



The Impact of the war Between Russia and Ukraine on Trade Routes in the Black Sea

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Abstract: *This paper explores the difficulties of unblocking the operations of Black Sea ports that remain under Ukrainian control, as well as the geopolitical dynamics between Russia and Ukraine in the area. There are two primary obstacles: first, Ukraine must preserve its coastal defense capabilities against the threat of Russian invasion without undermining the security of its land; second, it is crucial to ensure that Russia adheres to the regulations that safeguard freedom of navigation in the Black Sea. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia's influence in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea has expanded, jeopardizing the security interests of Ukraine as well as Western partners, such as the US and NATO. The analysis suggests measures that NATO and other allies can implement to enhance maritime security in the region, including bolstering Ukraine's navy and augmenting NATO's presence in the Black Sea. This dispute not only impacts relations between Ukraine and Russia, but also influences regional political and security stability in Southeastern Europe as well as broader international diplomacy.*

Keywords: NATO, Black Sea, Russia, Ukraine, Conflict.

1. INTRODUCTION

The difficulty of reopening the operation of Black Sea ports that are still under Ukrainian control is twofold. First, it is essential to find a strategy that allows this to happen without compromising Ukraine's capacity to protect its coastline from a possible Russian amphibious assault, which remains a major threat throughout the spring of 2022 (Kormych, Averochkina, & Kormych, 2024, p. 2). There is a challenge in the Black Sea ports where Russia wants to control its Ukrainian coast but Russia wants to do so without any resistance or efforts made by Ukraine to prevent that from happening.

At that point, Ukraine's coastal defense primarily depended on sea mines, coastal minefields, artillery, MLRS, and vessels maneuvering at the entrance to the port. Eighteen Russian troops continue to control Kherson and vast regions on the western bank of the Dnipro River, which could serve as a pathway to assault Mykolaiv and Odesa in an effort to seize the entire Black Sea coast of Ukraine. In such a scenario, there is a tangible risk that the Russian navy could take advantage of a confirmed secure route to Ukrainian ports for military gain (Kormych, Averochkina, & Kormych, 2024, p. 2). The situation on the coast of Ukraine which relies heavily on various mines and artillery makes ships run around at the

entrance to the port. A total of 18 Russian soldiers control Ukrainian territory and exploit the route for Russian military gain.

The next complex challenge involves ensuring Russia adheres to regulations that guarantee the safety and freedom of neutral maritime traffic from Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea. For instance, on February 25, 2022, Rossmorrechflot issued a NAVTEX notification declaring that, as of 4 a.m. on February 24, the Russian Black Sea Fleet had initiated "anti-terrorist operations." Consequently, navigation in the northwestern section of the Black Sea, north of the 24°21 parallel, was prohibited, with any ships or vessels in this area being deemed a potential terrorist threat (Kormych, Averochkina, & Kormych, 2024, p. 2). What Ukraine is still worried about today is if at any time Russia comes through the Sea of Azov and begins to invade the surrounding area.

Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Moscow has effectively transformed the Sea of Azov into a Russian-dominated zone, with one notable exception: the Ukrainian port of Mariupol. If these ports are rendered inoperable, Russia is likely to pursue similar outcomes in the Black Sea. This poses a direct challenge to the security interests of the United States and NATO. (Coffey & Sadler, 2021, p. 1). Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has determined that the Black Sea of Azov belongs to Moscow.

The United States must take a leadership role within NATO to assist Ukraine in strengthening security in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. This can be achieved by: (1) increasing its naval presence in the Black Sea; (2) encouraging a more robust NATO maritime presence in the region; (3) initiating a review of maritime boundaries in the Sea of Azov; (4) considering a Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) through the Kerch Strait; (5) collaborating with Black Sea NATO allies—Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey—to bolster regional security; and (6) enhancing the maritime and naval capabilities of Ukraine and Georgia (Coffey & Sadler, 2021, p. 2). The United States as an ally of Ukraine could help with the steps given above. These efforts may be able to improve security in the Azov Sea region.

On the evening of November 25, 2018, three Ukrainian Navy vessels were attacked, damaged, and seized by Russian Coast Guard forces, backed by fighter jets and combat helicopters, in international waters near the southern entrance of the Kerch Strait. Earlier that day, the Ukrainian ships had attempted to enter the strait to carry out a planned transit from the Black Sea port of Odesa to the Sea of Azov port in Berdyansk. The seized vessels and their 24 crew members, some of whom sustained serious injuries, were held by Russia until the autumn of the following year (Åtland, 2021, p. 2). The incident reflects the escalating

tensions between Ukraine and Russia, as well as the very serious impact on security in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov regions. The detention of Ukrainian crew members is also one of the direct impacts of the ongoing conflict.

