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Department of Political Science

**Bachelor's Thesis**

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**The Turning Tables of Russia's Global South  
Foreign Policy**

Bachelor's Thesis

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In Prague on  
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## References

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## **Abstract**

This Bachelor's Thesis aims to provide valuable insights into whether Russia's changes of Foreign Policy in the Global South was an act in correlation to the Ukraine invasion or more a story of the past. The research findings will contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of the Russian Foreign Policy, within itself and its evolution. This will be done through a thorough comparison of the three key eras of Russian Foreign Policy: The Tsarist era (1547-1917), the Soviet era (1945-1991), and post USSR/ "democratic" era (1991-present day). This paper will also further analyze and clarify Russia's views on the Global South and what is meant exactly by the term "Global South". Lastly the paper will both argue and discuss how these relations impact the wider international community and explore what I believe to be the correlation between the war and the ratifying of the Russian Foreign Policy.

## **Abstrakt**

**Tato bakalářská práce si klade za cíl poskytnout cenné poznatky o tom, zda změny zahraniční politiky Ruska na globálním Jihu byly aktem ve vztahu k invazi na Ukrajinu nebo spíše příběhem minulosti. Výsledky výzkumu přispějí k lepšímu pochopení dynamiky ruské zahraniční politiky na základě srovnání jejích tří klíčových období: carské éry (1547-1917), sovětské éry (1945-1991) a post-sovětské "demokratické" éry (1991-současnost). Práce dále analyzuje a objasňuje ruský postoj ke globálnímu jihu a jeho samotné vymezení. Závěrem se práce zabývá dopady těchto vztahů na mezinárodní společenství v důsledku ruské vojenské agrese vůči Ukrajině.**

## **Keywords**

**Global South, Ukraine, Russia, Western powers, Foreign Policy**

## **Klíčová slova**

**Globální jih, Ukrajina, Rusko, západní mocnosti, zahraniční politika**

## **Název práce**

**Otočné stoly Globální zahraniční politiky Ruska na jihu**

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## **Introduction**

Russia, a country and empire sometimes referred to as one of dominion but also of controversy and conflict. A vast nation, that has always had a rather serious self-identity problem. Whether it being in its very early days in the Tsarist era (1462-1917), to fast forward during the USSR (1917-1991) to current day 21st century politics (1991- present). When looking in depth in Russia's Foreign Policy you can identify three distinct periods the expansionist one which can be associated to the Tsarist but also Soviet era, the communist one and finally one that can be named as the "democratic" one. Before we unveil the content of this thesis in detail I believe it is important to mention some methodological pillars to provide us with some structure.

This thesis bases itself on a bottom up approach with both a research question and a hypothesis that I will reveal later on in this section. In order to prove this hypotheses I will be using a mixed approach of data collection meaning you will be able to find both qualitative and quantitative data as both are needed in order to support the longitudinal aspect of this thesis. Now to be break this thesis down precisely, we will in the first chapter take a glance at the history of the Russian Foreign Policy from its very foundations in 1462 all the way to its applied constructed system following the collapse of USSR in 1991, therefore ranging from early 2000's to the present day. In order to do so I will be opting for a qualitative set of data basing myself on the books of scholars who have made it their mission to investigate in depth the Russian Foreign Policy timeline.

Once that has been depicted we will move on to the second chapter of this thesis which will focus on another global sector, one that tends to often be cited alongside the mentions of the



Russian empire which is, the Global South. This term created by Carl Ogelsby in 1969 in the Catholic journal “Commonweal”, is broad and controversial as well as degrading for the countries that are being categorized by it. The Global South is truly seen to be just a more academical label for the obsolete term “third world countries, therefore justifying its controversy and overgeneralization when labeling it as a region. The fact the Global South constitutes of so many differing countries in terms of culture, religions, political systems and other factors, makes it so that one term cannot represent them all. I will go in depth about the specificity of the controversy and history of the term in the chapter itself. Which will be done through the discussion of who invented the term, when, why and what it defines in sense of geographic delimitation.

Furthermore in Chapter two, I will provide an analyses of the Global South’s implications and connections with the world’s biggest state, with a particular focus on the African continent and the Middle East in the time periods of; 1992-2012, 2012-2022. I will be once again relying on a more qualitative set of data in order to provide further historical context for the chapter to come. In order to do so I will use yet again the works of scholars, as well as official government reports to provide acute detailing about the history of these relations whether they be political, or diplomatic.

Lastly, I shall introduce a third and concluding chapter to connect it all together through the exploration of the Russian Policy towards the Global South in the time frame 2022-present day. This will provide the longitudinal approach I was referring to earlier, as i will be taking all the information I have gathered from the past and compare it to the present one. this is why I decided to opt for a bottom up approach as it in the context of this thesis it is important to build a historical foundation in order to be able to prove the hypotheses set in a more

current time period. That having been said the third chapter's main purpose will be to answer the research question; "Did the Russian military aggression on the 24th of February 2022, as well as the diplomatic reaction of the collective West lead to a restructuring of the Russian Foreign Policy towards the Global South?" In order to answer this question I will be basing myself on the hypotheses that "the Russian Foreign Policy towards the Global South has indeed been restructured as a response to the invasion and the collective West's diplomatic reaction."

To prove my hypotheses I will explore the following factors which I believe to be the main ones to have undergone some reform following the 24th of February 2022 in comparison to what they used to be in 1992-2012 and 2012-2022; Increased Isolation, Economic partnerships, Diplomatic outreach, Security cooperation and Arms Sales, Political alliances, Energy Sales, and Soft Power. Each of these factors will firstly be introduced in a matter of what they are, how they have been implemented within the Russian FP since 2022 and how they have undergone some change from their the pre-war status which I define as everything after the collapse of the USSR (1991) until February 2022, the current war period. In detail this means that unlike the previous chapters the data collection approach in this chapter will be mixed. As in order to be able to do the comparing and contrasting of data such as weapon import and export, types of trade agreements and the amount of flow coming in and out of Russia from countries such as China, or even the amount of diplomatic programs established between Russia and the Global South you need quantitative data. The quantitative comparison will be done by taking the data from the time periods of 1992-2012 and 2012-2022 and be compared to the data gathered by analysts after February 2022. In the scheme of these factors the Global South countries that will be the starring actors within the factors are China, Iran, UAE, North Korea (in particular within the economic and military related factors),

Latin American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela (mostly when talking about soft powers) and African states such as Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mali, Ivory Coast and Algeria (mostly present in the diplomatic and military sections).

Furthermore for each factor I will also be relying on qualitative data sets which include reports of diplomatic activity, head of states visits, organization and summit reports, trade negotiations as well as published new official agreements and energy deals. To obtain these information's I will be using official speeches from heads of states, published official government or press reports (in terms of; conferences, new dealmaking, or diplomatic visits and summits), specialized journals with weekly entries from university professors regarding the relationship between Russia and the Global South, as well as the general media and reports of supranational organizations such as the IMF, UN, or World Bank.

Of course just like any other thesis and methodological design they are some limitations to this thesis especially when it comes to the gathering of data whether it be quantitative or qualitative. Russia is a difficult country to obtain data about, as they tend to not share accurate statistics about anything ranging from their GDP, to exports and imports, to casualties on the front, and military aid. Secondly, when talking about such a sensible subject I will also have to take into account the potential bias of the media when it comes to specific topics such as diplomatic outreach as often the media do intend to twist around words. Especially given that for the third chapter I will be basing myself a lot on news articles, as the subject of this thesis evolves daily. Therefore making it ever so important to carefully filter the information gathered. Another downside is that once again since this war is a rather fresh wound it might be challenging to find official or government files.

Having established all of the following I believe it is now time to immerse in our first topic,

the history of the Russian Foreign Policy from its youngest forms to its current day structure.

## **2. The History of Russia's Foreign Policy**

The Russian Foreign Policy is a very complex and temporal one. Its foundations dates back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in 1462 precisely. It can be divided into three time periods; the tsarist era which ranges from 1462-1917, the communist/soviet era from 1917-1991, and the democratic era 1991-present. Despite numerous changes in terms of shape and form of the foreign policies themselves the one consistency has been its reliance on the overall form of balance of power polices. Balance of power polices are measures taken by governments who feel that their interests or security is threatened and they therefore enhance their power by any means available and possible.<sup>2</sup> The most common method used in these situations are military alliances which can either turn out positively or negatively like the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact with military buildup, interventions of weaker powers and eventually an outcome of war. Yet balance of power policies did work out in the favor of the Russian policy in both the tsarist era with the Triple Entente, but the soviet as well (setting aside the Nazi Pact incident) with the Warsaw Pact seen as a military counterpart of NATO. However when comparing these two FP eras with the current Russian Federation the major difference is that the nation is no longer part of any military alliance given the lack of major enemies in retrospect to the darker, older, times. It is nowadays more reliant on an internal and external system with the president dominating the process. The general purpose of the Russian Foreign Policy has always been to *“ensure national security, promoting the economic wellbeing of the country and enhancing national prestige”*<sup>3</sup> Yet through the different eras the way of implementing this moto varies. Let's firstly take a look at the Tsarist era and its expansionist Foreign Policy.

## 2.1 Tsarist Foreign Policy (1462-1917)

In *(The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests Robert H Donaldson, Joseph L Noguee)* the authors state that the legacy of the Tsars and the origins of the Russian policy can be traced back to the time period of (1462-1505). It all began with Ivan the III also known as Ivan the Great who is considered to be the first tsar. He was known for ruling over the Muscovite state but also for having been the one to get rid of the Mongols, undermine Tatar power and start the Western expansion of Russia. This caused him to go war with Poland multiple times yet through all this he managed to subject cities like Novgorod, Perm and Tver and establish them under the Moscow rule. His son Vasily III (in power from 1505-1533) would follow his legacy through the annexation of Smolensk into Moscow's orbit by 1514. Another Ivan would take the relay of this expansionist foreign possible, this time however Ivan wasn't Great but Terrible, in his years of ruling from 1533-1584 Ivan IV would be the first one to take the expansionism outside Russian territories, towards the southern Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan obtaining them access to the Caspian Sea, as well as the initiation of the first stage of the Siberian conquest in 1581 (which would be accomplished by the 1600's from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean). Ivan IV contributed greatly to the expansionist Foreign Policy yet the two leaders that followed only brought around trouble with famines and the Polish occupation of Moscow. It wasn't until 1613 that the empire would see a clearing of the skies with the stepping in of the Romanov dynasty with Michael I and his son Alexis who would acquire the eastern part of Ukraine including the capital Kiev or "Old Rus" at the time. The full flowering of the Russian FP under Peter I or Peter the Great (son of Alexis) who would go on to reign from 1689-1725. He would go on to make Russia part of the great European powers by firstly making the Russian Empire and himself the emperor but also through the building of a navy and the acquirement of

different ports which would pay off in the Great Northern War fought against Sweden through the obtention of ports in the Baltic Sea. This would therefore give rise to the construction and creation of a new city, St Petersburg in 1703, which ten years later would become the capital of the empire despite the war with Sweden not ending until 1721 the domination of the empire gave them the possibility to grow and rise faster. They would go on to incorporate Livonia, Ingria, and parts of Finland to their list. Some further shores in the east was acquired as well within the Caspian sea but then lost by the ones that would go on to succeed Peter the Great.

Thirty seven years later, the Russian Foreign Policy would enter another very significant era with Catherine the Great and her “active” Foreign Policy.<sup>4</sup> Active in reference to her numerous and significant additions to the empire. Following the partitions with Poland through the previous decades, Catherine the II (ruled 1762-1796) acquired Belorussia, Lithuania, western Ukraine, and two thirds of Poland. These impressive accomplishments transferred themselves to the South with the acquisition of northern Black Sea coastlines (Azov and Crimea), extending all the way to the Dniester River, as Odessa by 1796. These additions to the empire not only increase the general population of the empire but it also provided them with the ability to catch up to their European neighbors due to enhanced expertise. The military grew stronger which was showcased during the Napoleonic wars, but would fall behind in the centuries to come with the industrial revolution and high scale warfare of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

When Alexander I came to power things took a turn in terms of ideological focus in the context of Foreign Policy. Nationalism became suppressed with the creation of the Holy Alliance therefore emphasizing the legitimism of the empire and making Russia the

gendarme of Europe. Russia sought to maintain a balance of power in Europe, particularly in relation to other major European powers. The Tsarist regime engaged in alliances and conflicts to secure its interests and prevent encirclement by potential adversaries. This would influence Alexander's successor Nicholas the first to make his policy that revolved around the motto "Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationalism" by that is meant that the ruler would use 200,000 troops to suppress any rising revolutionary feelings in its annexed provinces in order to prevent this revolutionary European wave from spreading to the empire. The Tsars often presented themselves as protectors of Orthodox Christianity as this ideological element played a role in expansionist policies, especially in areas with a significant Orthodox Christian population. It was used to justify interventions in the Balkans and the support of fellow Orthodox Christians under Ottoman rule. This conservatism however did not make it so that the FP turned fully defensive, expansion was still very much the leading actor as the ruler was every interested in annexing Constantinople and further territory in the East. Russia's imperial ambitions to extend to modern-day Istanbul, the historic capital of the Byzantine Empire was mostly influenced by the thought of having a Russian presence in the city, as the protector of Orthodox Christians, on one hand. But also it was heavily influenced by fact the Tsarist regime had a longstanding geopolitical rivalry with the Ottoman Empire. This rivalry played out in conflicts such as the Russo-Turkish Wars, where Russia sought to expand its influence in the Black Sea region and the Balkans. This stagnating situation with the Turks led to the empire starting negotiations with China which would obtain them access to Vladivostok through negotiations in 1860. Power as well as land over central Asian regions including Tashkent would come to them in 1865. In Central Asia, Russia engaged in the "Great Game" with the British Empire, a geopolitical rivalry focused on influence in the region. The Tsarist regime sought to expand its influence in Central Asia, leading to the conquest of territories such as present-day Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. As

mentioned earlier the dominating aspect of the tsarist Foreign Policy is expansionism with a purpose to not only “fill internal vacuums” but also strive towards the open sea and the ports they come with. Access to warm-water ports was a strategic imperative for Russia, given the limitations of its northern ports, which were icebound for a significant part of the year. The acquisition of territories along the Black Sea, including Crimea, aimed at securing year-round access to warm-water ports and facilitating maritime trade. This four centuries long pattern of land conquering is often justified by numerous varying theories such as Russia being an aggressor fulfilling their autocratic needs, or simply them being a regime that sees itself as frail and vulnerable in case of invasions therefore triggering an obsession for finding security. Expansion into the vast territories of Siberia and the Far East provided strategic depth and enhanced Russia's security. It acted as a buffer against potential invasions and allowed for the development of resources that contributed to the country's economic and military strength. As said by Henry Kissinger:

*“The absolute nature of the Tsar's powers enabled Russia's rulers to conduct Foreign Policy both arbitrarily and idiosyncratically...To sustain their rule and to surmount tensions among the empire's various populations, all of Russia's rulers invoked the myth of some vast, foreign threat, which, in time, turned into another of the self-fulfilling prophecies that doomed the stability of Europe”<sup>5</sup>*

Therefore when taking a closer look at the diplomacy of The Tsarist Foreign Policy of Russia, particularly during the imperial period preceding the Russian Revolution of 1917, I believe it is fair to say that it was characterized by a combination of expansionism, geopolitical ambitions, and a pursuit of strategic interests. The Tsarist regime sought to establish and consolidate Russia as a major European and global power. Yet according to Henry Kissinger he believes the FP to also be a symbol of struggle for ideology the one of



Pan-Slavism. “Russia for the most of its history has been a cause looking for an opportunity”. I however disagree with the previous statement as a significant portion of Russia's territorial expansion was not driven by a commitment to Slavic brotherhood but rather stemmed from a pragmatic pursuit of resources such as gold, valuable minerals, furs, and the establishment of trade routes to the renowned markets of the Orient. Martin Malia, a scholar who contends that Russian exceptionalism was primarily a feature of the Soviet era, presents an argument opposing the attribution of Russian expansionism predominantly to ideological motivations.

