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The Russia-Ukraine War: Historical Factors of the War and its Effect in the International Community

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Abstract

For a long time, the international community wondered if there would be a war between Russia and Ukraine or if Putin was bluffing. This war in Ukraine has however been ongoing since February 2022, and its scope expanded to include more actors of the international community taking positions. To achieve international peace, the discussion and study of conflict and its resolutions in the international system is a prerequisite. This article, therefore, gives a detailed account of the Russia-Ukraine conflict using both Game theory and Realism. Political commentators and analysts asserted that Russia's amassing troops on the Ukrainian border in the wake of Joe Biden's inauguration was to draw the new president's attention, as well as the European superpowers. But, on the 24th of February, the conversation switched to whether or not Putin was irrational to start a war in the wake and presence of nuclear weapons.

Keywords: *International Conflict, Russia, Ukraine, International Relations, Actors.*

1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the international community wondered if there would be a war between Russia and Ukraine or if Putin was bluffing. Political commentators and analysts confidently asserted that Russia's amassing troops on the Ukrainian border in the wake of Joe Biden's inauguration was to draw the new president's attention, as well as that of Europe's superpowers (Wood, 2022). Indeed, Paul Wood, a former BBC foreign correspondent for 25 years, succinctly titled his article for The Spectator, 'Putin's Big Bluff.' Fundamentally, in Europe and Washington, Russia's action was perceived as the transparent strategy of a floundering state which still wanted to act and seem like a superpower (Patrikarakos, 2022).

However, on the 24th of February, the debate switched to whether or not Putin was irrational to start a war. Russia has been careful not to start wars where victory was not assured, thus putting a dent in the argument on Putin's rationality or otherwise. However, the events that followed this decision to launch an attack on Ukraine have taken an unexpected turn for Putin's Kremlin and his administration.

This article gives a detailed account of the war between Russia and Ukraine using Game theory and Realism. It explores the different factors that have contributed to the conflict and the escalation into a war that started on the 24th of February, 2022. In analyzing this war, the article considers state leaders' factors and how they influence each other's actions during the war. It also differentiates between the victims of the conflict and

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how the war impacts the livelihood of the citizens. There are many effects of this war on states and the international community as a whole. Some of these effects, such as migration crisis and food insecurity, are discussed in this paper. In conclusion, this paper opines that the resolution of the war is dependent on the direct talks between Vladimir Putin and Viktor Zelensky.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the paper outlines the key theories critical to understanding the issue being considered. However, before these theories are explored, it is pertinent to assert why they will be important (Kaufmann, 2022). This paper's introduction indicated that Russia's war with Ukraine defied reason to such an extent that European and US observers doubted its possibility right up to Russia's invasion. The Russia-Ukraine war represents the true state of the international system, which is characterized by a variable and unpredictable nature. Therefore, to make sense of the complexities of the international system, theories are pivotal in providing frameworks that will guide the scholar in understanding events in this complex system (Kaufmann, 2022).

Several international relations theories could be used to expand on and analyze the new conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Some of these theories include liberalism, game theory, clash of civilizations, realism, and others. However, this paper adopts the use of both realism and game theory as theoretical frameworks for conflict.

Focusing on realism is justified because of its historical importance in explaining state behavior and interests. Realism emphasizes the role of the state, national interest, and powers in world politics. This theory stresses the competitive and conflictual nature of international politics. Scholars of this theory opine that no agency or institution can protect states from each other. It also opines that an aggressor might threaten states at any time. In this case, the invasion of Russia as the aggressor adds truth to this notion.

Another example that backs up this claim is the Iraq invasion of 2003 by the United States. These remind us that great powers become belligerent when they believe their national interest is threatened (Adlakha, 2022; Walt, 2022). Within the realist theory are sub-themes, one of which is the "security dilemma". The theme of the security dilemma states that a nation's steps to protect itself and improve its security often make the other nations less secure and causes a threat of force for these nations (Jervis, 1978; Walt, 2022). This theory and theme play out very clearly in the case of the Russia and Ukraine conflict.

The realist concept of security dilemma effectively explains Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Since the 1990s, there have been attempts to expand the NATO alliance to incorporate Eastern European states, which were eager for such an alliance given their long-term concerns about Russia. Most recently, in January 2022, concrete steps were taken regarding Ukraine's admission into NATO (Drezner, 2022). This situation alarmed Russia, and in their opinion, they saw the West's embrace of Eastern Europe as a bargaining chip in the silent war between the West and Russia (Yanukovych, 2011; Merchant, 2022). In fact, Putin's perception of NATO's current attempt to ally with Ukraine can be gleaned from a speech he made in 2007 at a conference during NATO's initial attempt at expanding eastward. During the Munich Conference on Security Policy, Putin stated, 'I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious

provocation…' (Muradov, 2022, p.18-19).

