



APRIL 2022

# WHAT WILL RUSSIA GAIN FROM THE UKRAINE INVASION?

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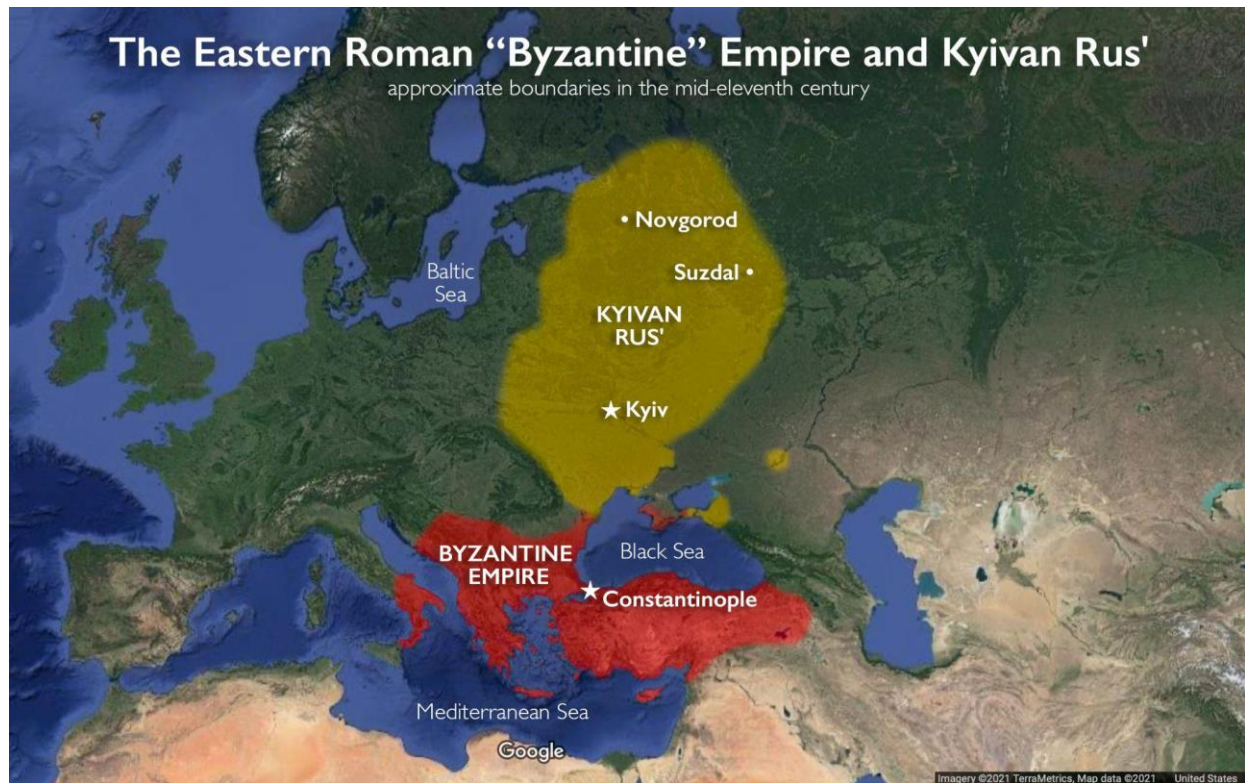
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**T**his paper aims to find an answer to the question the world is asking: what will Russia gain from the Ukraine Invasion? The first section focuses on the Kyivan Rus history and its origination and what Vladimir Putin meant by his statement of Ukraine not being an independent state. The second showcases the decline of the USSR from the 20th century onwards and the Russian Mir's decline in Ukraine by the intersection of religion and the rise of Ukraine by analysing Ukraine's political identity. The third section underlines the security threat which Russia has faced and its complete losses. This is interlinked with the fourth section on how that drives Russia's possible short and long term gains. The last section arrives at the paper's conclusion of what Russia will gain from invading Ukraine.