*“In fact, however, Russian Foreign Policy under the old regime was no more ideological than that of any other European powers. Like all other powers, Russia was expansionist, but essentially for geopolitical reasons. Indeed, there was probably more ideology in the Western overseas expression of this expansionism than in its Russian, continental, and Eurasian forms...Russian Foreign Policy under the old regime did have an ideological component, but only toward the end. Until the early 20th century, pan-Slav ideology was much more the property of society than of the government, which succumbed to it only in the immediate buildup to 1914.... It was with the October Revolution that Russia's international role changed fundamentally to a messianic ideology.”<sup>6</sup>*

Certainly, no singular driving force can comprehensively account for tsarist Russian expansionism. Instead, a complex interplay of factors, including geography, regime characteristics, the international system, and ideology, all contribute, with varying degrees of influence at different junctures. As shall be explored in the subsequent section, certain aspects of tsarist diplomacy persisted into the Soviet era, while others did not. In assessing the legacy of the tsars, one can speculate that there are valuable insights to be gleaned from the history of the Russian Empire, potentially guiding the Foreign Policy of both communist and democratic successors. Spanning from the Time of Troubles in the seventeenth century through conflicts like the Crimean and Russo-Japanese wars up to World War I, Russian history underscores the perils that overextension and warfare pose to internal stability. While

at times undertaken as a distraction from domestic issues, war more frequently compounds these problems ultimately contributing to the downfall of an empire once revered as the most formidable in Europe.

## **2.2 Soviet Foreign Policy (1917-1991)**

1917 represents the year the Russian Empire was overthrown and gave its place to a new formed, state governed nation. A state to be governed based on scientific socialism. That is, a concept deeply enrooted in the ideology of revolutionary Marxism initially preached by Vladimir Lenin. This concept would give the Foreign Policy quite a twist as with the installation of this new government and ideals it was proclaimed by officials that it would now be desired to have a “just and democratic peace”<sup>7</sup> approach to not only Russia itself but also the annexed states. To be more specific and in the words of the November 1917 decree on peace, this meant there would be no more “annexations, incorporations or indemnities”.<sup>8</sup> With this growing sentiment for revolution the Russian state and its leader felt the need to help spread revolution throughout the world in both industrial nations of Europe but also the colonial world, beginning the Russian outreach towards the “Global South”.

Yet the sudden materialization failed to succeed and the Russian state found itself stuck with the old acquired territories that made up the previous empire. It would be in 1922 with the proclamation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that a true union would be formed between the Russian state and its imperially annexed territories, the goal for this was the creation of a “World Socialist Soviet Republic”. However as showed in the past the transition wasn’t easy as the USSR constantly struggled between its ideological commitment, national

interest and of course the global spreading of the soviet system. This was however cut short a few years later with the soviets triumph in WW2 and the rise of Joseph Stalin to power.

The USSR metamorphosed from a regional to a global power firmly guided by ambition and “revolutionary-imperial paradigm” as labeled by Vladislav Zubok, professor of international history at the London School of Economics. The Soviets therefore adopted the geopolitical strategies that were used in the tsarist era in order to successfully spread the soviet ideology around the world under the influence of Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

Lenin's understanding of Marxist theory emphasized the pivotal role of a revolutionary party in quickening a nation's progression towards socialism. This perspective extended to the realm of Foreign Policy, where the Soviet Union aspired to assume this leading role on a global scale. The validity of the Soviet system was intricately linked to its capacity to safeguard and propagate the revolutionary ideals. Stalin explicitly articulated this notion by stating, *"Whoever occupies a territory also imposes his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."*<sup>10</sup> This therefore led to the escalation and direct confrontation with the United States giving rise to the Cold War but also the growing presence of the soviets in Asia, Africa and Latin America, all of them being continents where soviet influence had previously been close to non-existent. The dependency on ideology within the Foreign Policy but also the bureaucracy in general is also what would lead to the USSR's demise. The countries FP and stability was getting more fragile under each leader it had whether it was Brezhnev, Andropov or Chernenko, despite the fact it wasn't undergoing any change the cabinets became less and less immune to rivalries and divisions over policies. However in the dawn of 1985 dramatic changes in Soviet Foreign Policy would surface under the rule of Mikhail Gorbachev. However before going into detail regarding Gorbachev's FP changes I believe it is important to explain the structure of the Soviet government to get a rough idea as to how the cycle of policy

implementation functions, especially since it provides the model for the current Russian government. The way it was structured was that the government was directed by a Chairman who was referred to as the “Premier” this chairman was designated by the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Soviet Union and then elected by the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union. Further on other government officials of important status such as first deputy premiers and government ministers were picked out by the supreme soviet. At the beginning the highest organ of power within this system was the All Union Congress of Soviets while on the other hand the Central Executive Committee practice the role of the Congress of Soviets. In addition the committee labeled Council of People’s Commissar which was the government was seen to be the executive branch of the Central Executive Committee. However things would change under Stalin following the declaration of the 1936 Constitution, the Council of People’s Commissars was adopted to be the Soviet government but also become the main branch of executive and administrative power. This new Constitution did also take away the ability for the Council of People’s Commissars to enact laws, instead made them issue regulations as well as decrees based on the laws that already exist. The legislative power was attributed to the Supreme Soviet as well as the Presidium, who was now eligible to change laws by himself as he stood in the place of both the congress of soviets and the central executive committee. Therefore Stalin reshuffled the system and hierarchy of the government in order to give himself more power and the ability to pass whatever laws and policies he pleased whether they be domestic or foreign.

Having laid the structural foundations of the government, we can now resume with Gorbachev’s FP changes. As Gorbachev's tenure progressed, especially following the 1987 Central Committee Plenum that signaled the intensification of his reform initiatives, he endeavored to move away from the Stalinist *"revolutionary-imperial paradigm"* in favor of

his *"new thinking."*<sup>11</sup> This involved a redefinition of the Soviet role on the global stage, shifting the emphasis from confrontation to cooperation with the United States for the sake of collective security. Gorbachev notably embraced the notion of Europe as the primary focus of Moscow's Foreign Policy, advocating for a *"common European home."* This vision was articulated during a speech in Prague in April 1987, where Gorbachev stated, *"We assign an overriding significance to the European course of our Foreign Policy."*<sup>12</sup>

However, Gorbachev's most impactful accomplishment, as noted by his former aide Anatoli Cherniaev, was the "de-ideologization" of Soviet Foreign Policy.<sup>13</sup> This transformation paved the way for historic events such as the reunification of Germany, the democratization of Eastern Europe, and the establishment of a new transatlantic relationship. The process of De-ideologization under Gorbachev marked a departure from the ideological confrontation that characterized the Cold War era. Gorbachev steered Soviet Foreign Policy away from conflicts in regions like Africa, Latin America, and Asia and aimed to improve relations with major global powers, including the United States, China, Great Britain, France, and West Germany. Despite his efforts to reduce foreign tensions, internal crises, particularly economic failures, led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

After the collapse, Russian Foreign Policy was no longer bound by ideological constraints. However, it faced challenges in defining its national interests and formulating a coherent Foreign Policy strategy. The Russian government initially sought to project a different image from the Soviet era but later explored which Soviet-era policies could benefit post-Soviet Russia. The new government under Yeltsin aimed for greater integration into the West while wrestling with the complexities of Russia's historical legacies.

In the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, Russian leaders faced the challenge of reconciling historic legacies with Foreign Policy choices. Yeltsin, seen as the first president (in democratic terms) highlighted the transitional nature of Russia by questioning what elements to retain, discard, or create anew. In the first two decades post-Soviet era, Russian Foreign Policy navigated the consequences of the collapse, retrieving certain aspects of the Soviet state, and seeking a new direction.

### **2.3 21<sup>st</sup> Century Foreign Policy (1991- present)**

Following the collapse of the USSR, Russia now faced the challenge of reconstructing and reasserting itself not only a national level but also an international one. The 1993 Russian Constitution opted for a pyramidal Foreign Policy format, which meant that power was centralized within the hands of the president. “The president represents the country in international relations (Article 80); supervises the conduct of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation and is the one who must sign all international treaties (Article 86); is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces (Article 87); and, as chief executive, appoints all ministers, ambassadors, and heads of agencies and sets down the foreign and national security strategies of the country (Article 83).”<sup>14</sup> Yet soon crisis would dawn upon the newly established system. Boris Yeltsin became very ill and turned over the authority to his prime minister, Vladimir Putin who would go on to succeed him. From 2008 to 2012, Russia's third president, Dmitry Medvedev, governed in close collaboration with Vladimir Putin, who transitioned from the presidency to the role of prime minister. Adhering to the constitutional prohibition against serving more than two consecutive terms, Putin returned to the presidential office following the March 2012 elections.

While the president is the central figure in the Russian government, the daily control over policy is constitutionally entrusted to the chairman of the government, the prime minister. According to Article 114, the prime minister holds the responsibility to *"adopt measures to ensure the country's defense, state security, and the implementation of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation."* Despite the president having the authority to appoint ministers, such as the foreign minister, the prime minister plays a crucial role in proposing nominations to fill government posts, as outlined in Article 113<sup>5</sup>. During both the Yeltsin and Putin administrations, the prime minister's position was clearly subordinate to the president. Notably, when former President Vladimir Putin assumed the role of prime minister in 2008, he subtly redefined the relationship, emphasizing a more equal distribution of power: *"The president is the guarantor of the constitution and sets the main domestic and Foreign Policy guidelines. But the highest executive power in the land lies with the government..."* <sup>16</sup>

Vladimir Putin became the initial post-Soviet Russian prime minister with direct oversight of the majority-holding political party in the Duma, United Russia. This marked a departure from previous prime ministers who were entirely reliant on presidential favor. Putin assumed the chairmanship of the party on April 15, 2008, asserting that *"the head of the executive branch leading a party is a civilized and natural practice traditional for democratic states."*<sup>16</sup> This shift in dynamics meant that while the president retained the constitutional authority to dismiss the prime minister, the prime minister, in turn, commanded a supermajority in the Duma with the potential to either impeach the president or amend the constitution. Named "the tandem," this arrangement balanced the presidency with the prime minister's office, blurring some of the distinct lines of authority between the two positions.

Although the president and prime minister attained near-coequality during this period, there was no certainty that the state of affairs from 2008 to 2012 would endure as the norm in Russian politics. Dmitry Medvedev's announcement at the United Russia party congress in September 2011, stating that he would not seek a second presidential term and would nominate Vladimir Putin for the presidency, followed by Putin's declaration of preserving the tandem by swapping positions after the March 2012 presidential elections, raised uncertainties about the future exerting of executive power.

In his third term, Putin had undertaken measures to reinstate the previous dynamic of presidential-prime ministerial relations, characterized by the prime minister's relegation to the policy directives set by the president. This shift is notably evident in a series of decrees that transfer certain powers enjoyed by Putin as prime minister to the presidency. (The PM no longer appoints the heads of the major state companies, the president does.)<sup>17</sup> Simultaneously, the need to maintain steadiness among government positions and accommodate competing factions may obstruct the complete dismantling of institutions established during the 2008-to-2012 period. Consequently, future prime ministers might retain a higher degree of policy autonomy compared to their predecessors before Medvedev.

In consequence of this game of political musical chairs they are five distinct factors that are critical in explaining the post-soviet FP. These are firstly; the shift of the international system away from bipolarity, Russia's military decline, the shift from a previous command economy to a market one, Russia's integration in the global economy and its growing dependence on the world market and *"Russia's political leadership and domestic politics, especially as manifested in the struggles between Yeltsin Russian nationalists, followed by Putin's efforts to restore the power of the state and its central control."*<sup>18</sup> these factors truly showcase a



different approach to Foreign Policy than the Soviet one. The Soviet approach to FP was firstly changed and established after WW2 but also comprised of seven points that revolved mostly around *“shifting the structure of the international system, the growth of polycentrism towards the rise and fall of the communist movement, the prospect of a strong and growing military to annihilate the enemy, military parity between the two Cold war powers yet leading to the crumble of the USSR and its title of superpower, the transition of the Soviet regime from totalitarian to authoritarian and eventually a fragmented polity leading to the fragmentation of the economy and finally the different approaches of the Soviet leaders reflected by their opposite personalities from Stalin to Khrushchev and Brezhnev to Gorbachev.”*<sup>18</sup> This compare and contrast clearly shows the shifts in priorities but also in systems as by gathering all the power into the hand of one leader but also by avoiding diversity in candidates the post-Soviet FP has become more centered and therefore stronger in action. While the Russian FP has always based itself on the ideal of expansionism whether it's through conquering land, or spreading an ideology on a global scale, I believe that despite the initial concept still being present in the post-Soviet one it has taken a more imperial twist.

A credible Russian Foreign Policy should align with *“its genuine strategic interests and the goals of economic and social development,”*<sup>19</sup>. Given Russia's global reach, establishing priorities becomes essential to identify the most crucial areas worldwide. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, two key debates have shaped Russian Foreign Policy. The first revolves around whether Russia's national interests are better served by aligning closely with and eventually integrating into a Euro-Atlantic world led by the United States, or if Russia should instead seek alliances and partnerships to hedgerow against and possibly constrain U.S. influence globally. The second debate focuses on the degree to which Russia should actively substitute the reintegration of the Eurasian space. This involves considering whether Russia

must actively hinder the political and economic influence expansion of other major powers in the region to safeguard its own interests. In the first years after the Soviet Union's disintegration, the Boris Yeltsin administration, according to Igor Ivanov's analysis, predominantly concentrated on these pivotal debates.

The Boris Yeltsin administration directed its Foreign Policy efforts toward *"accelerated integration into the Euro-Atlantic structure,"* a stance that some critics argue came at *"the detriment of Russia's relations with other parts of the world."* This inclination was evident in its *"desire to join the ranks of the West as quickly as possible, even if to the detriment of Russia's real interests."*<sup>20</sup> In 1992, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev declared that the *"developed countries of the West are Russia's natural allies,"*<sup>21</sup> emphasizing a primary focus on these nations, including the United States, France, the UK, and Germany. Other regions such as the Eurasian space, the Far East, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America were relegated to the *"second echelon"* of Russian Foreign Policy interests.<sup>22</sup> However, by the early 2000s, Russian diplomacy shifted to broaden its network of international relationships. Recognizing the unique geopolitical position of the country and the realities of global politics and economics, Russia aimed to cultivate cooperation equally with nations to the West, East, North, and South.