When Russia and Putin's perception of NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe is considered, it can be argued from a realist perspective that in attempting to expand the NATO alliance and integrate Ukraine, NATO triggered a security dilemma with Russia, leading to its response of invading Ukraine in 2022 (Drezner, 2022). Russia claims that NATO's attempt to ally with Eastern European countries poses a threat to Russia's national security and a credible response is justified (Muradov, 2022). Russia's actions towards former colonies of the Soviet Union have increasingly been a threat to these "now countries", the European Union and the West. This then opened the conversation of membership in NATO as a means to ensure security and further led to Russia's fight against it (Adlakha, 2022).

The UK's response to the war since the invasion in February has also been consistent with the realist theory of international relations. The level of threat felt is therefore as a result of power, proximity, and the fact that the foe has offensive capabilities with aggressive intentions. This action of Russia increased the perception of threat in the West. It is important to note that the economic interdependence in the international community that Russia also enjoys did not stop Moscow from launching this invasion despite the immediate and long-term loss that will be incurred (Adlakha, 2022).

Besides realism, the Game theory is another international relations theory that explains this conflict. Realism is useful because it explains state actions as an outcome of anarchy in the international system, the immutability of human nature, and the enduring importance of national interest. The game theory differs from realism because it offers a predictive function rather than explaining current state action. Usually, a Game theory exists within the domain of probability mathematics and statistics (Szanto, 2022). However, in the international relations context, Game theory functions as a theory aimed at guessing or predicting actors' intentions in the international system (Kapitonenko, 2022).

Hence, the purpose of the Game theorists within IR is to study every strategic choice available to parties to a conflict (Hayes, 2022; Hadfield, 2022). Through these steps, game theorists develop and build several permutations and combinations that allow them to extrapolate and predict the likely actions and reactions between two players in a conflict. At the end of the process, game theorists can arrive at a conclusion regarding what will most likely occur in the conflict and its outcome.

Following an explanation of what game theory entails, it is clear that it is effective at deducing the actions and reactions of states in a conflict. In regards to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, deducing the potential win and losses for both sides depend on considering and addressing three key variables, which include "(i) the likelihood of clear escalation set against de-escalation, which can torpedo or consolidate negotiations (ii) diplomatic countermoves undertaken in parallel to the war by the US, EU and NATO (iii) the likelihood of a winning or losing payoff for both sides" (Hadfield, 2022).

Regarding the first variable, the current state of the war indicates that escalation continues to be far more likely than de-escalation. This is reflected by the continuous increase in Russian aggression in Ukraine. The implication of this increase in Russian aggression is that both sides are now locked in a zero-sum scenario where a loss for one side would immediately equate to a win for the other (Hadfield, 2022). Theoretically, Russia can win this zero-sum game due to its vast resources, which exceed that of Ukraine.

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Unfortunately for Russia, the Ukrainian resistance to Russia's invasion is backed by major national and supranational powers, including the United States, NATO, and the EU (Khalil, 2022).

The second variable, which is expected to help predict future actions and outcomes of the conflict, concerns the existence of diplomatic actions aimed at checking, offsetting, and countering moves by Russia. The NATO summit, which occurred on the 23rd of March, 2022, and was headed by President Biden, exemplifies the kind of diplomatic countermoves aimed at checking Putin and Russia.

The third and final variable which aids in deducing a possible outcome of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the potential winning and losing payoff or outcome expected by parties to the conflict (Hadfield, 2022). Regarding Russia's outcome, there is increasing acceptance that rather than the comprehensive annexation of Ukraine, Putin would have to settle for dominance in specific parts, including Eastern Ukraine (Hadfield, 2022). This changing payoff emanates from Putin's strategic failure; he completely underestimated Ukraine's cohesion and will to resist and misjudged the West's unity and support for Ukraine (Gould-Davies, 2022). Therefore, in contrast to the expected trajectory of the invasion, where Russia was expected to overwhelm Ukraine, the situation is such that Putin would settle for a war by attrition, where the goal is not to win outrightly but to wear down the opposition (Dickinson, 2022). Fortunately, this changing war dynamic indicates that Russia would be willing to negotiate, as evidenced by negotiations that had been occurring by April 2022 (Kusa and Minakov, 2022). Unfortunately, these negotiations are unlikely to be successful due to Russia's unwillingness to engage in discussions concerning its 2014 annexation of Crimea and its willingness to continue the war by attrition (Kusa and Minakov, 2022).

