

Assessing The Ukraine-Russia Conflict: A Threat to Global Energy Security and The Prospect of a Third World War

by Jana Publication & Research

Submission date: 29-May-2025 12:48PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2664983897

File name: IJAR-51948.docx (87.54K)

Word count: 16834

Character count: 94755

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Abstract

This work evaluates a Ukraine Russia conflict of being a threat to global energy security and evaluate how it may potentially lead to third world war. The impact of the war is elaborated concerning disruptions in the energy supply, especially in Europ, where the reliance on Russian oil and gas has been reported as the major weakness. In view of understanding the role of energy resources within the framework of international relations, it is necessary to pointing out the role of the conflict in restructuring the energy market in the enhancement of geopolitical tensions, and further popularizing the issue of energy diversification. Furthermore, the paper assesses the current role of NATO, the EU, and other world actors in relation to the war, and analyzes the possibility of the war turning into a world military conflict. The study provides a detailed review of the possible steps toward de-escalation, individual actors' rationality and interests and the stakes of global security, energy resource, and diplomacy for the continuation of instability by specifying the impacts on global peace and security.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, Global energy politics, Third world war, American Elections, National Interests.

Introduction

The Ukraine-Russia conflict based on Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent escalation in conflict since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is now one of the most severe geopolitical crises in the twenty-first century. This war has not only reformulate Europe's political-military structures but also impacted world energy security and the distribution of power in the world. While the situation ispanically settled with ceasefires, it remains as one of the most threatening conflicts to the stability of international energy supply given that Russia is a leading world producer of natural gas; and oil. , there is also concern over the increase in military tensions and calling some experts have characterized the scenario as one that could lead to a Third World War(Forsberg & Patomäki, 2023). The role of the conflict in

energy security is rather complex. Russia has had a strong influence on the energy sector internationally and Europe particularly since the latter relies in large extent in pipelines from the former for natural gas supply. Because of the war, targeted sanctions have been applied, energy supplies were interrupted, and the focus of energy imports has shifted. When European countries wanted to cut their reliance on Russian oil and gas, the international market was unpredictable, with oil and gas prices rising and falling and non-conventional energy sources being considered more often. They pointed out that disruptions in supply chains bitten the EU as well as the effects of the western sanctions slamming Russia has been felt cross the globe affecting developing nations, energy prices and the general stability of the global market (Balmaceda, 2007). The events in Ukraine and Russia are not only an opportunity for an energy supply crisis, but also with a broader geopolitical impact. The conflict has further escalated relations between NATO and Russia and revived some fears of the direct armed conflict that have origins in the Cold War. As both Russia and the West have aligned their forces, accumulated forces and have been proxying local conflicts, the risk of a full scale, multi-front war is still very real. Going by Russia's recent actions to name specific countries it regards as its enemies and use harsh language that explicitly referred to nuclear capability, the world increasingly thinks that there could be a third world war and this has ignited debates. Being involved key states of the USA, the countries of the European union and China the situation is gradually gaining a confrontation as for an international system and as for the efficacy of the diplomacy for non-escalation of the war (Müller-Kraenner, 2008). Similar in terms of explaining the issue of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, are the flipped patterns of Geopolitical alliances and the workspace of Non-State actors, including PMCs and energy firms. The war has prompted new partnerships, revives the archenemies' enmity, and accelerate the quest for sovereignty on energy and military status among nations. It has revealed weaknesses of the old order, including the globalization of energy dependence, and has prompted countries to reconsider their safety paradigms (Correlje & Van der Linde, 2006). This paper aims at analyzing the complex significance of the Ukraine-Russia conflict mainly on energy security of the world and the possibility of its extension to the Third World War. In particular, this study seeks to provide a detailed understanding of various implications of the crisis considering political, economical, and military viewpoints and therefore reveal possible threats connected with the conflict in addition to its impact on the sphere of international peace and security. This will also present an analysis of the part played by global

organizations, the other regional actors and diplomacy in addressing the effects of the crisis and potential ways of avoiding the exacerbation of the situation. Finally, this research was intended to advance the discussion around the conflict in Ukraine and Russia in terms of its potential to alter the global energy relations and the course of the world diplomacy(Frederick et al., 2023).

Problem Statement

Conflict between the Ukraine and Russia continued for many years, Russia officially invaded Ukraine without approval in February 2022, which turned into the biggest world problem interfering with the international energy market and having the ability to create a maximum military conflict as well. Russia stands out as the third-party largest ¹producer, and the second-largest exporter of oil and natural gas; its military aggression has disturbed stable supply sources and long-standing energy relationships particularly in Europe – which has led to an escalated instability in the energy supply and has prompted geopolitical reappraisal of source dependencies. These disruptions have not only caused steep inflation in the energy prices but also created threat for energy scarcity especially vulnerable developing countries, which are prone to world's supply disruptions. It has become equally clear that the current conflict has been the tip of the iceberg of global energy insecurity that has resulted from the growing interconnectivities between energy supply and demand, availability, and geopolitics. However, the conflict in Ukraine-Russia has increased geopolitical risk especially with NATO and Russia. With the escalation of the military confrontation, with more and more important Western allies sendingUG more and more sophisticated weapons to Ukraine and with the evident nuclear blackmail launched by Russia, many have expressed the fear that the Ukrainian conflict may become a world war. The participation of such considerable countries as the USA, the European Union and China combining with the potential for further regional or even global escalation in the military level has raised anxiety level of the international community, many experts referring to this as the potential Third World War. However, as much as focus and resources have been directed towards addressing this crisis, there is still limited research that presents an understanding regarding the relationship between geopolitics and energy as constituents of conflict, and how these two relate as agents of instability. In particular, there is a necessity to evaluate a set of consequences of the continuation of this war ⁴on the development of the

international energy security, global economy, balance of power, as well as a probability of an evolution of the war into a broader international war.

Research Questions

- ❖ In what ways has the conflict between Ukraine and Russia destabilized energy security in the world especially to Europe?
- ❖ How short-term and long-term consequences affect the conflict on global energy markets oil and gas prices energy supply chains and alternatives?
- ❖ In what way does the energy dependence on Russia define the foreign policies and security strategies of the concerned countries predominantly in European region?
- ❖ What were new shifts as the conflict via geopolitical lines between Russia and NATO and other world powers and what could be next level risks?
- ❖ What is the odds with which the Ukraine-Russia conflict may turn into a military conflict involving the whole world, the probability of the third world war?
- ❖ Given the threat of another military confrontation and mid-east oil export disruption what diplomatic, military and strategic measures can be employed by the world community to contain the threat and preserve stability in the world's supply oil and gas markets?

Research Objectives

- ❖ To examine the effect of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia on global energy security in terms of the disruption of supply chains, volatility in prices in oil and gas and the turn towards the sources of alternative energy.
- ❖ The following ideas are assigned to its analysis: In the context of the conflict, what is the place of Russian fuel and energy exports in the world political processes and how energy-importing countries adapted their energy policies and security concepts?
- ❖ To analyze the future geopolitical impact of the conflict in the form of the risk of the turning of the war into the more large-scale conflict and to discuss the significance of the global

military conflict in terms of its impact on the relations between countries, as well as the peacekeeping process.

- ❖ To explore prospects for economic and political impact of the conflict on the global economy and international relations, with emphasis put on the relations between energy security, military force, and geopolitics.
- ❖ In order to offer recommendations on how exactly energy security could be avoided and the situation between Ukraine and Russia does not turn into a big war.

Significance of Research

²⁷ This research is highly significant due to the intersection of two of the most pressing global concerns in the 21st century: Business risk factors such as energy security on the international business relationship and geopolitical stability. The Ukraine-Russia conflict has already affected the global energy markets and Europe in a special manner because, with the help of energy supply, Russia significantly influenced Ukraine's state and population. Mitigating these disruptions and predicting their additional consequences for the energy security all over the world is crucial for making future decisions in the sphere of energy politics and for increasing the stability of supply chains in the case of geopolitical conflicts. Also, the continued perpetual of the Ukraine-Russia war poses a high ³⁵ threat to international peace and security in the sense that the conflict may extend to a third world war. This research is going to help in understanding a little more what are the consequences of military escalation, who are the key players, like NATO, United States, or Russia, and how all of this is interconnected and forms modern interstate relations. Achieving these objectives, the research will make a significant contribution towards ongoing debate of how global energy security could be effectively managed in the face of rising insecurity in today's world. It will also ⁵⁶ provide specific guidance on recommendations to regional and global actors on measures to be taken in order to avoid the risk of escalation and how to achieve stability of both the energy sector and relations between countries. This happened most especially because, as this study would reveal, the Ukraine-Russia conflict poses a vexing set of intertwined problems for policymakers, diplomats, and international organizations.

