

THE WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA-UKRAINE AND ITS IMPACT ON UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, which began with Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, has had a major impact on the United States in many different ways. While the fighting is happening in Eastern Europe, the effects are being felt across the globe—especially in the U.S., which has taken a leading role in responding to the crisis. This article explores how the war has influenced the U.S. economy, foreign policy, and political climate at home. Economically, the war has disrupted global markets, especially for energy and food, causing rising prices and adding to inflation in the U.S. Politically, the conflict has sparked debates in Congress and among the American public about the cost and value of U.S. support for Ukraine. The U.S. has provided billions of dollars in military and humanitarian aid and has worked closely with NATO and European allies to apply sanctions on Russia and reinforce security in Europe. To better understand why the U.S. is so involved, this article uses a theory from international relations called "Realism." This theory explains how countries act mainly to protect their own interests and maintain power. From this viewpoint, America's actions are part of a larger strategy to stop Russia from threatening European security and to defend the current global order. The article also looks at how other countries have responded to the war and what this all means for the future. It concludes by discussing the long-term effects the conflict may have on U.S. leadership, international alliances, and the balance of power in global politics.

Keywords: NATO Response, Security Cooperation, Sanctions on Russia, U.S. Domestic Politics, International Relations, Realism Theory, Global Alliances, Defense Industry, EU Response, Congressional Policy

INTRODUCTION

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it sparked not just a regional crisis, but a global one. The United States quickly stepped in as one of the main countries supporting Ukraine. This support came in many forms—sending military equipment, giving financial aid, placing tough economic sanctions on Russia, and working closely with allies through diplomacy. The U.S. government made it clear that defending Ukraine was about more than just helping one country—it was also about standing up for democracy, protecting international law, and preventing further aggression by powerful

states. This strong involvement has had major effects, both around the world and within the United States itself. Internationally, the U.S. response helped bring NATO and other allies closer together, showing that the West could still act in unity when faced with a serious threat. But the conflict also made things more tense between the U.S. and other countries, especially Russia and China, and created difficult choices for countries that didn't want to pick sides. Back at home, Americans have felt the impact too. Because Russia and Ukraine are both big players in energy and agriculture, the war disrupted global supplies of

oil, gas, and grain. That led to higher fuel and food prices, which added to inflation that was already affecting many American families after the COVID-19 pandemic. These rising costs made life harder for millions of people and forced the government to rethink its economic policies. The war has also caused political disagreements inside the U.S. At first, there was strong support from both parties in Washington to help Ukraine. But as the war dragged on and the costs went up, some lawmakers and citizens began to question how long the U.S. should keep sending aid, and whether that money should instead be spent on domestic problems like healthcare, education, and infrastructure. These debates reflect a long-standing tension in American politics: should the U.S. stay deeply involved in global affairs, or focus more on issues at home? On the strategic front, the war has pushed the U.S. to re-evaluate its role in Europe. American troops and equipment have been sent to reinforce NATO's eastern borders, and the U.S. has reassured allies that it will stand by them. At the same time, leaders in Washington are also trying to manage rising competition with China in the Indo-Pacific. Balancing both Europe and Asia as strategic priorities is becoming more challenging—and more important—for American foreign policy. Because this conflict touches so many parts of U.S. policy—economy, politics, and global strategy—this article looks at three key questions: how has the war affected the American economy, how has it changed U.S. foreign policy, and how has it influenced domestic political debates? To help answer these questions, the article uses Realism, a theory in international relations that focuses on how countries act mainly out of self-interest to protect their power and security. This theory helps explain why the U.S. responded the way it did, and what that says about its future role in the world. In the end, the Russia-Ukraine war isn't just about two countries fighting. It's about a changing global landscape—and the choices the United States must make as it tries to lead, protect its interests, and deal with the consequences at home and abroad.

