

# RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE, THE DRIVING FORCES, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

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## Abstract

*The study interrogates the issues surrounding Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing war between the two Eastern European countries. It examines the remote and immediate causes of the invasion as well as the position of leading and other members of the UN Security Council and other world leaders on the aggression. The study also analysed Russia's justification of the invasion based on the fact that Russia's security is being threatened by the continued expansion of NATO to Eastern Europe, against which Moscow claims it is a red line that cannot be tolerated. A brief background of the crisis that led to the invasion/war was examined, as well as the internal and external factors that triggered the invasion. Finally, the paper examined the implications of Russia's invasion of Africa. The study relied on documentary evidence sourced mainly from the internet and applied the realist theory in analysing the issues. The study found that though NATO's expansion eastwards and Ukraine's intention to join the security alliance were the immediate triggers for the invasion, several other remote factors contributed to the invasion. The study also found that though Africa is miles away from the theatre of conflict, it is being affected in several ways by the conflict. Amongst others, the paper recommends that Africa should maintain its non-aligned posture in the conflict, and should seek closer ties within the continent and with non-European partners to cushion the effects of the war.*

**Keywords:** Russia, Invasion, Ukraine, Implications, Africa

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## Introduction

On Thursday 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military assault on Ukraine after months of troop build-ups around the Ukrainian borders and recognition of two separatist enclaves (Donetsk and Luhansk) in eastern Ukraine as independent states. In a televised address, Vladimir Putin said Russia's move to launch a special military operation in Ukraine came in response to threats emanating from that country. Vladimir Putin went ahead to warn other countries that if they attempt to interfere with the Russian military operation, they would see "consequences they have never seen" (Press Trust of India, 2022). The announcement by Putin which came at the time the UN Security Council was meeting on the situation in Ukraine was followed by various responses from the UN Security Council members. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was shocked enough to call the announcement of a special military operation in Ukraine the "saddest moment in his tenure" (Campbell, 2022). Antonio Guterres responded to Russia's invasion in this way:

I must say, President Putin, in the name of humanity bring your troops back to Russia. In the name of humanity, do not allow to start in Europe what could be the worst war since the beginning of the century, with consequences not only devastating for Ukraine, not only tragic for the Russian Federation but the entire world (Press Trust of India, 2022).

In reaction to Putin's announcement, US Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield said:

At the exact time as we are gathered in the Council seeking peace, Putin delivered a message of war in total disdain for the responsibility of this Council. This is a grave emergency. The Council will need to act, and we will put a resolution on the table tomorrow." She added that earlier in her remarks, "I said that we predicted Russia's false flag attacks, the misinformation, the theatrical emergency meetings, and the cyber-attacks – but one piece had not come to pass. Unfortunately, while we've been meeting in the Security Council tonight, it appears that President Putin has ordered that last step" (Press Trust of India, 2022).

The UK ambassador to the United Nations and her French counterpart also shared the same sentiments. While Council members including the US, UK, and France primarily condemned the act of aggression and called for de-escalation, restraint, and diplomacy just as explosions and artillery fire were beginning to find homes on Ukraine soil, Russia was undeterred and unperturbed. According to Putin in his televised address, the West has "deceived us, played us" (Bloomberg News, 2022), and reneged on their

promises not to expand NATO eastwards even by an inch. To enforce his position, Putin also added that:

Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist while facing a permanent threat from the territory of today's Ukraine. In accordance with Article 51 (Chapter VII) of the UN Charter, with permission of Russia's Federation Council, and in the execution of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 22, I made a decision to carry out a special military operation. The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kyiv regime. To this end, we will seek to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation (Bloomberg News, 2022).

Putin's invasion (Russians were banned from calling it an invasion but a special military operation), a large-scale war of aggression in Europe since World War II was neither sudden nor a "surprise" for obvious reasons. First, Russia's increasing military build-up at the Ukraine border was visible for weeks, leading to the earlier predictions by some leaders and policy analysts that war was imminent, although there were doubts in some quarters that Russia would not invade. For example, prior to the full-scale invasion, the estimated number of Russian troops deployed in and around Ukraine as of Monday 21 February 2022 ranged from 100,000 to 190,000 (Brown, 2022). The estimate includes military troops along the border, in Belarus, and occupied Crimea; Russian National Guard and other internal security units deployed to these areas; and Russian-led forces in eastern Ukraine (Brown, 2022). Second is Putin's years of warning against NATO's expansion to the East and unacceptable Ukraine's membership in NATO. In his televised speech, Vladimir Putin also referred to the eastward expansion of NATO, which was moving its military infrastructure ever closer to the Russian border.

According to him:

Over the past 30 years, we have been patiently trying to come to an agreement with the leading NATO countries regarding the principles of equal and indivisible security in Europe. In response to our proposals, we invariably faced either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure and blackmail, while the North Atlantic alliance continued to expand despite our protests and concerns (Bloomberg News, 2022)

Ukraine war follows decades of warnings that NATO expansion into Eastern Europe could provoke Russia (Suny, 2022). Putin has been clear for many years that if the expansion continued, it would likely be met with serious resistance by the Russians, even with military action. Russian elites and broad public opinion have also long been opposed to such expansion, the placement of American rockets in Poland and Romania, and the arming of Ukraine with Western weaponry (Suny, 2022). Back in June 1997, 50 prominent foreign policy experts signed an open letter to Clinton, saying, “we believe that the current U.S.-led effort to expand NATO ... is a policy error of historic proportions” that would “unsettle European stability” (Suny, 2022).