This context leads to the concept of vectors, determining which powers Russia should closely align with to best advance its national interests. The conflicts in the 1990s between Atlanticists and Eurasianists, the theory of multipolarity proposed by Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, and debates within the Putin administration over prioritizing a Western or Eastern vector have all contributed to shaping arguments for different alignments in Russian Foreign Policy. These are the potential possibilities of alignment.<sup>23</sup>

The vectors are as follows: <sup>24</sup>

*“1. Commonwealth of Independent States/Eurasian: Russia's engagements with its immediate neighbors, the other nations that emerged from the former Soviet Union.*

*2. Western/Atlantic: Russia's primary emphasis should be on interactions with the United States and joining the assembly of Western nations led by the U.S.*

*3. European: Russia should concentrate on strengthening its historical, economic, and security bonds with European nations. Simultaneously, it should advocate for the development of a Europe that maintains a less rigid connection to the United States. Within this vector, there may be inclinations toward prioritizing relations with specific European countries such as Germany, France, Italy, or states in Eastern Europe.*

*4. China: Proponents of a strong strategic alliance with Beijing argue that this offers the optimal opportunity to safeguard and advance Russia's national interests.*

*5. A broader Asia-Pacific vector can either encompass the strategic partnership with China or be designed to introduce a degree of equilibrium to the relationship with Beijing.*

*6. The Non-Western: If Russia faces barriers to full integration into the Western world, its interests lie in contributing to the formation of a coalition comprising emerging non-Western powers in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This coalition would serve as a counterbalance to both the Euro-Atlantic West and the growing influence of China.”*

That being said as well as having established all these vectors I believe it is time to dive deeper into one the region, if we can call it so, the “Global South” which includes most of the vectors mentioned earlier. This is a key word when it comes to Russia as in the last few decades as well as currently it has proven to be a key area of interaction, as well as an arcade.

Specifically in the context of trade cooperation but also potential war breakouts between the East and the West.

### **3. The Global South's Structure and Russia's Influence**

When talking about the Global South, before even getting started on its particularities and its role on the international stage we have to look into the term itself. As not only is the “Global South” making a comeback in the geopolitical arcade but within the linguistic sphere as well. It is a term often used to refer to the world's political and economic divisions both geographically and internationally. The “Global South's” frequent apparition in media nowadays is highly due to the escalation and intensification of the geopolitical rivalry between the world's hegemon, USA, and the hegemon wannabee, China. With this modern day Cold War like setting and tensions between the two superpowers it has once again triggered most developing countries in the world to be pawns in a game of picking sides, whether it be through the alignment with the democratic West or authoritarian East with Russia and China. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine this has only made the division worse and the need to align with one side more significant. Ukraine aside these countries have faced other crises pressuring them to pick a side. Whether it was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic or the worsening climate emergencies, these developing countries need foreign help in order to survive these emergencies in political, economic and of course ecological spheres. Having said this I would now like to dive into the roots of the term but also its role internationally.

#### **3.1 The Global South and the world Stage**

In most recent years the use of the term “Global South” has exploded with the phrase making appearances in speeches and quotes of political leaders, international organizations,

and not to mention major democracies. For example UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres declared in November 2022 not long after the world reached 8 billion inhabitants expressed that; *“Many countries of the Global South face huge debts, increasing poverty and hunger, and the growing impacts of the climate crisis,”* Another example of the terms usage by high ranked figures are; Ajay Banga (President of the World Bank) US President Joe Biden and his national security adviser as well as secretary of commerce.<sup>25</sup> ( Yet the most shocking is even certain leaders of the nations that this term denotes, have opted for its usage, when referring to their countries. One of the key figures to have done so is the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the context of a White House visit in June 2022 where he stated that *“lending a voice to the priorities of the Global South is a central objective of India’s G20 chairmanship.”*<sup>26</sup> However the problem with this phrase is that it calls for unwarranted generalizations as it has become *“a convenient shorthand for a broad swath of nations seeking to overhaul the unjust structures of the global economy, hedge their strategic bets, and promote the emergence of a more multipolar system.”*<sup>27</sup> leaders and policymakers should be rather more vigilant when using the term as a reference.

The origin of the word however comes from the American writer and New Left activist Carl Ogelsby with the terms grand debut in the following phrase *“the North’s dominance over the Global South . . . [has] converged . . . to produce an intolerable social order.”*<sup>28</sup> This first occurrence dates back to 1969 when Ogelsby was redacting the Catholic journal *Commonweal* throughout the Vietnam war. This came about at a rather convenient time especially for Western analysts who were firm believers in the idea that the world was divided into three worlds, a concept firstly depicted by Alfred Sauvy in 1952. The breaking apart constituted of the following categories; “First World” comprised of the United States and its Western Allies then the “Second World” which included the USSR and its Eastern

bloc satellite states and finally the “Third World” which covered the “developing” and nonaligned nations, since most of them had only recently obtained their emancipation from their colonizers.

Following the previous explanation as well as the given context it is fair to assert that the concept of the “Global South” is meant to be a synonym for the “Third World” and this is exactly what started happening by the 1970’s with the call for a New International Economic Order.<sup>29</sup> Yet it would only go on to fully gain its prominence in 1980 with the Brandt report, a landmark document written by the international commission of West German chancellor Willy Brandt. His main point was to distinguish between countries with more prominent GDP’s which conveniently found themselves to be located in the Northern Hemisphere and compare them with poorer ones that often tended to be positioned in the Southern Hemisphere. Consequentially, this created the infamous “Brandt Line” whose sole purpose is to be a “ *imaginary boundary running from the Rio Grande into the Gulf of Mexico, across the Atlantic Ocean, through the Mediterranean Sea, and over the vast expanses of Central Asia to the Pacific Ocean* ”<sup>30</sup> however the map did in a way fail to prove the theory as from a geographical point of view some of the “southern” labeled nations actually lie entirely in the northern hemisphere such as India for that matter, while on the other hand Australia and New Zealand whom are considered to be “northern” even though it physically lies below the equator, which truly displays the flaws of the boundary by contesting what it is trying to prove. The label “Third World” would go on to eventually lose its popularity as an outcome of the end of the Cold War due to the collapse of the “Second World” as well as for the fact that the term was starting to sound degrading as it was basically used to connote a group of poor, unstable and backward countries while the term “Global South” had a more neutral appeal while still remaining a label. The “Global South” became to be the categorizing and

overall header for the Group of 77 which are a group of postcolonial as well as developing states that formed a union in 1964 to fight for collective economic interest and “boost their negotiating capacity at the UN”<sup>31</sup>. Today the G77 constitutes of 134 countries which often choose to refer to themselves as the Global South for which the UN has created and launched numerous initiatives and bodies to fulfill their needs and ambitions, for example the creation of a UN Office for South-South Cooperation.<sup>32</sup>

The true enquiry nowadays is whether the labeling of the Global South is still appropriate and to a certain extent even relevant. Its biggest setback is its abstract disjointedness as it puts in one basket a group of 130 heterogeneous countries which make up for two thirds of the planet’s inhabitants and expand over the African, Asian, Oceanian, South American continent without forgetting its inclusion of the Middle East and Caribbean’s as well. It represents 85% of the world’s population and as much as 39% of the global GDP. (Nicolas Véron, 2023) Some of the members on the list easily range from Barbados to Bhutan, Malawi to Malaysia, Pakistan to Peru, and Senegal to Syria to list a few. It also includes some key developing powers who are also applicants to the UN Security Council in order to obtain seats. The following countries are part of that list: Brazil, India, Nigeria to mention the bigger ones and Benin, Fiji, and Oman for the smaller ones.<sup>34</sup> Despite some of the Global South regions sharing some common features and interests, when looking at the political, economic and cultural spheres it is much more complicated to comply them under one general label. Especially when this often leads people to go on and further accentuate the generating of stereotypes and outdated dichotomies. In addition to delimiting the pros and cons of the term we can observe that the label fails to differentiate the growth of certain of its members in the recent decades especially in the context of their economies. It is important to remember that one of the main criterions to fall under the label “Global South” is not only the geographical

placement of the country but also its GDP per capita which is estimated by the World Bank. Since 2021 countries that have shown to have a GDP per capita of above US\$15,000 are officially considered part of the “Global North”.<sup>35</sup> Having that definition in mind Russia and Ukraine technically are part of the Global South just as India and China. Yet to come back to the geographical aspect of it countries like Chile and Uruguay lay in the Southern hemisphere but are classified as part of the “Global North” as per their GDP per capita. Countries such as Malaysia have seen themselves growing in terms of per capita income with \$28,150 (PPP) where in contrast you have countries like Zambia who’s per capita income is \$3,250 (PPP).<sup>37</sup> When looking at the previous example it is clear that there is no economic logic whatsoever in grouping nations like Malaysia who’s been enjoying an economic breakthrough these last few years to a country like Zambia who’s been stagnating. Similar story applies when you take a look at Costa Rica who’s been a forefront of environmental preservation and transitioning to cleaner energy yet it belongs in the same category as Nigeria who’s been an ever growing petrostate.

The political sphere is also rather strongly impacted by this overgeneralization. You see countries with very different political regimes and quality of governance all be put in on basket and being referred to as one. Yet when you look into it you very rapidly notice that according to the latest yearly Freedom in the World survey, realized by the NGO Freedom House with the statistics of the survey basing themselves on the criteria of “people’s access to political rights and civil liberties,”. The “Global South” not shockingly goes on to range from the lowest score represented by the number 1 which equates to (“not free”) for countries like South Sudan and Syria to then peaking at a strong 96 meaning (“free”) with Uruguay.<sup>37</sup> When seeing such disparity we can truly see the extent to which overgeneralization and



categorization are responsible for the failure to advocate for an accurate representation of their members.

Lastly I believe it to be worth mentioning that the categorization of Global South is rather unsuccessful at providing insights as to their members stands on the war in Ukraine. This was further emphasized with the UN General Assembly vote in February 2022 following the beginning of the war. The vote was responsible for deciding on a resolution for demanding Russia's withdrawal from Ukraine. The Global South saw itself divided with 60 percent alienating themselves with Ukraine and 30% abstaining.<sup>38</sup>

While a label or a term isn't static and if anything they are prone to evolve through the years they are still responsible for changing veracities, perceptions and emotional responses towards a certain subject. When looking for the main distinctions between Global South and global north or in other words developed or developing countries, the answer tends to be based on what we can call a teleological standard, the explanation of a phenomena in the context of their purpose and not the cause from which they ascend. Which in the context of the "Global South" is how similar they tend to be to a Western model. Due to such explanations in 2015 the World Bank decided to cancel out the term "developing world" as they believe that their sustainability development goals were created to stir global efforts at bettering the human condition by 2030, a goal that applies to all nations disregarding the status of their income.

Having taken all of this into account it is fair to say that the term "Global South" seems to be sticking around for now. Yet I believe if it is to do so then it is in the hands of analysts as well as policymakers to use it wisely in order to avoid discrimination as well as overgeneralization. As the last time we saw powers do as such it didn't lead to gratifying results, especially when taking for example the USA during the Cold War and their tendency

to treat the “Third World” as “an undifferentiated terrain for zero-sum superpower competition, rather than to engage individual nations on their own terms, as actors in their own right possessing distinctive identities, interests, and motivations.” claims Stewart Patrick a senior and director of the Global Order and Institutions Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.<sup>39</sup> With the global stability currently at a brisk degradation it is important to avoid replicating past mistakes by not presenting the “Global South” as a single entity but more so by emphasizing finding unique strategies of engagement for the different countries, in particular with the pivotal states: Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, as well as Turkey. Finally if we are to group certain countries together then let it be in categories that actually bind these lower income countries that actually identify with the “Global South” and leave them room to claim their membership in the groupings they want whether it be instrumental, situational, or rhetorical. While the individuals that adhere to the term see it as a form of equitable and inclusive economy as well as a multipolar international system these two categories don’t tend to cancel each other out. Yet for the ones at the top this labeling is more qualificative of sustained development and economic growth that could potentially benefit their own nations then emphasizing geopolitical world order. A nation in particular that has been prone to doing so in the past few years is Russia, who’s relations with the “Global South” we shall investigate in the following section.

### **3.2 Global South and their relations with the RF**

Russia’s southern relations can be divided into three eras. Two of these era’s we will explore within this chapter while the third will be part of the FP change analysis in chapter three. The three eras are 1992-2012, 2012-2022 and February 2022- present. The reason I believe these are three crucial time frames is because they are also the ones that provide the

best foundations for understanding the relations with the Global South. In these three time periods Russia and its government underwent a lot of change in terms of policies but also regimes style. The first era being the post USSR one with the constant game of musical chairs between president and prime minister as mentioned previously in the democratic Foreign Policy section, secondly the following era is as crucial as it is the comeback of Putin to power and his decision to take a stance and shift his orientations of alliance from West to East. These two periods provide us with a lot of defining factors as to fully understand on what stands the importance of Russia's relations with the "Global South", how they came to be that way and further on in the text how they have evolved in the context of the current war. When looking at the relations between the regions it is crucial to highlight Moscow's proximity with both Africa and the Middle East (Iran in particular) as they are key actors when talking about the past but also the present, as we move closer in time we will start mentioning actors like China, Turkey and Saudi Arabia more, especially in the Ukrainian war era.

In the 20 years that followed the fall of the Soviet Union Moscow's international relationships mostly revolved around the positioning of the United States as well as Europe. The Western values in the 1990's were becoming a major influence to global power therefore leaving Russia with not much room to be sidetracked. Despite already having some influence in Global South regions such as Africa, Russia, used that leverage only to please Western countries. An example of that I believe is when in 2001 Putin permitted the US to establish a military base in both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan following the attacks of 9/11 and their "war on terror".<sup>40</sup> They also further went on to take part in numerous peacekeeping missions organized by the West as well as provided the US with advice about Afghanistan. Of course when mentioning such favors it is not to imply that Russia was always helpful to the West,

as in the long run it was more an obstacle than an ally. Such as Moscow's opposition to the Western approach of the conflict in Kosovo, "which was based on human rights and the responsibility to protect principle, and refused to recognize Kosovo's independence, remaining loyal to its state-centric approach to international law."<sup>41</sup> Putin interpreted Europe's support of Kosovo's independence as a symbol of them trying to please the Americans and further entertaining them in their fantasies of a "unipolar order" as he clearly mentions in his Munich speech in 2007. In fact before Putin's speech, Yevgeny Primakov had advocated for a "multipolar world order" in the mid-1990s in order to counter the US hegemony and motivate other major European countries to fight this unilateral power and change courses. This advocacy against the West fully established itself within the Russian FP when Putin came back to power in 2012. He no longer gave speeches to western audiences and made sure to label Russia as a non-Western country in terms of politics more than culture. This phase having commenced the Kremlin made the decision that "Russia would not achieve a satisfactory position in the Western-centric international system".<sup>42</sup> This brutal shift of sides raised concerns within political experts who saw the rule of Medvedev from 2008-2012 as an experiment to see to what extent could Russia expand their relations with the West. This would therefore mark the beginning of Russian international relations becoming ends to themselves.