Literature Review

This text describes an inter-sectoral investigation of the Ukraine-Rus conflict emphasizing historical, geopolitical, and identity factors that led to the current state of affairs. The principal objective of the research will be to pay attention to the roles of the histories, the political systems and the nationalistic identities of Ukraine and Russia in explaining the conflict. The study is aware of the fact that conflict between Ukraine and Russia does not stem from one cause or circumstance, but is caused by historical, cultural, economic and political factors. It is therefore the aim of this research to examine how these factors have contributed to lead to the recent escalation of tensions resulting in armed conflict. Implicitly, the author alludes to the fact that a closer examination of such multifaceted aspects as historical animosities, changes in the position of states, material concerns, and nationalism, opens the main keys to understanding the basic roots of the present-day conflict (Kratochvíl & Tichý, 2013). However, it is maybe important to notice that this study is set apart from the others by its interdisciplinary focus. To achieve this, the research synthesizes techniques and theories from various disciplines, including history, political science, international relations, sociology, and cultural studies, in analysing the conflict, in an effort to provide a broader and complex understanding of the conflict. This approach seeks to be used instead of strictly political or military one as the adjuvant of sociocultural viewpoint for tracing the incentives and emotions of both Ukraine and Russia. Indeed, such an approach is highly relevant in the context of the fact that the conflict is not only interstate and regional, but also based on the elements of the identity and ideological discussions, as well as direct impact from the external geopolitical factors (Bahgat, 2006). To this end, this research incorporates a wide array of the sources, in the form of primary materials and sources, related literature, references to archival data and publication, as well as contemporary news articles. This methodology approach makes the study historical while at the same time making it contemporaneous with the constantly changing war scenario as it is today. The application of such diverse sources will make it possible for the study to obtain the historical processes which have influenced the state of conflict between Ukraine and Russia as well as the current factors which keep on influencing the process (Havlik, 2010). This study explores the impact of the ongoing conflicts in Palestine and Ukraine on three major economic corridors: three of such economic corridors includes China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), India Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEEC), and International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC). They are important for economic connectivity for regional and international trade in South Asian

countries and the middle-east. The chapter also exposes how, due to the wars in Palestine and Ukraine, crucial trade corridors have been distorted and investment patterns shift, notably in the geopolitically contentious SSE region and the Middle East(Bocse, 2020).

The analysis is concerned with the impact of these conflicts on geopolitics that has caused changes in the trends of trading, economic and political partnership. Recognising that these wars have brought about changes in economic planning strategies as well as in the relations between the nations, the study evaluates the impact by adopting a literature review of research that has gone before and a scrutiny of case studies. For instance, conflict in Ukraine affects the relation between European nation and Russia directly implicating the trade through INSTC owing to their affects on the supply of energy resources, similarly the conflict in Palestine and scale of violence throughout the Middle Eastern nations affects the steadiness of the commerce and investment through IMEEC directly. This paper convincingly argues that both of these conflicts have given rise to new problems for the economic corridors, such as shifting in bilateral and multilateral cooperation and breaking up trade relationships(Tunsjø, 2011).Based on the conflicts this research outlines several challenges; dilution of regional integration and change of allegiance that has supported these economic corridors. However, as countries define new roles in the new relations, the trade networks which were former stable are now instable. The study emphasizes that, what such geopolitical tensions distort is not just the direct trade flows but also other economic development objectives, in the contemplated regions.HOWEVER, to minimize the impact of these disruptions, the study recommends that countries involved in these economic corridors should enhance diplomatic practice, regional integration and take advantage of strategic partnership. In doing so nations can secure the trade interests as well as other important sea lines of communication along with bearing the political risks. The study says that cooperation will be important in order to fix the economic disruptiveness resulting from conflicts, since it can also help maintain the flow of goods, investments and stability(Tunsjø, 2011).Therefore, it is the study's main message that when global pressures like those in Palestine and Ukraine exist, the most acute conflicts affecting the key economic routes, their functionality and the further evolution of regional economies must be resolved through collective, international efforts. It becomes clear that through diplomacy, economic relations between nations can align themselves to new geopolitical realities, and therefore strive to sustains stability in these areas.

This text presents great power rivalry in Africa as a complex phenomenon that impacts nearly all the aspects of the continent such as stability, and development as well as security and governance. The research questions seek to establish more information about the role of the superpowers in the consideration of the continent as well as catalogue their actions, impacts and strategies being placed on Africa. The term, great power competition does not refer to a war in the conventional sense, but a competition between the super powers on multiple range of interests where everyone has their own goals and ways of operation (Walton, 2007). According to the text, Africa is now turning slowly into a playing ground for world powers; for the US, China, Russia as well as the EU, all world powers seek to expand their influence across the region. These powers use many tactics to realize objectives – economic initiatives, defense cooperation, diplomacy, and promotion of concrete political entities or governments. Although the causes of these actions are also depicted as arising from developmental and humanitarian objectives, there are stronger undercurrent suggestions that these essential are firmly rooted in strategic power politics and concerned fundamentally with the struggle for resources, markets, and geo-strategic advantage in world affairs (Bukhari, Iqbal, & Khan, 2024). One of the main directions discussed is the possible effect of this competition on the stability of Africa. Some scholars opine that the participation of major world players can worsen existing disputes, increase the likelihood of conflict and attain military-like control over certain territories:increase the likelihood of ‘proxy wars’ or indirect confrontation..... In the same process the study reveals that this competition impacts on governance structures within African nation states and international actors take sides with different regimes and thereby begin to manipulate domestic politics, leadership and policies often at the detriment of ‘democratization’ or even the overall national development (Khattak et al., 2018). This is well demonstrated by the fact that great power competition also affects economic development. International actors including global powers might source and grant investments, foreign assistance, or market access but these are sometimes Auxiliary with the interests of the global players in mind, and may not necessarily meet the developmental and, consequently, the sustainable needs or the aspirations of African countries. Articulated hidden is the dire notion that whilst Africa on social account may gain economically via interaction with the outside world, then these advantages may be associated with cost or may lead to relationships that are not healthy for the growth of the African continent (Umbach, 2010). Laying out the general context of global rivalry, the text underlines the best understand it

as not a simple struggle between powers but a bargaining game that might influence African countries in both ways – positively and negatively. Foreign participation is thus a double edged sword because while it offers a base for foreign investors to enjoy the returns on their investments this same broad participation increases the prospects of diminished sovereignty within the African countries or increased division amongst state's within the continent(Dibb, 2019).

This paper examines the complex interactions of proxy wars and militancy in Africa, which are primarily influenced by Franco-Russian geopolitical rivalry. It is involved areas of conflicts including the Central African Republic, Mali and Libya where the two powers have in the past used force, proxy militias to control factions and armed groups for their self interests and resources. Through analyzing these areas of discussion, the study shows that France alongside Russia take advantage of local conflicts to gain a broader space of influence within the African region not sparing common international principles such as sovereignty and stability for the nations in question(Domingues, 2021).It also looks at the background of these interactions especially with regard to the settlers' experience in most of the Africa's colony nations. Most African countries are ex-colonies of European countries, and especially France and there exist political and economical links most commonly in neocolonialist manner. These agreements help to pull African nations into French association through military obligations, political and economic entwinement that makes dependency. This is an important aspect of the factors that exists at play since France and Russia rely on historical relations and alliances as a way of dominating the affairs of the African continent, since they influence local militia with the intention of protecting their interests(Angevine et al., 2019).One of the principal aspects of the research is the comparison of the French and Russian policies on the African continent. France which has been existing in the region for quite some time uses military might, formation of economic alliances and the political power. While other countries, like Russia, have become more aggressive in the last few years, this has done by the use of private military security companies, such as the Wagner Group's intrusion into Libya and Mali through economic agreements. Both powers, however, want some kind of control over Africa's natural wealth, such as minerals, oil and natural gas, which are vital to their own economies and a component of their struggle for hegemony. What is more important, this struggle for resources intensifies existing

conflicts because it results in the use of resources for the further armed conflicts(Jansen & Seebregts, 2010).The study also emphasizes massive human costs of these geopolitical competitions. The crisis that has been caused by French and Russian involvement has migration, violation of rights, and loss of property across the country. Besides the human costs of these conflicts, the study also focuses on the cost of these long-drawn conflicts. Foreign interest exploitation particularly of minerals results in conspicuous inequality where minority benefit while the larger population wallows in poverty, insecurity and lack of good opportunities. This exploitation of Africa natural endowment does not only aggravate existing conflicts but also hinders Africa general development and the ongoing search for sustainable peace(Ebrahim et al., 2014).