## History of the Kyivan Rus

Vladimir the Great or Saint Vladimir is revered to be the originator of the modern-day Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, and the majority of people in the Eastern European Plain who identify themselves with Balto-Slavic roots (David 2022). Today's conflict is just a reminder of how countless battles have been fought for obtaining control over the anarchic world order by fighting for domination. The doors of the heartland were always prominent areas of contestation because of their strategic importance. Whoever controlled the eastern European plains, automatically possessed the strategic advantage to control the west and east. To the west, are the European plains, and to the east, is the Russian heartland. Before the formation of the stable empire of Kyivan Rus, the doors of the heartland or the Eastern European plains saw wars between the Varangians (Viking Raiders), The Turkic Khaganate, and the First Bulgarian empire. The foundations of Kyivan Rus were laid down by Sviatoslav I Igorevich (David 2022) who was a Varangian (Viking Raider) and reigned from 945-to 972 AD. He controlled vast lands of Balto-Slavic speaking people by defeating the Khazar Khaganate which was the most influential and successful commercial polity in Caucasian lands. Sviatoslav I Igorevich's rule led to the decimation of Khazars and the first Bulgarian empire. Sviatoslav distributed his kingdom among his 3 sons. The eldest son Yaropolk got Kyiv, the main powerhouse of the Kyivan Rus empire. The second son Oleg got the lands of Drevylans. Vladimir, the youngest son, got Novgorod in the north. The distribution of Kyivan Rus lands became the cause of a rift between the three sons and the result of this power struggle saw

the death of the two elder sons which ultimately led to the formation of the stable empire of Kyivan Rus, by Vladimir the Great.



Kyivan Rus under Vladimir majorly spanned the parts of modern-day Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, with its sphere of influence spanning the eastern European plains of Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Romania. Vladimir Christianised the pagan world of Kyivan Rus. It is noted by historians that before Christianising itself with the Eastern Catholic church, Vladimir analysed all the existing religions of the time including Islam, Judaism, Latin Rite Christianity, and Eastern Rite Christianity. It was Eastern Rite Christianity that not only struck Vladimir but also matched the psyche of the Kyivan Rus. Therefore, he christened himself and the whole state of Kyivan Rus with the Eastern Orthodox church. Today, a follower of any form of the Eastern Orthodox Church can trace their origin back to Vladimir the Great. During the 1200s, Genghis Khan's rise to power led to the First Mongol invasion of the Caucasian lands and the Eurasia continent. This invasion saw the first physical split up of Kyiv and Moscow where Kyiv became a part of the commonwealth of independent states that spanned Poland and Ukraine, while Moscow was the local capital of the Mongol empire. The differences shared between Moscow and Kyiv were substantiated for the first time by the Mongol invasion of Eurasia.

# The Decline of USSR: 1917-1991

Since the onset of the 17th Century, the world has been heavily influenced by 2 major players in the world. The US-European alliances on one side and a Russian Mir (Russia's sphere of influence) on the other. With time, and especially with the coming of the 20th century the US-European-led alliance led half of the world politically by changing from being a dictator or an imperial power to a flag bearer of democracy and rule-based world order. On the economic front, this alliance led half of the world in capitalistic ways which were seen as owner-centric. The other half of the world under the USSR's Mir politically was seen adopting Communism as an antipodal way of life when compared to the western border. On the economic front, it offered socialism which was structured in such a fashion that it would eliminate all the shortcomings faced by capitalism and would be more worker-centric.

During the Tsarist Rule, the Russian Mir followed Christianity (Orthodoxy and Catholicism). But since the spread of the red wave of Communism, religion was heavily criticized as the “opium of the masses” and under the Lenin-Stalin rule, Soviet authorities from 1917 to 1991 led an atheistic wave that was not just being spread but taught in schools. During that time, heavy persecutions took place of believers, and organizations that promoted religion.

With the end of the Cold War, the atheistic wave on the Eurasian continent also came to an end. The defeat of the USSR signified the political defeat of communism and the economical defeat of the socialist way of life. On the victor's side was the political victory of democracy along with the economic win of neo-capitalism (addition of labour laws and rights). The successful execution of the Marshall Plan in bringing war-torn Europe after the two World Wars from poverty to prosperity made the eastern half of Europe shift their alliances towards the more prosperous side of US-Europe. This gradual shift of Eastern European countries towards the West was intensified by the politically democratic world and a socially free and developed world of the west.

## Religion and the Rise of Ukrainian Nationalism

The geopolitical realm is always a theatre of great power contestation. After the USSR split, the Russian sphere of influence drastically declined in the international sphere. After Ukraine's independence from Russia in 1991, its political landscape, foreign policy, and domestic policies have increasingly become aligned with the US-led western European alliance. From 1991 onwards, there has been a steady increase in the application of European countries for coming under the security umbrella of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and economically under the EU (European Union). The first wave of NATO expansion in 1999 of the Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia) signified NATO's and EU's ever-increasing clout whereas the Russian led CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) lost the vote of confidence of its 3 members from a total 9 member group to renew the CSTO treaty. The decline of Russia's hard power resulted in Moscow increasing its outreach with the help of soft power tools.

