



*The Impact of the Russian-Ukrainian War on Russia's Economy and International Standing*

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*Abstract*

The Russian-Ukrainian war stands as one of the most critical crises of the current century due to its repercussions on regional, continental, and global security and stability. The crisis's complexity has grown as it encompasses a wide geographical scope, significant international involvement from both nations and institutions, turning it into a protracted conflict. This article explores Russia's strategic motivations and interests in Ukraine, the nature of these interests, and whether Russia can resolve the war and achieve its goals in the face of international intervention, growing pressure on Russia, and support for Ukraine. It also delves into the economic consequences of this war for both countries and contemplates whether Russia will alter its strategy in managing the conflict.

✓ **Keywords:** War, Russia, Ukraine, Economic Consequences, International Standing.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Today, Russia is considered one of the major countries that shape world politics with its policies. Russia's interventions in various regions of the world reflect its ambitions to become one of the world's poles of power. Russia's strategy is guided by the statement of Harold Mackinder, "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world." Ukraine, with its strategic location, serves as a gateway to Europe for Russia. Therefore, Russia's strategy towards Ukraine is built upon this significance.

Russia's strategic location on the world map is one of its most powerful attributes, driving its capacity to be among the most influential players in global politics. Historical evidence, such as the defeat of the Nazis on its borders, underscores the importance of its location from both defensive and offensive perspectives.

Russia has a tradition of playing active roles in international relations. It has adopted policies that prioritize Russian interests across various domains, particularly in light of European and American ambitions and objectives that affect its neighbors and vital areas.

Vladimir Putin's ascent to power in 1999 led to a change in Russian foreign policy to align more closely with a leading role in international politics. The new president outlined a foreign policy based on defining and defending Russian national interests.

Russian President Vladimir Putin actively worked to establish strong and durable relationships with former Soviet allies, including China, India, and Iran. This was done with the aim of restoring Russia's international standing and attempting to counter American dominance in the post-Cold War era.

Russia's return to the international stage raised concerns for the United States and Europe. This was primarily because Russia, possessing a nuclear arsenal and superiority in missile systems, was seen as the only power capable of challenging them. In response, efforts were made to contain Russia geopolitically. Missile defense systems were deployed near Russian borders to undermine Russian superiority. The United States also sought to expand NATO to Russia's borders by incorporating Baltic and Eastern European countries. Given Ukraine's strategic importance to Russia's national security and future ambitions, any strategic competitor in Ukraine was strongly opposed. Russia adopted several strategies to counter American dominance in the region, ultimately leading to its military intervention in Ukraine.

In light of the preceding information, the following questions are raised:

What were the motivations behind the Russian military intervention in Ukraine? What are the implications of this intervention for Russia, and its international strategic standing?

## **2. The First Axis: The Geopolitical and Military Significance of Ukraine for Russia**

### **Ukraine as a Geopolitical Location for Russia:**

Russian leadership consistently employs a geopolitical perspective in shaping its grand strategy. This is evident in its persistent pursuit of dominance in three key geopolitical regions:

- The Western Region: Extending from the Baltic to the mountains in central and eastern Europe.
- The Southern Region: Stretching from the Danube to Iran.
- The Eastern Region: Extending from the Volga to the south and southeast.<sup>1</sup>

And Ukraine represents a geostrategic location for Russia, with Russia emphasizing the importance of the region once occupied by the former Soviet Union as an area of distinct interests for Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin has considered the collapse of the Soviet Union a major geopolitical catastrophe.<sup>2</sup>

Today, Russia shapes its strategy based on its external environment, driven by the need to secure its neighboring countries for the protection of its borders.

Regarding the Eurasian region, it is of great geostrategic importance for major world powers due to its abundant resources and significant geopolitical significance. The Eurasian region is considered the convergence point of two major continents, Europe and Asia. Many geopolitical theorists, including Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman, as well as strategic thinkers like Zbigniew Brzezinski, have focused on the importance of this region. The United States has also adopted some of Brzezinski's ideas as approaches to its foreign policy in the area.