History of the Russian-Ukraine Conflict

This section of the paper explores the history of the Russian-Ukraine conflict. However, before this occurs, it is important to understand why highlighting the history of the conflict is pertinent to the discussion regarding the current conflict. Thus far, this paper used two theoretical frameworks in an attempt to make sense of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The problem with international relations theories is that they are simply roadmaps. They are guides that rely on debatable assumptions to develop conjectures. Hence, inevitably, all theories are limited. Classical realism postulates that states seek power for security. However, the theory failed to define what power entailed (Barkin, 2010; Kapitonenko, 2022).

Moreover, classical realism failed to predict and explain the ever-changing nature of the international system, where states are not the only actors anymore (Barkin, 2010; Kapitonenko, 2022). Likewise, the Game theory also has some limitations. Such limitations are related to its assumption that people are rational actors that are self-interested and utility-maximising (Hayes, 2022). However, the most significant limitation of game theory is that without empirical facts, it will be impossible to predict international phenomena, and in international politics, there are no empirical facts because humans, who are the basic unit of politics, are not rational actors (Brams, 2000; Snidal, 1985).

When the limitations of theoretical frameworks are understood and accepted, it becomes apparent that other instruments are needed to make sense of Russia's - previously unthinkable - invasion of Ukraine. One such instrument is to examine the history of the

situation. The history of this conflict is so important that Putin has weaponized it to justify the invasion of Ukraine (Marples, 2022; Mulligan, 2022). Despite being fundamentally flawed, Putin's view of Russian-Ukraine history has been effective at perpetuating the narrative where Ukraine's existence, statehood, and historical legacy have been challenged (Goldenberg, 2022; Marples, 2022; Mulligan, 2022).

Considering the value of history and the power that such knowledge bestows, every discussion of the Russian-Ukraine conflict must consider their shared history (Lévesque and Chapman, 2022). The provision of this historical perspective provides an objective context, aiding comprehension of everything that is unfolding, thus preventing facile and oversimplified explanations of the conflict (Lévesque and Chapman, 2022).

When the Russian-Ukraine history is examined, it becomes apparent that the clashes between Russia and Ukraine have existed since the Cold War era. As recently as 2014, and before the new war, Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea into its territory. Ukraine was created after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and 1996, and Boris Yeltsin accepted Ukraine's post-soviet borders. With a small jump in history, Putin's Kremlin in 2004 inserted itself into Ukraine's electoral politics by openly supporting and campaigning for Yanukovych, the pro-Russian candidate (Yanukovych, 2011). Yuschenko, the pro-western and opposition candidate, was poisoned in an assassination attempt that was blamed on Russian security services. After he won, Moscow quickly responded with politically motivated gas cut-offs and several forms of pressure in both 2006 and 2009 (Kohut, 2001; Mankhoff, 2022).

Yushchenko was instrumental in the view of Ukraine as a European country that had been a victim of Russia's operations. In 2010, Yanukovych returned as president, and though he wanted to maintain close ties with Russia, he, alongside his cabinet, favored signing an association agreement with the EU (Yanukovych, 2011). This decision was diametrically opposed to Putin's call for a Eurasian Union that would be "a supranational association capable of becoming one of the poles in the modern world" (Mankhoff, 2022). This union would also allow Moscow to expand its political and economic influence across the countries of the former USSR.

Following much pressure from Russia on Yushchenko to drop the agenda of becoming a European country, he stalled on signing the agreement, which translated to a betrayal of Ukrainians' aspiration to be a European future (BBC, 2013; Beatty, 2014). He fled the country after this decision, and in 2014, the pro-European Union candidate Petro Poroshenko became the president. He subsequently signed the EU association agreement, which closed the door on Ukraine's potential inclusion in the Eurasian Economic Union, leading to the disintegration of Putin's dream (Mankhoff, 2022).