As Putin claimed in 2014 "Our goal is to have as many equal partners as possible, both in the West and in the East. We will expand our presence in those regions where integration is on the rise, where politics is not mixed with economy, and where obstacles to trade, to exchange of technology and investment and to the free movement of people are lifted."<sup>43</sup> A good representation of this evolution is Russia's actions in Syria. Their involvement in September 2015 originally began as a part of a conversation between the west and Moscow.

On the eve of Russia's intervention in Syria, in a speech addressed to the UN Putin claimed "We think it is an enormous mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian Government and its Armed Forces, who are valiantly fighting terrorism face-to-face."<sup>44</sup> Yet things took an unexpected turn as the rebellion didn't go as smoothly as had been anticipated which in a way actually ended up working in Russia's favor as given its presence in the region it got to deal with a lot of the surrounding actors. This therefore meant a comeback in the Middle East for Moscow as a "power broker" as well as being one of the only outside powers that was on actual talking terms with the regional actors ranging from Israel and Iran to the Kurds and the Turks.<sup>45</sup> In addition to all this they came around to find out that being present in the region and being on talking terms could also lead to certain financial bonuses especially in the eyes of Saudi Arabia who saw Moscow as a relevant power, but also a relevant oil partner. Seeing the success in defying the West and going off in Syria by themselves Moscow decided to hit it off in Africa. Using a similar method Russia would soon sly their way within the continent through offering regime support to careworn leaders of state such as in the Central African Republic in 2017 or even Mali in 2020 by doing so they set themselves up for what they hoped would be future capitalization of the relationship. Yet there is one major difference that lays between Russia's operations in Syria and the ones in Mali and the CAF that being the actors operating the missions. While in Syria it was direct state involvement overseen by the Russian ministry of defense and foreign affairs, the missions in Mali and the CAF were entirely ran by PMCs aka the rather infamous Wagner Group and a steering of special services. Through such laid back involvement by the hiring of PMC's it offered

Moscow a lot of flexibility and by that is meant the possibility to deny any presence in the region should things go south or enjoy the benefits should things go right.

Early 2022 looked rather promising for Russia it had just survived its first decade as a “non-Western power” and was slowly but surely finding its place in an international stage where it no longer was seen as a superpower. They had all assets on their side with both US and China being on talking terms with them, yet not wanting them to side with either of the two. Russia was at last building itself rather a lot of leverage in multiple corners of the globe as well as their military having gotten to an effective level to meet political ends. Yet this would all get wrecked by Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine. By doing so not only would he compromise himself to the western eye and all the exceptions that were ready to be made (Biden’s willingness to back away from the post-cold war US policy, as well as Ukraine’s NATO membership)<sup>46</sup> but also now he would have to rely more heavily on China for diplomatic contacts, investments and technology. Further on with most of his men and armies mobilized on the Ukrainian front flexing Russia’s military muscles was becoming more and more of a challenge, especially in Africa after the Prigozhin “incident”.

Ever since Russia’s relations with the rest of the world has become armament sourced in order to feed its troops in Ukraine. It has therefore made Russia a what can be labeled as “one issue country”<sup>47</sup> limiting its scope of handling issues and conflicts elsewhere. In such context it is primordial that Moscow assesses carefully its Foreign Policy agenda as to whether it can hinder or help its actions in Ukraine. Moscow has been rather desperate for international military aid, political support and trade as well as finding countless ways to

evade sanctions. Yet it wasn't always that way there used to be an era where Russia was the deal maker and not the deal taker, for this however we have to dive back to the past.

### **3.3 Moscow and Teheran in the Middle Eastern Framework**

When going through the era's one crucial factor is Moscow's relations with Teheran. Their relationship has always been based on an array of factors that range from economic interests, to the nuclear file, regional tensions within the caucuses as well as the Middle East. Until 2012 the main factor that defined the interaction between the two countries was mostly how the western nations had influenced Russia to treat Iran in a similar matter as the US did, through complying to sanctions. In short Teheran went one way the US and Russia went the other, while Russia was using its links with Teheran to deepen its relation with the White House. In 1995 in an agreement between American vice president, Al Gore and Russian PM Viktor Chernomyrdin, Russia would end its military export to Iran by the year 1999 and wouldn't sign any new deals causing Teheran to be rather bitter about the whole thing. <sup>48</sup> After the US-Russian relationship soured in the final years of President George W. Bush's administration, there was another surge in Russian-Iranian cooperation, which came to an abrupt end in 2010 when President Dmitry Medvedev, swayed by Obama's reset policy, backed by the UN Security Council Resolution of 1929, had opened the door for severe international sanctions against Iran. Furthermore, Russia unilaterally stopped selling Iran S-300 surface-to-air missiles. <sup>49</sup> However Putin's return as Russian president in 2012 would terminate the previous decisions made. He would go on to prioritize forming relations with the non-western world including of course the change of Russia's stance towards Iran, referring to them as an "old traditional partner"<sup>50</sup>. This rapprochement with the middle eastern countries, as well as diplomatic changes following Putin's return as president was mostly due to the Kremlin's confrontation with both the US and EU. He went on to do so

through his declaration to the Russian Federal Assembly on December 4<sup>th</sup> 2014 where he announced that Russia would be shifting their key diplomatic interests which had been the west from 1991-2012 to non-European and middle eastern countries, this was further on highlighted by his Foreign Minister in February 2015 with his mention of “the turn to Asia”<sup>51</sup>. The creation of such active Foreign Policy towards the nonwestern countries was aimed to create a leverage to impact the behavior of both the EU and the US towards Russia’s economy, security and international relations. These relations and concerns would fully reveal themselves and intensify between 2012-2017 with Russia’s implication and behavior in both Syria and Ukraine. The current relationship between the two however tends to differ from anything seen in the past, as this time the scale of the moral conflict between Russia and the West is much higher than it ever was since the fall of the USSR. This tense setting has compelled Moscow to change its priorities regarding the region and reassess their position as a “global chessboard”<sup>52</sup> Previously defined by their relations with the West. While the new updated approach doesn’t fully cancel out the past concepts, Iran and the Middle East indeed underwent quite a transformation from no longer simply being pawns in a Russian strategy game but potentially becoming direct and bilateral providers of certain resources and services for the Russian state.

Yet when looking at the general picture I believe there is another crucial factor to highlight when it comes down to the Russian Foreign Policy towards the Middle East and that is the leader of the state and his personality. When looking at past leader’s such as Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999) or even Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012), they both were of opinion that the Middle East was only of secondary importance for the Kremlin. While when looking at Putin’s perspective of it he believes that “Russia, as a country lying between Europe and Asia, should diversify its political and economic diplomacy that—in their view—had been



excessively concentrated on the West since 1991.<sup>53</sup> This difference in approaches was demonstrated with the Libyan crisis in 2011 when Putin claimed that both the US and EU were the “new crusaders”<sup>54</sup> while on the other hand Medvedev went on to express his fulfillment regarding the capture of Qaddafi. Therefore it came as no surprise when Putin welcomed the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, not even two months after his return to the Kremlin, further emphasizing that it is his priority to restore the relations with the region that Medvedev had compromised during his time of presidency. This rather aggressive and authoritarian behavior that Putin showcases in 2012 does rather contrast with the one he had during his first term from 2000-2004. As this time around he reflected a much stronger opposition to the west and their allies and was determined to expand his influence in a region that could potentially help him create an opposing hegemony to the West.

Following all these events Putin went on to overturn the cancellation of weapon trade with Iran that had been set up by Medvedev, and in 2016 would be sending upgraded models of the S-300 missile as the older version was no longer being manufactured. It is also Putin’s involvement in Syria in 2015 that would go on to truly intensify their cooperation, with Iran giving the Kremlin permission to use their Shahid Nojeh Air base to conduct attacks on Syria as highlighted by the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani in a Tasnim News article<sup>55</sup>. While both parties interest’s in the region didn’t overlap it doesn’t mean their relationship didn’t remain strong, which in contrast to the past was something Iran was rather surprised about as Russia wasn’t always the most loyal ally.<sup>56</sup> Since the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February the relationship between the two countries but also Russia’s role

and its Foreign Policy towards the region has once again evolved to new standards which we will explore in the following chapter.

### **3.4 Russia and Africa**

While it may seem that the Russian footprint and influence in Africa is a rather new concept, when taking a deeper look at the history of the empire and the continent, you stumble upon a much older relationship than expected. What can be labeled as the first political communication between Russia and African countries dates back to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when what was at the time still the Russian Empire, hunted for support from the rulers of states such as Morocco (1897), Ethiopia (1898) and Tunisia (1869) in order to oppose the Ottoman empire. It seems that it is rather Russia's "thing" to form coalitions with countries that aren't part of the big "enemy" alliances. Yet in 1917 the relations between Russia and the African continent plateaued due to the October revolution taking place within the Bolshevik empire, this would last until 1943 when the USSR put in place official diplomatic relations with Egypt and Ethiopia. These relations with the continent further intensified following the end of the second world war when the era of colonial powers (France, UK, Portugal and Belgium) was diminishing and African nations demanded independence and self-determination.<sup>57</sup> Fast forward to the beginning and during the Cold War, a time during which the Soviet union was supporting its African allies such as Egypt with the Suez Crisis in 1956-1957, but also providing "military-technical, financial and diplomatic assistance to national liberation organizations and movements fighting against colonialism and racial discrimination regimes in Southern Rhodesia (renamed as Zimbabwe in 1980) and South Africa."<sup>58</sup> one key aspect of this Soviet-African relation was economic and technical assistance such as procurement of loans and staff training in thirty seven nations within the continent. Some of those projects were to mention a few; "the Aswan High Dam

and the Helwan Iron and Steel Factory in Egypt; the Capanda Hydroelectric Power Plant in Angola; a bauxite mining operation in Guinea's Kindia Region; the El Hadjar Steel Plant in Algeria; a mining and beneficiation plant in the Mfouati District of the Republic of Congo; the Diamou cement plant and the Kalana gold mine in Mali; the Assab oil refinery in Ethiopia; and the Ajaokuta Steel Mill in Nigeria.”<sup>59</sup> Further on when taking a glance at the military cooperation, the Soviet Union provided African nations that were prone to socialism, with numerous loans to invest in the purchasing of weapons as well as sending off some military specialist to the countries in question. This is showcased by the Soviet Union's supply of weapons to Egypt during its clash with Israel from 1967-1973, as well as the 1975-1991 armament aid to the Angolan and Mozambican armed forces against their fight of anti-communist groups that were heavily influenced by the discriminatory regimes of Southern Rhodesian and South Africa. According to TASS (the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) established in 1904 under the name SPTA (St. Petersburg Telegraph Agency), the Soviet Union was responsible for 40% of weapons being exported to Africa during that time frame, in addition to Soviet tanks making up 70% of all tank quotas in the various African nation's armed forces, while on the other hand Soviet aircraft and helicopters constituted of only 40% and 35% of the total, respectively.<sup>60</sup>

As mentioned Moscow did provide a rather lavish economic and defense assistance to those regimes it deemed to have potential which as mentioned earlier often included Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Mali. Not to mention all the Marxist groups in the other countries that unlike Angola and the others were deemed to have less “Russia-friendly regimes”<sup>61</sup>, which calls out South Africa and Rhodesia for the most part. Yet I believe that one part that is worth mentioning about this rather symbiotic relationship is how Russia also decided to play university host during that time period. By 1990, 30,000<sup>62</sup> African students

were present and studying in Soviet Universities which at the time amounted for as much as a quarter of their foreign students. Despite the contrast of lifestyle that was being promoted by the red giant, that led to some student uprisings at times. It nonetheless did harvest numerous soviet educated and Russian speaking individual within the technocratic, technical and political spheres of African elites. To an extent where in an interview that took place in 2001 the at the time rector of Moscow's Peoples' Friendship University, Patrice Lumumba, bragged about more than a few high-profile alumni, "the president of Guyana, the Cuban ambassador in Ukraine, the health minister of Nicaragua, the national university rector in Equatorial Guinea, the foreign minister of the Ivory Coast"<sup>63</sup> This diaspora of African students had a high potential to become a resource of soft power yet it proved itself unattainable at the time due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the newly born "free Russia" still kept its extensive network of embassies as well as trade agreements with countries such as; "Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, and South Africa, it did not dedicate much effort to new political ideas or initiatives."<sup>64</sup> Despite frequent visits to the continent in the mid 2000's by Medvedev in countries such as Angola, Nigeria, and Egypt to mention a few, the significant comeback of Russia in Africa begun in 2012 and took a significant approach following the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Trade and official ministerial visits became more frequent as Russia was enduring a lot of tensions with the West. This therefore led to the trade revenue between the continent and Russia to almost double from \$9.9billion (2013) to \$17.7 billion in 2021.<sup>65</sup> This nonetheless, does not compare to the trading magnitude Africa has with the EU or China but it is still consequent enough for Russia to make a reputation for itself. As well as indirectly inducing a kind of trigger that led to a slight sentiment of competition with the West, especially with their providing of security assistance through PMCs in Mali and the Central African Republic. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies seven varying types of

Russian PMCs have conducted an approximate of 34 operations in 16 African states since 2005.<sup>66</sup>

Through the opting for the stick and carrot method in these states it has made it hard for western military deployments to keep up their influence and some have had to pull out their troops such as France in Mali. In this context it only makes further sense for Russia to have also grown from 2012-2022 as Africa's major arms exporter something already seen during the years of the USSR. Here is a chart representing the increase of arms imports from Russia to Africa in comparison to other countries.<sup>67</sup>

**Table 1: Percentage of African Arms Imports (2018-2022)**

Country	% of weapons exported to Africa
Russia	40%
US	16%
China	9.8%
France	7.6%

Source: (Mathieu Droin and Tina Dolbaia; Russia Is Still Progressing in Africa. What's the Limit, August 2023)

Another advantage that Russia faces through its presence on the African continent, is the nature of their relations having no strings attached especially concerning topics such as human rights and political standards, a big contrast to the European oriented relations. The weapons they have been providing while being neither the most advanced nor sophisticated

they have proven to be very reliable and cheap to the extent that since the USSR Mozambique has had a Russian Kalashnikov depicted on its flag. Furthermore Russia unlike its European counterparts has no precedent reputation labeling it as neither a former colonizer nor as a future challenge or debt collector when mentioning China. Moscow even went on to advertise itself as both a pragmatic and practical ally to the continent through their emphasis of hosting the first summit between the two in the autumn of 2019 in the city of Sochi which welcomed 43 African heads of state.<sup>68</sup> Finally within the past decade Russia has resumed its once so popular, in the USSR, student exchange program which has depicted ever growing numbers that surpass those of the previous regime with 35,000 African students being enrolled in Russian establishments in the country itself. This wouldn't have been possible if the nation hadn't used its previous successes and graduates from the Soviet era to further on promote the various programs. An example would be the Malian's Prime minister, Choguel Kokalla Maïga's, statement regarding his past years of education in the USSR "I lived in the Soviet Union for 11 years. I am a Muscovite,"<sup>70</sup>

Taking into account Russia's rather transactional attitude towards Africa it could be taken as a winning ticket especially when it is compared to the western approach of the continent which relies much more heavily on political conditionalities and policies. However the rather ironic bit is that since 2022 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Moscow has altered its approach towards African nations by retorting back to a propaganda heavy policy. A choice I believe to be solemnly based on Putin's current race against the West in order to pacify the "global majority" which in his eyes Africa is the perfect battlefield for that fight. In the following chapter I will go on to analyze given the background provided in this chapter, how

Russia has evolved its Foreign Policy towards these different regions and their territories in the context of the full scale invasion of Ukraine.

