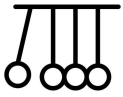


TURKEY'S UNHEARD VOICES

# Addressing the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

POLITICS

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## Abstract

Russian-Ukrainian ties have always been intricate and varied, influenced by geopolitical, historical, cultural, and economic variables. Ukraine has worked to declare its independence and establish itself as a sovereign nation free from Russian influence since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. But in an effort to keep control over its neighbor and keep Ukraine from allying too closely with Western powers—especially NATO and the EU—Russia has continuously seen Ukraine as a crucial strategic and cultural ally.

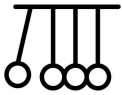
In particular, after Ukraine's Euromaidan uprisings in 2014, which resulted in the removal of the country's pro-Russian president and Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea, tensions between Russia and Ukraine have sharply increased in recent years.

The ongoing confrontation between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatist organizations in eastern Ukraine is a result of this action, which was strongly denounced by the world community and marked a key turning point in Russia-Ukraine relations.

Due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which was predicated on worries over the fate of Russian-speaking populations in eastern Ukraine and the alleged threat posed by NATO expansion, the battle became much more intense. The invasion has caused massive destruction, the eviction of inhabitants, and a high death toll. As a result, it has drawn international censure and set off a humanitarian crisis.

Tensions are still high despite continuous diplomatic attempts to end the conflict, as both sides use military action and propaganda campaigns to further their own agendas. The situation between Russia and Ukraine remains fluid and volatile, with the potential for further escalation and instability in the region.

This report examines the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, beginning with Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022 and delving deep into the historical roots, including Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and its support for separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, which led to the Donbas war as well as Russia's Soviet past. The report also talks about Key battles in Mariupol, Kherson, Bakhmut, and Avdiivka marked turning points, with Ukraine launching successful counter offensives, while also highlighting military strategies, territorial changes, and the role of international support, especially from NATO and Western nations. Alongside all mentions, it also focuses on how diplomatic negotiations have failed to produce lasting peace, and the war continues with an uncertain resolution, affecting global security and diplomatic relations.



## Definition of Key Terms

**Buffer:** In geopolitical terms, a buffer refers to a neutral zone or territory situated between two rival or conflicting powers, intended to reduce the risk of direct confrontation or conflict.

**Sphere of influence:** A geographic area or region where a powerful nation or entity exerts significant political, economic, or cultural influence, often without direct control or formal annexation.

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO):** A military and political alliance with 30 members from Europe and North America that was founded in 1949. NATO members commit to mutual defense in the event of an attack on any of their fellow members, with the main goal being collective defense.

**Institute for the Study of War (ISW):** A non-partisan, non-profit organization based in the United States that conducts research and analysis on military and geopolitical affairs. The ISW provides reports and assessments on various conflicts and security issues around the world.

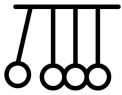
**Federal Security Service (FSB):** The principal security and intelligence agency of the Russian Federation, responsible for counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and national security. It is the successor agency to the Soviet-era KGB.

**KGB (Committee for State Security):** The main security agency of the Soviet Union, responsible for intelligence, counterintelligence, and internal security. It operated from 1954 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

**Dnipro River:** Also known as the Dnieper River, it is one of the major rivers in Europe, flowing through Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. It is of significant geopolitical importance, serving as a key transportation route and water source.

**Black Sea fleet:** The naval fleet of the Russian Federation based in the Black Sea region, with its headquarters in Sevastopol, Crimea. It plays a strategic role in Russia's maritime security and projection of power in the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions.

**Membership Action Plan (MAP):** A program established by NATO to assist aspiring member countries in preparing for possible membership in the alliance. It includes political, military, economic, and legal reforms aimed at aligning a country's policies and institutions with NATO standards.



## General Overview

Before dawn on February 24, 2022, Russia launched dozens of missile strikes on cities across Ukraine, initiating its invasion. Russian ground forces advanced swiftly, taking up vast swaths of Ukraine in a matter of weeks and reaching the city's outskirts. In addition to encircling the port city of Mariupol and capturing land as far east and south as Kherson, Russian forces were also bombing Kharkiv. However, they encountered fierce resistance from the Ukrainians practically everywhere and had significant logistical issues with unmotivated

### How military control of Ukraine has changed

Feb 2022: Before the invasion



Mar 2022: Russia's rapid advance



Nov 2022: Ukraine regains ground



Nov 2023: Ukraine advances



■ Russian military control      ■ Held or regained by Ukraine  
▨ Limited Russian military control      □ Russia annexed Crimea in 2014  
■ Russian-backed separatist-held areas

Note: Areas held or regained by Ukraine were reset by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) on 12 May 2023

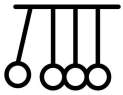
Source: Institute for the Study of War

BBC

Russian troops who were low on supplies of food, drink, and ammunition. Western-supplied weaponry, such as the NLAW anti-tank system, which proved to be extremely effective against the Russian advance, was also swiftly deployed by Ukrainian forces. By October 2022, things had drastically shifted, and Russia had fully withdrawn from the north after failing to seize Kyiv. Ukraine was hopeful that its counteroffensive might tip the scales in its favor more than a year after the invasion.