Also, in 2014, pro-Russian demonstrators had broken out in Crimea, Ukraine, and Russian forces had started to seize government buildings and military assets across. This chaos made it easier for Russia to annex Crimea. The ease with which Crimea was annexed reinforced the assumption about the weakness and artificiality of the Ukrainian state and misled Moscow to assume that it would be the same with other Russian-speaking regions in Eastern and Southern Ukraine (Yanukovych, 2011). What Russia failed to see or acknowledge was that, despite this conflict and other pressures, Ukraine was still bent on being a part of the European Union.

Ukraine has always had a powerful nationalist movement and a strong memory of its independence in Europe. It is the second largest European country, and Russia is the first. A

huge percentage of Ukraine's population voted for independence in the referendum of December 1991, and Kravchuk was elected as president. By this time, there had been developments in Ukraine, including the dissolution of the communist party and the development of infrastructures for the Ukrainian armed forces. These developments appeared too sudden to Russia, which still perceived Ukraine as an integral part of the Russian realm and the same people as Russians. For its first 20 years of independence, Russia scrutinized and watched every move of development in Ukraine and interfered in many ways. Though the country was independent, it was not seen as a whole for a long time because many of its cities had been conquered; hence, "the country's historical memory itself was fractured" (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Thus far, this section has shown that the current Russia-Ukraine conflict is a continuation of historical hostilities often set off by Russia, in its bid for comprehensive control of Ukraine (Myre, 2022). Fundamentally, the current Russian-Ukraine echoes the actions of Russia in the past. As was the case in the Crimean War of the 1850s, Russia's 2004 political interference, and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the current conflict is an outcome of Russia's perception of itself as an empire, intent on expanding and reacquiring lost regions (Kravchenko, 2022; Myre, 2022). This situation gives credence to Hedlund's (2005, p.267) prescient statement that "Of all the burdens Russia has had to bear, heaviest and most relentless of all has been the weight of her past." With this understanding, it is easy to see past Putin's weaponization of history aimed at painting Ukraine as a nation of illegitimate national traitors (Goldenberg, 2022; Marples, 2022; Mulligan, 2022). Rather, a study of the history of the Russia-Ukraine conflict reveals that Russia is a country stuck in a vicious circle of history, characterized by a perpetual attempt (and failure) to reclaim or control regions perceived to be part of its historic legacy.

The Factor of Leaders

In 1991, when the Soviet Union had just been dissolved and Russia had lost its relevance, Vladimir Putin was a young KGB officer (the security agency of the Soviet Union). In 1990, he had risen from a mid-rank on the periphery of the KGB to deputy mayor of St Petersburg. In 1996, he was called to Moscow to work in President Yeltsin's Kremlin. Putin started to explore the discussion of Russia's strength as a weapon right from his campaign for the presidency in 1999. He called on Russians to unite to ensure that the country remained a "first-tier nation" (Walker, 2022). He won the election and went on to be president from 2000 to 2008 in his first two terms and came back in 2012 for his next two terms, which are still ongoing (Britannica, 2022). To the veterans, Putin thanked them for making Russians get used to being victors.

As an individual, Putin was calm and stern and shrank his circle to include only those he knew from his time with the KGB and who had a security background (Kohut, 2001). This circle hardly communicates with anyone, thus making it difficult to get reliable and credible information from or about the Kremlin. Eventually, Putin became synonymous with the state because of his position as president for almost two decades (Walker, 2022; Kohut, 2001). As far as Putin is concerned, Ukraine has never achieved genuine statehood. Throughout Putin's time in office, Moscow has pursued a harsh policy toward Ukraine and Belarus, which has been predicated on the assumption that their respective national identities are artificial and weak (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

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Volodymyr Zelensky, president of Ukraine, is an important factor in the conflict. Although he came with a pragmatic approach to Russia following the Minsk II. Shortly after his election, he switched his approach to a harder line (Aljazeera, 2022). He started to chip at Russian powers in Ukraine. He ordered the shutdown of pro-Russian television networks and arrested oligarch Viktor Medvedchuk who funded several of these channels and was often regarded as the Kremlin's proxy (Mankhoff, 2022).

The New War and the Response of the International Community

On the 24th of February 2022, the world woke up to the news that Russia had invaded Ukraine. There were mixed reactions from the community; some were surprised at the attack, and others expected it. "Peace on our continent has been shattered," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the morning after the invasion began. "We now have war in Europe on a scale and of a type, we thought belonged to history". Though the invasion was predicted by US intelligence, the strategy of the Russian military force seemed weak (Wolf, 2022). Russia's military strategy involved the assumption that a good number of Ukrainians in the eastern part of the country would accept some form of reintegration (Cancian, 2022). What was not taken into account was the resistance of Ukrainians, who have been waiting to be a part of the EU for over two decades. Fiona Hill opines that Putin's decision to start a war was based on the plan to rebuild the Russian empire (2022).

