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Abstract: *This article examines the geopolitical, strategic, and institutional transformations induced by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, with profound ramifications for the security structure of the European Union. Anchored within the realms of theory, the work appraises Russia's motivations founded on historical grievances, territorial imperatives, and in reaction to NATO expansion. Considerations surrounding Ukraine's lift westwards and its democratic evolution post-2014 have triggered new policymaking by the EU Avenue that previously had been dominated by soft power considerations but now sees the EU more active geopolitically. The paper then looks into the supposed rebalancing of the EU stemming from forcible military aggression in its periphery, using strategic autonomy, defense integration, and energy diversification as case points. Moreover, in this backdrop, issues of internal divergence among member states are analyzed alongside the broader context of transatlantic relations with the United States; with the contention that the conflict has both revealed gaps in the previous EU security mindset and hastened a transition towards greater strategic coherence and resilience in cyber security, alongside reconsidering enlargement and neighborhood policies. Hence, this is among the key moments driving the evolution of the EU towards a unified and security-conscious actor on a global stage wherein it finds itself in a fragmented order.*

Introduction

The twenty-first century has seen a resurgence of classical geopolitics of territoriality, competition, balancing and militarized conflict. The spirit of the liberal post-Cold War era had been that globalization and interconnectedness would demystify conventional power politics and yet the Russia-Ukraine war that broke out on February 2022 has been a grim reminder that hard power ages never stop playing themselves out in world politics. As the most significant war on European territory since World War II The Russia-Ukraine war is more than a localized bilateral conflict; it expresses global antagonism between authoritarianism and democracy, between the East and the West, and between imperial nostalgia and sovereign modernity Russia's conflict with Ukraine is part of a conflict it has emphatically worsened, instead of having helped resolve, when it seized and annexed Crimea in 2014 and when it further became directly involved in the Donbas, inscribing this conflict into a broader strategic agenda of reconquering influence over former Soviet satellites² As Ukraine and Russia fought a major war in 2022, it became utterly clear that this latter had launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbour. Strategic insecurity, geopolitical revisionism, and the consolidation of domestic authoritarianism are the

underlying motivations behind the Kremlin's justifications, which include NATO expansion, the defence of Russian-speaking populations, and the so-called denazification of Ukraine. Russia has resurrected Cold War-era power politics under President Vladimir Putin, posing a threat to the post-Cold War European security framework and establishing a sphere of influence that directly challenges neighbouring states' sovereignty.

In contrast, Ukraine has become the geographical and symbolic focal point of Europe's security predicament. The Russian leadership is deeply concerned about Ukraine's westward orientation as a post-Soviet state aiming to join Western organizations like the EU and NATO. Moscow viewed the 2014 Euro maiden movement—which resulted in the overthrow of a pro-Russian president and the pursuit of EU Association Agreements—as a geopolitical intrusion rather than a democratic shift. With unprecedented military, financial, and humanitarian support from the West, Ukraine has shown incredible military and political resilience since the start of the 2022 invasion. Ukraine's election as an EU candidate in June 2022 signalled a dramatic change in European integration policy and highlighted the EU's developing geopolitical awareness. The strategic ability of the European Union, which has historically relied on multilateralism, economic diplomacy, and soft power, has been put to the test. The EU has been compelled by the war to reconsider its fundamental beliefs regarding power projection, peace, and security. NATO's hard defence and the EU's own conflict prevention, development assistance, and regional integration mechanisms served as the cornerstones of the EU's security model for many years. But in the face of direct military aggression on its borders, the war in Ukraine has shown how inadequate this strategy is. In response, the EU has taken unprecedented actions, such as enacting coordinated sanctions against Russia, financing weapons through the European Peace Facility, and reducing dependency on Russian gas in order to achieve energy independence.

The theoretical frameworks of realism and neorealism in international relations (IR) are the main sources of inspiration for this study. In both its classical and structural forms, realism provides strong instruments for comprehending the behaviour of states in anarchic situations, the importance of power, and the timeless logic of competition for survival and security. States are logical actors in a self-help system that constantly aim to maximize power or secure survival, according to realist theorists like Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. Given this, it is possible to read Russia's actions as a reaction to perceived Western and NATO threats, while the EU's responses demonstrate the balancing behaviour typical of neorealism. Furthermore, neorealism—specifically, the offensive and defensive branches delineated by theorists like Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer—help to explain the EU's strategic recalibration as well as Russia's assertiveness. (Mearsheimer, 2014) made the well-known claim that increased instability in Eastern Europe resulted from the West's pursuit of NATO expansion, which created a security conundrum with Russia. Realist viewpoints undoubtedly shed light on the competitive logic of international relations that underlies the current crisis, regardless of one's agreement with this stance. They also contribute to the explanation of secondary actors' strategic actions, such as Ukraine's pursuit of protection through the formation of alliances and conformity to Western norms.

