sanctions on the Luhansk and Donetsk regions and the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline a few days later.

On February 24, during a United Nations Security Council meeting to dissuade Russia from attacking Ukraine, Putin announced the beginning of a full-scale land, sea, and air invasion of Ukraine targeting the Ukrainian military as set s and cities across the country, marking a dramatic escalation of the eight-year-old conflict and a historic turning point for European security. Biden declared this attack "unprovoked and unjustified" and has since issued severe sanctions in coordination with European allies, including sanctions that target four of Russia' s largest banks, its oil and gas industry, and the financial as set s of Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

The U.S. continues to commit military assistance to Ukraine; following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the U.S. Congress on March 16, Biden announced an additional $800 million in military assistance. Since Russia's invasion, the United States has committed $3.4 billion in security assistance, including heavy weapons and artillery. The United States has also dramatically increased the number s of U.S. troops in Europe, bringing the total to more than one hundred thousand.

With expanding Western aid, Ukraine has managed to frustrate many aspects of Russia's attack, but many of its cities have been pulverized sed, hundreds of civilians killed, and some places — including Ukraine's largest nuclear power plant — are already under Russian control. Not to mention, the war has resulted in one-quarter of Ukrainian citizens now being refugees or displaced persons, upending decades of peace in Europe. The United Nations, G7, EU, and other countries continue to condemn Russian actions and support Ukrainian forces . In an emergency, the United Nations session on March 2, 141 of 193 member s states voted to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and demanded that Russia immediately cease its use of force in Ukraine. In late March 2022, Russia announced that it would " reduce military activity" near Kyiv and Chernihiv. As the initial Rusian invasion ion slowed, long-range misslies trikes caused significant damage to the Ukrainian military assets, urban residential areas, and communication and transportation infrastructure. Hospitals and residential complexes also sustained shelling and bombing attacks.

By April 6, Russia had withdrawn all troops from Ukraine's capital region. In the aftermath of the Russian withdrawal from Kyiv's surrounding areas, Ukrainian civilians described apparent war crimes committed by Russian forces including accounts of summary executions, torture, and rape.

HISTORY & CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Ukraine was a cornerstone of the Soviet Union, the archrival of the United States during the Cold War. Behind only Russia, it was the second most populous and -powerful of the fifteen Soviet republics, home to much of the union's agricultural production, defense industries, and military, including the Black Sea Fleet and some of the nuclear arsenal. Ukraine was so vital to the union that its decision to sever ties in 1991 proved to be a coup de grâce for the ailing superpower.

In its three decades of independence, Ukraine has sought to forge its own path as a sovereign state while looking to align more closely with Western institutions, including the EU and NATO. However, Kyiv s struggled to balance its foreign relations and bridge deep internal divisions. A more nationalist, Ukrainian- speaking population in western parts of the country generally supported greater integration with Europe, while a mostly Russian- speaking community in the east favored closer ties with Russia.

So when a pro-Western protest t s broke out in Kyiv in 2014, ousting the Moscow-aligned president, Russia responded by invading and annexing the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine and arming and abetting separatists in the Donbas region in the country's southeast. Russia's leader saw the fall of the Soviet Union as the "disintegration of historical Russia".

He claimed Russians and Ukrainians are one people, denying Ukraine its long history and seeing today's independent state merely as an "anti-Russia project". It was his pressure on Ukraine's pro-Russian leader, Viktor Yanukovych, not to sign a deal with the European Union in 2013 that led to protests that ultimately ousted the Ukrainian president in February 2014. Russia's next move was to seize Crimea; the first time since World War II that a European state annexed the territory of another.

Over fourteen thousand people died in the fighting in the Donbas between 2014 and 2021, making it the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the 1990s. In February 2022, Russia embarked

on a full-scale invasion of Ukraine with the aim of toppling the Wes tern-aligned government of Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Russian leader's initial aim was to overrun Ukraine and depose its government, ending for good its desire to join the Western defensive alliance Nato. After a month of failures, he abandoned his bid to capture the capital Kyiv and turned his ambitions to Ukraine's east and south.