Following the World wars and the cold war, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was created in 1949 to contain the great power of Eastern Europe. It is a collective security system established during the cold war in response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union. It started with 11 members but now has 30 members and four countries aspiring to be members of the organization, one of which is Ukraine.

According to Vladimir Putin, many European allies of the US are aware of the risks that come with the NATO membership promise to Ukraine and perceive this approach as an anti-Russia policy (Putin, 2022). He further describes this process as a means of "decommunization" or political cleansing, which is a process of dismantling the legacies of communist state establishments, culture, and psychology in post-communist countries. With the long desire to be a part of the EU, a generation of adult Ukrainians have "maintained a robust democracy and is becoming increasingly (Western) European in its outlook, even as Putin's Russia remains fixated on quasi-imperial great-power aspirations" (Cancian, 2022).

Their claim of Ukraine not being a country by Putin has been supported and agreed on by other Russian politicians and intellectuals, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a Nobel prize-winning novelist, and philosopher who claimed to be half Ukrainian (Walker, 2022).

In 2021, Russia commenced a military buildup near its border in the east of Ukraine. This raised concerns for Ukraine, the US and Europe. On the 21st of February 2022, Vladimir Putin recognized Donetsk and Luhansk, non-government-controlled but administrative regions in Ukraine, as independent entities and sent Russian troops into those areas. Shortly after, the world woke up to an invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Before this, the United States had released some of its findings and intelligence, which pointed to a planned invasion by Putin. However, critics of US intelligence had dismissed these allegations as a fantasy, pinpointing the false claim of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2003 (Madhani and Rama, 2022).

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Several states in the international community have responded to this conflict with diplomatic talks and sanctions and have held mediations to contain the conflict. The EU has adopted the use of sanctions to respond to the conflict in the form of five packages. The sanctions have included individual sanctions on Putin, Russian officials, celebrity sportspeople, business people and banks, closure of the EU airspace to all Russian aircraft, prohibition on imports of Russian products, including luxury goods, coal, fuels, steel and food items, prohibition on new investments and others. These sanctions were rolled out from the 23rd of February to the 8th of April, 2022.

Victims of War

The victims of conflict are always seen in two categories: direct and indirect victims. The direct victims are casualties due to direct combat and violent actions of war participants, like being bombed or shot at. Indirect victims are a result of the consequences of war, such as being unable to reach the hospital for care or being unable to access food. While it may be too early to see the indirect effect of the war on civilians, some reports have been published to attest to the fact that civilians are the main victims of this war.

The number of casualties from both sides has been undisclosed for different reasons. However, there have been speculations on the direct victims of the war. NATO estimates that Russia has lost 7,000-15,000 soldiers, which is about a quarter of its initial combat at the start of the war (Cancian, 2022). The Kremlin's first statement on Russian casualties, released on the 2nd of March, stated that 498 soldiers had been killed and 1597 wounded, and it continuously claimed that they had low casualties without being specific with numbers. However, on the 21st, a Russian tabloid reported that 9861 Russian troops had been killed and 16,153 wounded (Crawford, 2022).

Russia's tactic of fighting within the cities shows a disregard for civilians who end up being the real and vulnerable victims of the conflict. Russian military forces have been accused of committing war crimes and violating civilians in Ukraine's Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Kyiv regions (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The laws of war prohibit sexual violence, torture, willful killing and inhumane treatment of captured combatants. However, many civilians have come out to say that the forces have ignored these laws. In Ukraine, there have been many reported cases of repeated rape, execution of men and violence against civilians. In an interview with Human Rights Watch, a woman stated that Russian soldiers had repeatedly raped her in a school where she and her family hid in the Kharkiv region (2022).

According to international law, all parties to a conflict are obligated to abide by international humanitarian law and the laws of war, including the Geneva Convention of 1949 (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The UN, therefore, considers the military offensive launched by Russia as a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Following this statement, the Secretary-General appointed Amin Awad of Sudan as Assistant Secretary-General to serve as UN Crisis coordinator for Ukraine. As a response to the war, many countries have sanctioned Russia, its political leaders and businesses, as discussed in the next section.