Religion is a very potent tool responsible for turning the political alignment in Ukraine's case. The majority of the European Union (41 per cent) follows Catholic Christianity, whereas the countries which were once under the Russian Mir follow the Eastern Orthodox church. According to a Pew survey, there is a substantial link between religion and national identity. It states that 70 per cent of people in Orthodox-majority nations favour the idea that being Orthodox or Catholic is vital to one's national identity and only 57 per cent of people in Catholic-majority countries support the idea that religion is important to national identity. In a survey conducted by Razumkov Centre Ukraine has a majority population of 67.3 per cent who believe in the orthodox form of Christianity.

### Orthodoxy by year

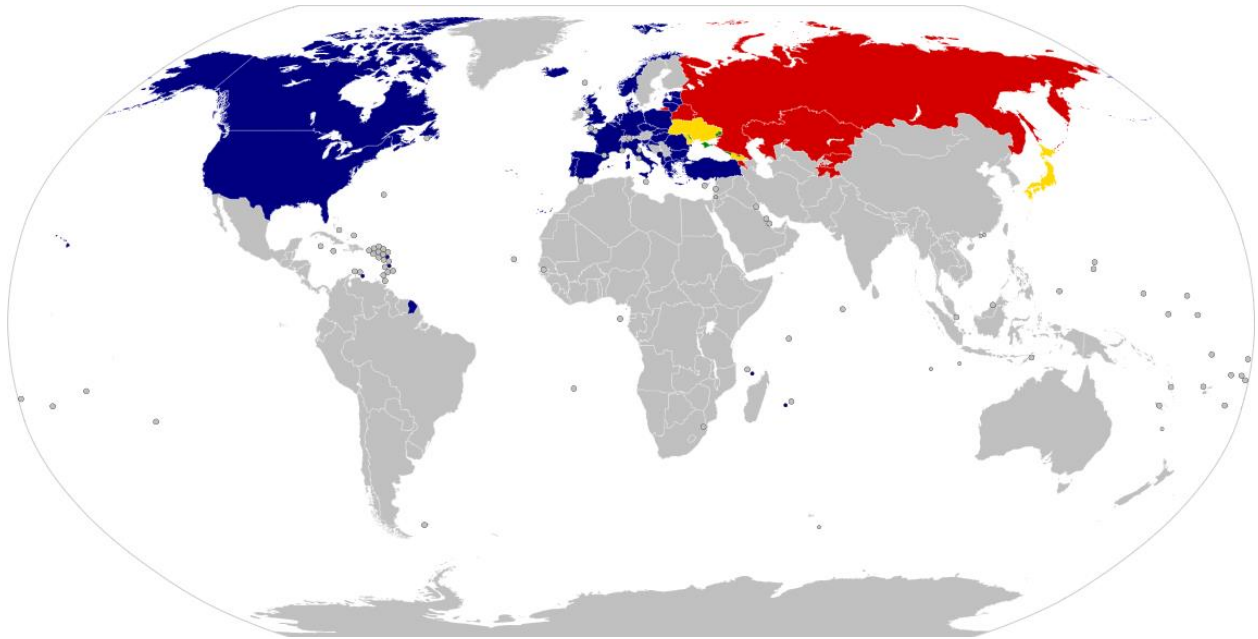
Group	2000	2005	2010	2013	2014	2016	2018
Orthodox	66.0%	60.8%	68.1%	70.6%	70.2%	65.4%	67.3%

Moscow Patriarchate	9.2%	10.6%	23.6%	19.6%	17.4%	15.0%	12.8%
Kyiv Patriarchate	12.1%	14.0%	15.1%	18.3%	22.4%	25.0%	28.7% <sup>[i]</sup>
Autocephaloeus	1.3%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	1.8%	0.3% <sup>[ii]</sup>
Just Orthodox	38.6%	33.4%	25.9%	28.8%	28.1%	21.2%	23.4%