Beyond looking at the behavior of France and Russia, the study looks into the reactions of international actors like the United Nations and the African Union. Two of these are; The African Union body and the Economic Community of West African States both engage in conflict mediation and peace keeping within the continent but are hampered by political aggregation and logistical issues respectively. The study also measures the role of these organisations in regard to the effects of Franco-Russian animosities and other proxy wars in Africa, asserting that their abilities to contain the wars and contribute to the enhancement of security have been lukewarm due to continued power politics(Atanasov, 2023).Last, the study suggests a policy analysis intended to help alleviate conflict, promote stability and foster sustainable peace in Africa. These recommendations include and increased diplomatic foreign policy approach to African nations, as well as the capacity of regional institutions in Africa such as the African Union increase the attention given to long-term development and conflict resolution over Africa distended short-term political and economic interests. The study therefore discourages exploitative behavior and challenges the global community to respect the independence and development of African countries in as much as they compete internationally. In more detail, this research aims at revealing the main trends in Franco-Russian geopolitical rivalry in Africa and at analyzing the main implications of those maneuvers for African security and development, thereby offering important findings for policymakers, scholars, and representatives of international organizations who have to deal with the challenges that are stirred by the rivalry in question(Zakeri et al., 2022). The present article focuses on

analyzing the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine addressing the topic of identity politics based on the theories by Francis Fukuyama and the civilization concept by Samuel Huntington. The overall thesis states that Referentization of Ukraine-Russia conflict can be discussed as the “war for identity,” which means that the conflict is not an attempt to appropriate the power and resources but the attempt to reclaim, and alter Ukrainian cultural self-image and historiography. The findings of this particular study are that it is not a conventional geopolitical conflict for resources and respect for borders, but has a more cultural and historical agenda(Orban, 2008).To support this, the article turns to Huntington’s civilizational model wherein the future wars would mostly be civilizational because they draw from different cultural and historical contexts. This framework asserted that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine can be categorised under such civilizational conflicts. In accordance with the ideas proposed in the article, the Russian invasion can be explained by two factors. First, the invading force – here Russia – is depicted as being inherently dissatisfied with its own heritage and, in its] war against the Ukrainian nation, poised to take over the Ukrainian cultural identity in an equally benighted effort to re-establish a missing empire. Second, the article looks into Russia as a region stranded between the east and the west civilizations which makes it have no specific civilization affiliation. Critics thus claimed that Russia is a ‘split’ society, falling to opposite cultural factors that define its political and social matrix(Big-Alabo & MacAlex-Achinulo, 2022).

The author of the article attributes the pro-active and menacing foreign policy which has been expressed by the Russian Federation in general and regarding Ukraine in particular to the identity problem which the Russian Federation has been facing over the year, and it is an effort to create consolidated and strong cultural and political narrative. This crisis coupled with Russia’s autocratic political system has given a long list of problems with its neighbors over border issues. Because Russia can be characterized as having a torn identity with the pull and tug between western and eastern civilizations, the country has had its fair share of conflict, internally and with its neighbours(Larrabee, 2010).In the light of this, the war in Ukraine is presented as a conflict over the ownership of historical and or cultural memory. This means that Russia wants to take over and re-establish control over Ukraine for more than just resources or hegemonic power, but for a reclamation of the historical legacy and narrative that Russia feels all too ready to enforce upon Ukraine and the rest of Europe. It is for this reason that the article posits that the war in

Ukraine is a war of a new kind, a war of the post Cold war kind that is not for resource or strategic advantage but it is a war over identity, culture and imperial legacies(Jonsson & Norberg, 2022). The text is devoted to a forum that allows examining the Russian war against Ukraine in the micro level and through the personal experience of scholars affected by the war. While it does not claim a geopolitical analysis of such a global conflict, CWC's primary focus is more on the human perspective of the war while dealing with the aspects of the war and human experience during that time with much concentration given to the most basic human element; the family. This is well illustrated in the contributions in the forum where people explain how the war not only is transforming territories but is also fragmenting people's lives. The authors explore the vicarious interviewing of those impacted in the community where the conflict plays out, and the ways in which conflict occurs on the ground, beyond formal political discourses(Van de Graaf & Colgan, 2017).The contributions focus on diverse 'forms of bordering', that is, the concrete and existential barriers generated by the war. These borders are not geographical borders setting out territories or countries, but rather the borders in social-emotional aspects of peoples' lives influencing the families and personal identities. This idea of 'situated bordering' addresses the idea of personal costs of geopolitics where political, economic events are more than just signs of political and economic disruption, but it is also ringing true in people's lives(Leung et al., 2014).

In essence, the forum which largely comprises of faceless populous' portrayal of war brings out the confrontation in a relapse of day-to-day human experiences of the war. Hence, the contributions distanced the analysis of wartime from the polis and gross political/military affairs and brought in the tent restorative-realistic aspects of war. Urging to follow this perspective as of a preventive measure when there is no time to consider the effects of geopolitical dynamics on local lives and their becoming alongside political events(Costantini et al., 2007).

Research Gap

- ❖ **Energy Security** Disruptions: While reports of the energy supply chain disruptions, energy price volatility and energy diversification efforts are increasingly being published especially in Europe, there is little comparative analysis on the impact of these global disruptions of world energy markets, especially the energy vulnerable developing nations.

- ❖ Geopolitical and Economic Interconnections: Although there are research papers analyzing the geopolitical structure that exist between NATO, Russia, and the other world powers, ¹⁹ there is a lack of research that seeks to establish how, and to what extent the above countries depend on energy. For instance, how do energy regimes of global powers affect their diplomacy approaches to the conflict? In what ways have these policies influenced the economic relationship with Russia and other producers of energy? little was done to dissect the secondary and probably more severe impacts of the conflict on global markets outside the energy market including trade imbalances, inflationary and regional stability impacts.
- ❖ Risk of Global Conflict: While the possibility of the conflict enhancing into a larger-scale conflict including Third World War is often analyzed by media outlets and policymakers, theoretical and empirical literature on that has not been systematically researched in depth. There is still much more to be done on the contingency of how military escalation might proceed, the place of nuclear weapons, and the political constellations leading to great power war.
- ❖ Policy and Strategic Responses: Current policy literature lacks detailed prescriptions for how energy security policy needs to evolve to meet current and future vulnerabilities as well as underlying geopolitical risks. Although many papers concentrate on sanctions or military actions, the number of papers that discusses the need for proper strategies combination in terms of energy, security, and diplomacy is significantly lower.

Theoretical Framework

- ❖ **Realism (Geopolitical and Security Studies):** Classical realism and structuralist realism provide analytical tools for viewing the state action in world politics as reflecting the power, security, and survival imperative in a condition of anarchy. Posing a threat to the sovereignty of a great power, Realist theories focus on military and strategic power for managing global affiliation and antagonism. Making the conflict between Ukraine and Russia comprehensible. An analysis of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and NATO dynamics and the international players' actions and decisions will pertain to the power relations aspect of the studied theory. Realist views will also be applied when analyzing the nature of the conflict and possibility of the war getting out of proportions and beginning on an international scale, the role of military threats and balance of power and security dilemma.

- ❖ **Energy Security Theory (International Political Economy):** Energy security theory deals with the possibility of states to gain cheap and permanent ⁶ access to energy resources and the challenges connected with energy vulnerabilities and shocks. This theory is specifically important for the Ukraine-Russia conflict given Russia's position as a dominant source of fossil fuels for Europe and subsequently, the unsettled global energy supply chain that the conflict has produced. Energy security theory will be used to establish the way that the war has threatened energy supply, the ways in which countries have sought to adapt to such occurrences while embracing diverse sources of energy as well as the effects of such changes on the global economy. It will also be used to understand how energy dependencies define foreign policy especially in energy consuming countries and how this policy impacts on the security architecture of the world.
- ❖ **Geopolitical Theories (Regional and Global Geopolitics):** Geopolitics theories deal with analysis of space and location that determines powers in politics as well as relations in the world. Regarding Ukraine-Russia conflict, theories of geopolitics will bring understanding of how key aspects like nearness, energy corridors and sphere control influence the action of Russia, NATO and European Union. ⁴ From the geopolitical point of view which accentuates state territory, ⁴ access to energy resources and the power struggle the conflict as to whether Ukraine is a Russian sphere of influence or Western allied country may be best understood. Furthermore, geopolitical theories will assist evaluate on how the shift in world power relations for instance rising of China power and decline in powers of U.S. in some regions is playing the Ukraine crisis and possibility of war expansion.

Research Methodology

For this study, the research method will be a qualitative; interdisciplinary and literature-based research enhanced by case study examination of the subject at hand: The Ukraine-Russia conflict and its likelihood to create a Third World War as well as the method that may be used to measure the disruption ⁴⁰ it has created in the quest for energy security in the world today. This approach is necessary ⁴⁰ to better understand the geopolitical, economic and strategic aspects of the conflict and analyze both frequency and content of the messages exchanged.

- ❖ **Interviews of Experts:** Primary research interviews with limited structure will involve academic professionals in energy security, international relations and military science. The experts may include scholars, diplomats, specialist from oil and energy sectors as well as from the UN, NATO, or the International Energy Agency among others. These interviews will assist in gaining enhanced understandings of general dynamics of the conflict, current diplomacy and military actions, as well as difficulties of managing energy insecurity in the context of occurring military conflict.
- ❖ **Document Analysis:** Another main part of the ⁶¹research will be based on the policy analysis of the key policy documents and the governmental reports as well as the statements of the NATO, EU, UN and other international organizations. They will be studied to identify the measures put in place to prevent energy interruptions and avoid the escalation of the conflict. This involves analyzing missiles sanctions, diplomatic mean, energy perspective carried out by different actors in the conflict.
- ❖ **Scenario Modeling and Risk Assessment:** In a bid to estimate the probability of an increased level of the Ukraine-Russia conflict into a more general conflict, the research will use qualitative risk analysis tools. This will involve evaluating problem areas related to chief geopolitics threats and military factors such NATO participation, utilization of nuclear weapons, and prospect of greater regional conflicts in Europa Orientale or elsewhere. Using the current state of military technologies, the current international relations and alliances, different conflict escalation situations will be painted.
- ❖ **Quantitative Data Analysis:** However, while this study will be mostly based on the case-study approach, the key variables will be qualitative; while besides sections identifying hypotheses and quantitative data like energy price trends, the figure of gas exported, or military expenditures will be included for support. Information about the changes in the energy market around the world, the trends in Russia's energy sales, and the effect of energy deficits will add a layer of the general economic end-result of the clash.