The Implication of the War

Seeing that this conflict is a few months in, it may take a while to see the full range of damage that will erupt and the effects of the conflict on international politics. However, some implications have been made clear as the conflict continues to take its course.

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The international community has been accused in many wars of responding late to conflict, but with this conflict, its response was quick with the imposition of many sanctions from western democracies on Russian business people, politicians and individuals connected to the Kremlin (Ellyatt, 2022). This would inevitably lead to an economic depression in the country. According to the Institute of International Finance, it is predicted that Russia's economy "will contract by as much as 15% in 2022" and experience a 3% decline in 2023 (Ellyatt, 2022). Ukraine will also experience a decline in its economy by almost 45%. (World Bank, 2022)

The oil market has been shaky since 2021, but with the invasion and rollout of sanctions, there has been an upward spike in the price of oil. The European Union, prior to the war, got about 45% of its oil from Russia. Now it has pledged to reduce this to two-thirds of its original purchase with a plan to stop buying fossil fuels from Russia in 2030. Again, this will dent Russia's economy (Ellyatt, 2022). Apart from the effect on Russia's economy, the instability in the oil market has also led to oil scarcity in some African countries, like Nigeria, and Europe, like Germany.

There have also been concerns about food security in the EU and globally. This may not be seen in the short term, but the effects will be visible over time due to the rising costs of energy, fuel and fertilisers. Put together, Russia and Ukraine are responsible for 27% of wheat exports, which has led to a high surge in the price of wheat (UNRIC, 2022).

An effect of war since its inception is a migration crisis. With the number of civilians that attempt to escape the war in their countries, there is a high influx of people trying to cross the borders into other countries. The migration crisis has been a huge problem for Europe, which only adds to it. At the time of writing, over 6 million Ukrainians have fled from Ukraine since the start of the war (UNHCR). The 2015 migration crisis, also known as the Syrian Refugee crisis, had the most people migrating since the world war and led to the reformation of migration policies in the European Union. To avoid a crisis like 2015, the EU adopted a temporary protection scheme to reduce the pressure on national asylum.

Asil Demirgüç-Kunt, World Bank Chief Economist for Europe and Central Asia, opine that the war, coupled with the pandemic, reveals that the crisis can "cause widespread economic damage and set back tears of per capita income and development gains" (World Bank, 2022).

3. CONCLUSION

Both game theory and diplomacy require that there is a win for both sides of the conflict. Hadfield states that "in order to achieve the goal of stopping the violence, then the negotiations need to achieve a spectrum of wins and losses that gives every side a win" (2022). But with the events occurring and past conflicts analysed, a win for one party would be impossible to accept by the other or attain in the international community. A win for Ukraine would be for Russia to hand over the claimed territories and leave its territory, and a win for Russia would be to build the power and influence of Russia, which means the inclusion of all former colonies of the Soviet Union.

Russia is facing its own endgame, which means that winning this conflict is a little more than difficult and committing to a ceasefire is the only possible response that comes out with a little dignity. This is because with respect to the response of the West to Russia, the EU and NATO are maintaining a strong, unified pushback with the use of cut off

diplomatic and economic sanctions to the use of lethal arm supplies to humanitarian assistance (Quakenbus, 2022). Mediations and negotiations have been ongoing to resolve the conflict, but with the targets of each party involved, it is uncertain what that would look like.

However, it is important to keep the dialogue going because it is from these conversations that strategies for resolution are found. As President Zelensky himself said, "I think I have to talk to Putin. The world has to talk to Putin because there are no other ways to stop this war". The effects of the conflict already exist in the form of casualties, death toll, migration and the damage on properties (Ellyatt, 2022; The Economist, 2022).

For Russia, the damage would get worse as its attempt to once again become the great power in Eastern Europe may just have come to an end. It is hard to see a way back from this for Putin who has been president for almost two decades in total. Putin has become a synonymous image with Russia and it is difficult to separate him from the state. One factor that is absent in this article is the voice of the Russians. This is because there is no monotonous voice, while some are against the war, some support the war and others are nonchalant. And for a country that places measures on the freedom of speech, this is expected. Antiwar Russians have been threatened and had their properties vandalised for the decision to speak out.

Ukraine has and still suffers from this invasion. Over 6 million of its citizens have fled, many have been killed and their territories have been seized. But the president, Zelensky, has portrayed unrelenting strength in the face of the conflict. Though the damage cannot be undone, the country will come out with the ability to rebuild itself and of course with Russia paying for the reformation.

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