#### **4. The Changes in the Russian Foreign Policy Towards the Global South Post-Invasion**

In the previous chapters we have explored the depths of both the evolution of the Russian Foreign Policy throughout the various eras of its regime as well as its ties with the so called “Global South”. I talked about the meaning of the term itself as well as the controversies behind it, and further went on to elucidate how the nations that are categorized by the term have been in collaboration with Russia through the decades. Having laid out a rather detailed background regarding the two important factors of this thesis it is now time to move on to the analysis of these factors intertwining, in a context of war. In this chapter I would like to analyze and take into account what was mentioned earlier and put it on trial in the context of the two-year old war in Ukraine. Despite this not being the first conflict between Russia and Ukraine it is the first of this scale. This war on European soil has caused global distress and has led to further complications on the international stage. In order to adjust to this different geopolitical environment I believe Russia had to modify in various ways its Foreign Policy in order to favorize cooperation with the Global South in more than one way. I believe that in order to do so we have to take into account the following factors as each of them has seen some type of modification ever since the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022; Increased Isolation, Economic partnerships, Diplomatic outreach, Security cooperation, Political alliances, Energy deals and Soft power. As mentioned earlier I will be taking into account the past context of these variables and will be assessing the newer models of it in relation to my hypothesis. Even if some of them seem to be of a similar status as of what they were before

I still stand by the fact that the approach itself and the methods of applications differ. Therefore without further due let's explore our first variable, Increased Isolation.

#### **4.1 Increased Isolation**

When talking about increased isolation I believe that they are two important factors to take into account when applying it to Russia, economic and political isolation. Ever since the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 Russia became the most heavily sanctioned country in the world, and struggled with a rather complete political and economic isolation as 40% of the ruble's value dropped, western companies decided to leave the country and half of the central bank's reserves ended up being frozen in response to the sanctions. Yet despite having initiated an international crisis with no particular justification for it except for a so called "denazification" of Ukraine. This should have made Russia a highly untrustworthy partner, yet two years later it seems that the Russian federation is in fact far from being completely isolated especially on the international stage. Despite having lost all the support of the West and being the number one enemy, the federation was able to weave itself another web one that has been growing in influence through increased collaborations with China but also the "Global South" particularly; India, the United Arab Emirates and Brazil, as well as neighboring states such as Turkey, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.<sup>71</sup> These have seen to be key allies for Russia as they facilitate trade between the country and the rest of the world. Furthermore international organizations such as BRICS have played a role in promoting their union with Moscow and made it their goal to attract new members in order to help Russia find new ways of evading the accumulating sanctions from the EU and the US.<sup>72</sup> When looking at the economic standpoint of this isolation we can realize that sanctions are nothing more than government measures whose purpose are to restrain investment and trade across a country. This rather protectionist approach whose long term purpose is often



to boost, protect and strengthen domestic industry, in this case has seen itself to be arbitrage which in the end actually is counterproductive to the sanctions. As with arbitrage as long as they are numerous isolated markets whose price levels vary depending on the goods then the profits made from technically “crossing the border”<sup>73</sup> increase. In other words this means that the more you isolate a country or a market the larger the profits will be if you end up collaborating with that country. Therefore in the case of Russia the more the West will sanction them and restrict their trading rights, the more the benefits will increase for those who alienate themselves to the role of intermediaries in order to access the Russian market. An example of this logic in action is India and China’s role as a Russian commodity importer, due to the western sanctions, impacting Russia to sell goods at a discounted price. Turkey and the UAE as well as nations of the EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) have immensely benefited<sup>74</sup> from these new trade flows from Russia to the west by passing through their territories. For Chinese automakers it was the jackpot reached to see western firms leave Russia as well as their sanctioning, as they have now been able to acquire the market they sought for years, making the Russian federation their biggest importer of Chinese cars in the world<sup>75</sup>. Despite the forever threat of new sanctions being there which could lead some companies to rethink their involvement with the federation some other factors can create better economic opportunities. This “shadow integration”<sup>76</sup> of Russia in the global market doesn’t mean it will make its economy more efficient or superior than before the war started. It simply means that the cost of both Russian imports will retail for more and their exports for cheaper. With this functioning new model it enables the wealthier percentage of Russians to still have access to luxury goods, run their factories and finally the ability to obtain the parts they require to assemble complex military weapons that are later on shipped off to the front. In essence, the complete economic isolation of Russia is improbable as long as it remains an appealing economic partner with substantial domestic market and resources

which is exactly what it has been doing so far. Comparatively, previous sanctions against North Korea or Iran were more effective because they had less to offer economically and bounce back on. However there tends to be limits to severe secondary sanctions as those could be imposed on the Russian intermediary states by the West. However that would only push forward alternative payment systems and trade routes which are completely outside the western control. The biggest threat to this economic system is in fact the government itself. As with Putin's rather mood oriented decision making, that could be the one thing that could shatter it all. Yet for now he seems to be deeply reliant on this system as is his Foreign Policy therefore it could have a stronger future then predicted. Consequently when looking at this from afar it is fair so say in my opinion, that the West has failed to isolate Russia economically as well as politically. Despite isolation not being the only goal of these sanctions, but demonstrating to other global dictators that certain attitudes regarding their Foreign Policy will not be tolerated and will end up being costly being. If anything this failure on both the EU and US behalf teaches an undesired lesson to the autocrats of the world which is that one can navigate no matter how suppressive Western sanctions can be, and that shows the limits of western economic powers which could take the future on a rather volatile path.

Having talked in depth about the economic isolation I believe it is only fair to mention the second factor which is political isolation. Despite the two being intertwined it is fair to mention it on its own as well. Ever since the beginning of the war communication between Moscow and the West has made itself rare, mostly due to their lack of trust towards Putin and his government. To the point where future engagements and negotiations have become rather unthinkable of, for politicians no matter who ends up being at the head of it if Putin was to fall. The unpredictable nature of Russia makes it so that NATO fears more and more

everyday an attack from Moscow directed at them (we cannot exclude any possibilities, as no one never thought he would launch the attack on Ukraine and he did).<sup>76</sup> Yet the ones who have decided not to go through with this approach are the “Global South”, which strangely enough the main reason behind this is their diverse perception of war. While for Europeans it is inconceivable to have such a high scaled conflict on the continent since 1945 (excluding the Yugoslav and Southern Caucasus wars) for the states of the Global South it isn’t. As for a lot of Asian, Latin American and African states full scale invasions and border tensions are a frequent problem. As confirms Kazakh president Kassym Jomart Tokayev “For the Global South, Russia’s unprovoked aggression does not necessarily mean that Russia cannot be dealt with at all.”<sup>77</sup> Yet the true question is to what extent is Russia willing to go in terms of interests and capacities in various world regions. While when the war began Russia was much more oriented in maintaining its relations with the “Global South” now it has found itself and its Foreign Policy monopolized by the war. Therefore making Moscow’s attention span rather short. Meanwhile, the Global South has opted for a strategic “political arbitrage”<sup>78</sup> positioning themselves, as mentioned earlier in the economic section, as intermediaries between the West and Russia including being a buffer for the competition going on between the two sides. This is especially showcased by Russia’s direct neighbors as it is the only viable solution in order to keep the stakes of risk low and have a mutually beneficial relationship without picking sides. This has also taught the leaders of those countries to maneuver the situation in a skilled manner, which a perfect example of that would be Kazakhstan on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September of 2023 with his game of reassurance<sup>79</sup> towards the German chancellor about implementing sanctions against Moscow while at the same time declaring<sup>80</sup> that Kazakhstan will be developing its trade relations with Russia. As

for the countries that are further of reach the technique of political arbitrage may be extensive.<sup>81</sup>

Finally when it comes to the perception of the West by the Global South they do lack a certain amount of credibility, due to having a track record far from exemplary in particular on the grounds of exploitation for dominance or starting wars for blurred reasons. Such as the “colonial past in Africa the CIA backing for Operation Condor in Latin America in 1975-83; the US invasion to Iraq in 2003; and Germany’s justification of bombing Yugoslavia in 1999 because of the so-called Operation Horseshoe plan of the Belgrade regime which most likely wasn’t even real.”<sup>82</sup> Given this context it makes it plausible for Russia to gain grounds and support from those regions as well as delegitimizes the west and their diplomats to a certain extent. When it comes down to the potential downfall of this system, or the factor that could limit its attractiveness to the Global South, similarly to the economic one, the biggest risk is Putin himself. Only he can damage the image and reputation of Russia in the eyes of his fellow foreign followers and intermediaries, something we will explore further in the following variables of Putin’s change of Foreign Policy.

## **4.2 Economic Partnerships**

In the Past two years the Kremlin has gotten the reputation of being quite the record breaker but not in a positive manner. With more than 13,000<sup>83</sup> restrictions on its back it has become the most sanctioned country in the world that is all sanctions applied to Iran, Cuba and north Korea combined. While the Russian GDP saw a gradual fall in 2022 by 2.1 percent <sup>84</sup> the IMF had predicted it would rise again by 2023 and that was correct. While this has led Moscow to claim that they were left indifferent to western sanctions they did have to change their modus operandi of their economic sphere yet once again not in the best way. While before the war the Russian system relied on state capitalism, following the invasion its

economic policy had to shift away from its reliance on “technological development, diversifying exports away from the country’s dependence on fossil fuels, and the relatively free movement of capital.”<sup>85</sup> (These factors have now been replaced by “capital controls, the labeling of countries as either friendly or hostile, the yuanization of payments, and the militarization of budget spending.”<sup>86</sup> While in a way the sanctions have strengthened the Russian fortress in the short term by preventing it from global market ups and downs as mentioned in the previous subchapter about isolation it has also weakened the nation in its medium and long term run. The West having frozen most of Russia’s assets the economy was bracing itself for a rather crucial collapse however the rapid reaction of the government helped cushion the blow. It did so by restricting the flow of capital and augmenting the interest rate by 20 percent<sup>87</sup>, which resulted in a stemming of capital from the banking system which had bled out around 2 trillion rubles (\$30 billion)<sup>88</sup> in the two weeks following the beginning of the war. This showed to be really efficient as by the end of April the interest rates on the short term deposits had had grown to the point that Russia had almost retorted back to its 90 percent<sup>89</sup> of funds that had previously been withdrawn. Through this accomplishment the Russian economy managed to stay afloat however the inability to move capital remained an issue.

Once the Russian economy found its roots in this newly designed and required economic policy, it is easy to observe that it is then the Foreign Policy and the economic partnerships that entered the stage of musical chairs. As mentioned earlier one of the new key approaches of the Russian economy is “*the labeling of countries as either friendly or hostile*”<sup>90</sup> having now taken care of the core money flow problems it was time to move on to picking sides, forming coalitions and signing new deals. While the kremlin went on to label rather a lot of countries as having committed some type of hostility towards the nation they were no clear

explanation as to what exactly were the boxes to be checked to fall under that category. As very well phrased in an article by Alexandra Prokopenko a fellow at Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center *“this designation, rather than pragmatic economic interests, now appears to be the main criterion upon which trade relations and foreign economic policy are based”*<sup>91</sup>. This therefore lead to the coalitions we currently have which includes Moscow strengthening its ties with countries such as ; Iran, Turkey, the UAE, Myanmar, as well as certain African nations. The Kremlin even went as far as to join a consortium created by the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>92</sup> These newly established geopolitical alliances will determine the future trade policy that Russia wishes to adopt, meanwhile Moscow has demonstrated a very obvious economic dependence on its key ally, Beijing. Despite a 50 percent<sup>93</sup> collapse of imports for Russia following the war in Ukraine the nation has actually managed to return to their 2019 import rates something once thought impossible. However if Russia was able to reach that goal it isn't without the help of their fellow partner China. As while Chinese exports with the rest of the world grew by 29 percent since 2021 Chinese exports themselves with Russia

have grown intensively, further making Beijing a key supplier of both consumer and industrial goods.

**Table 2: Percentage Change in Exports to Russia (2021-2023)**

Country/Region	Change in Exports
China	+121%
Western Exports	-63%
G7	-28%

Sources: (Niels Grham Chinese exports have replaced the EU as the lifeline of Russia's economy February 2024)

This has shown to be crucial in order to keep the Russian economy afloat as it continues to fight the war in the face of G7 sanctions. As while western exports with Russia have collapsed compared to pre-COVID times, as well as an additional loss on the G7's 2019 average at the end of 2023. Yet Moscow has managed to replace these long standing relations with the countries of the G7, as well as the EU. Just like that it made it so that China now exports more the Russia than the entire European Union ever did before COVID.<sup>94</sup> Despite all these restrictions the broader G7 coalition still sends a rough amount of \$3.2 billion in goods to Russia every month meaning some animal based products and pharmaceuticals are still being traded between Russia and the G7 countries in order to prevent further impacts on populations. Yet the most crucial variable about the new economic alignments Russia has been making since the war in connection to its Foreign Policy, is Putin's statement of being ready to switch to the yuan in terms of trading currency. That is, not just with China but also

with the other countries in order to further encourage a de-dollarization of the Russian economy but also a “yuanization” of the global market.<sup>95</sup>

The reason I choose to really emphasize the increased economic collaboration with China in this section, and not so much the other “Global South” regions such as; the UAE or even Iran. Is that despite these economic cooperative ties being very crucial, I believe it doesn’t come anyway near the global influence and impact China has compared to these other nations. As while yes Iran has been crucial in providing Russia with weapons I believe that they are more fitting to be mentioned when overseeing the military factor, and energy deals when it comes to the UAE. The reasons Chinas heavy trading with Russia is very important to mention is because nearly half of the goods that were being imported to Russia in 2023 were consumer goods and not industrial one. *“Russian factories have now become reliant on Chinese inputs, Russian households are increasingly dependent on Chinese-made apparel, toys, and even office equipment. Many Russians have been forced to swap out the western fashion houses of Paris, London, and Milan for Shanghai’s suits and Fujian’s footwear. They are also now driving Chinese cars: Chinese vehicle exports are 900 percent higher in 2023 compared to the same time frame 2019.”*<sup>96</sup> With that we can now see that this relationship is actual far from equal, as clearly Russia has become over reliant on the Chinese industry and its consumer import truly reflect the extent Moscow has become an economic vassal for China. Moscow has grown to have lesser and lesser choice as to whom they can turn to when in need. Clearly once again, Beijing has played its cards well as Russia will almost every time turn to them for *“its large economy, technological prowess, and global clout.”*<sup>97</sup> However we also do have to keep in mind that this relationship is not completely asymmetrical either as Beijing does also need Russia as Moscow is a key ally when it comes



to souring their trade relationships with other countries. Here is a chart summarizing the changes in Chinese exportation flows:

**Table 3: Chinese exportation flows 2023**

Year	Exports to Russia	Exports Globally
2023	+46%	-5%

Source: (Niels Grham Chinese exports have replaced the EU as the lifeline of Russia’s economy February 2024)

As China does face problems of its own such as *“large domestic industrial overcapacity issues, an increasingly hostile trading environment from its traditional export markets such as the EU”*.<sup>98</sup> In order to obtain this export oriented growth Beijing sees Russia as a perfect valve to take in Chinese products which would result in supporting Beijing’s domestic economy.