The southern maritime regions of Ukraine—the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov—have emerged as a "third front" in the ongoing seven-year conflict between Russia and Ukraine, alongside Crimea and Donetsk. By escalating its military aggression into the Black Sea, Russia has entered a new stage in its confrontation with Kyiv, creating an additional challenge: restoring political and military stability in the region. This conflict has significantly impacted security in Southeast Europe, strained Russia's relations with NATO, and further damaged Russia's international reputation (Åtland, 2021, p. 3). Not only the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea are affected by the Russia-Ukraine war, but this conflict has become increasingly serious and threatens the political stability in Ukraine.

2. TEORITICAL STUDY

International Trade Theory

International trade plays a crucial role in the global economy, serving as a primary source of foreign direct investment (FDI) and facilitating the adoption of new technologies to boost a nation's GDP (Krugman, 1980). Research indicates that trade theories have evolved alongside the progression of nations. The rise of mercantilism in Europe during the late 16th to 18th centuries marked one of the earliest systematic efforts by Europeans to develop and articulate trade theories (Mansouri, 2022, p. 1). The international trade sector is one of the most important sectors in the economy in the world because the trade sector is the main source of foreign investment.

Drawing on articles and books about international trade theory, this study examines various trade and growth theories in the history of development economics, spanning from classical and neo-classical frameworks to modern trade theories currently embraced by several developed nations. While the study emphasizes a historical review of economic theories, its primary focus is on lesser-known theories that have received limited attention in the field of international trade (Mansouri, 2022, p. 2). This study discusses the theories of international trade that have grown in the history of development economics starting from classical and neo-classical theories to new trade theories.

The degree of openness or protectionism significantly influences the long-term stability and sustainability of regional economic growth. In recent years, particularly

following the 2008 global financial crisis, the pace of global integration has slowed and even shifted toward an anti-globalization trend. Influenced by Schumpeter's theories and the flight-from-competition hypothesis, both developing and developed countries have increasingly embraced trade protectionism. This shift has been fueled by the rise of populist ideologies and xenophobia, exemplified by movements such as Brexit and the policies of the Trump administration (Chen, 2022, p. 1). Since the world financial crisis in 2008 has caused an anti-globalization trend. This phenomenon has occurred since the policy of populist ideas and *xenophobia* caused by *Brexit*.

Developing countries that have long embraced open trade policies often become heavily dependent on global trade after acquiring significant production facilities. While openness brings certain advantages—such as capital accumulation, alignment with global economic trends, foreign investment inflows, trade revitalization, resource utilization, and industrial or service development—it frequently fails to eliminate systemic exploitation and inequality. Without effective policy guidance, domestic and regional capital often struggles to invest in technological innovation and scientific progress in the short term. Although such openness integrates these nations into the global financial system and industrial network, it risks reducing them to mere manufacturing hubs for developed countries, often at the expense of their own societal and economic well-being (Chen, 2022, p. 2). Developing countries that have adopted open policies have relied heavily on open trade since they have received many production facilities.

All trade theories share a similar yet paradoxical and unclear perspective on the impact of open or protectionist policies on the growth of underdeveloped regions. On one hand, openness undeniably fosters regional economic development, a conclusion supported by both theoretical research and real-world examples of national progress. On the other hand, according to these studies, open policies can also lead to significant negative effects on underdeveloped areas, such as product dumping and resource exploitation (Chen, 2022, p. 2). All trading theories have almost the same understanding but are ambiguous about the influence of open policy.

International trade theory has evolved over a long history, generally divided into four key stages: classical trade theory, neoclassical trade theory, new trade theory, and emerging classical international trade theory. In its early phases, classical and neoclassical theories dominated, driving international trade through differences in labor costs and resource availability across countries. Prominent theories from this period include Adam Smith's theory of absolute advantage, Ricardo's theory of comparative

advantage, and John Stuart Mill's theory of reciprocal demand (Chen, 2022, p. 3). Through a long period of development, international trade theory has gone through four stages, including classical, neoclassical, new trade theory, and classical international trade theory.

International trade has long been a key foundation of global economic relations, affecting the prosperity and stability of countries around the world. As global interconnectedness increases, the policies governing international trade have profound implications for the overall health of the global economy (Davis, 2019, p. 2). The prosperity and stability of countries around the world are increasingly connected due to international trade policies.