Russia’s “clear rejection” expansion of NATO and “impermissible” Ukraine membership have often been made public and even communicated to the US government through its ambassadors that have served in Moscow. For instance, in 2008, William J, Burns, then the American Ambassador to Moscow, wrote to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice saying:

Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite (not just Putin). In more than two and a half years of conversations with key Russian players, from knuckledraggers in the dark recesses of the Kremlin to Putin’s sharpest liberal critics, I have yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests (Suny, 2022).

No doubt, various opinions, and perspectives have continued to surface on the reasons behind Russia’s invasion and what it portends for the world including the aggressor (Russia) and the victim of aggression (Ukraine). While to some analysts, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war might mark a turning point in the history of globalization, on a par with 1914, others opine that the war is one of Russia’s efforts to open channels for trade with India and China as harbingers of a new multipolar order (Tooze, 2022). Whichever is the case, what cannot be disputed is the fact that Russia’s invasion is bound to have far-reaching global consequences and could change the global order for a long time. Many of its negative impacts have reverberated across the globe. It is against these backdrops that this paper seeks to critically analyse the implications of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine for Africa.

With the introduction as section I, the next section contains a background to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The third section examines Russia’s invasion through a theoretical lens. The fourth section is a broad analysis

of the possible driving forces behind Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The fifth section involves a critical analysis of the implications of Russia's invasion for Africa. The sixth section contains the conclusion and the recommendations.

## **Russia- Ukraine Conflict: A Brief Background**

Ukraine for the greater part of its history had always been mainly under Russian rule and influence either as part of Tsarist Russia or as part of the Soviet Union (Isoh, 2022). Its citizens had always suffered so many historical wrongs at the hands of Russia, and Ukrainians had often struggled to gain independence. In 1918 for instance, Ukraine declared independence from Russia during a conflict fought by multiple countries and armies over several years. Although its independence and sovereignty received international recognition at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Soviet forces later overthrew independent Ukraine, which became subsumed into the Soviet Union the following year (Bigg, 2022). The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was founded in 1921. However, Russia was the dominant player in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with Ukrainians subjected to all forms of inhuman treatment. For instance, during Stalin's Agricultural Collectivization Scheme of the early 1930s Ukrainians were reported to have suffered most disproportionately of all ethnic groups in the country owing to the fierce resistance to the policy by peasant farmers (Isoh, 2022). Although it was the broader Soviet famine (1931– 34) that also caused mass starvation in the grain-growing regions of Soviet Russia and Kazakhstan, the Ukrainian famine was made deadlier by a series of political decrees and decisions that were aimed mostly or only at Ukraine (Applebaum, 2022). In acknowledgment of its scale (more than 5 million people died), the famine of 1932–33 is often called the Holodomor, a term derived from the Ukrainian words for hunger (holod) and extermination (mor) (Applebaum, 2022).

In succeeding years, Russia's (the dominant power in the USSR) subjugation of Ukraine never ceased. Between 1939 and 1944, the Soviet Union annexed what is now western Ukraine from Poland and Romania, and Nazi Germany and the Axis powers invaded the Soviet Union and occupied Ukraine, which suffered enormous devastation (Applebaum, 2022). During the late 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost ("openness") provided an opportunity for the mobilization of nationalist movements pushing for the breakup of the Soviet Union, including the People's Movement (Rukh) of Ukraine (Mankoff, 2022). The sclerotic USSR economy and the obvious signs of its collapse in the late 1980s made the Presidents of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus to sign an accord for

the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Moreover, Ukraine, having suffered so much persecution at the hands of Russia desperately wanted that independence. Thus, Ukraine and Russia, among other members of the USSR became independent countries that emerged from the Soviet Union. But for Ukraine, it was not so easy because Russia saw Ukraine's nuclear arsenal as a big threat, and Crimea being part of Ukraine was also an issue for both countries. The countries in possession of nuclear weapons then such as the United States never wanted more countries to join the club of nuclear powers, and an agreement was reached for Ukraine (the US persuaded Ukraine) to give up its nuclear arsenal, and in return keep Crimea. An agreement called the Budapest Memorandum was signed in 1994 between US, UK, and Russia that Ukraine's sovereignty would be guaranteed. Under the Budapest Memorandum, Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal in exchange for a commitment from Moscow "to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine" (Applebaum, 2022).

Though the signatories of the memorandum pledged to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and inviolability of its borders and to refrain from the use or threat of military force, Russia breached these commitments with its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and aggression in eastern Ukraine, bringing the meaning and value of security assurance pledged in the Memorandum under renewed scrutiny (Bunn, 2020). Scholars have argued that Russia's annexation of Crimea, a part of Ukraine, was because "Moscow saw it as becoming more closely aligned with Western institutions, chiefly the EU and NATO" (Masters, 2022).

The Ukrainian society has made sure that succeeding generations never forget all the humiliations suffered at the hands of Russia. It has been transmitted from one generation to another through music, movies, books, and oral tradition, and as a result, Ukraine has focused on creating and maintaining its own identity. As noted by Mankoff (2022), the past three decades and especially the years since the 2014 "Revolution of Dignity" and ensuing Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in Donbas have witnessed a significant consolidation of Ukrainian civic identity. A generation has grown up in an independent Ukraine that, for all its flaws, has maintained a robust democracy and is becoming increasingly European (and Ukrainified - thanks in no small part to Russia's aggressive meddling) (Mankoff, 2022). The relative success of this project of "making Ukrainians" accelerated Ukraine's decoupling from Russia, feeding concern in Moscow that time is running out to restore influence over its neighbour

and justify a series of increasingly risky gambles to pull Ukraine back into Moscow's orbit (Mankoff, 2022).