Therefore when taking all this into account we quickly realize the importance of Moscow as an export market as well Beijing’s personal strategic interests following the war in Ukraine. The current economic relationship between both Russia and China seems sturdy enough that western sanctions will not be enough to make Xi Jinping change his mind about his exports to Russia. Another factor that would make that complicated is that after 2 years of ongoing war and sanctioning the members of the G7 are running out of eligible sanctions against Russia that could reach a consensus. The last few months of 2023 have been great proofs that Russia’s global trading relationships are becoming quite stable, that Chinas imports will continue to augment and the ones of the G7 to decrease not necessarily at the same rate as

earlier on in the conflict, given we are entering the third year of this war the things to be done on the importing side of Russia's trade flow are becoming mere. If anything I believe that the G7 will go on to focus more on trying to make Russia pay for its imports by focusing on the other side of their trade balance through restrictions of its exports as well as the payments received from them. Besides the economic partnerships, in order to make a difference on the global stage Russia also has had to rely on its diplomatic outreach which has played a crucial role in making a difference in the Foreign Policy following the war in Ukraine, we shall further investigate that in the following section.

### **4.3 Diplomatic Outreach**

*“The Global South’s relationship with Russia is not just defined by contemporary geopolitics; it is also mired in history, economic ties and diplomacy”* <sup>99</sup> While geopolitics have been a long standing influential factor for Russia’s approach to many issues in the world, starting with its own political, cultural and economic attitudes. These past few years following the commencement of its full scale attack on Ukraine, Russia has been not only playing its geopolitical card but it has started further experimenting with the diplomatic one with the help of its membership in various organizations. Especially with Russia being at the head of the commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and soon of BRICS for its 2024 chairmanship. With that being said it is clear to say that the influence is growing large. This influence has proven itself to be efficient in terms of support and diplomatic relations within the current war context. As many of the BRICS member (in this case the foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which are also known to be a part of the Global South, where the first ones to stand up for Russia when all the sanctions were being released as well as when the UN General Assembly voted to condemn Russia’s invasion (yet in the context of the vote only China, south Africa and India abstained). Which the

abstention of the countries mentioned previously isn't surprising as they are known to have close economic and diplomatic relations with Russia, especially when taking into account Prime minister's Modi's reference to Russia as "most reliable partner"<sup>100</sup> since 1947. Yet within the diplomatic outreaches of Russia following the war some are more reliable and impregnated than others. While BRICS countries for the most part are fulfilling their part with continued support, finding new members to introduce to the organization with the recent addition Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, letting Russia be chairman for 2024, and in the case of South Africa granting all leaders attending the 2023 summit in Johannesburg "blanket diplomatic immunity"<sup>101</sup>. The members of the organization being of greater majority Asian and African countries part of the "Global South" is a golden opportunity for Putin to reminisce a propaganda worthy of the soviet scale in terms of slogans, in order to strengthen the groups international solidarity and "friendship" proven to be effective given there are new members. When looking at the current state of diplomatic affairs between these regions we have to establish one ground line, that is for the most part both Africa and Asia have been recognizing for a long time now the importance of ending the US and western led hegemony. To them it has become a much better deal to turn to countries such as Russia, India and China. To understand and actually go through with these multipolar endeavors there needs to be active partnerships and activities in domains such as culture to create bonds between the regions. as everyone is evolving immensely not always for the better and the only way you can keep any development at this stage is through recurrent interactions, exchange of technological ideas as basis for promoting trade and as basis for developing skills on modern technology for the current and future generations. By offering countries with the latest opportunities and initiative, it makes the country in question much more attractive in foreign eyes, but also gives them the ground to build the

foundations of trust which is a fundamental value. In particular, if you want to move on to culture, business and potentially economic advice regarding the inner state relationship.

Having established that lets take a closer look at how Russia has exactly been using this method recently in his Foreign Policy and diplomatic endgame to further stimulate their influence and relations with Africa and Asia. Russia is rather fortunate in this case as despite being at war and having to focus a great deal of their time, energy and finances to keep fighting their strength lies in BRICS. Having this organization gives them opportunities to not only organize and host events but also to invite neighboring countries of the members to take part in them for their own curiosity. An example of that would be the BRICS+ Fashion week which is held every November, it is seen as the one event that can really be broadened in order to include numerous African and Asian countries who hold a membership. This could create a new type of platform for collaboration between Russia and international designers something rather crucial in order to promote cultural bonds but also spread influence as this particular fashion show in 2022 was visited 1.5 million people in the Russian capital.<sup>102</sup> Given this framework, the participating countries, 30 in 2022(the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa and the CIS) were given the opportunity to further discuss their cooperations, but also development of free enterprises, and the use of modern technologies as well as preserving culture. As further emphasizes the deputy mayor of Moscow Natalya Sergunina *“It gives an additional impetus to the development of the fashion market and help foster cooperation with friendly regions,”*.<sup>103</sup> Another example of Russia further opening up to Africa and Asia is through the 2024 inaugural cybersport tournament “Games of the Future” that took place in Kazan from the end of February till the beginning of March. Another important event will be the 2024 BRICS Games that are to occur from June 12<sup>th</sup> to June 23<sup>rd</sup>, representing 25 different sports, once again inviting all their

members to join as well as other nations from the African and Asian continent to join. <sup>104</sup> I also believe it fair to declare that these events are also proving an earlier point made, regarding Putin bringing back his A-game in terms of propaganda. As these events are just remakes of the Olympics that are to happen this summer and fashion week at the end of the year. Yet despite all this Europe and the West still remain very influential and have a particular grip on Africa something closely tied with their past colonial history. However the efforts that have been made by Moscow have not shown to go reward less as clearly shown when it came down to the attendance of the African-Russia summit in summer 2023, where 17 African heads <sup>105</sup> of states attended despite the global sanctions. They even went on to pass quite a few deals regarding arms race, security cooperation, and fighting terrorism. *“The second Russia-Africa Summit held in St Petersburg in July marked the culmination of collaborative efforts to significantly enhance ties in this promising area of Russia's Foreign Policy. The agreements reached at the highest level set the priorities for long-term cooperation with African countries and associations.”* <sup>106</sup> Yet I believe the biggest proof of the growing influence and stable diplomatic relations between the two regions, (despite being earlier in time than the Russia Africa summit), is that out of 54 African countries 24 decided to either abstain or not show up the day of the UN General Assembly vote to condemn Russia’s war on Ukraine. Putin has been playing his cards rather well as in the last few months he has rejected the term “Global South” and its use by the western countries and has emphasized a *“multipolar world”* one that fights against Europe’s and the US *“based rules and regulations”* <sup>107</sup>. By installing a feeling of trust and belonging through cultural events and the use of tools such as BRICS, Russia has definitely made a breakthrough in its

diplomatic relations with Asia but even more so Africa nothing compared to what it was before the war.

#### **4.4 Security Cooperation and Arms Sales**

Since the beginning of the war we have clearly noticed a change in Russia's alignment in terms of security cooperation. While before the war Putin's Russia may have been prone to collaborate with the West and agree with some of its measures regarding other countries such as Afghanistan (to a certain extent). Since their invasion of Ukraine the tables have turned and so have the members making up the "dream team". Russia has demonstrated a very rapid rapprochement to both Iran and China as the two main actors but also less popularly but still of importance North Korea. Through these close ups they have been able to benefit from strong military cooperation in terms of weaponry and other equipment. However I believe that it is important to mention that by focusing on these newly acquired friends they have in my opinion lost some ground on the African continent. Not only due to being distracted by the war and fueling their troops but also due to the internal complications between Wagner PMC leader, Prigozhin and the Russian head of state. As I mentioned in the last chapter about past Russo African relations, Moscow used to account for 40% of African imports of weapon systems between 2018-2022 which was higher than all other countries sending such materials combined. However when the war debuted these exports were becoming scarce due to the ongoing war on European soils, yet these shortcomings have not yet been seen to have any specific impact on African nations in the sense of them trying to seek new military trading partnerships. In fact in 2022 some African nations even initiated or continued their military engagement agreement with the Kremlin. Those include Cameroon who signed a new defense deal with the Russian Ministry of Defense regarding conjoined military practices as well as Mali has managed to receive some type of equipment from Moscow. This is not to

say that some negative trends haven't been noticed in particular with Algeria and Egypt who are known to be Russia's best top five arms purchasers in the world and they have loosened some defense ties with Moscow.<sup>108</sup> However given the reliance these two nations have on Russian originated weapons the stakes are high that the relations will remain nearly intact. The sphere where Russia has actually lost ground in Africa is through the influence of its PMC's. As we know Africa is host to at least seven Russian PMC's that have carried an approximate 34 operations in 16 different countries within the continent. However with the deployment of some of these PMCs to help on the Ukrainian front but also the Bakhmut incident that led to Prigozhin's orchestrated "*march for justice*"<sup>109</sup> against Putin, some questions have arisen as to whether Putin's system in Africa and on the front is truly stable, but most importantly what is the future of Wagner in Africa. Had it not been for the uprising Wagner could have worked it out by being sidelined in Ukraine and shift back to Africa "*resuming limited-scale expeditionary operations and supplying muscle to fragile states in exchange for access to valuable resources.*"<sup>110</sup> Which was actively the case in March 2023. Following the incident in June the Kremlin was obliged to come up with a way to restructure Wagner's operations in Africa in order not to lose the influence. One of Prigozhin's soldier even went on to state that "*entire sectors of Russian Foreign Policy are dependent on the assets of Wagner PMC abroad, and if they are removed, there will be a rapid compression of Russian influence, more in Africa, to a lesser extent in Syria.*"<sup>111</sup> Since then Prigozhin having "accidentally" crashed in a plane, problems are solving themselves rather by themselves and it can be expected that the influence of Russian PMCs in Africa will continue to grow and expand as well as the income they are making through the extraction of gold<sup>112</sup>

in the CAR and Sudan. Having looked upon the ups and downs of military cooperation in Africa lets now dive into the three main actors of the moment China, Iran and North Korea.

The reason I believe it is important to mention these three actors is because not only do they represent other sanctioned countries in the world but they are also viewed as global threats, in particular North Korea and China given the nuclear weapon factor. Iran on the other hand while it is not yet a nuclear power it has been financed by Russia and North Korea in order to boost its researches and developments of such weapons disregarding the sanctions established by the west. Yet in the context of Russia's change in FP towards the Global South these countries play a major role in military cooperation as they are the ones providing Russia with more weapons and technologies to further boost Moscow's performance on the front. While the trade of weapons with North Korea and Iran has been made rather official the aid provided by China tries to remain more discrete to the international eye in order to not lose its cooperation with the West as well as the presence of Western firms in the country. The military cooperation of these three countries with Russia is very specific to its own case, lets firstly start with the Teheran-Moscow cooperation. While for a very long time Iran and Moscow were closer to being enemies than allies, this all changed in the end of December last year with a statement of the Russian foreign ministry that would alert not only the US but the EU as well. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December Moscow announced a "*major new interstate agreement*" with Iran while it remained rather about the scope of this particular agreement it did go on to further entail that this deal was at "*a high stage of readiness*".<sup>113</sup> Yet this vagueness has been clarified in the last few months, and we now know that the agreement in question was regarding the shipment of 400 Iranian ballistic missiles (Fateh 110 family of short range ballistic missiles) to Russia.<sup>114</sup> Since January 2024, following the closing of the deal in late December, Iran has been continuously sending these missiles to Moscow who in



return has been putting them to use in Ukraine due to their weapon shortages. However this relationship is not unilateral Russia has agreed in response to provide Teheran with Su-35 fighter jets<sup>115</sup>, Mi-28 attack helicopters and Yak-130 pilot training aircraft therefore making the relationship bilateral as disclosed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January by both Russian and Iranian Security Council security. We have to however keep in mind that this is a big breakthrough for Iran as until now they had been rather hesitant in trading missiles with Russia, fearing a hard blowback from both the US and the EU. However the end of the UN arms embargo on the transfer of missiles to Iran ended in October 2023, therefore Iran is now legally permissible to export and supply missiles. *"There will be more shipments,"* the second Iranian official said. *"There is no reason to hide it. We are allowed to export weapons to any country that we wish to."*<sup>116</sup> As for sanctions on arm transfers, those are voluntary and while European countries have retained them they could not reinvoke the previous UN penalties. In addition following October 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 with Hamas' attack on Israel it has further put an end to any potential relationship between Iran and the West, due to Iran being known for their funding of the terrorist group, further explaining their quick rapprochement to Russia. Besides the import of missiles to Russia, Iran has also supplied the country with munitions, artillery shells and drones which has further led to the establishment of a factory for producing these Iranian drones in Russia, the factory is located 500 miles from Moscow in the region of Tatarstan and has for goal to domestically manufacture 6000 drones by the summer of 2025.<sup>117</sup> In return for these precious donations Russia returned the favor by launching an Iranian satellite into orbit in February 2024, giving Iran some ties within the space industry. Iran has also received the promised combat trainer aircraft Yak-130 and Russia got its new Iranian kamikaze drone Shahed 101 which has been previously used by Iran to fight against US forces within the Middle East. <sup>118</sup> This coalition with Iran comes in handy especially given the ties Russia has had with China. Iran and China having signed a

25 year pact in March 2021 makes this Russian rapprochement to Iran an even bigger threat but also a clear sign that Russia has opted for a Global South oriented FP to create a multipolar empire. Russia's close relations to Iran are essential in order to oppose the US's influence and presence within the Middle East, by teaming up with Iran Putin gets a say in the game unravelling in the region. As he clearly showed following October 7<sup>th</sup> when welcoming Hamas leaders in Moscow. While Iran may have its own game to play in the region it still needs Russia and the little they have to offer and Russia needs them, and with China joining the equation this coalition could truly be formed.