The main objective of this review is to thoroughly examine the various dimensions of international trade policy and their impact on the overall economic stability of the global community. Through an in-depth analysis, we aim to explore the effects of protectionism, tariff conflicts, and non-tariff barriers on interconnected trade networks. Furthermore, we will assess the challenges faced by developing countries in managing these policies, with a specific focus on the potential increase in economic inequalities. (Davis, 2019, p. 2) This review aims to critically examine the various dimensions of international trade policy and how they impact economic stability.

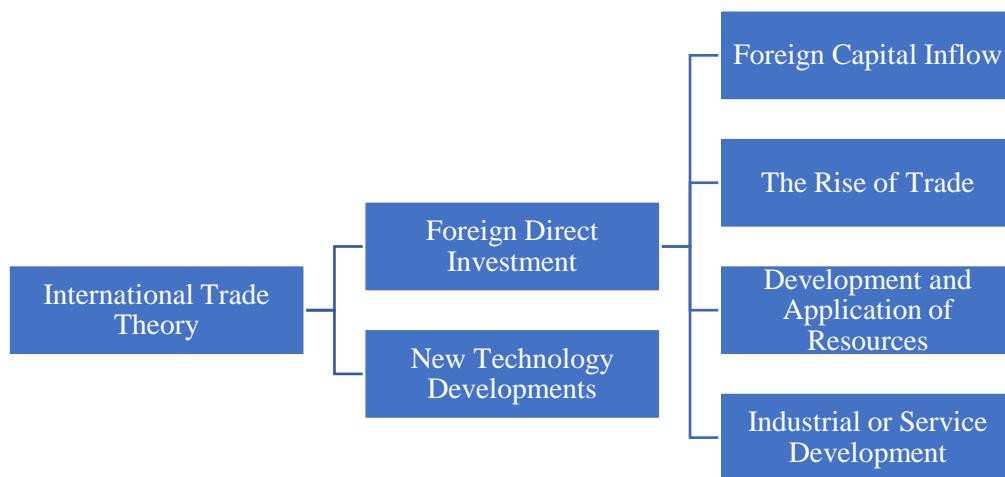


Figure 1. Indicator of Internasional Trade Theory

International Conflict Theory

Conflicts in international relations, whether internal or between nations, have emerged as one of the most urgent security challenges in the modern world. These conflicts are often marked by violence and casualties, which can escalate into humanitarian crises, resulting in substantial material, human, and environmental damage. Conflict-affected regions often become sources of population displacement, increasing pressure and fostering conditions that enable the rise of radical and terrorist groups. The devastating effects of conflict lead to economic decline in the affected nations, deepening the divide between stable regions and those caught in conflict. Conflict resolution and prevention in international relations is an interdisciplinary field, drawing on psychology, sociology, mass communication, development studies, the study of international institutions and politics, political science, security studies, and, above all, the study of international relations itself (Kazansky, 2020, p. 2). Generally, conflicts in the scope of international relations have a nature that concerns humanitarian crises and moral damage.

Conflicts are becoming more dynamic in the 21st century. This change is apparent not only among the parties directly involved in the conflict but also among those engaged in its resolution, with various actors—beyond just the state—playing a role. Consequently, the emphasis is shifting toward preventing and resolving conflicts through the participation of national, regional, and supranational entities (Kazansky, 2020, p. 2). In the 21st century, conflicts have become more dynamic, these changes not only occur among the parties directly involved in the conflict but also the parties involved in the resolution of the conflict.

The history and development of International Relations is an ongoing process. People examine their past through the context of current experiences, aiming to uncover the roots of past events that are significant for both the present and future. They reinterpret history to make it pertinent to today and valuable in shaping a better, more positive future. Similarly, past views on international conflicts are updated based on new evidence as the process progresses (Uwomano, 2024, p. 2). In History and across International Relations, this event is an ongoing process.

In the realm of Conflict Studies and International Relations, the intricate problem of the "security puzzle," referred to as a "fundamental confusion" deeply woven into the fabric of global interactions, remains a lasting and complex challenge on today's multifaceted world stage, as observed by Herbert Butterfield (1952) (Uwomano, 2024, p.

2). The security puzzle is characterized as a fundamental confusion that is intricately woven into the tapestry of global interactions.

As a result, some modern theorists contend that global insecurity has increased. Consequently, the cycle of global instability, which some scholars argue has been exacerbated by the rigid perspectives of policymakers and their associates, is fueled by this perception (Uwomano, 2024, p. 2). Some modern thinkers state that the level of global insecurity continues to occur very rapidly.