Limitations of the Study

- ❖ **Access to Primary Data:** Since Russia chooses to wage a continuous war, some forms of primary data may be restricted or inaccessible. For instance, scanning of government or intelligence reports on specialized areas may lead to restrictions because of national security concerns or getting real time data from sources in Russia, Ukraine, or conflicted regions may be also challenging.
- ❖ **Uncertainty of Future Developments:** Currently the dispute between Ukraine and Russia is still rife and therefore the direction of the conflict is unknown. Consequently, the consequences of these changes for energy markets and the capacity of the conflict to develop into a larger war and other shifting geopolitical consequences might postdate the end of this study. The study will utilize the existing trends and forecast from bodies of authority, but such forecasts can never be entirely accurate.
- ❖ **Bias and Political Sensitivity:** Owing to the political sensitivity of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia there is a high likelihood that the information within the sources could be tainted in terms of bias coming from players within the conflict zone. For instance, quantitative data obtained from official statements or reports provided by Russian, Ukrainian, or any Western sources may be colored by that author's national or political bias, which may distort the data interpretation. To control for bias situations where information will have to be gathered from different sources, to avoid contradiction will be undertaken.
- ❖ **Geopolitical Complexity:** More to it, there exist tight geopolitical struggles related to the Ukraine Russia conflict situation which change often. There are many players, and each has its own goals – while NATO and the EU expect other actors (such as China or other regional powers) to shoulder some of the burden as well, these actors have their own conceptions of regional stability as well. Nevertheless, few certain actors and trends will be in the focus of this study, while it is impossible to describe all the geopolitical subtleties in details.
- ❖ **Energy Market Volatility:** There are various factors beyond the outside world that affect the global energy market, which in turn affects the results of this research study. For example, cataclysms such as natural disasters, severe flu outbreaks or unpredictable

fluctuations of global oil and gas production can change energy prices and supply chains and it is nearly impossible to foresee all possible subsequent energy security concerns.

- ❖ **Limited Focus on Non-Energy Dimensions:** Despite the fact that the study will analyze the conflict within the EU energy security and military contexts of Ukraine and Russia, certain aspects of the conflict like humanitarian aspect, internal Ukrainian politics or socio-economic consequences are not going to be addressed. These are important aspects of the conflict but lie beyond the range of focus of this study.
- ❖ **Technological and Energy Transitions:** The study assumes that energy transitions like transition to renewable energy or realization of new technologies will proceed at the same rate. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that new technological developments, or shifts in policy that can quickly offset the direction of global power capability, and international relations of energy security might not have been captured within the scope of this research period.

Discussion

The bitter and still escalating Russian – Ukrainian economic war has directly influencing the European energy security. Having natural gas and oil resources, Russia ranked one of the top global providers for energy resources to the European market. The war has distorted them moreover increased the fluctuations in the prices and revealed the weaknesses of the European energy systems. This disruption has served to destabilise energy security both within Europe and in the wider global international system and the long-term implications of this remain uncertain (Costantini et al., 2007). Before the situation worsened in 2022 Russia supplied about 40% of the EU's imported natural gas and many central and eastern European countries depended on Russian gas. Ukraine was also a pipeline transit country for Russian natural gas, 30 percent of which exports to Europe transited through Ukraine. Nonetheless, as fighting escalated, Russia turned off the EU's gas supply, including to Ukraine and many other nations, this went a long way in causing a gas shortage in Europe area (Emiliozzi et al., 2024). Even before the present conflict in Ukraine, European reliance on Russian energy was a big concern: Russia provided about 40% of the EU's natural gas imports, 27% of its oil imports, and 46% of its coal imports in 2021. This situation, however, intensified during the conflict. Suddenly with Russia showing signs of weaponising energy exports by turning of the Supply to countries that supported

Ukraine- Poland and Bulgaria and reduction of flow to other countries- Germany and France Europe was immediately in an energy crisis. In 2022, when Russia threatened to cease/discontinue supplies or reduce gas exports to Europe, the latter experienced an energy deficiency(Dinan et al., 2017).

While, the Table 3 clearly indicates that ³ as a result of such reforms higher natural gas prices prevailed in Europe. Speaking of Europe, natural gas price rose to over €300 per MWh in August 2022, while before the war it was about €20-30 per MWh. The boost of prices is attributed to concerns regarding additional disruption and doubts about ⁴³ the role of Russia as a supplier. This led to increased electricity prices, inflation and enhanced economic cost especially on energy hungry industries. For example, in the United Kingdom, the prices for electricity in 2022 were more than 200% higher than in the previous year. Consumers in all the European countries experienced a sharp increase in the expenses on heat that in turn detrimentally affected business costs and, therefore, ²³ the growth rate of the economy(Wolff, 2015).However, it also unveiled major fault lines in Europe's energy system – the sudden ²³ sharp increase in the price of natural gas. The recent gas and oil cut by Russia has raised the alarm on how much Europe relied on Russian pipeline, including the Nord Stream 1 and even the completed but yet unused Nord Stream 2 pipeline. The only pipeline through which most of Russia's natural gas reached Germany, Nord Stream 1 was wholly shut down in September 2022. Several days after that, ⁸ explosions in the Baltic Sea affected the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and worked for the disturbance of energy supplies again. These events and other failures to involve more infrastructure also indicate that the risk of geopolitical aspect important for relying on a single energy supplier, whose actions may involve using energy as a geopolitical weapon(Smith, 2011).Due to these shocks, ¹ the European union, and its member states ³⁸ embraced the concept of the Energy Diversification. EU has not taken lightly in efforts to diversify the sources of natural gas, by importing LNG from the US, Qatar and Algeria among others in a bid to cut its reliance on Russian energy. Increased from previous years, Europe imported 17 million tons of LNG from the United States in 2022 as it tried to diversify from Russian supplies. However the change to LNG has not been without its problems. LNG supply chains are less developed; the infrastructure for import and regasification costs and is limited. However, due to the global competition for the LNG it has raised the prices even higher not only for Europe but also for many other regions which rely on the fuel(ROZUMNY, 2023).

It has also contributed this to a greater change in energy policies in Europe. The EU has accelerated the shift towards green energy, and the European Green Deal has emerged even more. Attempts to bring more renewable energy including wind, solar and hydrogen have been stepped up to quickly wean off dependency on fossil fuels. Nonetheless, as the changeover of generation is considered as important for energy security, sources of renewable energy are not quite effective in terms of the amount of energy that the Russian gas holds. Although EU's RU has increased over the years, there are however issues to do with its deployment, storage and ability to meet demand during certain times of day or year for example during the day when there is little sunlight or when there is no wind(Sokolsky, 2017).However, not only energy supply has been impacted by the conflict, but also the situation in the oil market has been closely influenced as well. Russia remains **the second largest exporter of oil in the globe and the** EU used to be a big customer for Russia's crude oil. DOWNLOAD IMAGE As to the invasion of Iraqi territory by Western nations, sanctions on Russian oil are as follows: In this regard, significant changes that preceded the invasion of Iraqi territory and affected the global oil market shifted quite rapidly. Whereas some EU countries – including Germany and Italy – can offset their Russian oil imports with Middle Eastern, US and African grades, others such as Hungary cannot. Together with the reduction in production by Russia and other OPEC+ members, the impact has produced higher global oil prices such that Brent crude oil reached above \$130 per barrel in early 2022 from slightly more than \$60 in early 2021(Nygren, 2007).

The conflict impact on energy security is not only limited to Europe, though its influence crosses geographical borders. The war has therefore thrown the energy market dynamics especially for the developing nations, which rely on importing energy products from Russia. The highest energy price inflation has been registered in emergent economies especially in African, Asian and Latin America. These countries relying on Russian's oil and gas imports have had to increase the cost of energy which has promoted inflation and instability of their economy(Urciuoli et al., 2014).It has also increase **pressure on the global energy system as the demand** for its supply **increases** is also felt. The volatility that has characterized the pursuit of energy resources has worsened the pursuit of achieving affordable energy for everyone and the war has demonstrated the instability of global value chains. The global average natural gas price in 2022 was at 5.5 times its long-term average, which denotes an energy affordability question mark in the global advanced and emerging economies(Casier, 2011). The ongoing war between

Ukraine and Russia has caused both the calamitous and long-term implications for global energy markets, oil and gas prices, energy delivery chains, and the creation of new, renewable energy sources. Some have manifested in such forms such as price fluctuations, disrupted supplies, and changing juncture in energy policies and investments(Mitchell & Vasquez, 2024).In the short term, what happened offered a taste of the consequences, most felt in the energy markets as Europe got a firsthand taste of a disruption of Russian oil, gas, and coal. Russia is the second biggest exporter of oil and the supplier of natural gas among Europe countries, that makes it set up the position on global energy markets. Again, at the beginning of the conflict in February 2022, Russia challenged the export limit, which created abrupt supply disruptions. For instance, Russia's pipeline exports to EU decreased significantly – from 170 bcm in the previous year and to around 60 bcm in the current year. It was coupled with Russia's decision to suspend or cut deliveries to countries that backed Ukraine notably Poland, Bulgaria and the Baltic States making the European region further squeezed in supply(ACHUDUME, 2023).