We have already mentioned China earlier in terms of increased economic partnerships, yet they are also present within the military field. Despite not directly providing Russia with weapons in order to avoid Western retribution, access to Russian weapons is an important matter for Beijing. Disregarding the fact that most of Russian-made weapons have perished on the Ukrainian front China still feels that acquiring some of Russia's military and space technologies is important. In exchange for such acquisitions Russia expects China to provide them with some "*technological marvels*" <sup>119</sup> it acquires from the West which is easier said than done. As unlike North Korea, China refuses to provide lethal aid to Russia to avoid sanctions or the departure of western firms from their country. However their exports of "*dual use equipment and industrial products*" <sup>120</sup> have truly made a breakthrough in Russia's war efforts. The true military rapprochement between the two countries however has been through the intensification of cooperation between their navies in the sea of Japan and the South China Sea. The two navies have conducted numerous joint exercises and patrols which could be linked to President Xi's urge to take Taiwan, peacefully or not. The biggest proof of these increased collaboration was proved when a new minister of defense was appointed in order to tighten military cooperation. Minister of defense, Dong Jun's, first public

engagement after having taken office was to call Sergei Shoigu, his Russian counterpart to tell him as reported by the Russian News Agency TASS: *“We have supported you on the Ukrainian issue despite the fact that the U.S. and Europe continue to put pressure on the Chinese side. Even defense cooperation between China and the European Union is [now] threatened, but we will not change or abandon our established policy course over this. And they should not and cannot hinder normal Russian-Chinese cooperation.”*<sup>121</sup> This rising Russian influence has increased the anti-Western sentiment for China especially when seeing the political instability in the US between democrats and republicans, and the strengthening of Putin’s relations with North Korea and Iran which have weakened the geopolitical perception of Ukraine in president Xi’s eyes. These relations may have possibly reached a point of no return however Putin has to be careful as China has limits as to what they are willing to do for them as they will always put their own priorities first, and they are not ready to completely cut ties with the West and their markets.

Lastly the third actor in this upgraded military cooperation is North Korea, to whom Russia has turned to also replenish its rather depleted stockpiles in exchange for Russia’s help in developing weapons and a potential spy satellite. On November 28th 2023 North Korea launched a satellite into orbit which they claim has been able to take pictures and locate critical US sites such as the Norfolk Naval Station, the White House and Pentagon. Following this statement the South Korean intelligence services claimed that the only way North Korea was able to launch such a satellite<sup>122</sup> was through the help of Russia, especially given the repeated fails the country encountered in the previous months. This caused a major raising of awareness for both Indo-Pacific countries as well as European countries as it is perceived as a threat to their own national security. *“We fear in particular that Russian counterparts [are acting] for the benefit of the North Korean regime,”* said French Foreign

Minister Catherine Colonna following a November 23 meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing. She said these actions are causing “*destabilizing activities in the region in defiance of [U.N.] Security Council resolutions.*”<sup>123</sup> China has stayed very neutral regarding the situation, by deciding to abstain from condemning or using its influence to speak on dealings between Moscow and Pyongyang, to make a statement despite the pressure being applied from both Seoul and Washington. If anything this alliance for China is an asset as it will help them for future policy making and positioning in regard to South Korea, Japan and the US as further claims Robert Rapson charge d’affaires and deputy chief of mission of the US Embassy in Seoul from 2018-2021 “*In fact, it probably views them as useful for its posturing and policies toward the U.S., South Korea and Japan,*”.<sup>124</sup> Further on, Moscow would be “willing to help” North Korea boost its ICBM’s called Hwasong-18, which disregarding the sanctions Pyongyang has been repeatedly testing. The countries urging need to modernize its antiquated military equipment is what is pushing it to further support Russia in its war with Ukraine. Kim Jong Un was the first president to have said he supported<sup>125</sup> Putin in his efforts of war after the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022. According to the White House he was also one of the first to send artillery shells to help the Russian front in Ukraine. With the White house also releasing satellite images in January 2023 of North Korean shipments of arms to Russia by rail cars. The trade of weapons between the two countries was further solidified in September last year when the north Korean leader visited president Putin in Vostochny Cosmodrome located in Russia’s Amur region<sup>126</sup>. This is where Putin gave the green flag to help North Korea enhance its satellite technology. It however didn’t stop there as Pyongyang is also looking to modernize its air force and therefore visited a fighter jet production plant in Komsomolsk-on-Amur as well as the Knevichi Airbase and the Pacific Fleet in Vladivostok.<sup>127</sup> Following Kim’s meeting with Putin, the white house released in October images of a shipment of around 1000 containers

of military equipment and ammunition leaving the port Najin. Recently the North Korean Foreign Ministry mentioned that Putin might be of visit in the country as a follow up to meeting between the NK foreign minister, Putin and Lavrov end of January in Moscow. It was said by the north Korean public statement *that “the two countries agreed to further strategic and tactical cooperation with Russia to establish a “new multi-polarized international order,” a reference to their efforts to build a united front against Washington.”*<sup>128</sup> For North Korea having Russia on their side could help them counter balance the coalition in the region of Japan, South Korea and the US. Having made Seoul their number one enemy as well as declared earlier this year that they will no longer pursue peaceful unification of the two peninsulas *“It is the final conclusion drawn from the bitter history of the inter-Korean relations that we cannot go along the road of national restoration and reunification together,”* Kim declared.<sup>129</sup> Obtaining Russian technologies can only be an asset for Pyongyang, as well as benefiting from the alliance with China the other important actor of the region.

As for Russia they are obtaining all the material they can get through these different military cooperations, which they have been needing in order to make this war go on for much longer than predicted. However this China Iran coalition goes beyond just military cooperation and we shall explore that in the following factors that have been influencing the approach to their Foreign Policy.

#### **4.5 Political Partnerships**

While we have already talked about economic partnerships as one of the key variables that have changed in Russia’s Foreign Policy since the beginning of the war, political partnership is another very crucial one as these alliances are not only powerful ones but they may very well alternate the international geopolitical stage in the long term. In the previous paragraphs

we have often mentioned Iran and China when it comes down to Russia's new "best friends". With this variable these two countries once again play a major role but for different reasons that I shall elaborate on now.

Firstly I believe that in this context out of the two countries involved the bigger political partnership is Iran due to its role in the Middle East. While China may have been the winner when it came down to the economic partnerships, for this category I believe it is Iran who takes the cake, and here is why. Ever since the beginning of the war Russia has of course been delegitimized by the west and in order to regain some influence it decided to turn to the Global South to regain some support. While its relations with certain countries such as Africa do not make a great political impact the one with Iran does and not only because both of them are heavily sanctioned and exchanging weapons. By siding and getting closer with Iran Russia has gotten itself a free entry card in the business of the middle east and by that I don't only mean resources (which we will discuss in the following section). While after the war begun nothing much was coming out politically of this relationship, it is when the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 took place that we truly started seeing what the Kremlin's real strategy was. Following the attack of Hamas on Israel, Moscow saw its influence and partnership with Iran as an opportunity to play "peace broker" in the Middle East by meeting with the Iraqi president on October 10<sup>th</sup>, and calling Erdogan a few hours later, all this before even getting in contact with the Israeli PM on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Just to make matters even clearer he welcomed in December Iranian president in Moscow and further continued conversing with Egyptian, Palestinian, Turkish and other Middle Eastern leaders regarding the events in Gaza, once again not getting in contact with Netanyahu until mid-December. <sup>130</sup> If Russia isn't going to regain political and diplomatic credibility in the eyes of the West it sure is determined to do so with the East and the resuming of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict gave

them just the opportunity they needed. While Russia used to be rather in good terms with Israel, this war has proven that this too has changed. Israel being one of the US closest allies Russia can only be against it despite having quite a few oligarchs with the double nationality. While Israel joined the West diplomatically, it never aligned with the sanctions or sending equipment to Ukraine that was imposed by the West. Yet Russia still decided to turn their back on them and even went as far as dragging them through the mud publicly at an emergency UNSC meeting. *“Lavrov described as “concerning” and “unacceptable” the (Israeli) attempts at “forcible relocation of Palestinians from places of their permanent residence.” Other Russian representatives have repeatedly lashed out at Israel and accused it of engaging in “limitless and unrestrained indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza’s civilian infrastructure and civilian population,” and seeking to “cleanse” and “mop up” the Strip.”*<sup>131</sup> Now that Moscow had made it clear that they were siding with Palestine it came as no surprise when Hamas leaders found themselves in Moscow both in October 2023 and recently in January 2024. As well as joining the Arab States in a declaration in December 2023 that condemned Israel. *“Israel’s ongoing and escalating aggressive war against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.”*<sup>132</sup>

What is truly interesting about this is that in the past Russia didn’t see the Middle East as their priority especially in terms of their Foreign Policy, despite it being a very important geopolitical region with a lot of rivalry in terms of powers nowadays as in the era of the Cold War. Therefore this Russian sudden hovering of the region does lead me to think that it isn’t solemnly just for the obtention of materials but also, of course, as an opposition to the United States. Having taken that into account it explains why Moscow has moved away from its decade long balanced approach as peace maker as well as being the only country within the region to have constructive connections with the local feuding actors, while the West was

sitting on the sidelines. Moscow has decided to sacrifice its relationship with Israel in order to prioritize its alliance within the “Axis of resistance” which includes; Hezbollah, Iraqi and Syrian militias, and Yemen’s Houthis.<sup>133</sup> Not to mention the propaganda being generated to manipulate the masses to believe that the west are responsible for the escalations in the region. While these rapprochement and alliances are threats not to be taken lightly this tactic can very easily backfire for Russia. As apart from Iran, Syria and Yemen’s Houthis very little countries are willing to escalate hostilities against the West or further disrupt the current world order. That being said even Russia’s current closest business partner, China, doesn’t align with the entirety of Moscow’s Foreign Policy. Yet in the current framework these partnerships will go on to strengthen as politics isn’t the only factor at stakes, as when it comes to energy deals these bring in a lot of income to the region, and in the middle east as in anywhere in the world money often tends to give you more power. Let’s therefore move to our next section.

#### **4.6 Energy Deals**

As Ukrainian cities change hands in the context of the counteroffensive, the world’s energy map is also being restructured. While the war has immensely decreased oil and natural gas flow from Russia to Europe it has also redrawn the energy relationships worldwide. Ever since the beginning of the war Ukraine’s energy sector has been decimated by more than 50%<sup>134</sup> because of the numerous attacks whether it was with the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam or the constant destruction of the power plants in charge of the generation of the country’s energy. Europe itself with the numerous sanctions it has established against Russia, which used to be its main provider, has been suffering in terms of provisions and spiking oil and gas prices. While following February 2022 Russia’s economy started spiraling down due to all the sanctions and the big market loss it quickly got back on its feet



by taking their business elsewhere, the Global South. They decided to ramp up their energy exports towards China, the Gulf states, India and even Turkey despite being a NATO member. Notwithstanding that many of these states don't directly oppose the Western sanctions aside from China, these countries saw this as an opportunity to widen their energy connections with Russia, as well as benefit from some economic self-interest towards the creation of a more multipolar world. Moscow has even gone as far as finding new energy markets in Pakistan<sup>138</sup> and Africa who have also not been the West's number one fans in the past few years. It is by playing this card that the Russian economy has been able to stay somewhat resilient in the face of war and sanctions. Here is a chart summarizing Russia's GDP's<sup>135</sup> flow following the war:

**Table 4: GDP Change for Russia (Feb 2022-Jan 2024)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Post Feb 2022	-2.2%
April 2023	+2.2%
January 2024	+4.6%

Source: (Dr. Horst Stipp, Year-over-year gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate in Russia from January 2019 to January 2024, Feb 2024)

Similarly the country's oil and gas revenues went up by 28 percent in 2022 which means nearly \$37 billion. This shows that the Western sanctions have not proven to be efficient on the Russian energy as by gaining the support of China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar

in terms of these deals they have been able to expand their market to new lengths. Moscow has in particular put all of its eggs in Asia's basket, in particular China. Beijing has replaced Europe as Russia's primary energy market, the oil imports between the two countries hit a record of 9.7 million tons in May 2023 which is around twice the amount of what it used to be prior to February 2022.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, Moscow and Beijing have also signed a long term agreement to expand the gas pipeline infrastructure between both countries. The flow of energy from Russia to China is estimated to further augment by 40 percent<sup>137</sup> however Russia isn't getting as much from this trade with China as it did with Europe. We also have to take into account that with emerging technologies in Europe that prioritize decarbonization and green technologies the Russian economy could be at risk due to its fossil fuel reliant economy.

When talking about energy deals and its relation to the Russian Foreign Policy I believe it is important to mention OPEC+ and the role it has played in creating a monopoly on oil between Russia and its Global South allies. Russia has since the beginning of the war been a major exporter of refined fuels to Saudi Arabia and other middle eastern countries. Following this intensification of exports Saudi Arabia has been investing more in Russian energy companies. With both countries leading the OPEC+ group it has therefore created a big monopoly on energy and oil imports and exports especially in 2023 when both countries decided to cut down barrel productions to hurt the West and make prices go up. A cut production that they have decided to extend until the end of the second quarter of this year as announced by the Saudi Ministry of Energy at the beginning of March. Therefore this means that Riyadh will go on to produce only 9 million barrels<sup>139</sup> of crude oil per day instead of 10 million and Russia will keep on trimming its export and production by a total of 471,000 barrels until the end of June 2024, which was announced by Alexander Novak the

Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>140</sup> Accordingly Iraq and the UAE, who are key OPEC producers, will also keep on following along with the cut of 220,000 and 163,000 barrels<sup>141</sup> per day, an information released by both their state owned media the INA and WAM. Back in November last year the goal was for OPEC+ countries to reduce their collective output by 2 million barrels per day until the end of this year. However aside from the organizations strategy some of the heavyweight members such as Saudi Arabia and Russia decided to themselves voluntarily reduce their supplies by a combined 2.2 million. These production cuts also come at a time where the oil price is spasming from a previous \$75 to a current \$85 for a barrel<sup>142</sup> due to the ongoing conflict within the Gaza strip and the threat of Houthis destroying container ships. Regarding the cut in production we will have to wait for the next round of OPEC+ negotiations in June to see where Russia and Saudi Arabia decide to go regarding their monopoly on the situation as especially within the second quarter of the year China who is the world's top crude importer, starts to worsen.<sup>143</sup> Therefore it wouldn't be a surprise if the other countries maintained the cut in order to destabilize the general system.

As we see following the war in Ukraine the Russian Foreign Policy has once again changed this times in terms of energy partners, while Russia used to be Europe's number one provider of oil and gas, following all the sanctions this has come to an end and Moscow went on to seek business opportunities and deals elsewhere. With their current alliances with China and also Saudi Arabia but also the depletion of all Ukrainian energy infrastructures it is fair to say this is only the beginning of the energy crisis for the West.