However, the internal complexity of the EU and its gradual but increasing embrace of strategic autonomy cannot be adequately explained by realism alone. Beyond simple state behaviour, the EU's multi-layered governance system, which is made up of supranational institutions and intergovernmental dynamics, adds a level of complexity. Because of this, even though this study is based on realist ideas, it also discusses more general issues like European strategic culture, security governance, and institutional adaptation during emergencies.

As a result, the Russia-Ukraine war has a variety of effects on EU security. Materially speaking, the war has resulted in higher defence spending throughout Europe, with nations like Germany announcing historic budgetary adjustments. Politically speaking, it has reignited debates about European strategic autonomy and the necessity of a more unified and assertive EU foreign policy. It calls into question the EU's identity as a peace project on a normative level and forces it to balance its principles with the harsh realities of geopolitics. To put it briefly, the war has changed the EU from a reactive actor to one that needs to act more strategically and cohesively.

Four main questions are addressed in this study to examine these changes:

- (1) How has the conflict between Russia and Ukraine affected the European Union's stance on strategic autonomy and collective security?
- (2) How has the EU's policy response been influenced by its reliance on Russian energy?
- (3) How has the war changed the perception of the EU's internal cohesion and threat?
- (4) What effects has Ukraine's wartime bid for EU and NATO membership had on EU foreign policy and enlargement? By asking these questions, the study hopes to advance knowledge of how the EU manages a world order that is changing quickly and where strategic interests, military might, and normative values converge in previously unheard-of ways.

Research Questions

1. How has the Russia-Ukraine war transformed the EU's approach to collective security and defence?
2. What are Russia's strategic motivations and how do they reflect broader Realist assumptions?
3. How has Ukraine evolving geopolitical alignment influenced EU policy?
4. What are the long-term security, economic, and political implications for the EU?

Literature Review

Much scholarly discussion has been sparked by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, especially in relation to its causes and wider security ramifications. International relations experts have provided differing analyses of the crisis since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion in 2022. The literature can be broadly divided into three analytical streams: (1) those who contend that NATO and the European Union are to blame for inciting Russia; (2) those who see Russia as the main aggressor attempting to regain imperial power; and (3) those who see the conflict as a symptom of a larger geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West, particularly NATO.

Prominent Realist intellectuals, including John (Mearsheimer, 2014), contend that the conflict is primarily caused by Western expansionism. Mearsheimer highlights that Russia's strategic interests are directly threatened by NATO's and the EU's post-Cold War (Mearsheimer, 2014) from joining NATO and disregarded Realpolitik, a crucial aspect of international affairs. According to this perspective, Moscow viewed Ukraine's claim of sovereignty and wish to form alliances with the West as an infringement on its historical sphere of influence supported by the West rather than an exercise in self-determination.

In support of this view, (Kanet, 2015) and Kanet & (Kanet R. E., 2001) contend that the decline in Russia's ties with the West began during the early post-Soviet period. Started in the early post-Soviet period, when Russia was viewed as a weaker power by the United States and its allies. The majority of people disregarded Russia's protests against NATO expansion, particularly in former Soviet republics. These academics point out that this disdain was partly the reason behind Russia's post-1995 change in foreign policy toward nationalism and assertiveness.

In a similar vein, (Tsygankov, 2022) and (Umland, 2015) observe that a perceived decline in Russia's standing in the international system has a significant impact on the country's strategic culture. Vladimir Putin successfully mobilized nationalist narratives in Russia to defend actions in Ukraine as a result of the West's disregard for Russia's security concerns. Another Realist, (Frix, 2016) argues that Russian aggression was sparked by NATO's expansion. Since states act to safeguard their own security in anarchic societies, NATO's proximity to Russia's borders prompted a strong reaction meant to restore strategic parity.