In turn to these disruptions, global prices of oil skyrocketed as illustrated here below. Brent crude – the international standard for oil – rose to more than \$130 per barrel in March this year, from about \$60 per barrel at the start of 2021. An identical picture emerged in natural gas prices where prices in Europe were recording their highest levels. For instance, the price of natural gas in Europe by August 2022 reached over €300 MWh, compared with the war levels in Europe of about €20-30 for per MWH. Such increase in prices was occasioned by concerns over renewed supply risks, cut in Russian exports, and heightened competition for spare energy supplies such as LNG. These increases in prices automatically translated into increase energy costs for consumer, industries, and businesses in Europe and globally and thus bring inflation(Torulagha, n.d.).Specific short-term effects, for example, worked to deepen many supply-chain disruptions in energy markets. When”countries searched for the new sources of energy after being cut off from Russian supplies....”, the overall demand for energy from other sources was meant, thus internationalizing the energy demands. For instance, the European Union in particular looked to LNG from the United States, Qatar and Algeria in place of Russian gas. The US LNG export to EU: In 2022, EU imported LNG worth 17 million tons from the US while in 2021, it imported only 5 million tons. But, LNG supply chain logistics are far more complex and expensive than pipelines hence most LNG regasification, storage and transportation facilities are scarce especially in countries with poorly developed port and receiving terminals.

Thus, even while other sources were being sought, costs and logistics constraints of switching to LNG made it impossible for many countries to fully diversify away from Russian gas in the short term (Olson & Lenzmann, 2016). These disturbances feathered energy supply chains and also impacted on oil markets. In the short term, after the conflict, the measure like sanctions on Russia with regards to America and EU banning Russian oil exported were some of the major ways that changed oil flow in the global market. New buyers seem to have exceeded traditional customers, particularly Europe, through which Russia drastically reduced its exports for oil in the recent past as the Asian market, particularly China and India, emerged as prospective consumers. Although Russia was in a position to redirect some of its oil exports to these markets the process was not smooth and led to serious imbalance in the supply of oil. Second, world demand for oil and gas has remained high as economies started to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, effectively drawing energy markets even tighter (Benton et al., 2022).

The impact of the conflict on the long-term evolution of energy markets is not yet fully clear, however, several factors are expected to redefine world energy policy and investment outlooks for years to come. Perhaps the most profound residual consequence is that the crisis precipitated Europe as a bloc to further shift its sources of energy supply and away from depending heavily on Russia. The European Union has laid out clear strategic goals to diversify from Russian oil and gas – namely, to reduce EU imports of Russian gas by 2/3 by the end of 2022, and to completely eliminate EU's consumption of Russian energy by 2027. As lengthened economic horizons have raised the capital intensity of carbon-free power generation, investments in renewables like wind, solar, and hydrogen have received a major boost (Ellison et al., 2023). The EU's quest for greater energy self-sufficiency is also now leading to even more significant investments in fresh LNG-related infrastructure for import, in the form of terminals and storage destinations to receive growing LNG imports from other locales. In 2022 only, starting from Germany, the Netherlands and Poland several countries in the EU continue to ramp up the timeline for the new LNG terminal projects many of which have been either shelved or delayed because of high costs. The demands to diversify the energy sources have also led to enhanced cooperation with such countries as the United States, which delivers LNG to Europe and Qatar, which increases exports to satisfy growing European demand (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016). Yet another long term impact of the conflict has been the shifting of the global oil markets. Since the Western

countries imposed trade sanctions that limited Russian export of oil to Europe, Russia has sought other markets in Asia. India and China, two of the biggest nations using oil, have benefited from affordable Russian oil. Indeed, SE Asian Imports of Russian crude oil more than tripled between 2021 and 2022, and India, in particular, buys Russian oil, at a deep discount, occasionally as much as 30% below the global average. This change in the geography of interdiction has led to increased disintegration of the world oil market as Europe, traditionally a consumer of Russian oil has been supplanted by new consumers in the East. Nevertheless, these changes are not without the market imperfection and great volatility because this chain market of oil is in the process of transformation(Bukhari, Khan, Noreen, et al., 2024a).

Secondly, the relevance of concern relative to the long-term hazards of relying on fossil fuels have been asserted by the war in conjunction with increasing geopolitical tensions. This recognition is increasing pressure on governments & industries for faster switch to the green energy, clean energy. While RE source can reduce energy security threats in the long run, the transition is not easy and is expensive. Even as more money flows towards renewable energy sources, fossil fuels still accounts for a lion share of the energy generation shift and the speed of green energy revolution cannot cater for the energy demands of the world in the near future(Glanville & Pattison, 2024).The conflict has also brought to the foreground the problems of economic and environmental character linked with the use of oil. Although energy prices have continued to rise, the shift towards renewable sources of energy is going to call for massive capital investment, infrastructure and technology. The idea of energy security by having domestic production of energy and diversified imports as well as through the use of renewable energy sources is well understood by governments. However, the transition to green energy future will occur slowly and the international relations in energy field continue to be problematic(Bukhari, Khan, Noreen, et al., 2024b).In conclusion, the short-term impacts of the Ukraine-Russia conflict have been ugly characterized by shocks to energy supply and steep price hikes apart from volatility in the O&G business. These changes are expected to persist in the long run and may cause fundamental shifts in world energy security architectures, in the pace of the transition towards renewable sources and LNG facilities and in the patterns of States' oil exchange. These outcomes have made Europe and other areas reassess energy dependence and diversification, and other regions and countries to implement an urgent shift towards cleaner energy systems, as well as to build more resilient ones(Krickovic, 2015).

This paper explores ways in which energy dependence foreign policies and security strategies of European countries especially in the light of the present day geopolitical crunch and energy supply turmoil occasioned by the Russia Ukraine conflict. The partnership between Russia and Europe nowadays has been based on the fact that Russia has been a long-term supplier of energy in Europe and this factor has influenced greatly foreign policy, security and diplomacy of Europe (Glaser, 1993). For most of the beginning of the 21st century a vast number of European countries especially those in the central and eastern part of the continent have depended on Russia to supply them with natural gas, oil and coal. Russia has been the EU's leading provider of natural gas for many years, and as of 2021, it accounted for 40% of EU import of natural gas as well as a major source of imported oil for Europe. This has given rise to a web of energy interdependence between Europe and Russia where while energy forms a strong bond of economic cooperation it also forms a geopolitical risk. European countries have, over time, fine tuned their foreign policies for meeting their energy needs without straining their existing diplomatic relations with Russia. Lack of energy independence has had severe consequences to the European foreign policy and security strategies whereby most of them depended on Russia for their energy needs. First of all it has made Europe largely, especially those European countries that borders Russia act cautiously and diplomatically towards Russia. Germany, Austria, and Hungary for example, which have depended on Russian energy, have a more inclined bent towards dialogue, cooperation economic diplomacy, and diplomacy with Russia. For instance, Germany has been standing firmly for the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline being the projects that connect Russia to Germany with no transits through the Eastern European states. Take the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that was agreed in 2021 but froze when there was aggression in Ukraine; it can be seen that the energy requirements have shaped Germany's foreign policy towards Russia. Although Germany and other European countries have come under criticism for reliance on Russian energy, these projects were viewed as necessary for access to a stable and reasonably priced energy source, and as traditional European domestic energy sources continue to fall. This has also impacted the security perspective European nations in a way that their policies in other fields of foreign relations are often unable to take more stringent measures against Russia due to their excessively increased reliance on Russian energy. For example, before the outbreak of war in Ukraine, many EU nations were cautious over the prospect of implementing severe penalties on Russia over the emanating worry on energy crisis.

After the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Crimea in 2014 ⁸ Russia the EU has imposed several economic sanctions on Russia including the restrictions imposed in the energy section. However, some European nations especially Germany and Italy were reluctant to support for stricter measures because such measures threatened to affect supplies of Russian natural gas. The government of Germany in particular expressed concern about the possible impact of sanctions aimed at the Russian oil and gas sector: increased prices for gas or even a shortage of it that could negatively affect the European economy. So, due to overs(dependency)dependence on Russia in energy sector, Europe sometimes lacked powerful punch in diplomatic and economic strategies in Ukraine and other cases.