#### **4.7 Soft Power**

As can be noticed Russia sometimes lacks a clear Foreign Policy, it tends to spread in more than one domain and involve more than one party. However following the war they have successfully leveraged the Global South and were able to build strong connections in both

economic and diplomatic spheres. Yet I believe it is important to mention that throughout the years it has been implementing its role as a soft power in different regions such as Latin America and Africa, through projects in culture, business and of course education. For example in Africa radio broadcasting in local languages was what helped the PMC group Wagner to make many African nations stray away from the older colonial French sphere of influence. Further on similar programs and activities are being established in Latin America and Asia enabling them now to be able to cancel or block performances of antiwar Russian emigrants in those countries. Something that occurred in Thailand with the show of a young Russian comedian named Maxim Galkin, who's show in January of this year got canceled due to his opposition to the war.<sup>144</sup> Russia has a very specific strategy when it comes down to soft power, it resolves around two very specific axes; the education and cultural one and then the axis that consists of political reflection of the world. While in the earlier variables we have mentioned Africa in more than one way soft power is another one where it makes an appearance. As stated earlier it is no news that the African continent and many of its states are slowly but surely succumbing to the Russian influence whether it is through military cooperation or even accepting Russian sponsored education and cultural programs in the framework of BRICS, we still recognize the two key axes of Russian soft power implementation. While until now we have very often mentioned the relations between Africa and Russia in regards to the change of Foreign Policy and cooperation approaches, in this section I would like to focus mostly on Latin America and how these axes have been implemented there and why.

When looking at the political reflection Latin America is viewed as a crucial region for the United States not only due to their proximity but also their resources. That being said of course it is of an even bigger interest to Russia due to their strong urge for a multipolar world

and an overthrowing of the western hegemony. Therefore if Russia was to gain some influence within the region they believe it would give them the upper hand. Which has slowly shown to be working as the multipolar concept is finding some supporters in countries that were once linked to Russia such as Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua. Which has been proven in speeches of leaders of the region in these past few years: Former Chilean President Sebastian Piñera (2010-2014 and 2018-2022) said that “*we need leadership and multilateral collaboration*”<sup>145</sup>, while Argentine President Alberto Fernández notes that countries are now “*united by multilateralism or dominated by polarization*”(Speech by Argentine President Alberto Fernández on 9 June 2022, at the closing ceremony of the Summit of the Americas (formal meeting of the heads of state of North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean).<sup>146</sup> The Argentinian president is rather critical of the US as he is of opinion that the OAS (Organization of American States) was responsible for the coup état in Bolivia in 2019 as well as the American appropriation of the leadership of the Inter-American Development Bank which has been owned by the region in the past. This has therefore led to growing discontent for the US in the region and increased support for Russia. In addition some Latin American leaders who have in the past sided with a Foreign Policy in favor of Washington are switching teams. For example Colombia used to be pro US in particular due their leader Alvaro Uribe and those close to him, but in June 2022 things took a turn when Gustavo Petro came to power and ever since the country has been much more critical about Washingtons decisions. The US has been rather skeptical about this sudden switch in supporting sides, they fear that the “*troika of tyranny*”<sup>147</sup> will return (which during the cold war era was Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela). Which I believe these worries aren’t unprecedented as Russia accounts for most arms sales to these three countries from 2000-2022. It is rather habitual that the region takes a stance of non-intervention meaning that this is for the most part a position of “neutrality” or “non-alignment” which was opted for in

regards to the war in Ukraine. Something that was rather exciting for Moscow as doubt has been installed regarding the region's support for sovereignty and democracy. It is true that most LAC states voted in favor of the UN's resolution to condemn Russia but this is as far as any of them went. Ever since the vote some of these nations have actually had some rather contradictory behaviors given their stance during the UN vote. Brazilian president Lula da Silva practically blamed Ukraine for Russia's attack<sup>148</sup>, as well as Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador who stunned quite a lot of people by inviting Russian troops to march with the Mexican ones on their national day parade last September.<sup>149</sup>

To finish with the political reflection Latin America has also helped Russia soften the impact of the Western sanctions by letting them rely on some of their largest economies by providing with a continuous flow of hard currency. In December 2023 the largest<sup>150</sup> amount of oil was exported by Russia to India, China and Brazil, this led to Brazil's purchases to surge throughout last year and make them the principal purchaser of Russian diesel globally. Secondly, Brazil and Argentina are also crucial exporters of Russian fertilizer, while other states such as Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador and Peru are rather reliant on it. The kremlin has further emphasized the importance of the region to them by appointing very experienced ambassadors to all posts in the region.<sup>151</sup> In addition to this Prime minister Sergei Lavrov completed a visit to LAC in February 2024 for the second time in less than a year (first one being in April 2023)<sup>152</sup> with another stop in Brazil for the G20 meeting of foreign ministers.<sup>153</sup> In 2023 Lavrov had expressed his gratitude for Brazil's support in their statement regarding Ukraine "culpability" in the aggression. Lavrov event went on to say that the kremlin appreciates that Brazil and Russia have "*similar approaches*"<sup>154</sup> regarding the conflict as well as the construction of a multipolar world. Lula replied to this by emphasizing his desire to host president Putin in Brazil for the G20 summit in November of

this year, of course disregarding the international warrant for his arrest by the ICC. Furthermore, Lula will be attending the BRICS summit hosted by president Putin in Moscow this October.<sup>155</sup> As we can see Russia has consecrated a lot of time and energy despite the ongoing war to maintain its influence within the Latin American region and really turn it into a soft power that they can rely on and in the future potentially use to threaten the United States.

While the political approach is one aspect of it, it is not the only method that Russia has resorted to in order to be influential within the region. As it is one thing to get the support of the leaders of the Latin American countries however it is another to be appealing to the populations. This is where the second Russian soft power axes, culture and education, comes in play. In the context of Latin America, media influence, is a major part of it as well as the spread of culture. In 2009 a Spanish version of Russia Today was launched and has been overgrowing ever since. Its audience numbers has almost reached that of the American media within the region. In 2018 the audience numbers of Russia Today more than tripled from a rough 5 million in 2015 to 17 million in 2018<sup>156</sup>. As if this wasn't enough the X social media page of Spanish translated RT has 3.5 million followers<sup>157</sup> where Russia constantly tries to justify their aggression on Ukraine as well as their disregard for NATO. This manipulation has shown to be effective as following the invasion of Ukraine the hashtag "abolish NATO" was trending in the region including in non-NATO countries such as Brazil and Argentina or Colombia the only NATO partner in the area.<sup>158</sup> This general manipulation of masses has led to the eruption of programs such as "*Conversando con Correa*,"<sup>159</sup> which are local programs

that promote the visions and values that are more than similar with what Russia has been preaching these past few years.

Aside from media manipulation, the Russian soft power method involves getting involved with culture and promoting Russian in Latin America. Multiple foundations to promote Russian language have been established within the region starting with the Ruskiy Mir Foundation established by presidential decree in 2007 with its purpose being to promote Russian language worldwide. While worldwide might be a challenge especially nowadays, the mission was rather successful in Latin America with ten centers in the region “*two in Argentina, one in Brazil, one in Peru, one in Ecuador, one in Costa Rica, one in Guatemala, one in Nicaragua, one in Cuba and one in Mexico*”<sup>160</sup> in addition a Russian federal agency called Rossotrudnitchestvo in charge of the Russian diaspora abroad as well as cultural cooperation since 2008 has three centers located in Chile, Peru and Argentina and has established some further representatives in Russian embassies in the following countries of the region: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, Brazil and Mexico. With such a spread out network in the region, it comes as no surprise that the number of Latin Americans learning Russian has increased to 30,000.<sup>161</sup> Another rather strategic element that is connected to culture is education. While education in the region can be rather costly Russia saw this as an opportunity to grant more scholarships to students from the region. While 1600 Latin Americans were studying in Russia in 2011 the number currently stands at about 5000 students originating mostly from Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador.<sup>162</sup> With this approach Russia has seen a rise of 28% in enrollment of students from Latin America as they come seeking a better affordable education.<sup>163</sup> In return it provides them with better jobs



opportunities, which of course are very often in Russian companies either in Russia or back in their native countries.

With such programs whether they be educational, cultural or political they for sure seem to have made an impact on the Latin American population. While this is not the only region in the world where Russia has gone out of its way to make a good impression and leave some kind of footprint behind this is one of the only regions where the emphasis has been more about cooperation and human relations than security agreements and weapons exchange.

While of course there is still some trade involved and some economical deals made it is not the sole purpose of Russia's alignment with Latin America. When it comes to this region what makes it special and different from the other regions Russia has been collaborating with, is its proximity to the United States. Their presence and influence within Latin America gives them the potential to threaten the US in more than one way and create major discomfort.

When looking at it that way that type of Foreign Policy doesn't differ much from the one during the Cold War. However the major difference is that this time Russia has been weaving itself a major web internationally and Putin will stop at nothing to get what he wants, no matter how many sacrifices or different foreign policies it takes. Having gone over all these major factors that have changed or evolved in the Russian Foreign Policy these past few years, I believe it is time to summarize everything mentioned in this paper and conclude this analysis.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have gone over a lot of different prospects, in the beginning we touched upon the history of Russian Foreign Policy and the way it was and is set up in terms of structure and distribution of power. I then focused on the Global South, towards which Russia has been very active ever since its aggression on Ukraine. The second chapter that touches upon the “Global South” defines not only what it is and represents but also the controversy behind the name. In the same chapter I explored the past relations between Russia and the Middle East as well as Africa, in order to set the ground for the chapter to follow and understand to what extent and how the relationship has changed and evolved, as well as its meaning on the international stage. Finally in the third chapter I went over what I believe to be the different factors and aspects of the Russian Foreign Policy to have changed following February 2022. When going over these variables I analyzed their impact on the countries they applied to but mainly what this means for Russia and its Foreign Policy as well as their influence on the global stage.

Throughout the redaction of this thesis I based myself on the hypothesis *that “the Russian Foreign Policy had been restructured towards the Global South following the commencement of the war and western diplomatic reaction”*s, while staying in the framework of the research question which was; *“Did the Russian military aggression on the 24th of February 2022, as well as the diplomatic reaction of the collective West lead to a restructuring of the Russian Foreign Policy towards the Global South?”* As I got further into the writing and analysis process I did realize that my hypothesis was indeed proven especially after the release of an updated Russian Foreign Policy in March 2023. I believe it was crucial in order to notice this change to analyze and learn about the past relations between Russia and the different regions of the Global South. As it is through this method

that you can really notice the changes within the policy and relations. Which one may ask what are these changes?

Having reflected deeply on this after this extensive research I believe that the primary difference between the Foreign Policy of Russia towards the Global South before and after the war is firstly its intensity but also its extensivity. While before the war Russia used to be rather invested in its affairs with the African continent in terms of military cooperation I believe that the intensity of those relations lessened following the beginning of the war. As with this conflict raging on for a longer than expected period of time Russia found itself not being able to provide the same materials and weapons that they once could. If you also take into account the context of sanctions I believe that to have been a major factor to the shift of key interest region. As I explained and demonstrated in chapter 3, the region of the Global South that is of main importance to Moscow at the moment is the Middle East as well as China. As this region is the one providing them with money and trade opportunities at a crucial time for Russia, given its status of most sanctioned country in the world. Whether it is their very extensive trading agreements with China that has boosted the economies of both sides, or the influential collaboration that Russia has gained in the Middle East through complex deal making with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE regarding oil. As for their influence in the African continent as mentioned earlier it has switched from being heavily military based whether it is through the trade of weapons or the presence of PMCS in the region, to being the subject of a lot of BRICS event. Given that Russia's war has been going on for two years now they have had to cut back on effectiveness in Africa in terms of PMCS and of course weapon exports which was the main foundation of their Foreign Policy towards the continent until the war. Ever since the ongoing war they have had to resort to a different method in order to still maintain some sort of influence in the region without providing them the one thing that their relation was founded on. Moscow has therefore used

the BRICS card to include the African nations in various events and cultural projects to give off an image that they do care and are trying to keep their ties with the African states without necessarily giving them any concrete materials. So far it has shown to be efficient as a lot of African states have proven to be rather active within the BRICS domain as well as have shown growing support for Russia in the context of the UN general assembly vote. It is true that this cannot go on forever and that eventually Putin is going to have to find a way to resume weapon exports to its plain decree towards Africa or he might lose the support of a lot of countries. In particular, since his PMCS aren't as influential as they used to be in the region. To some degree that is due to the June 2023 Prigozhin incident but also the fact that a lot of Wagner and other mercenaries have been deployed to the front as backup was needed.

While the basis of my hypotheses were proven correct I do have to say that in a way it was also incorrect. While yes indeed Russia did change its foreign approach towards the Global South following the war it wasn't for the reasons I had in mind. I initially thought that they had done so in order to preserve their economy and not go completely crashing. Which rhetorically speaking isn't wrong but that by far isn't the main goal they have been trying to reach by enlarging their network. If anything this war isn't really about Ukraine at all in my opinion, of course the acquisition of the land would make Putin more than content yet I believe the reason he orchestrated this was to see who he could get on his team once the West was against him. I believe this to be a more accurate theory than the one I initially proposed at the beginning of this thesis. I also believe that this one can be proven to be not entirely wrong. As through this aggression I believe the kremlin saw an opportunity to finally be able to publicize who it will manage to get on its team in opposition to the west. To an extent this was rather effective as very soon the West started to worry when they saw that North Korea, China, India and a lot of Middle eastern nations were starting to make deals and partnerships with Russia. Then African nations followed in the UN assembly vote to

condemn Russia by abstaining and this influence even spread to Latin America despite having voted for the condemnation, the actions and behaviors from certain nations that resorted after prove that this was truly just a vote of compliance and not a meaningful one. If anything with this switch of Foreign Policy method and the use of soft power in regions like Africa and Latin America, Putin has shown that his Foreign Policy is no longer based on the initial soviet principal of protecting the interests of Russia and its people but more so to completely oppose western hegemony through the creation of his own “multipolar world”. This ideal of multipolarity has appealed to a lot of nations that are getting tired of western influence whether it be the Middle East and Latin America with the United States or Africa and some Asian states with their European colonial history. By touching upon these sensible subjects and proposing a concept that is aimed at opposing this general western ideology of democracy, power and influence he has gotten quite a few nations on board. Despite Russia physically raging a war on Ukraine in the meantime, this doesn’t seem to have really impacted the perception of their newly acquired allies as a lot of them see this as almost a normality due to being exposed to this quiet frequently in their regions.

With this approach to foreign relations and the allies Putin has been able to make we are starting to see a wall build up in the East, an alliance that doesn’t necessarily mean good news for the future of democracy. As with this year being one where 49% of the world’s population is being conveyed to the polls including the EU parliamentary elections the rise of the Anti-western sentiment is increasing and spreading not only in the “Global South” but in Europe as well, with growing pro Russia sentiments spreading even within EU members as can be seen with the recent election of the pro-Russian Slovakian president or the growing popularity of far right parties in Europe in general.

As we see this Russian led fight against democracy and the West unravel itself, I believe that

sanctions have become useless as Russia has found countless ways to navigate around them with the help of other nations. With a Foreign Policy aimed at destroying Western hegemony, and a Cold War like international atmosphere, the future has never seemed so unpredictable. At this point anticipating Russia or its allies next moves is very complicated. While we thought that World War Two would be the war to end all wars it once again seems that human kind and its leaders never learn from the past mistakes. With NATO bracing themselves for a third world war in perspective and a gradual decline of democracy, it is hard to determine who will make it out on top. That is if anyone makes it out whether it be the West, the East or the Global South.

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