In an increasingly interconnected world, preventing armed conflict is critical. Understanding the underlying causes of war helps identify early warning signs and develop strategies to prevent conflict from escalating. By studying both past and present conflicts, scholars and policymakers can gain valuable insights and apply them to current situations (Uwomano, 2024, p. 3). The prevention of armed conflict is an important thing in the scope of international security.

Nationalists support the use of force to protect their land and people from foreign threats. Research on nationalism in international conflicts explores the roles of elites, the general public, and the political dynamics between these groups, highlighting its role as a factor that increases the likelihood of war between nations. (Powers & Ko, 2024, p. 1). The Nationalists encouraged the use of their power to protect the homeland and its people against foreign threats.



Figure 2. Indicator of Internasional Conflict Theory

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a literature review approach, analyzing relevant works on international trade theory and international conflict theory within the geopolitical framework of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The method involves several key steps, including:

1. International Trade Theory Studies

This study examines various theories of international trade from literature sources that include classical, neoclassical, to modern trade theories. The main focus is to review the impact of open trade policies and protectionism on developing and developed countries, as well as their implications in the geopolitical context of the maritime regions of Ukraine and Russia.

2. International Conflict Theory Studies

This article also adopts the theory of international conflict to understand the dynamics of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The study covers maritime conflicts, economic impacts, regional security, as well as how these conflicts affect relations between Russia, Ukraine, NATO, and the US. Conflict theory is used to understand how the seizure of the Black Sea and Sea of Azov territories is part of Russia's military strategy, as well as efforts to resolve conflicts through international intervention.

3. Situational Analysis and Case Studies

The study draws on case studies of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, and the maritime blockade to illustrate the real challenges faced in the region. Historical data, official reports, and academic literature are used to explore how Russia's actions are changing the geopolitical situation in the region, as well as a potential response from the U.S. and NATO.

Using a multidisciplinary approach that combines the study of international trade and international conflicts, this method allows for a comprehensive analysis of the impact of maritime conflicts in the Black Sea on regional and global stability.

4. DISCUSSION

The discussion highlighted two key challenges related to efforts to restore Black Sea port operations amid tensions between Russia and Ukraine. The first challenge is managing the security situation without compromising Ukraine's coastal defense, which is vital to prevent further Russian aggression. Until 2022, Ukraine relied on coastal defense strategies, including sea mines and artillery, to protect its territory. With partial Russian control over the Kherson region and the western bank of the Dnipro River, there is a risk that Russia could use this area

as a base for attacks on Mykolaiv and Odesa, as well as gain control of the entire Ukrainian Black Sea coastline. In this context, shipping routes to Ukrainian ports, intended for neutral vessels, could be exploited by Russia for military purposes, further complicating the issue (Kormych, Averochkina, & Kormych , 2024). Currently, Ukraine is still trying to defend its coastal areas from Russian invasion, Ukraine is worried that if they fail to defend the region, Russia could invade even more widely. This condition is related to the risk of war between countries because it concerns tensions between two countries that allow war.

The second challenge is ensuring Russia's adherence to the rules that uphold freedom of navigation in the Black and Azov Seas. Russia has frequently invoked "anti-terrorist operations" as a justification to impose navigation bans in this maritime area, raising concerns that any military action could further escalate tensions. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Sea of Azov has effectively become a "Russian lake," granting Russia strategic dominance over the region. If Russia succeeds in neutralizing the Ukrainian port of Mariupol, it could extend this control to the Black Sea, posing a security threat not only to Ukraine but also to the US and NATO (Kormych, Averochkina, & Kormych , 2024). The challenge experienced by Ukraine today is to ensure that Russia complies with the rules of freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov. This concerns the Security Problem because the situation described shows a potential threat to regional security, especially related to freedom of navigation and Russia's control over strategic areas such as the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. This threatens the security of Ukraine as well as other countries, including NATO members.

In response to such threats, NATO and its allies, particularly the United States, must take a more proactive role. This involves increasing naval presence in the Black Sea, conducting freedom of navigation operations through the Kerch Strait, and enhancing the maritime security of countries surrounding the Black Sea, including Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey. Additionally, strengthening the maritime capabilities of Ukraine and Georgia could be a crucial step in bolstering regional security. The U.S. is also encouraged to spearhead more robust collective actions to counter Russian aggression, both militarily and diplomatically, with the goal of maintaining stability and security in the region (Coffey & Sadler, 2021). The United States and NATO are expected to play a more proactive role that can improve maritime security not only for Ukraine but for countries around the Black Sea. This condition is related to the Security Problem because in this case many countries are threatened, including NATO and surrounding countries, the United States as a superpower

that has a military with a strength that is able to compete with Russia is expected to play an active role in this situation.