Ukraine holds geostrategic significance as Russia's gateway to the Black Sea and access to several Eastern European countries. Therefore, Russia cannot afford to show any signs of weakness in its dealings with Ukraine. Particularly, the eastern part of Ukraine is a natural extension of western Russia, where Moscow is situated. For this reason, Russia declared its strategic interests in Ukraine as early as the 1990s. The idea is linked to Russia's security, considering Ukraine as its backyard and

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<sup>1</sup>- Murad Faisal, *The New Regional Policy of Russia: A Case Study of Ukraine*, Magister's Thesis, (University of Algiers 03: Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, 2016), pages 45, 46.

<sup>2</sup>- Emad Qadura, "The Centrality of Geography and Control over the Eastern Gateway to the West: Ukraine as a Center of Conflict," *Arab Policies Journal*, Issue 09, (July 2014), pages 49, 50.

a fundamental cornerstone of its security. Thus, Russia opposes the presence of any strategic competitors in Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

Russia seeks to underscore its international and regional standing by securing its geopolitical influence over neighboring countries, including Ukraine. Notably, the importance of the port of Mariupol is highlighted for Russia, as it occupies a strategically significant location overlooking the Sea of Azov, which is shared between Russian and Ukrainian shores and controls the Kerch Strait, which separates the Russian mainland from the Crimean Peninsula.

The significance of Mariupol for Russia lies in its role in providing a maritime route to the Crimean Peninsula. There is a Russian project to construct a bridge for trucks and a railway line, in addition to maritime routes, to enhance connectivity to the peninsula. However, the future of this project is closely tied to the fate of Mariupol, which is the largest city in southeastern Ukraine and currently under the control of Ukrainian government forces. The city also holds significant economic importance as it houses crucial economic facilities.<sup>2</sup>

The Crimean Peninsula has historically held immense importance for Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and contemporary Russia. Its possession implies control over the Black Sea and the regions bordering it. Therefore, the coveted goal of Russian rulers over centuries has been to secure control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to ensure the safe passage of the Russian Black Sea Fleet into the Mediterranean. The strategic importance of the Crimean Peninsula persisted throughout the 20th century, and it continues to do so in the present day, as it hosts the largest Russian naval base in warm waters and serves as the headquarters for the Russian Black Sea Fleet.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Ukraine's Economic Importance for Russia:**

Russia is among the great powers, and therefore, any strategy it pursues is motivated by various factors. The most crucial factor may be the achievement of Russian security, closely tied to other considerations, particularly its economic status.

Economically, Ukraine is one of the leading countries in terms of mineral resources. Ukraine's most economically valuable minerals include primarily coal, iron, manganese, rock salt, potassium salt, mineral water, gas, and oil. Ukraine holds a prominent global position regarding the reserves of certain minerals, such as iron, manganese, titanium, and zinc.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>- Boumengel Khalid, "The Discrepancy in Approaches: Russian and American Security Approaches to Conflict Management in Ukraine," (Germany: The Arab Center for Strategic and Political Studies, 2018), page 74.

<sup>2</sup>- Asmaa Haddad, "Russia and the Geopolitical Implications of the Crimea Crisis in the Context of International Competition for Eurasia," *Al-Maeyar Journal*, Volume 09, Issue 04, (December 2018), page 132.

<sup>3</sup>- Anna Mohamed Ali, "The Crimea Crisis and Its Implications on Russian-Ukrainian Relations," *International Studies Journal*, Issue 68, page 164.

<sup>4</sup>- Volodymyr Tolkach, the previous reference, page 04.