⁴² The unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in 2022 defined a new tendency in European foreign policy regarding Russia. The military conflict that unfolded in Europe has made Europe even more susceptible to such pressures from Russia as it started to cut its energy exports to EU in response to that punitive economic measure and support of Ukraine. European countries have had no choice but to quickly readjust and consider their energy security new directions and shift their policies regarding Russia. One of the elements of this process has been a focus to wean Western economies off of Russian energy. The European Union previously had 40% of its natural gas, and the revised targets, which the EU set its aspiration ⁷ to reduce Russian natural gas imports by two third by 2022, and completely wean off Russian imported energy by 2027. In practice, this has meant looking for other forms of energy, which has included increasing the capability for importing ⁹ Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from US, Qatar and other countries. For instance: in 2022, the EU imported 73 % more LNG from the US, while the US pipe-borne Russian gas imports reduced by over 60%. This energy shift has also made many European states realise and Opt towards diversification of energy sources and increase investments towards renewable energy and nuclear sources. For instance, Germany that has fairly depended on Russian natural gas started shifting towards renewable sources of energy a policy it tagged, Energiewende. The events of war in Ukraine have not only highlighted the call for Europe to establish relationship with energy sources that are not solely with states like Russia but also for Europe to diversify its energy options. Likewise, Poland and the Baltic States that have long been voicing anti-Russian sentiments in energy policies see the need for more energy cooperation in Europe and are increasing the construction of the alternative energy system, including LNG terminals and the interconnectors with neighbors. The conflict has also caused shift on the strategic horizon of the

overall security architecture in Europe. The interest in energy security has grown higher in Europe due to the weakened influence of Russia in energy resources as Europe has considered it as an essential part of defensive and security strategy. EU has developed a series of initiatives to improve the over framework and to increase the energy storage capabilities, the infrastructures that connect EU members together and guarantee a solidarity in case of future emergencies supply. The EU has also tried to increase relations with other energy suppliers other than Russian and this include Africa, Middle East and America. This has involved commitments with Algeria, Nigeria and Azerbaijan on a larger supply of gas to Europe and negotiation for longer term more balanced LNG contracts with the US. Moreover, regarding the general security perspectives, the energy relation between Europe and Russia has had impacts in the defense and the military affiliations of European continent. Russia's very striking geopolitical assertiveness on energy was premeditated to bring amplifier the interests of NATO, especially the American side and took the situation as an opportunity to deepen the cooperation with the United States by ratifying that Russian energy dominance is a threat to many European state's security. Washington has persuaded European countries to decrease their dependence of Russian energy source as a measure into achieving the general objective of lessening Russia's power in Europe and reduce the impact that Moscow has in this continent. For instance, the U.S has offered crucial energy assistance to East European nations like Poland and the Baltic States to cushion them for impact of cut off of energy supply by Russia. In this regard, the protection of the energy assets as well as their security issues has emerged as an important factor of strategic considerations of NATO.

Therefore, energy dependence on Russia is viewed as the core characteristic of European foreign policies and security practices of the last several decades. It has influenced political relations, economic choices and security strategy in the region, thereby constraining Europe because of the credibility of the supply of energy. Nevertheless, recent Russo-Ukrainian war boosts the change in the energy policy of Europe—there is a trend in the reduction of reliance on Russian energy and in the diversification of energy supply. It is possible to was affirmed that in the years to come, energy independence could occupy the central focus of both European political foreign policies as well as the general approaches to security in European countries. The war between Russia and Ukraine, which escalated in February of 2022 has had major implications around the geopolitical alignments along the protracted axes of military affiliations, energy, and economic planning, security and architectures in the region. This conflict's

consequences are rewiring transatlantic security, NATO and Russia primarily, and ³²the role of extra-regional powers including the United States, China, and others. These shifts are thus recasting the international relations and introducing new challenges to international empty HTML tags security as well as development and stability of the entire world economy. Among all ⁴⁹the transformations that have taken place in the world arena, one of the most striking and constant changes is the renewal and reassumption of activities by NATO. NATO, which has experienced certain degree of identities crisis and debates about its roles after the Cold War, has received a boost from ¹³the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The conflict has brought NATO member states to the same line and many countries have enhance their defence budget and increased contribution towards the alliance security. Now, there is a formal request for accession to NATO by Finland and Sweden in 2022, which, in turn, makes a qualitative change in the NATO composition and a more powerful addition to the eastern wall of the Alliance. These countries were willing to come out in the open declaring they want to join NATO, knowing fully well that Russia has always been against NATO expansion suggesting that Russia is a threat to European security. Finland joined NATO in April 2023, while Sweden is expected to join as well: countries are turning to NATO for protection against Russia's aggression. Similarly, the conflict has deepened an ideological and military confrontation between NATO and Russia, who are expecting their confrontation to be long-term. Toward this end, NATO has placed more troops along the Eastern front and has also stationed more forces in the Baltic States, Poland, Romania and other member states considered to be vulnerable to Russian aggression. It has been accompanied by the enlargement of NATO spring exercise around the Russian borders that signal a shift in the core NATO focus and is a clear reaction to Russian activities in Ukraine. These plans intended to calm member states and respond to increased Russian militant force, yet at the same time they can provoke conflict with Moscow which considers NATO's movement eastward as interference in Russia's zone of influence.

The geopolitical confrontation has also changed the setting of energy politics, for instance, between Russia and Europe. The war in Ukraine also revealed ³⁴that most European countries depend on Russian energy sources – Russia leverages its position as one of the biggest exporters of natural gas and oil to Europe to put pressure on European governments. ⁷The European Union has reacted to Russia's invasion by adopting goals on diversification: The EU aims at lowering the dependence on Russian energy, intending the complete exclusion of Russian

natural gas by 2027. As was seen previously in 2022, the Russian Federation decided to cease supplying natural gas to Poland, Bulgaria, and Finland, which led to a profound reconsideration of the European energy situation. EU as a global consumer of energy has embarked on importation of other energy sources like Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from America and Qatar among others, and has invested in renewable energy sources. At the same time, new changes in the energy landscape have improved relations between Russia and China. While European countries look for ways to reduce their energy dependence on Russia, China emerged as the key buyer of Russian oil and natural gas. The two countries have enhanced their bilateral relationships especially in the energy and commerce and industry. Russia has more and more shifted to China as the main buyer of oil and gas and through more recent deals like the Power of Siberia gas pipeline and additional potential pipelines. This shift is of great importance for world energy effective demand and supply system due to the fact that the new alignment of energy interests between Russia and China decreases the previous Russian interest to European demand, while increases China's energy security. In addition, the conflict has expanded the competitiveness between the USA and China, thus deepening the rivalry between the two world giants. The U.S. has been an unequivocal source of support to Ukraine, both politically and militarily, having supplied Ukraine with money, arms and instructors. On the same front, the US has been at the forefront of the world in putting sanctions on Russia encompassing its energy industry, banking, and influential businessman. These sanctions are intended to halt Russia's economic activity, reduce its war funding and force Moscow to surrender to a ceasefire. Nevertheless, these measures also have their cost in the US and its associates in the international system particularly manifested in soaring energy prices as well as global inflation. On the other hand China has not offered direct criticism of Russia's actions and has urged for negotiations. Although China has not taken any aggressive position on the conflict, China has been a major diplomatic and economical ally of Russia. The Chinese decision concerning the further entrenchment with Russian on the Western sanctions reflects a longer strategic relationship designed for containing the American influence abroad. Thereby, this alignment of Russia and China poses new threats to the United States and it allies in terms of realigning the geopolitics of power back into the two authoritarian powers. Military relations between Russia and China, on the one hand, and with countries of the West on the other hand, are becoming more complex resulting in a new stage of globalization's "great power competition" to stir up effects on the

world's security. The increase in military organizations such as NATO, shift in energy geography, and escalation of geopolitical contest reflect new age of competitive power politics. It is the rivalry between superpowers that is raising tensions in the Indo-Pacific and Europe by heightening the danger that the conflict will escalate. Another of such risks inspired by these geopolitical changes is a prospect of the local war escalation or direct warfare between NATO and Russia. Given progress in expanding NATO's military infrastructure in close proximity to Russia's borders, the probability of military incidents, or if not incidents, of military confrontations will persist and are likely to intensify in the near future, respectively in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus situated on the NATO border. Proliferation of proxy wars and use of cyber warfare that are some of the characteristics of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine have the potential to increase the region's insecurity and may spread globally. Another threat is the active development of approaches to weapons of energy resources. The threats involved in the ability of Russia to weaponise the export of energy have been manifested economically early enough given the impacts on European economies that are vulnerable to high energy prices and energy insecurity. The moves away from reliance on Russian energy might increase energy prices worldwide, affect markets, deepen inflation rate impacts. The energy crisis may also expose international competitive struggle for new sources of energy such as natural gas and rare metals for renewable energy technology from Africa, Central Asia and the Arctic. The ongoing crisis in food security also has another factor associated with it, being the conflict. Russia and Ukraine are both key exporters of grain and interruptions in supplies due to the war have had a knockdown effect especially for developing countries in Africa and the Middle East. Conflict displacement, loss of homes, and eradications in Ukraine have also contributed to the humanitarian crisis and forcing the relevant international structures to expand aid to millions of refugees, and further investigate the sources of instability. Consequently, due to the armed standoff between Russia and Ukraine, the character and new threats arise from military confrontation, energy insecurity, the reorientation of economic relations and geopolitical shifts. Some more enduring effects of these dynamics are the increasing NATO-Russian confrontation, the intensification of the American-Chinese rivalry, and continuing problems for the international oil and grain markets. New threats appear time and again both for the Asian and world community so the latter has to look for ways to deal with these emerging threats through diplomacy, international relations and strategic planning.