Additionally, the 2018 incident in the Kerch Strait, where Ukrainian ships were shelled and captured by Russia, highlights the intense tension and real threats faced by Ukraine at sea. This event not only impacts the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia but also demonstrates how the land-based conflict can spill over into the maritime domain, effectively creating a "third front" in the ongoing conflict (Åtland, 2021). During the incident in the Kerch Strait in 2018 Ukrainian ships were shot down and captured by Russia, this affected bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia. The incident in the Kerch Strait and the tensions between Ukraine and Russia have a significant impact on Foreign Direct Investment, The uncertainty resulting from the conflict can affect economic projections. Investors often assess the potential for profit and risk. If the situation is considered high-risk, the investment decision may be postponed or canceled.

From the perspective of international conflict theory, this situation reflects the complexity of contemporary conflicts, where economic, political, and security factors are deeply interconnected. Tensions in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov are not solely about military dominance, but also about economic access, particularly concerning ports and international trade routes. In the context of international trade, Russia's control over the Sea of Azov region also carries significant implications for the potential exploitation of resources and a reduction in trade freedom, which should be the rightful prerogative of the countries bordering the region (Kazansky, 2020). All the events that have been discussed reflect the complexity of conflict in this modern era. The relationship between the situation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov with foreign capital inflows can be seen in Economic Control and Market Access. Russia's control over the Sea of Azov affects access to ports and trade routes, which are crucial for neighboring countries such as Ukraine. If this access is restricted, the potential for trade and investment in the region will be reduced. This can reduce the interest of foreign investors, who are usually looking for markets with good accessibility.

This type of conflict heightens instability and intensifies tensions between major powers, such as Russia and NATO, on a global scale. It underscores the necessity for a comprehensive solution that prioritizes not only military security but also international diplomacy, which can help prevent further escalation and ensure stability in the Black Sea region (Uwomano, 2024). This kind of conflict increases instability that exacerbates tensions between major powers such as Russia and NATO. This is related to Global Instability where the tension between Russia and NATO triggered by this conflict, creates a clearer division in

the international system. This could trigger a reaction from other countries, creating new alliances or blocs that could exacerbate global instability.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this discussion is that efforts to unblock port operations in the Black Sea, which are still under Ukrainian control, face two main challenges. First, Ukraine must find a way to defend its coast without sacrificing the security of its territory, especially from the threat of Russian invasion. Strong coastal defense is crucial because Russia has the potential to use the territory it controls as a base of attack. Second, it is important to ensure that Russia complies with international rules that guarantee freedom and security of navigation in the region, even though Russia has manipulated these rules for its own military interests. Russia has expanded its influence in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, posing a threat not only to Ukraine, but also to the security interests of the US and NATO. Therefore, NATO, with the leadership of the US, needs to increase the maritime military presence in the region, as well as strengthen the maritime capabilities of Ukraine and its allies to maintain stability. Overall, the conflicts in the maritime regions of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov show that geopolitical, security, and economic competition are closely linked. This creates a challenge for Ukraine and its allies to defend its territory, while Russia seeks to expand its influence. Resolving this conflict requires a multidimensional approach that combines diplomatic, economic, and military efforts to maintain regional stability.

6. UCAPAN TERIMA KASIH

Alhamdulillah puji dan syukur saya panjatkan kepada Allah SWT Tuhan Yang Maha Esa dengan selesainya tulisan ini dan dengan bimbingan dari dosen tercinta saya yakni Ibu Seniawati karena tanpa adanya beliau mungkin saya tidak dapat menyelesaikan jurnal ini dengan tepat waktu. Terimakasih juga kepada Ayah dan Ibu saya telah membesarkan dan mengajarkan saya berbagai hal-hal baik, yang mana dengan ajaran tersebut saya dapat merealisasikannya dalam kehidupan sehari-hari sehingga saya diberkahi oleh orang-orang baik di sekeliling saya. Terimakasih kepada Teman-teman saya SARKODES karena telah menyemangati saya dan menghibur saya saat merasa kesulitan dan sedih, Saya tidak akan pernah melupakan jasa-jasa dari orang yang telah saya sebut diatas.

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