A more complex viewpoint is provided by Henry (Kissinger, 2014). He warns against Ukraine joining NATO, stating that Ukraine should serve as a buffer state rather than a geopolitical fault line, even as he acknowledges Ukraine's sovereign right to choose its affiliations. Kissinger highlights the historical ties between Russia and Ukraine, contending that any perceived animosity through institutional alignment with the West could lead to conflict because Ukraine is a red line of civilization for Russia.

From a different perspective, Russia once aimed to integrate with the West, but trust was damaged by NATO's on-going expansion and Western-backed revolutions in post-Soviet (Trenin, 2014) cautions that the region will remain unstable as long as Western policies disregard Russia's regional aspirations. Especially its wish to include Ukraine in its Eurasian sphere. These worries are echoed by (Walker, 2022) who contends that a geopolitical conflict that is engrained in the minds of Russia's elite was sparked by

NATO expansion.

When taken as a whole, these works highlight the long-standing conflicts between Russia's desire to maintain its influence in Eastern Europe and Western strategic expansion. Although realists place a strong emphasis on issues of status, power, and security, these interpretations also shed light on the intricate strategic calculations that influence EU security policy in the face of Russian aggression.

Theoretical Framework: Realism and Neorealism

A clear framework for analyzing Russia's, Ukraine's, and the EU's strategic actions is provided by realism and neorealism.

Anarchy and Self-Help

In an international system where there is no central authority to enforce laws or provide security, states must rely on self-help to survive. A classic self-help mechanism is the use of force to establish dominance and safeguard strategic interests when international mechanisms are not trusted, as demonstrated by Russia's aggression. The EU made significant investments in self-sufficient defense systems after the war made it clear how risky it is to rely only on international norms or the US-led NATO framework.

Security Dilemma and Balance of Power

Given the possibility of Ukraine joining the alliance, Russia viewed NATO's eastward expansion as a direct threat. NATO and the EU felt compelled to strengthen their military postures as a result, especially in Eastern Europe. The concentration of forces on both sides, where each side claims to be acting defensively but both find the other's actions offensive, is a classic example of the security dilemma.

Relative Gains and Strategic Alliances

Realist theory highlights that states care about their power in relation to others as well as their absolute power. Concerns about upsetting the regional power balance with Russia are reflected in the EU's cautious approach to Ukraine's integration. Furthermore, to optimize gains without directly upsetting the enemy, strategic alliances such as NATO and the European Peace Facility are employed.

Three Key Entities:

Entity 1: Russia – Strategic Motivations and Global Power Projection

Russia's involvement in Ukraine is rooted in both historical perceptions and contemporary geopolitical calculations.

Historical Narratives and Strategic Depth

The term "Russkiy Mir" (Russian World), which portrays Ukraine as a part of Russia's historical and cultural sphere, is frequently used by President Putin in his speeches. This ethno-nationalist narrative is used to defend intervention and preserve strategic depth. Ukraine is more than just a neighbour; it is a buffer zone essential to Moscow's national defence.

Losing authority over regions that were formerly a part of the Soviet Union worries Russia. According to the Neorealist notion of structural polarity, a unipolar world dominated by the West (particularly after 1991) must eventually be challenged. Russia's resurgence in reaction to Western dominance is centred on Ukraine.

NATO Expansion as Existential Threat

NATO's open-door policy is seen by Russia as a gradual intrusion into its security area. The pledge made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually join NATO was a red line. The goal of Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and its full-scale invasion in 2022 was to stop this integration by employing force to stop additional NATO expansion.

Hybrid Warfare and Energy Weaponization

By combining conventional force with disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks, election meddling, and economic pressure, Russia has expertly employed hybrid warfare. The Kremlin had a lot of power because the EU was more than 40% dependent on Russian gas before the war. Winter energy supply disruptions put political and economic pressure on EU governments.

Entity 2: Ukraine – Resilience, State Transformation, and Western Alignment

National Identity and Strategic Sovereignty

Since 2014, Ukraine's identity has drastically changed. The public's support for joining the EU and NATO has significantly increased. In addition to strengthening its sense of national identity, the nation's resistance to the Russian invasion demonstrated how smaller states can change the dynamics of great power politics.

Ukraine's strategic significance has been acknowledged by the EU. After Ukraine was granted candidate status in 2022, substantial financial, military, and humanitarian assistance has been sent to the country. The EU's foreign policy has undergone a paradigm shift, moving from normative support to active security engagement.