Whether or not the Ukraine-Russia conflict is likely to degenerate into a global military conflict, or the Third World War is, therefore, a topic that cannot be defined in simple terms. Such elements determine this probability: roles of principal world players, presence of various types of military alliances, and geopolitical stakes, positioning of Russia, NATO and other actors. To measure this probability we have to take into account not only the impulse with subsequent chain reactions which can lead to generalised war but also the existing deterrents within the system of international relations. First, the conflict in its present size and the participation of NATO and the United States can significantly influence the chances of the expansion of the conflict. Since the Russian-Ukrainian war starting February this year, NATO has offered political support, weaponry, intelligence, and training to Ukraine, but has not engaged actively in the war. NATO's stance has been clear: it does endorse Ukraine's state and its territorial boundaries, but at the same time it does not want to deal with Russian army. Though the chances for direct confrontation are somewhat limited, they can come under question if Russian forces attack NATO member or if there is a major misperception on both sides of each other's military intents and capabilities. Collective defense, as which NATO defended in article 5, is also an important element that should determine the threats of the more widespread conflict. Article 5 of the charter has fulminated that an aggression on one member state signifies an aggression on all which has been a strong discouragement to Russia from carrying out any aggression against NATO states in the east. However, the possibility that something will go wrong—say, a Russian missile hits Land, part of NATO—has to be taken into account. One such event may initiate Article 5 and entice a military confrontation of NATO with Russia. For example, several events, such as bombings near infrastructural facilities near the NATO borders and border conflicts in 2022, such escalation fears. But as of now, the chances of the NATO actively combating Russia are low since both sides understand that the war in Ukraine should not spread beyond Ukraine.

The capabilities of NATO, the United States, and Russia in military terms also define another factor that makes probability of global war even more uncertain. The hegemonic leader of NATO, namely the United States, still possesses a considerable technological and numerical advantage in conventional armed forces especially in the areas of air and naval forces and super-ago and missile defense forces. The Russians possess a large military and even nuclear power but is left far behind by NATO in terms of technology. However, Russia's strategy has been focused

more and more on the use of nuclear weapons to prevent the participation of NATO countries. Since the incident at Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the threat of nuclear escalation is actually holding the conflict limited to Ukraine. Each of them has their own understanding of the fact that nuclear war means genocide, and this has limited to a great extent direct military conflict between the two parties. Another important factor that determine the likelihood of war at the world level is the positioning of other great powers, including China. On the question of Ukraine China has taken middle of the road approach. Although China has not backed Russia in the military manner it has outspokenly defended Russian actions and actively contributed to the imposition of economic pressure on Russia, for instance, through supplying Russia with energy resources. It has also pointed out that China too considers the US involvement in Ukraine as part of an ongoing mission to curb Chinese advancement in the Asia-Pacific region. Such dynamics indicate that although China cares about strategic interests in developing relations with both Russia and the West and seeks to avoid the extension of NATO presence in Eastern Europe. But China does not plan to directly get involved in a military style in Ukraine because it doesn't want an open confrontation with the West which is detrimental for china's strategic interests. The economic relations within the world also play a role to the whether or not there can be a Third World War. The current globalized economy especially in the areas of trade, energy and finance is integrated. A real war around the world means that all global shipments will be stopped, energy production will cease and all the world markets including Russia, China, USA and European countries will turn into nothing. Proxies for political relations show that whilst these countries are generally geopolitical adversaries, no country can rely highly on its own resources for economic growth as that depends greatly on these neighbors. For example, Europe imports goods from China while the US has endeavored on global supply chain hence, both are interested in none military confrontation. There is every tendency that the economic impact of a world war will overshadow any potential benefits of territorial or political annexation. Hence use of economic factors as an indicator serve as a sound signal that discourages the use of large scale warfare. Another important factor of preventing the conflict in Ukraine from becoming third world war is work of UN, diplomatic missions and other international organizations. The UN, despite of many deficiencies, the organization that serves an opportunity to hold negotiations and, therefore, to eliminate conflicts. Over the past period, Russia and the Western countries have sought to address their differences peacefully by using political diplomacy to undermine the risk

of full-scale war. Also, continued backing of peace talks and ceasefires in many states on international platforms is evident to demonstrate the importance of avoiding increasing violence. Middle powers such as the AU and ASEAN as well as regional bodies are also trying to stick to the diplomatic front despite their inability to directly address the conflict. Expanding the area of investigation, the risk of the conflict in Ukraine turning into a universal military confrontation remains low – although not excluded. To date, the practices of deterrence, diplomacy, and including assumptions regarding the mutual assured destruction of generalized nuclear measures will help to avoid a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia.¹⁵ It appears that both of these parties are still assuming that if the fighting were to escalate to the level of warfare, then the outcome would be one which could not be allowed. Furthermore, the primary actors, Russia, NATO, and the United States probably have realized that a conventional war would not only bring chaos to Europe, but also to the world with unanticipated severe implications for the economy, politics as well as humanity. But exclusion of this possibility is impossible; probability of this conflict's escalation remains rather high. Accidental measurement or the failure of diplomacy in conflict may also be the cause, and accidental depredation or escalation of violence may equally be a cause. However, the situation in Ukraine remains dynamic and, unless new players join this or that camp or appear new military tactics and strategies come to the fore or Ukrainian politics change once more, the risks remain somewhat contained. The participation of outsiders, for example China or local stakeholders like Turkey, Iran, or India with their pull factors for different reasons might alter this. Considering the current conditions, the risk for the Ukraine-Russia conflict to become a Third World War should be below 10 percent, nevertheless, the threat is still very much existing, constant diplomatic work and conflict solving efforts, and restraint should be applied. Though, to prevent further military conflict, which may be sudden in future and may involve Ukraine-Russia, Middle East conflict or any other, the world community needs to work on synergistic, diplomatic, and strategic level, focused with military might control and taking strategic measures safeguarding global stability, specifically in oil and gas domain. The impact of such a conflict would be disastrous for global security and the global economy will fallout for supply shocks and price hikes of oil and natural gas in both developed and developing countries.¹⁶ Among the most important diplomatic steps it would be possible to point to the need to begin quite intensive multilateral negotiations for the settlement of the situation in Ukraine, as well as the prevention of further conflicts on the geopolitical level. Such

diplomatic initiatives should include US, European Union, Russia and China, Turkey and India and other key powers of the world. To this end, International Organisation like UN and International Energy Agency, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Country are key players in the management of energy supply dialogue. Diplomatic initiations must strive to avoid escalation of the situation in Ukraine as a conflict between Russia and NATO. Among the most successful strategies for this is to strengthen commonly existing arms control treaties, CBMs, and avoiding more arms enhancements in contested zones. Diplomatic solutions should also encompass anticipatory measures to avert conflicts, as well as peace making, which has worked effectively for earlier tensions between the nuclear weapon states. Furthermore, in order to undertake measures to address the oil and gas security concern, there is need for international efforts to ensure energy security of supply. The West has targeted Russian oil and gas sector saying Russia is one of the leading exporters of oil and gas in the world thus affecting global energy supply. This has sparked the need for the globalization of energy sources so that to avoid the danger of being monopolized by a few countries. Governments can negotiate with energy producing nations of Middle East, Africa and central Asia to ensure that backup channels are developed. The U.S has already started the process of raising its output and the European countries which used to rely on Iran are now searching for some of new sources in other Arab countries including the UAE, Qatar and even Venezuela but this is politically sensitive. For expanding its interest, it is crucial to consolidate strategic partnership in other rich energy regions rather than Russia & Middle East. Governments need to engage themselves more in the diplomacy with the aim of increasing the energy cooperation relations as well as embrace other forms of power such as renewable energy. From the perspective of the military, the world community must strive to avoid new direct armed conflicts which will affect oil and gas production even more. This involves matters related to the safety of the international larger strategic sea lines of communications which are so important in transportation of the oil and gas industry. For instance, the Strait of Hormuz is a major international choke point in oil transport, through which annually flows about 20 percent of the world's oil. The free movement of oil through such important sea-lanes should be considered a priority of the global navy, including NATO powers and others like China who also depend on Middle Eastern oil imports. It would require the use of multinationals naval patrols to ensure that these trade routes remained the open and free from subversive activities any which would pose a blow to oil supplies.