The analysis of this trend of how the religious landscape of Ukraine has changed over the years suggests a positive increase in believers of UOC-KP (Ukraine Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate) and a negative trend for the UOC-MP (Ukraine Orthodox Church-Mysore Patriarchate) (“EXPLAINER: How is Russia-Ukraine war linked to religion?” 2022). Understanding how heavily religion and politics are entangled, and Moscow leadership is making use of this sharp power can be seen in 2010 abrupt increase of believers in UOC-MP from 2005 to 2010 which is from 10.6% to 23.6% and then a sudden decrease in believers UOC-MP from 2013 till 2018. In 2009 Patriarch Kirill, the head of ROC (Russian Orthodox Church) when visiting Ukraine, said how in the times of Kyivan Rus, Kyiv was Russia’s cradle and signified the importance of Russia being the guardian of the traditional family values and of the Christian way of life as opposed to the EU catholic beliefs and forceful exportation of LGBTQ rights and feminism. The 2009 Patriarch Kirill’s visit acted as a booster in placing Victor Yanukovych a pro-Russian leader as the President of Ukraine. This shows how religion can become a soft power tool for the power projection of any country. But as Victor Yanukovych pulled out of the Ukrainian-European Association Agreement, the masses saw it as a setback regarding Ukrainian’s development, resulting in the Euromaidan protest of 2013 which later snowballed into the annexation of Crimea by Moscow. After that, it is observed that there was a sudden uprisal in believers in UOC-KP which resulted in granting of autocephaly or legitimization to OCU (Orthodox Church of Ukraine) in 2019 (Alder 2020, 4). Former President Petro Poroshenko rallied the legitimization of UOC-KP and UOC (Ukraine orthodox church) and projected Ukrainian nationalism at the core of Ukraine’s domestic policy (Kominko 2019). On further analysis, it is observed that Petro Poroshenko's policies were more Ukraine-centric, which meant maintaining good relations with both the EU and Russia for the sake of Ukraine. But with Volodymyr

Zelensky's arrival in Ukraine's political landscape, its policies became pro-European and anti-Russian. Its biggest depiction is Zelensky's ambitions for Ukraine's membership in NATO which was originally formed for containing Russia's Mir.

## Russia's Losses and Security Threats



CSTO States in Red, NATO States in Red, Russia-contentious States in Yellow

### Russia's Diplomatic Clout Fallout

The formation of NATO based on decreasing the Russian clout of communism and socialism was a success, as it led to the victory of the US-led world order. But the Cold War game never ended in 1991. Article 10 in the NATO treaty which allows the expansion of NATO membership under the subsequent agreement is a direct threat to Russia's diplomatic clout. After 1991, NATO expanded by roping in the earlier Eastern Europe satellite states like Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, etc. which were ethnically, linguistically, and even culturally in line with the Kyivan Rus world. This continued eastward expansion of NATO was seen as a diplomatic win for the west, but on the other side was seen as a security threat that threatens the existence of the political landscape of Russia.

In contrast to NATO, Russia formed CSTO in 1992, which was not a success if one considers diplomatic clout to be a parameter. As of today, CSTO has only six member states that originally joined during its formation. As of 2022, NATO has a strength of thirty member states. With Volodymyr Zelensky's active participation in Ukraine's bid for NATO membership, the implications would have been such that the already volatile political landscape of Russia would have been pushed towards its fallout.

## **Military Security Threat at Russia's Doorsteps**

Ukraine's entry into NATO would mean increased international military cooperation and the merging of Ukraine and US-led NATO military tactics, which is a very big provocation considering Ukraine's location. The military has been extensively used wherever NATO member states' interests lie. For example, the Kosovo War in the former USSR state of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s, etc. There is a constant threat for Russia now that Ukraine can bask in the protection offered by the US-led NATO alliance.

## **Political and Religious Security**

With Ukraine's entry into NATO, the USA and Europe's political supremacy would be established. This would ensure that Ukraine would follow a restructuring of political governance whose policies in the future would be pro-European and anti-Russian. Since Ukraine's political landscape has always been vulnerable either to European or Russian influence, Ukraine's NATO entry would ensure that Russia loses any control it could have had. Ukraine's majority follows UOC-KP which has pro-European and pro-Ukrainian policies which would have further deteriorated the Moscow Patriarchate's control over Kyiv Patriarchate. In 2021, the Kremlin's political landscape meet with fierce competition in the form of anti-government protests headed by Alexei Navalny, a Russian opposition leader. This directly impacted political security and opened Russia to civil unrest. The CSTO member states are facing the fallout of the existing authoritarianism in their arena. For example, the 2020 Belarus anti-govt protest, and the 2022 Kazakhstan protests which were mass protests for LPG price hikes, snowballed into anti-govt and anti-regime protests.