Defence Modernization and Civil Resistance

Ukraine's military has undergone institutional reforms, Western-style training, and the acquisition of new weaponry since 2014. These changes were further accelerated by the war of 2022. In contrast to 2014, Ukraine had a population prepared to fight against occupation and a strong military in 2022. In an all-encompassing national effort, the "Total Defence" doctrine organized civilians, non-governmental organizations, and digital resistance groups.

Geostrategic Role in European Security

Pipelines, trade routes, and digital infrastructure all strategically pass through Ukraine. Russia has influence over the Danube and Black Sea thanks to its control over Ukraine. A sovereign and secure Ukraine is crucial for the EU, both strategically and morally.

Entity 3: The European Union – Defence Integration, Energy Diversification, and Strategic Autonomy Transformation from Soft to Hard Power

Long regarded as a soft power organization that prioritizes human rights and economic integration, the EU has started a significant security transition. The war in 2022 served as a trigger, causing member states to reevaluate their defence strategies.

Adopted in 2022, the Strategic Compass describes plans for joint procurement, cyber defence, and rapid reaction forces. Poland's record military expenditures and Germany's €100 billion defence fund demonstrate a regional trend toward rearmament.

Energy Security and Decoupling from Russia

The EU's excessive reliance on Russian energy demonstrated its vulnerability. Energy independence was accelerated as a result of the war:

- US and Qatari LNG imports rose;
- Significant investment boosts were given to renewables; and
- The Repower EU plan seeks to eliminate Russian fossil fuel imports by 2027.

This energy pivot is not only an environmental strategy but also a security one.

Cyber security and Disinformation Resilience

The Kremlin's disinformation campaign focused on election processes, EU unity, and institutional trust. In response, the EU established the Hybrid Fusion Cell and expanded the mandates for StratCom task forces to counteract misinformation.

Cyber-attacks involving infrastructure, such as the via satellite outage in February 2022, revealed vulnerabilities in EU networks. As a result, more money is being spent on digital sovereignty and cyber security.

Internal Cohesion vs. Political Divergence

There are still divisions within the EU, despite its initial unity in responding to the conflict in Ukraine by enforcing sanctions, accepting refugees, and facilitating arms transfers. Hungary and Slovakia have opposed some sanctions and expressed scepticism about additional military aid. These internal conflicts threaten the EU's strategic coherence.

EU Enlargement and Eastern Partnership Policy

The war provided a fresh boost to the EU's expansion plan. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are now seen from a security standpoint. However, integrating these countries requires addressing issues like corruption, institutional capacity, and the rule of law—areas where the EU has long set high standards.

Challenges to the Reconciliation between the U.S., Europe, and Russia

The United States is the only superpower in the world today that has the ability to start regional conflicts and wage war on its own. The conflict and its development at the intersection of geopolitical plates can be categorized into two levels: the first is the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine until they face off on a real battlefield, and the second is the systemic confrontation between Russia and the West, led by the United States. The \$1.5 trillion federal budget for the fiscal year 2022 was signed by President Biden on March 16.

The largest portion of this 2,741-page bill, \$782 billion, is allocated to US defence spending, a 5.6 percent increase, while less than half of the budget, \$730 billion, is allocated to non-defence spending (Probasco, 2022; Pramuk, 2022). The budget proposal that was ultimately put to a vote was interestingly changed; instead of allocating \$15.6 billion to combat the pandemic, \$13.6 billion was allocated to Ukraine and other Eastern European countries (Probasco, 2022; Pramuk, 2022). Given the current circumstances, American financial capital, production capital, and military-industrial complexes were used to create a bloodthirsty machine during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. In order to cripple Russia's foreign economic ties, cut off its financial lifeline, and remove barriers to low-cost legal theft of Russian assets, it is first necessary to work with key allies to impose economic and financial sanctions on Russia in turn. Second, in order to restore Europe's economic reliance on the United States, cut off Russia's economic ties with Europe. A number of nations, including France and Germany, were caught in the middle as they attempted to lessen their reliance on Russian energy while simultaneously taking steps to mitigate the impact of growing energy costs. A joint action "on enhancing European energy security and reducing its dependence on Russian oil and natural gas" is then announced by the U.S. (Reuters, 2022a).