Launching the invasion on 24 February, he told the Russian people his goal was to "demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine". His declared aim was to protect people subjected to what he called eight years of bullying and genocide by Ukraine's government. Another objective was soon added: ensuring Ukraine's neutral status. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke of freeing Ukraine from oppression while foreign intelligence chief Sergei Naryshkin argued that "Russia's future and its future place in the world is at stake. "

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT

A. Internal Humanitarian Crisis

- In the weeks after the onset of conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, the country's humanitarian s situation has surpas sed even the worst-case predicted scenarios.
- Neighboring countries are seeing huge refugee influxes, largely women and children. More than 5.3 million people, 90% of whom are women and children, have left Ukraine in search of safety, swiftly making Ukraine one of the world's largest refugee crises (second only to Syria). The U.N. is estimating that 18 million people will be affected by the conflict; this figure is based on a volatile and fast-moving situation on the ground, with people urgently seeking safety.
- Even prior to the invasion, years of conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine had left 2.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and displaced 1.5 million people from their homes. For Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced people, the most immediate needs include food, clean water, shelter, and protection from violence, including gender-based violence.
- In addition to the ongoing conflict, other major challenges for displaced families include the freezing weather, COVID-19 concerns, and access to healthcare, especially for women and the elderly.

- In just the first week of hostilities , over 1 million Ukrainians fled home, often with little more than a few days ' worths of clothes and food.

- Currently, 7.7 million Ukrainians are displaced internally within their own country. In total, the conflict has uprooted 13 million Ukrainians, approximately 30% of the country's population. The UNHCR also estimates that 13 million Ukrainians are stranded in zones of conflict and are unable to leave due to heightened security risks, destruction of bridges and roads, and/or a lack of information on where to find safe accommodation.

- Poland has taken in nearly 3 million Ukrainian refugees, many of whom had friends and family living in the country before this recent escalation in the conflict. (1.5 million Ukrainians lived in Poland at the beginning of 2022.)

- This represents a huge increase: In Kraków alone, the city's population increased by over 20%. In March, the Polish government passed a law allowing Ukrainians to legally live and work in the country for 18 months, with an option to extend. The government has even set up reception centers and hospitals near crossing points on the 300-mile border. Other neighboring countries receiving refugees include Moldova, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania.

B. Global Food crisis

- Ukraine grows enough food to feed 400 million people worldwide, which includes 50% of the world's sunflower oil supply, 10% of the worldwide grain supply, and 13% of the global corn supply. As for now, up to 30% of crop areas in Ukraine will either not be planted or be unharvested ted this year because of the Russian attack.

- In addition to this, supply chains from Ukraine have been disrupted, because of the closure of the Black Sea ports and limited ability to transport commodities through the Western border.

- Because of the war and consequently, city blockades, lack of seeds, and fertilizers, farmers are struggling to go ahead with the sowing. The markets have already reacted. Wheat prices soared by almost 25% over the past year. This will result in a supply issue, impacting the availability of food for people around the world.

- FAO has warned that di s ruptions to production, supply, and delivery chains for grains and oil seeds, and restrictions on exports s from Russia, will have a significant impact on

food security. An additional 8 to 13 million people could suffer from undernutrition worldwide if food exports from Ukraine and Russia were permanently prevented by the war. The UN Secretary-General has warned of a "hurricane of famine" and a "collapse of the global food system" . More than three months into the war in Ukraine, SecretaryGeneral has warned that the war in Ukraine threatens to unleash an unprecedented wave of hunger and destitution, leaving social and economic chaos in its wake. People around the world are facing a cost-of-living crisis not seen in more than a generation. On 13 July, Secretary-General António Guterres said that a "critical step forward" had been taken to allow the " safe and secure export " of millions of tonnes of grain via the Black Sea. The UN chief described Progres s between Russia and Ukraine on allowing the resumption of grain exports during UN-brokered talks in Türkiye, as a " ray of hope to ease human suffering and alleviate hunger around the world. "

C. Energy Challenges

- Russia s invasion of Ukraine has the potential to accelerate the global shift to green energy in the long run, but in the short term, it will have huge consequences on energy prices and market s structures. Firstly, countries are working on contingency plans as a response to the shortage of oil and gas. C. Energy Challenges The United States, United Kingdom, and Canada imposed an embargo on Russian oil and gas imports. The EU is working on plans to decrease dependence on Russian gas and oil by 2024, too. Other states and big private energy companies, like Shell, BP, Equinor, and Exxon are leaving Russia. Markets react with a gas and oil price surge.
- Security and affordability will play a key role in state policy of energy companies, as the urgency to no longer be dependent on fossil fuels has become more salient through the war in Ukraine and after the release of the IPCC s latest climate report. This marks a shift in how we think about energy and where we get it from the investment into renewables will be considered a component of energy security – and political s stability. Therefore, the rapid development of the technologies needed for a green transition would only accelerate this process.