When former Russian president Boris Yeltsin supported Ukrainian independence in the context of his effort to overcome Gorbachev and bring down the Soviet Union, he and his advisers clung to the belief that an independent Ukraine would continue to remain closely bound to Russia (Mankoff, 2022). But sadly, for Russia, Ukraine has adopted the Western democratic and economic model. Russian hubris rested on a basic failure to grasp not only the deep roots of Ukrainian identity but also the extent to which Ukraine itself has changed in the years since the Soviet collapse (Mankoff, 2022). The story of the more than three decades since the Soviet collapse centres on the gradual diffusion of "Ukrainianness" across an ever-wider swathe of the country and its people (Mankoff, 2022), which to Russia is a loss of power and influence.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is only an escalation of many years of conflict that resurfaced in 2014.

## **Analysing Russia's Invasion of Ukraine through the Realist Theory**

Realist ideas came from the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and also E. H. Carr, who set "realism" in opposition to "utopianism" (Cristol, 2017), and other key figures in the realist revolution such as George Kennan, Arnold Wolfers, and John Herz. Utopianism aspires to a world without war and where power is not the primary determinant of relationships. The outbreak of World War II saw the emergence of realists whose writing has a profound influence on international relations scholarship such as Hans J. Morgenthau. It was Morgenthau (in his book titled "Politics among Nations") that developed "political realism" into a fully formed, comprehensive international relations theory (Cristol, 2017), using his six principles of political realism. According to Morgenthau, the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power (Morgenthau, 1973). Morgenthau believed that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power and that the idea of interest is the essence of politics which is unaffected by the circumstances of time and place. For him, the power struggle is largely a result of man's selfish and competitive desire to dominate others, and the state then becomes the unit that carries out man's interest in international relations.

Kenneth Waltz later constructed what is called “structural realism” (also called neorealism) in his 1954 work “Man, the State, and War” and, in 1979 produced a fully formed theory in his book, “Theory of International Politics”. Neorealism differs in some way from classical realism (of Hans J. Morgenthau) because it concentrated more on the structure of the international system and its anarchical nature (caused by states’ struggle for interests and dominance) rather than on human nature. Neorealism believes that states act to protect their interests, and in a bid to achieve their goals, states end up in conflict with others, and it is unlikely that states will sacrifice their interests for the sake of others. Nevertheless, both Morgenthau and Waltz see the international arena as a competitive and hostile stage where power plays an indispensable role, which could either be caused by human selfish nature or by the structure of the system itself. In addition, classical and structural realism describes the world as it is and not as it ought to be.

International politics cannot be anything but power politics. It is the pervasive nature of the (sometimes aggressive) use of power in international politics that resulted in the use of the term power politics (Spanier, 1987). Because there are no agencies or institutions that can protect states from external aggressors, states (especially great powers) are concerned about their security and as a result, constantly engage in the pursuit of power and protection of interest to ensure their survival (self-help). When applied to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, realism guides us to see how states can go to any length (including the declaration of war) when they believe (erroneously or otherwise) that their core interest is at stake. For realists, moral condemnation of conflict does not prevent conflict when the core interests of states are threatened. Thus, for Russia, it does not matter how many countries vote against it at the UN or reject its invasion, as long as it believes its “survival” is threatened, the solution lies on the battlefield. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has, therefore, reaffirmed the enduring relevance of the realist perspective on international politics (Walt, 2022).

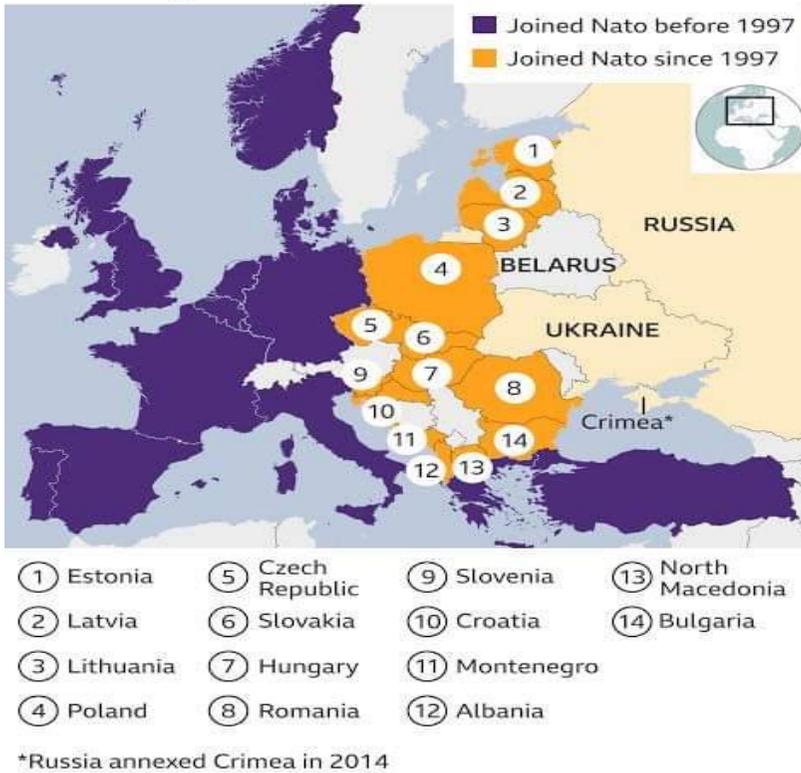
### **Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine: The Driving Forces**

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, no doubt, marks a turning point in the history of international relations. Three decades ago when the Cold War ended, Francis Fukuyama called it, “the end of history.” With recent development, it may not be wrong to say that history is being remade with new beginnings (though in less predictable directions, since the war is still ongoing) for the great powers’ rivalry. Nonetheless, it is imperative to assess the factors (external or internal) that could have triggered Russia’s

invasion of Ukraine. First, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is driven in part by historical and cultural ties to the region. Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union until the Union collapsed in 1991. Ethnic Russians accounted for 17% of its population at the time the last census was taken in 2001 (Vinopal, 2022). Putin sees the collapse of the Soviet Union as "the demise of historical Russia" and has frequently complained that the post-Soviet settlement cut millions of Russians off from their motherland while robbing Russia of its rightful heartlands (Dickinson, 2022). This sense of grievance has fuelled Putin's obsession with Ukraine, a country whose entire existence has come to represent the alleged injustice of the post-1991 world order (Dickinson, 2022).