Although it appears to ease Europe's concerns, it actually used the occasion to sell liquefied natural gas to the continent at exorbitant prices ((De Luna & Chestney, De Luna, & Woodward, 2022) For three months in a row, US LNG shipments to Europe have increased to more than ten times their level from a year ago (Andreas Rinke, 2022). One of the main winners of this boom is Cheniere Energy, the biggest U.S. exporter, which has recently inked multiple long-term contracts to sell LNG) (Andreas Rinke, 2022). By raising interest rates, the third stage aims to incite conflict in the global financial system and encourage European capital to return to the United States. The credit rating of the Russian government and all of its businesses has recently been totally revoked, mirroring the fourth round of EU sanctions against Russia. This has effectively shut off the Russian government's and its businesses' access to international financial markets for funding. At this time, the United States signalled a significant reduction in the Federal Reserve's balance sheet and began raising interest rates on the pretext of combating inflation (Andreas Rinke, 2022) . In addition to sending a strong signal to other strong economies around the world that the U.S. still controls the global economy and monetary policy, a rate hike by the Federal Reserve at a time when most equity markets are experiencing high levels of uncertainty suggests that the US is confident in the endogenous growth momentum it has achieved within its own economy. Global capital will accelerate the flow of capital into the US market, further prolonging the cycle of US dollar hegemony while bolstering financial stability. A new shuffle may also be on the horizon in situations where capital requires war to survive.

Russia's international standing and deterrence will suffer as a result of being forced to reveal its own vulnerabilities to the world in this military conflict. If Russia doesn't get technical and financial support from other sources, time is running out, even with its enormous stockpile of nuclear weapons, energy, food, and other negotiating chips. Regardless of the result on the battlefield, Russia has failed politically, diplomatically, and economically. The first is that the war was fought in an ineffective manner. It is evident that during this conflict, Russia adopted strategies from World War II, the Prague Spring, and Afghanistan. But Ukraine is engaged in a flat, decentralized conflict where artificial intelligence plays a significant role in high-tech settings. In this conflict, Russia's conventional military strategy may be viewed as out dated. The failure of national power is the second. Except for the military sector, Russia

lags behind in terms of production, finance, and knowledge in the four components of the structural power system: security, production, finance, and knowledge. Thirdly, strategic culture's fundamental reasoning has fallen flat. Russian strategic culture continues to emphasize monopolies on natural resources and territorial expansion. However, in the twenty-first century, the ability to influence global governance structure, technology, and finances has reframed great power struggles. In these areas, Russia is obviously at a clear disadvantage. The failure of the Russian way of thinking comes in at number four. It has recently been widely argued that Putin and Russia's decision-making have been greatly influenced by the ideas of one of the most influential thinkers in modern Russia, Aleksandr Dugin (Drehle, 2022) (Gallo, 2022). The Russian Messiah, Neo-Eurasianism, Slavic superiority, Russian exceptionalism, post-Soviet imperialism, and the "Living Sphere" or "Living Space" (Lebensraum) in a German "Geobiological Environment" are all mixed together in Dugin's ideas. (Shekhovtsov, 2014); (Scott, 2018); (Lewis, 2020); (Dunlop, 2004)). His philosophy lacks a notion of interdependence in the context of globalization, a proposal for the peaceful coexistence of various civilizations, and the modernity principle in the context of industrial and post-industrial civilization. Many Russians are still stuck in the 18th and 19th centuries in this sense. However, Russia has largely controlled the situation by demonstrating its willingness to use nuclear weapons. This suggests that in the future international game, having a warlike attitude and being willing to use nuclear weapons will be a potent negotiating tool. As long as there is no regime change, the nation can still withstand to some extent, aside from Russia's food, energy, and control over Eastern Ukraine and the Black Sea. The game between Russia and the United States and Europe is expected to be a long one. Its extreme hard-line stance on post-Soviet statehood—the former believing it has military superiority, the latter believing it has economic and political clout—is the biggest barrier to Russian rapprochement with the U.S. and Europe. It should be mentioned that the interests of the former Soviet Republics cannot be consistently guaranteed, even in the event that the two sides were to reach an agreement. Such a result is equivalent to appeasement when it comes to reconciliation at the expense of the former Soviet Union. As a key player in the conflict, Ukraine ought to be at the forefront of promoting peace between Russia, the United States, and Europe. However, Ukraine has taken an opportunistic stance on the issue of cooperation with Russia or integration with the West, looking to Russia for political advantages as well as Western nations for economic ones. Ukraine would do well to keep cordial, equal ties with Russia, the United States, and Europe in order to prevent becoming a proxy in the great power game. According to former US Secretary of State (Kissinger, 2014). Ukraine could work to build a bridge between the East and the West and maintain a viable international solution to the current crisis by adopting "a posture comparable to that of Finland...cooperating [ing] with the West in most fields but carefully avoid [ing] institutional hostility toward Russia." All parties would benefit from a non-aligned Ukraine. Negotiations are necessary to resolve issues on the battlefield regardless of how the Russo-Ukrainian War turns out. Russia is attempting to limit the scope of the conflict and pave the way for negotiations by exercising military restraint in Ukraine. Russia's "promoting talks through forces" approach is currently the main method used in negotiations. Ukraine wouldn't necessarily offer to negotiate with Russia if it weren't for the Russian army's on-going progress. In contrast, Ukraine is postponing talks to win over the United States and Europe. Russia would most likely respond with more "tit-for-tat" actions if the United States and Europe kept encircling and interceding with Russia, urged other nations to join a coalition of sanctions against Russia (some post-Soviet states might be forced to act as "vanguards" against Russia), or gave Ukraine significant military support. In addition to making Europe a zero-sum game by escalating conflicts and contradictions, this could also encourage the emergence of new political coalitions in other areas, resulting. NATO nations that border Russia may see Russia's military presence in Ukraine as a possible security threat if the conflict between Russia and Ukraine drags on for a long time. In this case, "NATO will depend on U.S. support as will the anxious and imperilled countries of Europe's east." NATO will probably have a sizable contingent of troops permanently based in Eastern member states, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania. It would be impossible to refuse Finland and Sweden's request to join NATO (Kimmage, 2022)). Reciprocal favours are a more practical approach than threats and extortions. All parties will need to make reasonable compromises if this step is to be completed. For