Consequently, Ukraine occupies a distinct strategic position in the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard, known as the "hinge." It functions as a pivotal state in political geography, acting as a buffer zone separating Russia and the European Union. It is a potential candidate for dominance in the Eurasian sphere, serving as a geographically intermediate state, referred to as the "hinge." It forms an integral part of the Russian identity and is strategically vital, being one of the Eurasian geopolitical pillars and one of the three gateways for Russia to engage with the outside world, alongside Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Russian orientation towards Ukraine to secure its energy security:**

When Vladimir Putin came to power in the Russian Federation, various concepts related to political, security, economic, and military interests of the new state evolved among the ruling elite. They attempted to evaluate the potential threats to these interests and developed a multifaceted strategy to achieve the national goals of the Russian Federation. Russian strategic thinking became a priority and a focus for experts.<sup>2</sup>

One of the primary concerns was preserving Russian national security and the territorial integrity of Russia, which involved curbing separatist conflicts and addressing the growing danger of an increasing foreign ethnic population beyond its borders, particularly in southern Siberia. This issue became more critical with the rising number of ethnic Chinese and Korean populations, posing a potential threat to the territorial integrity of Russia. Russia also sought to make Ukraine a barrier against European expansion.<sup>3</sup>

In 1999, Putin published an article in a magazine about mineral resources in which he stated that Russia's reserves of oil and gas were the key to boosting its economy, and that Russia's entry into the global economy would make it a leader in the economic field.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Russia aimed to enhance its partnerships by gaining access to seaports. This drive led to conflicts in the Baltic region as Russia sought a maritime gateway to the Atlantic Ocean and the establishment of a window into Europe, symbolized by St. Petersburg.

Oil and gas are vital resources for safeguarding a nation's security, serving as the lifeblood of its national economy and growth. Thus, energy security became a critical concern for all nations,

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<sup>1</sup>- Bassem Rashed, "The Geostrategic Threat to Russian Calculations in the Ukrainian Crisis," *International Politics Journal*, Issue 196, (April 2014), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>- Shaklaat, Wissam. "The New Russian Strategy in the Putin Era from 2000 to 2014: A Case Study of the South Mediterranean." Master's Thesis, Mouloud Maameri University of Tizi Ouzou, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Department of Political Science, 2016, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup>- Tariq Muhammad Al-Taie, "Russian Strategic Thought in the 21st Century: An Analytical Study in Light of Russian Official Documents," (Jordan: Dar Al-Akadeemyun for Publishing and Distribution, 2016), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>- Daniel Yergin, trans. by Haitham Nashawati, "The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World," (Qatar: The Arab and International Relations Forum, 2015), p. 64.

particularly major powers. Consequently, Russia developed various strategies to secure its energy resources.

### **The Challenge of Secure Transit for Russian Energy Supplies to the World**

The concept of transit security is one of the new dimensions of energy security, and Russia faces a dilemma in hindering the transit of its energy supplies to the global markets, especially in Europe. Most of Russia's energy exports are transported through an extensive network of pipelines, with Ukraine serving as a transit country for Russian energy supplies. Currently, more than 50% of Russian energy supplies to Europe pass through Ukraine, specifically through the Druzhba pipeline (the Friendship pipeline).

Historical evidence demonstrates that Ukraine has consistently been a vulnerable point for Russian energy supplies to Europe. This vulnerability became evident during the 2009 Ukrainian crisis when Ukraine disrupted the flow of Russian energy supplies to the European market. Ukraine even siphoned off significant volumes of Russian energy intended for Europe, and this was done illegally and without any legal justification. Additionally, Ukraine blackmailed Russia by raising transit fees for energy supplies to \$3 per 1000 cubic meters of gas per 100 kilometers.

The danger of Russian energy dependence on transit countries like Ukraine lies in the risk of obstructing these supplies. Furthermore, getting rid of this dependence before 2025 is a challenging task due to the enormous cost of alternative energy projects that might bypass Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

We can deduce that Russia's strategic direction is influenced by several factors, with the most important being the preservation of Russian national security.