THE GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, launched in large measure to compensate for strategic vulnerabilities caused by NATO's expansion, has triggered the most tumultuous and potentially dangerous transformation of the geopolitical disorder since the end of World War II. Internationally, there is a near-complete absence of trust and cooperation between the world's most powerful nations even as we face the existential threats of nuclear, climate, and pandemics. We are cursed with the near-complete absence of arms control agreements with the exception of New START which will soon expire. And hopes that global warming can be limited to 1.5C have evaporated. The Ukraine War is transforming the world's geopolitical systems. Russia will be increasingly dependent on China, and their tacit alliance will be institutionalized as they confront the United States, NATO, and their global allies. With Finland and Sweden joining the Alliance, NATO's border with Russia will double in size. Meanwhile, the U.S. has been ramping up its military, diplomatic, and technological campaign to reinforce its Indo-Pacific primacy against a rising China. While Eastern European and Baltic nations are committed to a decisive victory over Russia, in Western Europe there are growing concerns about energy and escalation to possible nuclear war. Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently warned that China is undermining the global order.

Despite the Ukraine War, the Biden Administration remains focused on China. Biden and his mandarins recently traveled to Asian and Pacific capitals, and with their Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States warned that the U.S. is "determined to strengthen our long-term position and commitment to the Indo-Pacific" by shaping the " strategic environment. " We see this in Washington' s threat following China' s establishment of a security relationship with the Solomon Isllands . There will be seismic consequences however the war plays out. Before 26 February, geopolitics and global trade were about 'the West' ver sus China; now it' s the West ver sus Russia and China. Moreover, Russia' s goal to limit NATO expansion has backfired spectacularly, with Sweden and Finland now preparing to join NATO. President Emmanuel Macron' s re-election in France is another boost to solidarity both for NATO and Europe.

SANCTIONS

In terms of effectiveness , sanctions against Russia have proven among the most powerful in modern history, largely because so many countries have gone along with them. The punishment to the Russian economy, and to rich and poor Russians individually, has also been extraordinarily severe. Many experts argue that if President Biden and European leaders had declared in advance, in public, and in detail the path-breaking sanctions now imposed on Russia, Putin might have reconsidered. But advance threats from Washington and European capitals were ambiguous and deterrence failed, perhaps because Putin grossly under estimated not only Ukrainian opposition but also the worldwide condemnation and punishment evoked by the invasion. The size, speed, and sweep of existing sanctions—supported not only by the United States but also by the entire European Union and several Asian allies—are exceptional. It i s entirely possible that Putin was unreceptive to Western threat s leading up to the invasion because unified and damaging sanctions against Russia have little historical precedence. The classic objectives of economic sanctions can be grouped similarly to the objectives of criminal justice: do they deter bad behaviour, but also can they be enforced, are their punishments effective, and do they lead to changed behaviour by the targeted countries ? Moreover, except for cancelling the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia, Western economic sanctions , including the freezing of Russ ian central bank assets , have exempted sales of fossil fuels . Crude petroleum, refined petroleum, and petroleum gas constitute roughly 35 percent of Russian exports , while all fuels and minerals make up 59 percent of export s . Putin clearly believed that this economy could easily weather the fallout from his war and that Europe would not risk cutting off Russian gas and oil supplies .