In the last two decades that Vladimir Putin has been in power in Russia, one of its main focuses has been on bringing Ukraine back into the country's sphere of influence (Vinopal, 2022). Rebekah Koffler, in her book, "Putin's Playbook: Russia's Secret Plan to Defeat America", argued that Putin has been planning this invasion for the past 20 years and is part of his larger master plan to ensure that post-Soviet states are returning under Moscow's control. Russia started with the invasion of Georgia in 2008 (though the conflict was over within a matter of days) and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The 2014 annexation of Crimea is believed to be part of Moscow's plan to suspend further westernization of Ukraine and its peninsula (Daily Sabah, 2021). Thus, the invasion of Ukraine especially to get back the separatist states of Donetsk and Luhansk have been part of Putin's plan, which was clearly stated in his televised speech on the morning of 24 February 2022. Secondly, NATO's expansion to the east was a huge trigger. In a speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Vladimir Putin accused Western powers of betrayal and violating a solemn pledge (not to shift one inch eastward) by considerably enlarging NATO most notably with the Baltic countries joining the Alliance (NATO grew from 17 countries in 1990 to 30 in 2022; see Figure 1 below on NATO's expansion since 1997).

### Nato's expansion since 1997



Source: BBC News (2022a).

According to Putin:

NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders, although as yet, we do not react to these actions at all. NATO expansion represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? (Carpenter, 2022)

Although Russia's claim of betrayal has also been refuted by the West saying that guarantee was not given to Russia but to the Soviet Union, and if the countries that constituted the Soviet Union have gone their separate ways, NATO can decide to relate with them independently. However, Russia under Putin has argued that the West reneged on its promises and Russia cannot be blamed for any action it takes. According to Carpenter (2022),

Putin's Munich speech was an important diplomatic warning to the United States and its allies that Russia's patience with NATO's encroachment was at an end. Putin has earlier demanded that NATO turn the clock back to 1997 and reverse its eastward expansion, removing its forces and military infrastructure from member states that joined the alliance in 1997 and not deploying strike weapons near Russia's borders.

In 2017, Putin in one of his foreign policy speeches noted that "our mistake was that we trusted you too much, and your mistake was to take advantage of that" (Pozner, 2018). Russia's rejection of NATO's expansion and threat to its security as well as Western interference has also received negative reactions from its leader. For example, from the enlargement of NATO to its bombing of Yugoslavia (from March 24, 1999, to June 10, 1999) by US-led NATO, to Kosovo's recognition, Boris Yeltsin was very angry, and warned that "we are not Haiti; you cannot treat us like Haiti. We are a great country. We have a great past and Russia will come back. Russia will come back" (Pozner, 2018).

Obviously, Russia is bent on reasserting its position in the international arena and since past agreements and dialogue have failed in the past years, Putin saw no need for diplomacy anymore but to take "what it claimed to be its own" by force. The Russia-Ukrainian war was predicted by political analysts as inevitable especially given NATO's expansion. For example, Thomas Friedman in a 1998 interview with George Kennan (one of the most brilliant political minds of the United States in the second half of the 20th century; the man who devised the idea of containment of the Soviet Union rather than war), asked Kennan what his opinion was about NATO's expansion. Kennan responded bluntly by saying, "I think it is the beginning of a new Cold War. I think the Russian will gradually react quite adversely; I think it is a tragic mistake, and there was no reason for this whatsoever" (Pozner, 2018). Clearly, Russia's invasion was somehow predicted. History has shown that great powers rarely ignore when there are intrusions into their spheres of influence.

The third factor that triggered the invasion was the Western powers' perceived plan (rightly or wrongly) to relegate Russia to the background and arrogance in foreign policy. According to Daily Sabah (2021), Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted to join the 30-nation military alliance in the early stages of his presidency in the 2000s. For instance, Putin told David Frost in a BBC interview that his country may join NATO "if and when Russia's views are taken into account as those of an equal partner" (Daily Sabah, 2021). Russia's concern on equal partnership remained a dream that never materialized as its interest in NATO was going to be treated

like Turkey's interest in European Union. In 2004, Russia's interest to join NATO changed as the Orange Revolution was unfolding in neighbouring Ukraine. Putin became increasingly suspicious of the Western states and believed that outside powers were behind the revolution in the country (Daily Sabah, 2021), and were out to "destabilize Russia." Many of the reasons for Russia's invasion lie in Putin's February 24, 2022, televised speech. Putin had noted that:

For the United States and its allies, it is a policy of containing Russia, with obvious geopolitical dividends. For our country, it is a matter of life and death, a matter of our historical future as a nation. This is not an exaggeration; this is a fact. It is not only a very real threat to our interests but to the very existence of our state and its sovereignty. It is the red line which we have spoken about on numerous occasions. They have crossed it (Bloomberg News, 2022) It is important to state that just like the Americans, the Russians also believe that they have a mission and that their country was destined to lead the world, and thus, being relegated to the background among other great powers is not a welcome one. In 1962, the US came to the brink of nuclear war with the Soviet Union in response to the placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba, 90 miles away from its shore. The Kennedy administration saw that as an unacceptable threat to US national security. If the US saw it as unacceptable to have a significant military presence 90 miles away from the US shore, why should Russia be different in guarding its spheres of influence? A US Senator, Bernie Sanders puts it in clear terms:

Vladimir Putin may be a liar and a demagogue, but it is hypocritical for the US to insist that we, as a nation do not accept the principles of spheres of influence. For the last two hundred years, our country has operated under the Monroe Doctrine embracing the principle that as the dominant power in the Western hemisphere the United States has the right.. to intervene against any country that might threaten our legit interests. And under this Doctrine, the United States has undermined and overthrown at least a dozen countries throughout Latin America, Central America, and the Caribbeans. Even if Russia was not ruled by a corrupt, oligarchic, authoritarian leader like Vladimir Putin, Russia like the United States will still have an interest in the security policies of its neighbours. Think about it. Does anyone really believe that the United States will not have something to say if for example Mexico, or Cuba, or any country in Central or Latin America were to form a military alliance with a US adversary ... (Sanders, 2022)?

If the United States has often had the power to send strong signals and even invade countries under the guise of security interests as seen in Iraq and Libya, among other countries, why then should Russia be seen as powerless in the face of external security threats? No doubt, Russia's inhuman acts of aggression against Ukraine are condemned in their entirety but the US wrote the playbook where Russia has lifted a few pages.

Fourth is the Russian leader's personality. One important aspect that cannot be ignored in foreign policy making is the personality of the leader. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is one of the greatest tragedies of recent years that have left the world looking toward one man: Vladimir Putin (Sam, 2022). Born in Leningrad in 1952, he grew up in a surrogate family. Just like Adolph Hitler, his traumatic experience as a child has a strong impact on his relationship with others and ultimately on his lack of trust (Sam, 2022). His only real obsession is power, achieved through fear (Sam, 2022). While Vladimir Putin, different from Hitler, has not come close to launching (at least for the moment) any anti-Semitic holocausts, there are signs of expansionist fanaticism, and an obsession to achieve total Russian domination (Sam, 2022), and the end of the war will likely come with another highest form of crimes against humanity. From time immemorial, the world had and is still producing leaders (Vladimir Putin for instance), some of whom are instinctively pugnacious, combative, accusative, acquisitive, arrogant, assertive, merciless (Babalola, 2022), and ambitious men/women often fail to recognise the humanity of others (Ubuntuism) to achieve their so-called aims. Today, some of the steps being taken by the Russian president, starting with the Georgia invasion in 2008, Crimea in 2014, and the recent decision to invade Ukraine are reminiscent of the salami-slicing tactics "employed by the Nazi leader prior to September 1, 1939" (Melman, 2022).

Salami slicing is a divide-and-conquer tactic used to overcome opposition and acquire new territories, piece by piece. The term was coined by Hungarian communist politician Matyas Rakosi during the 1940s to describe his strategy to the non-Communist parties by "cutting them off like slices of salami" (Dutta, 2022). Salami slicing is also known as the 'cabbage strategy' in military parlance. Putin's personality coupled with his position as the number one citizen, and commander-in-chief gives him the power to salami-slice off the territories he claims are part of Russia piece by piece (seen in the annexation of Crimea, recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk), and the on-going war in Ukraine. Those close to Putin understand that he views the current conflict as a holy war and has long since passed the point of no return (Dickinson, 2022).

According to Pavel et al (2022), President Putin is positioning himself in Russian history as a modern-day Catherine the Great, who ruled from 1762 to 1796, and, more than any other Russian leader, used the power of the Russian army in a series of wars to conquer, territory by territory, the country today called Ukraine. Catherine fashioned herself as an enlightened monarch and was determined to go down in history as the ruler who fulfilled Russia's self-defined destiny as a great power (Pavel et al, 2022). Putin has also been described as a mirror of toxic masculinity (Sam, 2022), which refers to the constellation of socially regressive (masculine) traits that serve to foster domination and aggression. Putin systematically has been consolidating his aggressive behaviour and personality cult. For instance, he sent his political rivals and dissidents to jail or exile or murdered them, preferably with poison (Melman, 2022). He got rid of oligarchs with political ambitions, such as Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and his partner Leonid Nevzlin, who threatened his power (Melman, 2022). This exaggerated masculine trait (toxic masculinity) also helps to explain to a certain degree Putin's decision to invade Ukraine despite global calls and diplomatic moves to make Russia change its mind. The terrifying scale of Putin's war aims in Ukraine may seem unthinkable to most rational outside observers, but they make perfect sense when viewed through the prism of his toxic worldview (Dickinson, 2022).

Fifth, Russia's push to retake its position among the comity of nations: Under Putin, Russia has also tried to reassert its great power status elsewhere from Central Asia to the South Caucasus, from Syria to Libya and Mali (Wolff, 2022). It has been argued by Melman (2022) that Putin seeks to change the balance of power that was consolidated after the collapse of communism in 1991. Russia's aggression against Ukraine raises questions about whether a shift in the global balance of power will preclude an end to the rules-based system (Matonga, 2022).

In Vladimir Putin's speech on February 24, 2022, he narrated how in the late 1980s, the former Soviet Union grew weaker and subsequently broke apart, which according to him, shows how "the paralysis of power and will is the first step towards complete degradation and oblivion" (Bloomberg News, 2022). Putin posited that the Soviet Union's "loss of confidence for only one moment was enough to disrupt the balance of forces in the world" (Bloomberg News, 2022). The former Soviet Union's loss of the Cold War brought new changes in the international system as the winners have "to make the rules" as it suits them. Putin acknowledged the new changes and creation at the end of the Cold War and puts it thus:

We saw a state of euphoria created by the feeling of absolute superiority, a kind of modern absolutism, coupled with the low cultural standards and arrogance of those who formulated and pushed through decisions that suited only themselves (Bloomberg, 2022).