instance, Russia lowered countersanctions against the United States and Europe or scaled back military operations against Ukraine in retaliation for the U.S. and Europe lowering sanctions against Russia or cutting military aid to Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine actively sought neutrality.

In order to restore security and peace, Europe should make the most of its position as the region's most powerful political and economic force, coordinate peace negotiations with its neighbours and the international community, promote the development of trust rather than escalating hostilities, and advocate for an early cease-fire. Given that Russia and Europe are inseparable neighbours, European nations must rationally and prudently manage risks like extending sanctions against Russia and boosting military aid to Ukraine, as well as create a regional security framework that is on an equal footing with Russia. More importantly, settling the Russian-Ukrainian conflict may be a big step toward Europe gaining the strategic autonomy it has long desired and the subjectivity required to redefine regional security. Europe is in a better and more logical position than any other actor in the world to put pressure on the United States to fulfil its obligations without escalating the conflict, avoiding its conflicts with Russia, or jeopardizing European security. Once again, the failure of the international order with the United Nations at its centre has been made clear by the start of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Despite being a part of the current system, Russia does not benefit from it, so it is free to wage war without giving the system's effects any thought. In light of this, the parties to the conflict ought to create a stronger regional security framework, set up a functional regional crisis management system, and bargain for stricter arms control regulations. Otherwise, a "cold war" and a "hot war" could coexist on Earth. Russia-Ukraine relations will never be the same again, and Europe's geopolitical structure and security pattern will change significantly regardless of how the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is settled in the long run. Other nations were subservient to the U.S.'s strategic interests, which were more important to it than preserving its dominant position in the international and regional order. Russia's long-standing discontent with the US-led international order and the European continent is reflected in the current conflict. Following the current Ukraine crisis, the European security order will be put to the test, Russian-European relations will continue to deteriorate, there will be few opportunities for Russia-European energy cooperation, and the global energy landscape will fundamentally change.

Conclusion

The European security architecture has been significantly altered by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. With its roots in power politics and strategic planning, Russia's invasion is a Realist response to perceived Western threats. In the meantime, Ukraine has emerged as a crucial strategic player in reshaping EU foreign policy as well as a symbol of democratic resilience.

Once satisfied with its role as an economic integrator, the European Union is now developing into a geopolitical organization. Energy independence, cyber resilience, and defence integration are now key tenets of EU policy. The conflict has brought attention to the need for strategic autonomy and the limitations of soft power.

Even though the conflict's future is still up in the air, its effects on Europe are already irreversible. The EU must continue to manage internal conflicts, strike a balance between its strategic interests and its values, and get ready for sustained competition in a fragmented world order.

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