

<b>FORUM:</b>	Security Council
<b>ISSUE:</b>	Situation in Ukraine
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<b>POSITION:</b>	Deputy President of Security Council

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## Introduction

February 2022 marked the first time since World War 2 that a country annexed another sovereign, independent state. Throughout two and a half years, the war has displaced over 10 million Ukrainians, causing millions to flee the country, and even more are in desperate need of food, water, and shelter. Not only that, but millions of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers have given up their lives during the war, and over 30,000 innocent civilians have died.



*Ukrainian Soldiers in the frontlines*

Since then, the war has taken a toll on Russia and Ukraine's economy and physical infrastructure but also has contributed to increased oil prices and food shortages in countries all around the world. Many countries around the world have taken sides in the conflict and have provided Russia or Ukraine with financial or military aid, with the US sending \$75 billion over the last 2.5 years. Russia's firepower and focus are primarily in eastern and southern Ukraine, targeting cities like Mariupol, a lead producer of steel in Ukraine, Zaporizhzhia, home to a big nuclear power plant, and ports, resulting in trade blockades that affect the global supply chain. Even now, Russia and Ukraine continue fighting, and peace treaties such as the Minsk Agreements have been futile in ending the war.

## Background

While the world often associates the Russia-Ukraine conflict with the war that started in 2022, the conflict dates back to 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea. The conflict primarily had to do with the historical significance of Ukraine to Russia and the Soviet Union; during the Soviet era, Ukraine was almost as powerful and influential as Russia and was an agriculture, military, and nuclear base for the Soviet Union. However, after the Soviet Union disintegrated into 15 republics, western Ukraine wanted to develop closer ties with the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while eastern Ukraine supported Russia. In 2014, Viktor Yanukovich, the president of Ukraine at the time, rejected a chance to obtain higher participation in the EU economically, which led to protests in Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital. Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, annexed Crimea, a peninsula in the southeast of Ukraine, the month after, in hopes of protecting the Russians living in the region at the time from potential further integration into the EU. This move led to more military tension in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, which separates eastern Ukraine from western Russia, that continued for years.



*Map of Ukraine*

In 2020, Ukraine had an enhanced opportunities partnership with NATO, which is a term used to classify the supranational organization's honorary associates. Russia claims that the United States and NATO did not honor its promises from 30 years ago that stated it would not bring significant Western influence on previous Soviet nations. To prevent potential further Western influence in Eastern Europe and to protect its trade and military interests, Russia annexed Ukraine in the spring of 2022 as a sign to the West, specifically NATO and the US, that it would fight for influence on the global stage.

## Problems Raised

### *Rising Food and Crude Oil Prices*

Millions of people around the world have been impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict through the rising food prices and lack of food. Ukraine is a world exporter of staples such as corn, wheat, and barley, and the country's primary export method is by sea. However, the Russian occupation resulted in the closing of the Black Sea ports, making it impossible to export agricultural products out of the country. Additionally, Russia is one of the largest exporters of crude oil in the world, and due to the sanctions,



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crude oil prices in European countries have gone up due to less supply. According to a survey, the price per barrel of crude oil went up more than 50% after the war started.

According to the United Nations, even at the start of the conflict in 2022, there was a \$70 million difference between what was available and what was needed for humanitarian purposes in countries like Uganda, Ethiopia, and Iraq. While these countries might not be directly impacted by the war, the citizens of these countries are suffering from a lack of resources, as the limited funding must be divided amongst more countries in need.



*The Nuclear Power Plant at Zaporizhzhia*

### *Risk of Nuclear Leakage and War*

Russia is one of the countries with the most nuclear weapons in the world and recently has been threatening to unleash its nuclear weapons on Ukraine and its allies. US President Biden claims the risk of a nuclear war has not been this high in the past 60 years. Since the war started, Putin has changed Russia's nuclear status to a new term, "high alert," which according to some, may imply Russian officers can use these weapons at will.

Additionally, Russia bombed areas near a nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia, the largest in Europe, and has now occupied the region. Russia has full control of the power plant, although Ukrainians still run the plant and have completely shut down the reactor units to prevent nuclear catastrophes. Ukraine claims Russian soldiers attached items that approximate bombs on the nuclear power plant. However, if the suspected bombs were to explode, there would be fumes and radiation, which would result in a higher probability of getting cancer. This strategic move discourages Ukraine from taking back Zaporizhzhia because Russia may blame Ukraine for explosions at the plant to cover up its actions.