As a re-emerging power (at least technologically and militarily- seen in nuclear warheads), Russia feels the impulse to make changes, intentionally or compulsively to the rules of the system that purportedly works against its interests. Putin's grand strategy to return Russia to its glorious imperial and Soviet Union days and re-establish it as a superpower began more than a decade ago, after he brutally suppressed the Chechen rebellion, with his typical immoral cynicism (Melman, 2022). According to German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, Putin is not just seeking to wipe an independent country off the map, but he is demolishing the European security order that had prevailed for almost half a century since the Helsinki Final Act (Press and Information Office of the Federal Government of Germany, 2022). Chancellor Scholz stated thus:

Anyone who reads Putin's historicizing essays, who has watched his televised declaration of war on Ukraine, or who has recently – as I have done – held hours of direct talks with him, can no longer have any doubt that Putin wants to build a Russian empire. He wants to fundamentally redefine the status quo within Europe in line with his own vision. And he has no qualms about using military force to do so (Press and Information Office of the Federal Government of Germany, 2022).

Sixth, Putin's knowledge of the US leaders and the "drifting power" of the United States. As pointed out by Melman (2022), Putin has a special talent for spotting the weaknesses of world leaders. In 2008, his army invaded Georgia and conquered the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Putin gambled that his aggression would be tolerated, and he was right because at that time US President George W. Bush was preoccupied with his wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and together with the rest of the West, let it go (Melman, 2022). During the Obama administration, Putin also sensed the softness of the administration, and invaded Ukraine for the first time, conquering the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. And, in 2015 sent troops to Syria after realizing that the U.S. president's declarations of "red lines" and threats to use military force if the Syrian dictator continued to use chemical weapons were just hollow talk (Melman, 2022). Based on earlier precedent (US weak response), Putin miscalculated and invaded Ukraine. According to Melman (2022), the United States' weak, almost submissive response sowed the seeds of Putin's blatant aggression today.

Moreover, America's catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan shattered the illusion that the United States is the world's policeman and ruptured the global order it ostensibly protected (Allison, 2022). After 20 years of war, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan ended in chaos (Wittes, 2022), and many analysts believed that United States' power and position are drifting away, little by little, as other nations' leaders are increasingly challenging US positions and decisions in the world. As Allison (2022) noted, "autocrats everywhere now know they can push the limits, and there is little to no appetite to stop them." Moreover, Haas, (2021) also pointed out that America's strategic and moral failure in Afghanistan will reinforce questions about US reliability among friends and foes alike. Thus, Putin saw a loophole in the US leadership position as the sole superpower.

Seventh, Russia underestimated Ukraine. Vladimir Putin assumed that Ukrainians would welcome Russian troops without a fight based on what happened in 2014 but it was a major miscalculation. In the eyes of the Kremlin leadership, the basic precondition of the successful war against Ukraine has been the perceived power of the Russian Armed Forces and possible superiority over the Ukrainian forces (Shelest, 2022). However, scholars such as Jones (2022) have pointed out that Russia has failed to achieve most of its objectives in Ukraine because of poor military planning, significant logistical problems, low combat readiness, and other deficiencies, which undermined Russian military effectiveness.

Also, the Russian idea in the numerous pre-war statements was that the Ukrainian people would not fight and that they would welcome Russians, to be 'liberated' or 'protected' but the reality showed the opposite (Shelest, 2022). Not only did Ukrainian Armed Forces fight back, but Ukrainian society demonstrates unity and resistance, something that contradicts the notion of a 'divided East and West' promoted by Russian propaganda for years (Shelest, 2022). The initial plan that these occupied cities would quickly follow 'the Crimea scenario' of the fake referendum and the installment of proxies as heads of the municipality did not work out (Shelest, 2022). The current situation shown in the resilience of Ukrainian forces (Ukraine adopted its first National Resilience Concept in September 2021, and the war has brought an opportunity to check its validity) demonstrates how the Russian leadership underestimated Ukraine's military, as most conclusions were based on the 2014 situation. While the Ukrainians would opt for peace rather than war, "the desire for peace cannot be confused with the willingness to surrender, and the desire for stability should not be confused with the willingness to suppress a democratic and sovereign choice of people" (Shelest, 2022). The high morale of the Ukrainian people and forces has kept them going, which Russia never expected. In a reported interview, one Ukrainian noted that

“it is our land, it is our home. We are not contesting anybody or disputing over something. We defend our family. Don’t ask how is my family, my family is 44 million Ukrainians” (Shelest, 2022). When planning his invasion of Ukraine, Putin could count on many known facts such as that militarily Russia dwarfs Ukraine but there was one big unknown - as the Americans learned in Iraq and the Soviets learned in Afghanistan, it is much easier to conquer a country than to hold it. Harari (2022) put it succinctly, “Russians may yet conquer Ukraine, but Ukrainians have shown in the past few days that they will not let them hold it.” With each passing day, it is becoming clearer that Putin’s gamble is failing, as the Ukrainian people are seen resisting with all their heart, winning the admiration of the entire world, although many dark days lie ahead (Harari, 2022).