## Economic security

Russia has already lost its hard and soft power influence, but Ukraine's 70% dependence (2020) on Russian oil and gas exports ("International", n.d.) was seen as a vulnerability to its energy security which could make it come to a standstill. Measures have been taken against this as Ukrenergo, Ukraine's main energy utility company signed a deal with ENTSO-E to merge Ukraine's electricity requirement with that of the European one till 2023 (Bove 2022). Earlier it was merged with the Russian and Belarusian power grids. Russia's invasion of Ukraine led Ukraine to merge its electricity grid within merely two weeks of the ongoing war, which is an unimaginable feat in itself. As NATO membership expanded from 12 founding members to 30 members, the member states didn't just confine themselves to this security alliance. After the establishment of membership, the chances of a newly inducted member state joining the EU (European Union) increased. For example, it became very easy for Poland Hungary and the Czech Republic, and Slovakia to gain EU membership because before joining NATO, they had to undergo the completion of the Membership Action Plan which meant a complete transformation of the political, economic, defence, resource, security, judicial landscape.

Russia tried to increase its stronghold by using religion as a sharp power (soft power in democracies) tool. But it ultimately didn't work in Ukraine's case as it already is a democracy that is influenced by western Europe. Russia's economic clout is limited to its energy and military supplies. Russia's treatment of Ukraine as Malo-Russia or Little Rus invigorated Ukraine's nationalism and its need to decouple with Moscow. Ukraine is a democracy and religion which is an individual choice, started to become imposed when UOC-KP and UOC were under UOC-MP. In Ukraine's case, religion became intertwined with the politics of Russia. Russia might officially be a democracy, but Putin's style of governance is autocratic, making religion an imposition by Moscow on Kyiv. This becomes one of the reasons for Ukraine's struggle to get out of Russia's Mir and set up its own identity in this geopolitical world.

# What will Russia gain from Ukrainian Invasion?

## Present Situation

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been a military and strategic failure assuming that bringing down Kyiv was the goal. The Russian assessment of Ukrainian resistance has gone wrong if western media is to be believed. But since there is no confirmation from Putin's inner circle of advisors and strategists on what the target areas were, the Russian objective on Ukraine soil is still unclear. According to various geopolitical scientists and observers of International Relations, Russia wishes to aim down on Kyiv militarily and install a puppet regime for completing its geopolitical objectives. Assessing real-time updates, Russian forces have been deployed for months now near the Belarus-Ukraine border (North-western flank), near the Donbas Region (North-eastern and Eastern flank), and the Black Sea- Crimean Peninsula (Southern flank). The 24th of February marked the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with heavy bombing and missile attacks burning down entire Ukrainian cities to rubble. As of 15<sup>th</sup> April, after several peace negotiations and talks, Russia has clamped down on its efforts to take Kyiv and shifted its military offensives to the eastern land border bridge extending from Kharkiv in the North to Mykolaiv and Kherson in the South. Russia has maintained a strong foothold near the southern tip of the Crimean Peninsula.

# Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 14, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



# Russia's Bid For Economic Security Through Warm Water Ports

## Land Border Security

Moscow has realised that its soft power tactics will not work unless and until it increases its economic power by increasing global economic interdependence. The geographic and political factors play a vital role in shaping a country's economy. Russia has not yet emerged as a major economic player because its geography limits its rise. Russia has a very large coastline extending from the North to the Arctic region. Russia's west is landlocked (Marshall 2015). These cold-water ports operate only during summers as they are frozen otherwise. These geographical restraints on Russia thereby limit its capabilities. So, the only option for Russia is to dominate trade by establishing a warm water port of Sevastopol in Crimea in its South West.

Russia's advances from Donbas to Crimea cannot be taken lightly as these advances ensure Russia a land border that connects the Donbas area to the Crimean peninsula which could turn out to be a strategic win to secure its warm water port of Sevastopol in Crimea. Russia has been fighting wars since the 17th century because of the absence of warm water ports for international trade. In geopolitics, it is said that geography is destiny and Russia is the backbencher, while the USA is the front runner. In Russia's defence, Vladivostok is its only warm water port and is seasonal as it is frozen most of the time. Although it can be broken by ice breakers, having a true warm water port means ease of business, trade, and commerce which reeks of economic prosperity. Vladivostok confines Russia to Asia and Sevastopol could provide the essential connection needed through MENA (the Middle East and North Africa), Western Europe through the Mediterranean, and the Americas through the Atlantic Sea ("Warm-water ports a factor in Russian foreign policy calculations" 2022). The Russian invasion of Ukraine has at least guaranteed it a land border with direct connectivity to the Crimean peninsula through the land. The air and water connectivity already existed but the strategic land border win which was amiss during the 2014 Annexation Of Crimea could fortify Russia's control over the sea.