### **The Military Importance of Ukraine's Location for Russia:**

Russia considers Ukraine a strategically important country due to its military significance as a buffer state between Russia and NATO member states. Russia's occupation of eastern Ukraine serves as a preparation for any potential land war against NATO forces on Ukrainian territory. Ukraine is seen as the first line of defense for Russia and essential for safeguarding Russia's territorial integrity. From a naval perspective, Ukraine is home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet, stationed in the city of Sevastopol, which the Russians refer to as the "City of Russian Glory." This is one of the reasons Russia annexed Crimea, and this annexation served three additional objectives for Russia :

- The annexation of Crimea serves several purposes for Russia. First, it provides a means to limit any potential Georgian influence and to facilitate any future military victories against Georgia. Second, it allows Russia to regain access to the Black Sea, which is strategically significant for its naval

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<sup>1</sup>- Tarek Radwan, "The Holy Energy War: Oil, Gas, and Blood" (Egypt: Hala Publishing and Distribution, 2016), p. 552.

presence. Third, it aims to prevent Ukraine and Georgia from joining NATO. Therefore, Crimea, on Russia's external map, is a guarantor of the stability of southern Russia. It significantly influences Russia's foreign policies, especially concerning countries bordering the Black Sea, such as Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, and Georgia. Russia's insistence on maintaining control over Ukraine is not solely due to external threats but also because of its geographic location, characterized by a lack of water passages. Russia, as a landlocked country, recognizes that those who control maritime bases can influence global trade routes.<sup>1</sup>

- Since southern Ukraine overlooks the warm waters of the Black Sea coast, which connects at its end to the Bosphorus Strait, the Russians have made controlling Ukraine a top priority in their foreign policy. Ukraine ensures their ability to export Russian goods and achieve economic security.<sup>2</sup>

- The Crimean Peninsula has a long stretch of the northern Black Sea coast, which would increase Russia's territorial waters in the Black Sea if it were to gain control of the peninsula. If Ukraine were to join NATO and possess Crimea, Russia would lose a strategically important foothold in the Black Sea. In this case, Russia would be forced to withdraw its military presence from the peninsula. However, Russia's annexation of Crimea has maintained the status quo, with Russian military presence on the Crimean Peninsula. The number of Russian forces stationed in the Crimean Peninsula has reached 14,000 soldiers.<sup>3</sup>

### **Russia and the Exploitation of the Border Crisis with Ukraine**

There is a border issue between Russia and Ukraine dating back to 1992, where the two countries have been disputing an area of approximately 2,000 square kilometers of border territories. However, this border dispute did not see significant developments between the two nations. They reached an agreement in January 2003, when Russian President Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Kuchma signed a treaty to define their borders after years of negotiations. But this border agreement didn't last long as the issue flared up again following Russia's announcement of a project to build a dam connecting to Tuzla Island in the Kerch Strait at the entrance to the Sea of Azov.

This led to a crisis in the relationship between the two countries. Ukraine viewed the dam construction as a violation of its territorial sovereignty, and Russia's actions were seen as unfriendly towards Ukraine. In October 2003, Ukrainian President Yanukovich announced that his country

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<sup>1</sup>- Mohammed Al-Amin Mekraoui Al-Waghlissi, "Ukraine's Geopolitics: A Reading of the Global Conflict Between the West and Russia," Al-Bayan Magazine, accessed on 09/03/2020, at the link: <http://albayan.co.uk/rsc/idaspx.text=3589>

<sup>2</sup>- The same location.

<sup>3</sup>- Bomengel, Khaled, a previous reference, pages 73 and 74.

would take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty over its territories. Ukraine sent a group of border guards and some aircraft to Tuzla Island to mark the border line in the Kerch Strait.

Russia justifies the dam project based on economic and environmental considerations. This kind of issue wasn't discussed in border talks between the two countries. However, in December 2003, an agreement was signed between the two nations, allowing for the use of the waters of the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait and officially delineating their borders. Despite the temporary resolution of the border problem, the possibility of it resurfacing remains, particularly in light of Ukraine's desire to join NATO. Ukraine sees its NATO membership as a way to bolster its position against Russian influence. In contrast, Russia views the border issue as a valuable tool to impede Ukraine's aspirations. NATO cannot admit a country in a state of conflict, highlighting the interconnected nature of various components of Russian national security.<sup>1</sup>

It is argued that the Russian-Ukrainian border is considered the weaker link due to its length and the presence of the Russian minority in eastern Ukraine with separatist tendencies, which undermines Ukraine's stability. Additionally, Russia's global status and its explicit support for eastern Ukraine add to this challenge.