Eighth is Russia’s adequate knowledge of the weakness of the UN and international law. That the United Nations has been called a toothless bulldog many times is not new. That international law has failed to hold states especially great powers accountable for war crimes is an open secret. Putin is well-informed and fully aware that Russia, with its action on Ukraine, has violated the non-use of force, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another state; and engaged in a unilateral change of borders by the use of force against the principle of *utis possidentis* (a principle of international law which provides that newly-formed sovereign states should retain the internal borders that their preceding dependent area had before their independence), but can the United Nations hold the country accountable? At least, the UN can pass resolutions to condemn the actions, where members of the General Assembly and Security Council can either vote in favour or against or decide to be neutral (abstain), but the resolution can only pass if no permanent security council member does not veto it.

On March 2, 2022, the UN General Assembly issued such a resolution. The Resolution, which says it deplors Russia’s “aggression against Ukraine,” was passed at an emergency gathering of the UN General Assembly. It was voted on by 141 of the body’s 193 member states, with 35 members of the UN General Assembly abstaining from it (17 of the countries that abstained came from Africa). Six (6) UN members including Belarus, North Korea, Russia, Syria, and Eritrea voted against the Resolution in support of Russia. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council voted on a binding resolution condemning the invasion and requiring Russia to cease its military actions and withdraw from Ukraine. But Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, vetoed the resolution (Bellinger, 2022). The Security Council voted 11-1 (with Russia opposed and three members abstaining).

The General Assembly could also go ahead to mandate a UN investigation of Russia's actions, urge member states to impose sanctions (sanctions have been imposed by many European and Western states on individual capacity and through the EU) on Russia; or recommend that Russia be expelled or suspended from certain UN bodies (Russia veto power remains a big shield and it cannot be kicked out); or at the end, Putin and other Russian officials could face an investigation by the ICJ for war crimes committed during the invasion. But great powers' politics have at different times hindered UN responses to grave violations of its Charter by its members. For instance, Russia is not a party to the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC). This makes it difficult for ICC to take up the trial of Putin and his cohorts. Notwithstanding these series of steps that the UN could take against Russia, the question is, to what extent would those steps make Russia, a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a "great power", brink?

## **Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Implications for Africa**

The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine is a history-altering event with implications for every region and every nation-state on earth (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2022), given the interconnectedness of the world. The first territorial invasion of a sovereign state in Europe in 80 years has left its mark, with impacts felt all around the world (Illmer, 2022).

For Africa, the Russia-Ukraine war could have various implications both presently and in the future. The major concern has been food security. For instance, Ukraine is known as an "important breadbasket, producing around half of the world's sunflower oil" (Illmer, 2022). According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Ukraine accounts for 15 percent of global trade in corn and 10 percent of global wheat trade (Illmer, 2022). Many nations in the Middle East and Africa also rely on Ukrainian wheat and corn. East Africa which meets most of its wheat demand through imports gets 90% of its imported wheat from Russia and Ukraine (Mureithi, 2022). At the outset of the conflict scholars posited that the war could cause supply disruptions, and "such disruptions could affect food security in the region" (Tan, 2022). Today, the impact of the war is already being felt all over Africa.

As pointed out in Human Rights Watch (2022) report, countries in East, West, Middle, and Southern Africa that rely on Russia and Ukraine for a significant percentage of their wheat, fertilizer, or vegetable oils imports,

are impacted by a disruption in global commodity markets and trade flows and increasing high food prices in the region. For instance, in 2021 Kenya imported almost 30 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine; Cameroon imported 44 percent of its fertilizers from Russia in 2021 and 60 percent of Ghana's iron ore and steel imports come from Ukraine. Also, Nigeria, the world's fourth-largest wheat importer, receives a fourth of its imports from Russia and Ukraine. Cameroon, Tanzania, Uganda, and Sudan source more than 40 percent of their wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The UN World Food Programme (WFP) buys half of the wheat it distributes around the world from Ukraine (Human Rights Watch, 2022). But since Russia's invasion, global food prices have reached new heights. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Food Price Index, a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, increased 12.6 percent from February to March, and that was the highest it has been since the measure was created in the 1990s (Human Rights Watch, 2022). With the war, supplies are squeezed, and prices rise, including fuel, increasing the cost of transporting food in and to the region.

Aside from the food prices, the construction industry is likely to face significant challenges for African countries that import steel from Ukraine such as Ghana. Even countries that import little from the two countries would be indirectly impacted by higher world prices for key commodities (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In May, the UN Security Council warned that hunger levels around the world have reached "a new high," adding that tens of millions could face long-term famine due to the war (Illmer, 2022). According to Fuentes-Nieva (2022), about 21 percent of people on the continent (a total of 282 million people) suffered from hunger in 2020. Between 2019 and 2020 (alone), in the aftermath of the pandemic, 46 million people became hungry in Africa (Fuentes-Nieva, 2022). No other region in the world presents a higher share of its population suffering from food insecurity (compared to Africa) (Fuentes-Nieva, 2022). And, given that the Covid-19 pandemic has put African households in a "very dangerous economic situation, the war is worsening the situation.

Another major implication that could arise is how the war may impact the UN commitment to African conflict, and Africa's democratization. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is already diverting global attention from other world problems and according to Westcott (2022), it may become harder for the UN to lead (and maintain) international peace-making efforts in Africa when the focus of the world is Ukraine. Moreover, there is no doubt that with Ukraine added to the conflicts that the UN is attending to, all over the world, additional funds in the areas of conflict management including

humanitarian assistance needs to be sourced by the UN. Thus, African conflicts may not get adequate attention. Also, with the disruptions in the global economy (since the outset of Covid-19), its negative impacts on Africa can cause political unrest and unending conflicts across the African continent.