Research Questions

1. How has the Russia-Ukraine war affected the U.S. economy, especially energy prices and inflation?

The Russia-Ukraine war has hit the U.S. economy in some pretty direct and noticeable ways. One of the biggest ways Americans have felt this impact is through rising energy prices. Russia is one of the world's largest producers of oil and natural gas, so when the war started, the global markets reacted almost immediately. The U.S. and its allies quickly put sanctions on Russian energy exports to try to cut off money going to Russia's war efforts. But those sanctions also reduced the overall supply of oil and gas in the world market, which made fuel prices shoot up. For people living in the U.S., this meant paying a lot more to fill up their gas tanks. Gas prices climbed to levels many hadn't seen in years, putting real pressure on family budgets. But it didn't stop there — higher fuel prices meant the cost of transporting goods also went up, which pushed the prices of many everyday products higher. On top of that, food prices increased as well. Ukraine is a key exporter of wheat, corn, and other grains. Because the war disrupted Ukraine's ability to ship those products, global food supplies tightened, making groceries more expensive in the U.S. and around the world. To try and ease the pain at home, the U.S. government took some steps. For example, it released oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve — basically the country's emergency stockpile of oil — hoping to increase supply and lower prices. The government also pushed to increase domestic energy production to reduce reliance on foreign oil. Despite these efforts, inflation stayed high through much of 2022 and 2023. The Federal Reserve responded by raising interest rates multiple times to try and slow down the economy enough to bring inflation down. But raising rates also risked slowing growth too much and possibly pushing the economy into a recession. So, the war made a complicated economic problem even harder to solve. It caused sharp increases in the prices of energy and food, which touched everyday life for millions of Americans, and it forced policymakers to make tough decisions balancing economic growth with inflation control. And because the war's future remains

uncertain, these economic effects continue to create volatility and uncertainty in the markets.

2. How has the war changed U.S. foreign policy and relationships with allies like NATO?

The war in Ukraine really shook-up U.S. foreign policy and how the U.S. works with its allies, especially NATO. Before the war, some people thought NATO was losing its relevance after the Cold War ended and the focus shifted to other global challenges. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine changed all that. It brought the alliance back together with renewed energy and purpose. The U.S. took a leading role in supporting Ukraine, sending billions of dollars in weapons, intelligence, and humanitarian aid. It worked closely with NATO allies to coordinate these efforts and also to impose tough economic sanctions on Russia. On top of that, the U.S. sent troops to Eastern Europe to strengthen NATO's presence and reassure countries like Poland and the Baltic states that America stood ready to defend them. This renewed focus on Russia shifted U.S. foreign policy back toward dealing with traditional security threats after many years of focusing heavily on terrorism and competing with China. Now, the U.S. faces the challenge of balancing its attention and resources between Europe, where the war is happening, and the Indo-Pacific region, where China's influence and military power are growing. This balancing act isn't easy because both regions are strategically important and require significant military and diplomatic attention. The war also prompted NATO countries to boost their defense budgets and invest in modernizing their militaries. This was a big reversal from past years when some members had been cutting defense spending. Still, the conflict also showed that NATO isn't perfectly united—some countries are more willing to take risks and confront Russia than others. So, while the alliance is stronger, it's also dealing with internal differences about how far to go. Beyond NATO, the U.S. has worked hard to build a global coalition to isolate Russia diplomatically. But not all countries have taken a clear side. Some have stayed neutral or tried to avoid choosing between Russia and the West, which

complicates America's efforts to put international pressure on Moscow. Overall, the war highlighted how tricky it is to manage global alliances and maintain a rules-based international system in a world with competing interests.

3. What are the political effects of the war inside the U.S.?

Inside the U.S., the war in Ukraine has become a hot political topic with opinions and debates changing over time. When the war first started, most Americans were pretty united in supporting Ukraine. There was a strong feeling that the U.S. needed to stand up to Russia and support democracy. This broad support crossed political lines and made it easier for the government to send aid. But as the war dragged on and the economic costs became more obvious—especially with inflation and rising prices—people's opinions started to split. Many Americans began asking whether the U.S. should keep spending billions on a conflict thousands of miles away while there are pressing issues at home like healthcare, education, and fixing roads and bridges. This tension is playing out in Congress and in the public. Some political groups argue that continuing support for Ukraine is crucial to defending democratic values and deterring authoritarianism. Others say the U.S. should prioritize domestic needs and avoid getting too involved in foreign wars. This debate reflects deeper disagreements about America's role in the world and what voters want (State., 2025). The war has also become a big issue in election campaigns. Candidates take different positions based on what they think their voters care about—some emphasize standing strong against Russia, while others focus on fixing problems closer to home. How the public feels about the war and U.S. involvement could influence upcoming elections and shape future foreign policy. In Congress, this division makes it harder to pass large aid packages because lawmakers disagree on the right approach. While many Americans still support Ukraine, there's a growing feeling that the U.S. can't—and maybe shouldn't—stay involved forever. So, the war has deepened political divides and sparked ongoing debates about balancing global leadership with national priorities.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY: REALISM