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### **3. The Second Axis: The Russian War on Ukraine, Its Paths, and Consequences**

#### **3.1. The Beginning of the Crisis Between Russia and Ukraine:**

The internal polarization began in 2004 when presidential elections were held between the candidates Viktor Yanukovich, of Russian origin and with an Eastern orientation, and Petro Poroshenko, of Ukrainian origin with a more liberal stance. Viktor Yanukovich won by a narrow margin of 3%, which incited the anger of Poroshenko's supporters. They alleged electoral fraud and gathered in the squares, using orange scarves as a symbol of support, as it was the color of Poroshenko's party's logo.

Protests escalated, leading to what became known as the Orange Revolution. Divisions and demonstrations spread across the capital, Kiev, with demands for the recognition of Petro Poroshenko as the legitimate president of the country. This led to the intervention of the Ukrainian court, which

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<sup>1</sup>- Murad Faisal, former reference, pages 47, 48.



ruled for a rerun of the elections. The repeat elections took place under international observation, and the results declared Poroshenko as the winner.

President Poroshenko's tenure saw the formation of a strong opposition front, with candidate Yanukovich successfully building support during Poroshenko's rule. This was aided by the failure to achieve the desired goals of the Orange Revolution, which the Ukrainian people had called for, including the fight against corruption. Instead, corruption increased, with Ukraine ranking 147th out of 180 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index for 2009, scoring only 2.2 out of 10, indicating a high level of corruption. Notably, this score was equivalent to the corruption index for 2004, the year of the Orange Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

The divisions continued until the 2010 presidential elections when Viktor Yanukovich, the opposition candidate, won. He promised to make amendments to improve the deteriorating economic situation. The Ukrainian economy had been adversely affected by internal conditions, compounded by the global economic crisis of 2009. This crisis had significant impacts on the Ukrainian economy, leading to unemployment, budget deficits, reduced foreign investment, and increased poverty rates among the population.<sup>2</sup>

Ukraine turned to external support due to its strategic importance, drawing attention from both Russia and the European Union. They aimed to provide economic assistance to aid Ukraine's recovery, which was crucial for their own economies, especially in the fields of energy and food exports.

#### **4. The Third Axis: The Consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian War on Russia and its Position**

##### **4.1-Economic Consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian War on Russia:**

The war triggered a massive shock to the global economy, especially to energy and food markets, squeezing supply and pushing up prices to unprecedented levels. Compared with other economic regions, the euro area has been particularly vulnerable to the economic consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> This is mainly because the euro area depends very strongly on energy imports, which accounted for more than half of the euro area's energy use in 2020. Furthermore,

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<sup>1</sup>- Bashir Nafei, "The Ukrainian Crisis Reignites the Conflict over Europe," Al Jazeera Center for Studies, (03/17/2014), p. 07.

<sup>2</sup>- The same reference, page 07.

<sup>3</sup> Arce, O., Koester, G. and Pierluigi, B. (2022), "Challenges for global monetary policy in an environment of high inflation: the case of the euro area", *ICE: Revista De Economía*, No 929, pp. 115-130.

Russia was a key energy supplier to the euro area before the war.<sup>1</sup> Russia and Ukraine also played a large role in euro area imports of food and fertilisers before the start of Russia's invasion.<sup>2</sup> More generally, the euro area is a highly open economy, which makes it vulnerable to disruptions in global markets and value chains.

The war added heavily to the inflationary pressures building up in the euro area during the post-pandemic recovery and pushed up consumer prices, especially for energy (Chart 2a) and food. Headline inflation increased from 0.3% in 2020 to 2.6% in 2021 and then to 8.4% in 2022 (Chart 1a). Energy and food inflation accounted for more than two-thirds of this record-high inflation in 2022.<sup>3</sup>

Also the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine following the full-scale invasion by Russia at the end of February cause inflation to rise while exacerbating supply chain pressures.

Despite the already strained relations between the West and Russia since the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, the new sanctions and the uncertainty around the supply of some key commodities felt particularly in Europe, where some of the strongest trade links with Russia remain.