In addition, UN member states' vote on United Nations Resolution on Ukraine has revealed a widening segmentation of governance norms in Africa and showed that African relations with Russia from now on will not be uniform nor abruptly reversed (Siegle, 2022a). For example, African states' voting pattern clearly presents an increasing liberal-illiberal divide between democratic and authoritarian regimes, with some aligning with the West and others with Russia. 28 African countries voted to condemn Russia's invasion, 17 abstained, and one - Eritrea, voted in favour of Russia. The most obvious category of countries unwilling to condemn Russia were those autocratic African leaders who have been co-opted by Moscow (Siegle, 2022a). These included Faustin-Archange Touadéra in the Central African Republic, Lt. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Sudan, and Colonel Assimi Goïta in Mali. These leaders do not only lack legitimacy domestically but depend on Moscow's political and mercenary support to hold onto power.

Also, others like Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe benefit from Russian arms or political cover. These leaders, moreover, have no interest in democratic processes that may threaten their hold on power (Siegle, 2022a). Drawing from its Syria playbook, Russia has propped up proxies in Libya, the Central African Republic, Mali, and Sudan, and Moscow also has its sights on another half dozen African leaders facing varying degrees of vulnerability (Siegle, 2022a). It is not unlikely that "if the war in Ukraine escalates globally and a Cold War 2 (also known as the new Cold War as was popularized during Donald Trump presidency in the context of US-China rivalry that entered strategic competition phase, and spurned by China's economic rise), including China, settles in, African countries would split into blocs instead of presenting a common front" (Tawat, 2022). This will allow Russia to "escalate its influence campaign in Africa in reaction to its international isolation following the Ukraine invasion" (Siegle, 2022b).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also led to a large number of displaced people, both Ukrainians and foreigners residing in Ukraine including African citizens. According to a UN report as of June 16, 2022, more than

13 million people (five million-plus left for neighbouring countries, while eight million people are thought to be displaced inside Ukraine itself) have fled their homes since Russia invaded Ukraine (BBC News, 2022b). There is no African country without a citizen in Ukraine, and with the ongoing war, many Africans who have lived in Ukraine for years either as workers or students have become either internally displaced, refugees in another land, or forced to return home. For instance, Morocco, Nigeria, and Egypt are the top three on the list of countries whose students are studying in Ukraine, with 8,000, 4,000, and 3,500 students respectively (Bailey, 2022). While these three countries made up nearly 20 percent of all foreign students in Ukraine as of 2020 (Bailey, 2022), other African countries have their citizens there. No fewer than 80,000 students who are enrolled in Ukrainian universities are from the Global South and many of those are from African countries (Walker, 2022). Thus, African citizens living in Ukraine not only bear the brunt of the war through greater displacement and its attendant consequences, but African governments (just like other countries) that had suffered an economic meltdown during the pandemic had to bear the cost of unexpected evacuation of their citizens at the outset of the conflict.

The war has also resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent civilians, slaughtered in the carpet bombing of Ukrainian towns and cities. Putin's irrational and unjustified destruction of lives and properties (residential buildings, schools, hospitals, offices et cetera have been bombed) impacts Ukrainians as well as foreigners.

The ongoing war has also brought to the fore the issue of racial discrimination against Africans. It was reported that Africans fleeing to other countries suffered racial discrimination, sometimes double discrimination – when leaving Ukraine and at the country of destination. As pointed out by Walker (2022), though everyone who fled the war suffered equally, unequal treatments were doled out at border crossings as some Ukrainian guards prioritized Ukrainians over Africans. Others reported discrimination in the countries to which they fled. For example, Walker (2022) noted that after suffering racism while fleeing the war in Ukraine, many Africans have reported experiencing further discrimination in other European countries.

Overall, the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine extend beyond the border of Europe. Africa is in a dire situation as the impacts of the war are multidimensional and felt daily with no end in sight.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing war between the two countries have not only thrown up a lot of issues in the international system but have also rekindled the old rivalry between Russia and the United States of America. While Moscow sees the ongoing war as an effort to roll back the influence of the US and NATO from its borders and therefore, ensure the security of the Russian Federation, Ukraine sees it as a fight for freedom from an overbearing neighbour and behemoth. On the other hand, the US and its NATO allies believe the war would tame Moscow and solve the Putin question once and for all. They have already slammed Russia with an avalanche of sanctions. Thus, the war is not only changing the global order but is also affecting the international community, including Africa, in many ramifications.

The study, therefore, recommends that Africa should maintain its non-aligned posture in the conflict. Already, Africa has manifested signs of rekindling its non-aligned stance of the Cold War era in the ongoing war. This was shown when a resolution was passed by the UN General Assembly on April 7, 2022, to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. The voting pattern among African countries showed that they would rather prefer not to take sides in the conflict. Only 19 African countries cast a vote. Even among this low number that voted, the result was split almost equally in favour and against the resolution. While 10 countries voted in favour of the resolution to suspend Russia from the UN human rights body, nine voted against it. A whopping number of 35 countries abstained or declined to vote (Normandin, 2022).

Secondly, and in line with the above, Africa should seek closer ties with non-European partners, not only to help cushion the effects of the war but also to avert the effects of any likely negative reaction emanating from its non-commitment to any of the parties in the conflict. Already, Russia has warned during the voting to suspend it from the Human Rights Council that it would consider a vote in support of the resolution and even an abstention or absence from voting as an "unfriendly" act (Normandin, 2022). Stronger ties with other regions outside Europe and North America would eliminate fears emanating from such threats. Finally, African countries should take agricultural production seriously and also strengthen the intra-African food trade to cushion the effects of food shortages arising from the conflict. Agricultural market integration and intra-African agricultural/food trade can be achieved by removing non-tariff barriers and reducing other tariff barriers to agricultural trade. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) provides a great opportunity that African states could tap into as the war rages on.

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