Realism is a way of looking at world politics that focuses mainly on power and security. It starts from the idea that there is no global government or police force that can keep peace and order everywhere. Because of this, every country has to take care of itself first. Countries act mainly to protect their own survival and interests, especially when they feel threatened by others. When we think about the U.S. role in the Russia-Ukraine war from this point of view, it becomes clear that the U.S. is acting not just because it supports Ukraine as a democracy, but mainly because it wants to keep its own power and safety. Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens to upset the balance of power in Europe. If Russia gains too much influence there, it could hurt the U.S. and its allies by making the region less stable and harder to control. Because of this, the U.S. has taken several important steps. It's helping Ukraine by sending weapons and money, so Ukraine can defend itself. The U.S. is also sending troops to support NATO countries that are close to Russia, showing that it stands with its allies. Additionally, the U.S. and its partners have put economic pressure on Russia by imposing sanctions, which are restrictions meant to hurt Russia's economy and limit its ability to fund the war. From a realist point of view, these actions aren't just about helping Ukraine – they are about stopping Russia from becoming stronger and keeping things stable in a way that protects U.S. interests. Realism also emphasizes that having strong military power and solid alliances is very important. The U.S. wants to make sure the world knows it will stand by its friends and defend them if necessary. This sends a message not only to Russia but also to other countries that might think about challenging the U.S. or its allies. At the same time, realism explains why the U.S. is careful not to get directly involved in fighting Russia itself. The U.S. wants to avoid a war that could be too dangerous or costly. So, while it supports Ukraine, it tries not to push things too far by sending American troops into the conflict or taking actions that could trigger a bigger war. This cautious approach is about balancing the need to push back against aggression while avoiding risks that could hurt

the Asininely, realism helps us see the bigger picture. The Russia-Ukraine war is part of a wider competition between the world's major powers. The U.S. wants to keep Russia from becoming too powerful in Europe, but it also has to watch China, which is growing stronger in other parts of the world. The U.S.'s response to Russia sends a warning to China and others that aggressive moves to expand power won't be tolerated. In short, realism shows that the U.S. is acting to protect itself and its interests in a dangerous world. The decisions it makes about Ukraine are about more than just one country's fight – they're about the future balance of power and security around the globe (Sarotte, 2021).

Impact on the United States

Economic Effects

The war in Ukraine has had a big impact on the U.S. economy, mostly because it disrupted global energy supplies. When the U.S. and its allies put sanctions on Russian oil and gas, it caused energy prices to spike around the world. In the U.S., gas prices went up quickly, and that made everything else more expensive too – from groceries to electricity. This rise in prices, known as inflation, hit American families hard and made it more difficult for people to spend money on other things. Businesses, especially those that rely heavily on fuel or shipping, also faced higher costs (Braesemann, F., & Schuler, M., 2022). In response, the Federal Reserve raised interest rates to try and control inflation. But those higher rates also made it more expensive to get loans, which hurt the housing market and slowed down business growth. At the same time, the U.S. government started spending more on defense, especially to replace the weapons and supplies sent to Ukraine. While that created jobs in the defense industry, it also added to concerns about the national debt and long-term spending (Ronaghi, M., & Scorsone, E., 2023) (IMF., 2022).

Foreign Policy and International Relations

On the international stage, the war has pushed the U.S. to become even more active in supporting its allies, especially in Europe. America's backing of Ukraine – including over \$66 billion in aid – has helped strengthen NATO and brought European countries closer

together. Even countries like Finland, which were previously neutral, have joined NATO because of growing fears about Russian aggression (Ross Smith, N., & Dawson, G., 2022). This conflict has also reminded other countries – especially in Asia – that the U.S. is willing to stand up to powerful authoritarian regimes. For example, countries like Japan and South Korea have been watching closely, especially when thinking about their own security issues with China and North Korea. Beyond security, the U.S. is also trying to rebuild its relationships with countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America by offering more economic and development support – showing that it's not just about military power, but also about helping others with food, energy, and infrastructure needs (Sarotte, 2021).

Domestic Political Implications

Back home, the war has stirred up debate in American politics. At first, most politicians agreed on helping Ukraine, but as the war dragged on, opinions started to split. Some believe the U.S. should continue supporting Ukraine because it's the right thing to do. Others argue that the money could be better spent at home on things like schools, healthcare, or fixing roads. War has also led to new arguments about U.S. energy policy. When gas prices went up, some people called for more drilling and oil production at home, while others pushed for cleaner energy sources to reduce our dependence on countries like Russia. Public opinion has started to shift too. Many Americans are still sympathetic to Ukraine, but there's growing concern about how much the U.S. is spending, and whether it's getting dragged into a conflict with no clear end. This has made the war a big issue in elections, with candidates taking different sides depending on their views and their voters (State., 2025).