Perhaps threatening to hit Russia where it would really hurt—by sanctioning exports of fossil fuels—would have made an effective deterrent. But Europe' s energy shortages at the height of winter made an embargo politically impossible. In the UN General Assembly vote denouncing Russia on March 2, 2022, four countries sided with Moscow (Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, and Syria), while 35 countries abstained, including China, India, and Pakistan. These countries are prime candidates for sanctions-busting transactions . They are logical destinations for Russiian gas and oil sold at steep discounts , as well as sources of consumer and industrial goods shipped to Russia at high prices . State Department and Treasury official s are now trying to dissuade neutral countries from overt sanctions-busting and may threaten secondary sanctions to back up their arguments . China especially poses a threat to enforcement of sanctions . Under its new Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, China bars its citizens from complying with foreign sanctions . As

Russia imports approximately 68 percent of it s computers , semiconductors , and smartphones from China, the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, if invoked, would allow Russia to evade the US Commerce Department' s export controls targeting it s defence, aerospace, and maritime sectors . Indeed, US officials claim that Russia has already asked China for military supplies . By historic yards ticks , the economic hardship now inflicted on Russia ranks among the brutal episodes of modern times , far greater than the mild punishment inflicted for the annexation of Crimea in 2014. In recent decades , only North Korea, Cuba, Iraq, and Iran have suffered comparable losses from the imposition of sanctions . By singling out Russsian elites , including Putin himself, for travel bans and as set freezes , Western leader s seek to penalise the Russian ruling class , but financial and trade freezes are bound to bring misery to the Russian masses . Enforcement by countries in the sanctions alliance should prove highly effective with respect to goods and finance originating in their territory and conducted through their companies . However, significant sanctions busting can be anticipated both by neutral countries and countries friendly to Russia.

Soon the sanctions alliance will need to decide whether to augment diplomatic protests with secondary sanctions to discourage neutral or friendly commerce with Russia. Thi s question finds antecedents in the Napoleonic Wars , when the United States played a neutral role but was subjected to economic and military pressure by Britain.

THE CYBER WAR

In the early hours of Feb. 24, as Russian forces entered eastern Ukraine, hackers crippled tens of thousands of satellite internet modems in Ukraine and across Europe. The modems provided internet to thousands of Ukrainians . It remains one of the biggest publicly known cyberattacks to have taken place in the conflict. The attack, against a network controlled by U.S. satellite firm Viasat, caused a "really huge loss in communications " at the out set of the war, senior Ukrainian cyber security official Victor Zhora said. Britain and the European Union attributed the digital blitz against Viasat' s network to Russia on Tuesday. Britain' s Foreign Office said Russia was behind the operation, citing "new UK and U.S. intelligence," without elaborating. After the invasion, Russian hacker s compromised several important Ukrainian organisations , including nuclear power companies , media firms and government entities , according to Microsoft. Though it i s difficult to track the goal s of each hack, one notable incident happened on Mar. 1,

when a missiile s trike against Kyiv' s TV tower coincided with widespread destructive cyberattacks on Kyiv-based media. Days later, Microsoft detected a Russian group on the networks of an unnamed Ukrainian nuclear power company, just as Russia' s military occupied the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power station - the largest of it s kind in Europe. Senior U.S. national security officials say Moscow is now combining Russ ia' s cyber and military forces . "We have seen the Russians having an integrated approach to using physical and cyberattacks , in an integrated way, to achieve their brutal objectives in Ukraine," senior White House cyber security official Anne Neuberger told a conference. On April 12, Zhora, ESET and Ukraine' s computer emergency response team said in a series of statements that an elite Russian hacking team known as Sandworm, which attacked Ukraine' s power grid in 2015, had attempted days earlier to cause another blackout in the country.

The hackers , reportedly part of Russia' s military intelligence agency, designed a piece of malware named Indus troyer 2, which could manipulate equipment in electrical utilities to control the flow of power. Indus troyer 2 had been deployed on an unnamed electrical substation that provides power to roughly 2 million locals , Ukrainian officials said. While the attack failed, Zhora said, the "intended disruption was huge." As war broke out, Ukraine called on hacktivists to help the country defend itself from Russia. Since then, as teady stream of unnamed, anonymous hacktivists from both s ides have taken to social media claiming to have conducted successful intrusions into either Russian or Ukrainian target s . In some cases , the hacktivists have posted screenshot s or caches of documents to prove their claims , but their actions have proven difficult to verify or measure, researchers say. Russian government agencies and companies seemingly affected by the Ukraine-allied hacktivists have declined to comment.