## **International Actions**

### *Ukraine Peace Summit*

Hosted in Switzerland in June of 2024, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with 57 other world leaders to discuss further action plans. Russia did not attend this conference, as the conference merely served to lay the structure for peace talks in the future as well as to organize future



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topics that are necessary to discuss foundational guidelines and objectives. Leaders discussed maintaining both nuclear and food security and returning the roughly 20,000 prisoners of war (POWs) and hostages, and ultimately, over 80 parties agreed to work towards resolving these problems. Specifically, the conference decided that the International Atomic Energy Agency must oversee the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which has been under Russian occupation for two years, and that the Black and Azov Seas should not be under Russian control but rather should be open for use by other nations.

### *Solidarity Lanes Commission*

After the start of the war, Russia blockaded maritime trade routes Ukraine had used for export; in an attempt to alleviate the stress of the situation, the EU has been working with Ukraine by developing a Solidarity Lane system to transport grain and other agricultural products outside of the country. This initiative includes efforts to bring the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) to Ukraine to connect it better with the rest of Europe and to negotiate with countries such as Moldova, Germany, and Poland to allow for easier transport. The Solidarity Lanes consist of vehicles such as trucks, trains, and boats (used for rivers and lakes within Europe) and are also an important way for humanitarian assistance to be brought into Ukraine.



Solidarity lanes bringing necessary supplies in and out of Ukraine

## **Key Players**

### *NATO*

NATO, having donated about 20 million euros, is one of Ukraine's key allies and has been condemning Russia's actions and providing military and humanitarian aid since the beginning of the war. In 2022, NATO sanctioned goods related to tanks and missiles, hoping it would deter Russia's war efforts. Additionally, NATO frequently conferences with its members about Ukraine's security and makes clear their support for the nation; in the long run, NATO seeks to invest in Ukraine's veteran care and continued development of border protection and control through analyzing Russia's war strategies.



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## *China*

While China avoids making direct statements about its position on the war, hoping not to offend either side and has been seen abstaining from votes in the United Nations, they seem to lean more towards aiding Russia; President Putin and President Xi have been seen on multiple occasions together. The US claims China is using its space technology to aid Russia in its war efforts, though China's Foreign Ministry representative claims China desires the war in Ukraine to end as soon as possible. China's drones were also found used by Russia, and despite the rest of the world's sanctions on Russia, China continues to import Russian oil.



President Xi (left) at a meeting with President Putin (right)

## **Possible Solutions**

### *Continued Sanctions*

While there is ongoing debate about whether or not sanctioning Russia has impacted the country, further analysis has shown the significant impact sanctions have had on the Russian economy. By analyzing what Russia's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would have been without sanctions, it is clear that Russia's real GDP would be at least 7% lower. However, certain countries, such as China and India have not participated in the sanctioning but have increased trade with Russia, and other countries have helped Russia buy goods from EU nations, destroying the significance of the sanctions. If all countries around the world would sanction energy, oil, and technology, countries would better be able to continue to pressure and take their stand against Russia and perhaps bring an end to the war.

### *Restoring the Black Sea Grain Initiative*

The Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI) was an agreement signed between Russia and Ukraine that took effect in the summer of 2022 and aimed to open up some of the seaports for export. In the agreement, Russia agreed not to attack ships exiting from 3 ports on the Black Sea, which are Odesa,



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Chornomorsk, and Pivdennyi. This treaty was renewed 4 times, for a total of 360 days, before Russia ended the deal. Ukraine was able to export 33 million tons of resources, which is over 9 times the amount exported before the BSGI came into play, some of which were exported to developing countries like

Ethiopia, Sudan, and Afghanistan.

In addition to helping feed poor countries around the world and lower the prices of agricultural products, the BSGI also helped improve Ukraine's economy. The BSGI allowed grain to be exported out of the country by sea, rather than by land through the Solidarity Lanes, which helped lower transportation costs and increase Ukrainian



*Food that was able to leave Ukrainian ports after the signing of the BSGI*

farmers' incomes, which boosted the country's economy. However, with the termination of the agreement, Ukrainian farmers are generating less revenue due to high transportation costs, which lowers the amount of money they have to invest in new crops the next season. Predicted exports in 2023/2024 versus 2021/2022 are more than 25% lower for corn, more than 40% lower for wheat, and more than 65% lower for barley, which could lead to global hunger but also remove Ukraine from the world's grain-producing stage.

## Glossary

### *Real Gross Domestic Product*

“A measure of the output of goods and services deflated by a price index” (Disney).

### *Sanction*

When a country sanctions another country, it closes down certain trade relationships, whether that be buying or selling, with the other country in hopes of economically pressuring the other side to do something, such as a ceasefire.

### *Solidarity Lanes*

A traffic system aimed to transport goods in and out of Ukraine by land and through small waterways using vehicles such as trucks, trains, and boats

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