Military and Defense Industry Effects

The war has been a boost for the U.S. defense industry. Companies that make weapons and military equipment have seen a big increase in orders, both from the U.S. government and from European allies who need to rebuild their own stockpiles. This has helped the economy

in states where these companies are based, creating jobs and investments. At the same time, the military is reviewing how ready it is for future conflicts. New bases have been set up in Eastern Europe, and the U.S. is spending more on modern equipment, cybersecurity, and better coordination with allies. However, some people worry that too much money is being funneled into the military while other areas like education and healthcare are underfunded. It's also raised questions about the influence of big defense companies on American politics and priorities (Zandi).

Long-Term Strategy

Looking to the future, the Ukraine war is likely to shape U.S. foreign policy for years to come. It marks a shift away from the focus on terrorism that followed 9/11, toward a new era of rivalry with powerful countries like Russia and China. The U.S. is now investing more in cyber defense, energy independence, and stronger global partnerships – especially with democracies that share similar values. At the same time, it's also realizing that relying too much on institutions like the UN doesn't always work when countries like Russia can block action (Ronaghi, M., & Scorsone, E., 2023).

International Response

The world's reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been one of strong and united condemnation. Most countries view the attack as a serious violation of international law and Ukraine's right to exist as a sovereign nation. As a result, governments, organizations, companies, and people across the globe have taken action – not just to punish Russia, but to support Ukraine and defend the international rules that help keep peace.

Pushing Russia into Isolation

Diplomatically, Russia has found itself more isolated than ever. Many countries have reduced or completely cut off ties with Moscow. Russian diplomats have been expelled, official visits have been canceled, and talks on trade and cooperation have been frozen. At the United Nations, even though Russia can still veto decisions in the Security Council, most countries have joined together

in the General Assembly to pass strong resolutions demanding Russia stop the war and leave Ukraine. Russia has also been kicked out of several major international organizations. It was suspended from the UN Human Rights Council, removed from the G8 (now G7), and pushed out of the Council of Europe. These decisions send a clear message: the world doesn't accept this kind of aggression and won't treat Russia as a normal international partner while it continues its invasion (Oliveira, 2024).

Economic Pressure Like Never Before

The economic sanctions placed on Russia are some of the harshest and most coordinated the world has ever seen. Countries like the U.S., U.K., Canada, Japan, and members of the EU have frozen billions in Russian assets, cut off access to international banking systems, blocked exports of advanced technology, and banned business with key Russian industries. Oligarchs close to President Putin have had their homes, yachts, and bank accounts seized. The effects have been painful for Russia's economy. The ruble dropped sharply at first, foreign investment dried up, and thousands of companies were forced to shut down or leave the country. Even large global companies — from Apple and McDonald's to BP and Shell — pulled out of the Russian market. Together, these moves have made it clear that waging war comes at a huge cost (Nurwulan, 2023).

Helping Ukraine Fight and Survive

While trying to weaken Russia's ability to keep fighting, the world has also stepped up to support Ukraine. Military aid has come in the form of modern weapons, air defense systems, tanks, drones, and intelligence. The U.S. and European countries have sent billions of dollars' worth of support to help Ukraine defend itself. NATO countries have also trained Ukrainian soldiers and worked closely with their military to improve their tactics. Humanitarian support has been just as important. Millions of Ukrainians have had to flee their homes, and countries like Poland, Romania, and Germany have opened their doors. The European Union gave Ukrainians temporary protection, so they could access schools, hospitals, and housing. International

charities, UN agencies, and volunteers have rushed in with food, medicine, shelter, and emotional support for those affected by the war (Ronaghi, M., & Scorsone, E., 2023).

Europe's Energy Wake-Up Call

One of the biggest long-term shifts caused by the war has been Europe's decision to break its energy dependence on Russia. For years, many European countries relied on Russian gas to heat their homes and power their factories. But once the war started, they realized that this gave Russia too much leverage. In response, the EU started finding new sources of energy — signing deals with other countries, importing more liquefied natural gas (LNG), and investing heavily in renewables like wind and solar. This shift hasn't been easy, but it's changing the way Europe thinks about energy: not just as an economic issue, but also a matter of national security. The U.S. has played a big role here too, by increasing its energy exports to Europe and encouraging cleaner, more secure alternatives. The overall goal is to prevent any one country — especially an aggressive one like Russia — from holding others hostage through oil and gas (Oliveira, 2024).