## Political security

Political security can only be established once the land comes under state control. Before the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine, political security was on murky ground because of high instability in Ukraine's political leadership. Russia's action of treating Ukraine as "Little Rus" and imposing the Moscow Patriarchate's monopoly over Kyiv, Russia's actions catapulted Ukraine away from Russia's sphere of influence leading to a loss of political dominance of the Kremlin over Kyiv. After the 2014 annexation of Crimea, Ukraine has seen a rise in pro-European and anti-Russian sentiments brewing up, resulting in Volodymyr Zelensky's victory whose rule would have ensured Ukraine's entry into NATO and EU before the 2022 Russian Invasion. Considering the possibility that Russia would not have invaded Ukraine, Ukraine's entry into NATO would have threatened the Crimean peninsula's security, making Russia lose its slightest chance of becoming an economic powerhouse.

## Religious Security

With the interplay of land security by the annexation of the land border, the Russians in the near future would be able to change the demographics of the eastern region, thereby strengthening the ROC (Russian Orthodox Christianity) and Russian identity. Religious identity is entangled with political ideology in the European Continent and the strengthening of political security along with ROC ideological beliefs. Tapping into the religious beliefs of an individual makes them work for a community-centric cause which acts like a soft power tool when used effectively by the state. The stability and congruency achieved through political and religious oneness (congruency) could eventually make Sevastopol port an economically stable place that could be turned into Russia's biggest trading and commercial centre.

# Russia's Gain From The Destruction of International Financial Institutions

SWIFT sanctions on Russia and its isolation from the only financial messaging system which facilitates international trade and economic order will have large economic repercussions for Russia. It is estimated by the Russian finance ministry that GDP will fall by 8-10% in 2022 (Soldatov, Beardsworth, and Beardsworth 2022). After the imposition of SWIFT sanctions, Russia has officially entered a recession period which it will not be able to cover up for at least two years. SWIFT Sanctions are bound to get hurt in the long term process considering the setting up of alternative platforms for international trade and commerce like the transfer of the rouble through its financial system of SPFS (System For Transfer of Financial Messaging), India's Rupay through SFMS (Structured Financial Messaging System), and China's Yuan through its DCEP (Digital Currency Economic Payment). These are just some of the payment methods whose regulation and adoption would mean fracturing the current economic order into a new economic world order which would be dominated by the national currencies of the countries.

In the recent update, India bought Ural Grade crude oil for its own domestic needs via a Rouble-Rupee system which already bypassed the SWIFT sanctions. ("India is snapping up cheap Russian oil, and China could be next" 2022) After India's purchase, China and Indonesia's state energy firm Pertamina is considering buying Russian Ural grade oil at discounted prices (Munthe, Nangoy, and Kapoor 2022). This could be seen as a start to the adoption of SDC (Sovereign Digital Currencies) through national alternative financial institutions, a new economic world order dominated by Asian countries. (Jindal and Marwaha 2021) Even if Russia were to stop or decrease its trade with the Global North, it will increase its economic interdependence with its Asian partners. This would = not only disrupt the economic order but would safeguard Russia's economic interest with more reliable partners in the East.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, although Russia has lost a lot of battles, with Ukraine's invasion, it could become a revisionist power to rise. The domino effect which started with land border security could trickle

down to ensuring Russia's political, religious, maritime, and economic security. This leads to the construction and completion of a well-oiled ecosystem of preserving Russia's national security and existence. Short-term gains for Russia would establishment of a Warm Water Port ensuring its strategic win in gaining an economical hub in the form of Sevastopol. Its medium-term gain is securing the political and ideological landscape and provision of military security from land air and sea to the Crimean peninsula. The long-term gain of setting up a new economic world order with Russia being at the forefront depends a lot on major geopolitical actors of the world with their geopolitical and geo-economic interests playing into the complexities of the world.

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