Ships carrying natural gas have increasingly become targets of piracy, hence; the military's main task should extend to the protection of vulnerable energy assets like refineries, pipelines, and processing plants for natural gas. This is particularly important in today's conflict-prone regions such as Syria, Iraq and Libya, where regional militias and non-state actors, allied to external powers, rely on the supply of oil. Additionally, any attacks on the oil infrastructure—including the drone attacks on Saudi Aramco's facilities in September 2019 — should have immediate and collective responses from the powers that be to check the escalation of such incidents and upset of oil markets stability. There are some recommendations: apart from military actions, governments and energy companies should create strategic oil reserves. Similar global SPR includes the United States that has the SPR and other nations like China, Japan, and several European states that use the reserves to balance their markets in the course of supply shocks. If the US coordinated the moves to release reserves in crisis alongside manner in management of the domestic requirements, then it would help in the mitigation of shocks that befalls the world energy market. Such efforts have been spearheaded ²⁹ by the International Energy Agency (IEA) and, the extension of this body's role in the course of a crisis would be of further assistance. Still in the long run, more long systematic procedures need to be worked out to promote the diversification of world energy supplies. Part of this is to advance the shift to renewable energy sources around the world, which would decrease reliance on oil and threaten supply cutbacks. Governments must elevate their spending on more efficient energy sources solar, wind, and hydropower among others and also come up with faster methods of developing batteries that would improve energy security by giving more of energy access. A broader agenda for energy transition ⁵¹ policies would also involve increasing nuclear energy in some parts of the world including Europe and some parts of Asia as there is demand for efficient clean energy. The opportunities of effective promotion of hydrogen energy and the actually occurring scaling up also indicate possibilities of gradual decrease in direct dependence on fossil energy resources in the long term. Today, such states as Japan, Germany, Australia and others have already started using hydrogen for industrial, transport and residential needs. There is the possibility for international collaboration with respect to the study and building of hydrogen infrastructure that would seem to open an additional source to traditional oil and gas deliveries. Moreover, the international actors need to develop the paradigm for energy security cooperation rather than confrontation. It may include regulation of value chains for energy supplying countries that

might address issues such as reserve transparency and conditions of oil and gas facilities, security of supply, as well as, managing geopolitical risks in energy markets.

Findings

- ❖ **Energy Dependence and Diversification:** It was the war in Ukraine which showed that EU is too much dependent on Russia and especially in the sphere of energy and raw supplies including natural gas and oil. The World has seen Russia as a leading exporter of energy to Europe and through this, Russia has been able to use energy as a weapon on European governments. The EU in its turn has formulated key objectives aimed at the reduction of this dependence, for instance a goal to end the dependence on Russian natural gas by 2027. In the EU's short term strategies, it has looked for non-Russian sources of supply and has bought Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from the U.S., Qatar and others besides investing in renewable energy.
- ❖ **Shift in Energy Alliances:** Whereas European nations are cutting back on imports of Russian energy, China has become an important consumer of Russian oil and natural gas. In turn, this shift is deepening cooperation between Russia and China, especially when it comes to new energy vector including the construction of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline. This has brought creditable effects on the international energy import and export since shifts Russia's energy delivery to China, improve the latter's energy security while reduce the former's overdependence on European market.
- ❖ **Impact on Global Rivalries:** In addition, the conflict is intensifying the geopolitical tension between the U.S and China. Supporting Ukraine, the US has been giving them financial, military, and diplomatic aid all the time increasing the sanctions against Russia, including the restrictions concerning its energy sector. On the other hand, while China has not condemned Russian actions bit by bit, has shifted closer to Russia's camp, especially in the sphere of energy relations with America. This realignment contributes another degree of freedom to the international political system and increases the confrontation between the USA and China.

❖ **Energy as a Weapon and its Global Impact:** Russia has turned energy as a weapon, with this they have resorted to denying its neighbor countries energy to gain the upper hand. This strategy has, therefore, caused shocks to the European economy and contributed to increased global energy insecurity and high energy prices and inflation. These changes may only serve to raise the cost of energy supply across the globe as the world shifts towards the search for new sources of supply that are competitive with Russia; primary supplies are expected to remain largely concentrated on natural gas, strategic metals, and renewable energy technologies.

❖ **Food Security and Humanitarian Impact:** These have affected by world grain exports from Ukraine and Russia with harsh effect especially to the developing countries of Africa and the Middle East. It has also led to significant suffering and, up to 2015, around five million people were displaced internally and in neighboring counties required humanitarian assistance.

❖ **Risks of Escalation and Military Confrontation:** That risk is the probability of an armed confrontations, especially with Russia, there is also a risk of the military escalation with other countries. The toughest issue that has emerged more so with the installation of new structures associated with NATO military grouping closer to the Russian borders includes the likelihood of some sort of armed confrontation, especially in the zone that may embrace Ukraine and Moldova as well as Belarus. The risk of an extension of the war also remains high, with increasing the number of proxy wars, cyber threats and other forms of hybrid conflicts primarily destabilising the region further.

❖ **Deterrence and the Role of Nuclear Weapons:**

Open conflict can be substantially contained through the deterrence mechanism based on nuclear potentials. NATO and Russia realize the destructive nature of nuclear war and due to that to a certain extent, direct military confrontation has been prevented. Nonetheless, unintentional drift can occur whereby leaders find themselves on a collision course due to technology, misunderstanding strategy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the nature and effects of Ukraine-Russia conflict present a new and challenging threat to global energy security and consequently, it has caused changes to energy supply chain, geo-political partnerships and worldwide economy. Russia's disruption of energy exports to Europe has shifted energy dynamics around the world, making it more difficult to find new resources and making prices go up. This change did not only impact the European plans on energy, but has also further improved the Moscow Beijing entente. It has provoked a considerable tension between leading powers of the world or grouping such as US & NATO on the one side and Russia & China on the other side furthering speculations that it may fuel additional deterioration. Thus, even though the probability of direct use of a military conflict in Ukraine as a starting point of the Third World War is currently rather low owing to the existence of prevention measures, and a realization of the repercussions of a nuclear war those who intend to participate in the military agitation, the risk of regional conflict and a proxy war remains high globally. This approach regards the critical conflict through diplomacy, energy partnership diversification, and military build-up restraint. Finally, the current conflict confirms that the world cannot exist without cooperation in the field of energy security and address the possibility of a large-scale, more catastrophic war.

Recommendations

- ❖ **Intensified Diplomacy and Multilateral Negotiations:** The world community needs to emphasize the diplomatic efforts to bring the war to a end especially between Russia and NATO. Bilateral discussions with the participation of Washington, Brussels, Moscow, Beijing, Ankara and Delhi, etc. should help to stabilise Ukraine and avoid escalation of the conflict in any other countries. Strategies that increase security and decrease the risk of a military confrontation, continue the improvement and maintenance of arms control arrangements of disputed territories, and limit military escalation in such places should remain core objectives of diplomacy.
- ❖ **Energy Security and Diversification:** Preserving the stability and independence in energy supply requires global diversification of energy sources as an aim of the international cooperation. These measures include buying energy from other world zones, for example, the Middle East, African States, and Central Asia and encouraging more utilization of

renewable power sources. It also reveals that governments should establish long term contractual relationships with energy supplying countries and seek fresh investment opportunities in energy infrastructure system.

- ❖ **Strategic Reserves and Energy Cooperation:** Investments into development of other types of preventive oil stocks, including strategic ones, should be encouraged worldwide, examples of which include the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve. These reserves can in fact come in handy during the disruption of supplies. The role of the IEA should be to act as the central organizer to release reserves in crises in an effort to provide stability to the global energy markets. Further, its main objectives should liaise with other global institutions like the IEA and OPEC to ensure energy value chains are preserved while energy prices do not cause economic imbalances.
- ❖ **Protection of Energy Infrastructure and Trade Routes:** Security services should target elements that threaten the energy transport that includes Pipelines, Refineries and Shipping Channel. The protection of critical provided access points; 'chokepoints,' like the Strait of Hormuz, is central to the free circulation of oil and gas importations across the international market. It is possible to scourge piracy, attacks on infrastructure bases or any other interferences that may pose a threat to the world energy supply by providing multinational naval patrols and international cooperation in development of defensive tactical measures.
- ❖ **Promotion of Renewable Energy and Energy Transition:** The international society must increase the use of green energy practices like the sun, wind, and hydroelectric power to change from the traditional black power sources. Governments should extend spending on needed renewable energy systems and expand upon research for better battery storage technologies. Moreover, there is the idea of hydrogen energy as one more prospective form of energy that should replace the known types of non-renewable resources, with creating proper conditions for this object international cooperation.
- ❖ **Strategic Military Restraint and Crisis Management:** To avert the unfolding conflict into an international war, military players have to make calculated and courteous actions only within the limits of crisis management frame works. U.S. and NATO, therefore, should assist Ukraine through other means with minimal provocation of Russian forces into

possibly direct confrontation. NATO and Russia should commit not only to diplomacy but also to deterrence preventing parties from reaching the conflict that could start accidentally.

❖ **Humanitarian Aid and Global Food Security:** More importantly, more effort should be directed to stemming the resulting humanitarian crisis that has affected Ukraine and other neighboring areas. Attention should be paid to giving help to refugees, supporting the uninterrupted delivery of food to the countries, which are in need, and dealing with other factors which have been enhanced by the war and related to food security. Such international organisations as the United Nations as well as the World Food Programme should be at the forefront of such initiatives.

❖ **Promote Geopolitical Stability Through International Cooperation:** Global society should strive to build the culture of collaboration with corresponding interrelations in the international cooperation concerning energy and military aspects. This is within the energy supply chains to enhance operational transparency, security of supply and geopolitical risks. More significantly, common partnerships to support varying energy security should set up so as not to create tension with regards resource attainment and sustainability.

Lastly, the events in Ukraine-Russia relations point to the significance of Establishing effective diplomatic/military and strategic means to regulate the existing and future relations regarding energy security in and beyond Europe. The recommendations focus on the cooperation with other countries, on diversification of energy resources, on building defense of critical energy infrastructure, and on progressing to RE sources which are crucial for the vibrancy of world economy and geopolitics.

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