Pushing for Justice and Accountability

Legal action is another major front in the global response. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened investigations into possible war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the invasion. Ukraine is also holding its own trials for captured Russian soldiers, and many countries are helping collect evidence. Some world leaders have called for a special court to be created to prosecute the crime of aggression — basically, for starting the war itself. There's also growing support for using the billions in frozen Russian assets to help pay for Ukraine's recovery. While complicated from a legal standpoint, this idea reflects a strong desire to make Russia not only stop the war but help fix the damage it's caused (Zandi).

New Global Alliances and Lessons Learned

This war is reshaping the way countries think about global security. It has made military alliances like NATO more important than ever. Finland and Sweden, which had stayed neutral

for decades, decided to apply for NATO membership. NATO itself has boosted its presence in Eastern Europe, with more troops, exercises, and defense plans to protect its members. Beyond Europe, the war has also changed the way democratic countries view their relationships with authoritarian regimes. Many leaders now realize that just doing business with countries like Russia or China doesn't lead to peace or shared values. There's a growing belief that countries need to stand together – not just with military power, but through stronger economic, political, and technological partnerships. The war in Ukraine has shown the world what can happen when a powerful country decides to ignore international rules. But it's also shown what's possible when nations unite in defense of those rules – and the people who depend on them. The international response may not have stopped the war yet, but it has sent a powerful message: aggression will not go unchallenged, and the fight for democracy, human rights, and peace is one the world is willing to take on together.

Conclusion

The Russia-Ukraine war has deeply affected the United States in many ways – from its economy to its role in the world and even the political debates happening at home. While it may seem like a distant conflict, the war has real and lasting impacts on American life and policy. When we look at the situation through the lens of realism – a theory in international relations that focuses on power, self-interest, and survival – we can understand that the U.S. isn't just helping Ukraine out of kindness. It's also protecting its own interests and trying to maintain a global balance where powerful countries can't invade others without consequences.

Economic Impact at Home

The war has made things more expensive, especially energy and food. Because the U.S. and its allies placed sanctions on Russian oil and gas, global prices went up. American families felt this at the gas pump and in their grocery bills. Inflation rose, and the Federal Reserve raised interest rates to cool things down, which made borrowing more expensive

for homes, cars, and businesses. These economic effects have caused many Americans to question how much the U.S. should spend on a war so far away, especially when there are needs at home like healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

Shaping Foreign Policy

On the global stage, the war has pushed the U.S. to take the lead in rallying support for Ukraine and standing up to Russia. It has worked closely with allies, especially in NATO, to send weapons, aid, and political support. This show of unity has been powerful – especially after years of division among Western countries. The U.S. has also increased its military presence in Europe to reassure its allies and deter Russia from going further. The war has forced American leaders to think more seriously about threats from other powerful countries too, especially China. By standing firm in Ukraine, the U.S. is also sending a message to countries like China that aggression won't go unchallenged.

Divisions in American Politics

At home, not everyone agrees on how involved the U.S. should be. While many people support helping Ukraine, others worry that the U.S. is spending too much or getting too deeply involved in a conflict that could drag on for years. Some think it's the right thing to do to defend democracy and international law. Others think the focus should be on solving problems here in the U.S. – like inflation, housing, and healthcare. These disagreements reflect deeper political divides about America's role in the world and how much responsibility it should take on.

A Global Turning Point

Around the world, the war has made countries rethink how they relate to each other. Europe is working to reduce its dependence on Russian energy. Countries like Finland and Sweden, which stayed out of NATO for decades, have now decided to join. The U.S. and its allies are standing more closely together than they have in years. Even though international organizations like the United Nations have struggled to stop the war, they're still playing

important roles in helping Ukraine and coordinating global responses.

Protecting the Rules of the Game

This war isn't just about territory – it's also about the kind of world we want to live in. If powerful countries can invade their neighbors without consequences, the entire system of international law and peace becomes weaker. That's why so many countries, led by the U.S., have responded strongly – with sanctions, aid to Ukraine, and efforts to hold Russia accountable. It's not just about Ukraine's freedom – it's about defending the rules that keep all nations safe.

Looking Ahead

As the war continues, the U.S. faces tough choices. It has to help Ukraine without getting pulled into a wider war. It has to lead its allies without taking on all the burdens. And it has to do all this while managing its own economic challenges and political divisions. How the U.S. handles this moment will shape its role in the world for years to come. The war in Ukraine is more than just a regional fight – it's a test of U.S. leadership, of global unity, and of whether countries are willing to stand up for the idea that might does not make right. America's actions today will help decide what kind of world we all live in tomorrow.

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