Markets could see continued volatility as the crisis evolves, with investors opting for safe havens, and some transactions postponed. Geopolitical and economic uncertainty is likely to remain high while the military operations continue to take place.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adolfsen, J.F., Kuik, F., Lis, E. and Schuler, T. (2022), "The impact of the war in Ukraine on euro area energy markets", *Economic Bulletin*, Box 1, Issue 4, ECB. Around 42% of energy came from domestic production (including from nuclear power and renewable sources) in 2020 – see the [Eurostat webpage on EU energy mix and import dependency](#).

<sup>2</sup> Bodnár, K. and Schuler, T. (2022), "The surge in euro area food inflation and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war", *Economic Bulletin*, Box 6, Issue 4, ECB; Emter, L., Fidora, M., Pastoris, F. and Schmitz, M. (2022), "Euro area linkages with Russia: latest insights from the balance of payments", *Economic Bulletin*, Box 8, Issue 7, ECB; and Attinasi, M.G., Doleschel, J., Gerinovic, R., Gunnella, V. and Mancini, M. (2022), "Trade flows with Russia since the start of its invasion of Ukraine", *Economic Bulletin*, Box 1, Issue 5, ECB.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Arce and Other 's , « One year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine\_ the effects on euro area inflation » , accessed on 23.10.2023 ; at the link : <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/blog/date/2023/html/ecb.blog20230224~3b75362af3.en.html>

<sup>4</sup> Russia and Ukraine conflict: Economic implications , Update from KPMG's Chief Economist in the UK , accessed on 12.11.2023 at the link : <https://kpmg.com/xx/en/home/insights/2022/03/russia-and-ukraine-conflict-chief-economist-team.html>

#### **4.2-The impact of the Russian-Ukrainian War on Russia Position :**

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked the largest conflict in Europe since World War II, the repercussions continue to reverberate around the world. Not only has the war in Ukraine set off a geopolitical realignment, but it has caused economic hardship far from the epicenter of the fighting.

The Feb. 24, 2022, invasion has touched off a refugee crisis, as Ukrainians flee the conflict in their homeland and many Russian men seek to avoid conscription. Meanwhile, it has spurred a process toward expanding NATO, with Finland and Sweden pursuing membership after decades of official neutrality.

Russia is one of the world's largest producers of oil and fuel. European countries have banned the Russian oil, gas and diesel they relied on, which initially caused a steep spike in prices. However, moves by European nations to lock in alternative sources, along with conservation efforts and a mild winter, have largely alleviated those price hikes. Now prices have returned to pre-invasion levels.

Russia has more nuclear weapons than any other country. Its attack on Ukraine has notably reenergized NATO, with the U.S. and other member states funneling tens of billions of dollars worth of military equipment into Ukraine. Early weapons deliveries included anti-tank rockets such as the U.S.-made Javelin. In the latest moves, the U.S., Germany and Britain have promised to provide state-of-the-art tanks.<sup>1</sup>

#### **5. Conclusion**

After delving into the previous sections and detailing the key determinants and motives that guided Russia in formulating its strategy towards Ukraine, we can summarize the following points:

- There are several significant determinants that lead Russia to shape its strategy towards Ukraine. These determinants encompass geostrategic, social, cultural factors, as well as the crucial economic factor, especially in terms of energy resources, which Russia heavily relies on.
- The primary driving force behind Russia's approach towards Ukraine is the pursuit of its energy security. Ukraine is considered a critical transit route for Russian energy pipelines, making it a key focus for Russian national security.

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<sup>1</sup> [Alyson Hurt](https://www.npr.org/2023/02/22/1157106172/ukraine-russia-war-refugees-food-prices) the ripple effects of Russia's war in Ukraine continue to change the world, accessed on :21.10.2023 , at the link : <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/22/1157106172/ukraine-russia-war-refugees-food-prices>

- Russia and Ukraine have shared a history of cooperation, with close ties and relationships. However, with the outbreak of the crisis in 2014, their relationship deteriorated, and various areas of cooperation and trade between the two nations declined.

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