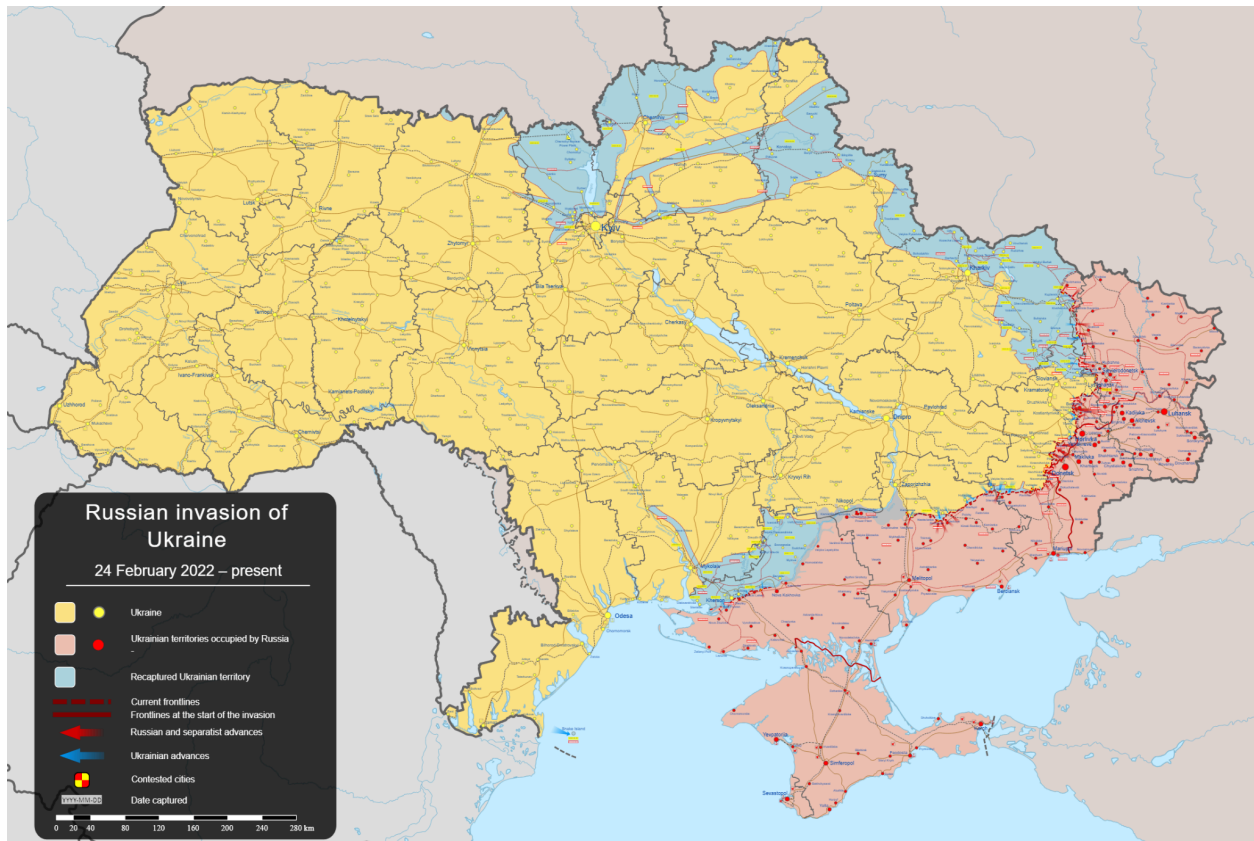
After more than four months of combat, Ukraine's counteroffensive appeared to gain momentum as winter approached. Ukraine asserted that it had secured a strategic position on the eastern bank of

the Dnipro River, potentially facilitating the movement of essential equipment across the river. In contrast, Russia concentrated its efforts in eastern Ukraine, with clashes reported near Bakhmut and Donetsk. Andriy Yermak, Chief of Staff to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, declared this success following reports from US-based experts indicating limited progress in the village of Krynky, located 2 km (1.25 miles) inland from the river. On November 15, 2023, Russia acknowledged the presence of "small groups" of Ukrainian forces in the settlement but insisted they had suffered heavy losses and had little chance of

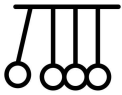


success. Vladimir Saldo, Russia's appointed official for overseeing the Russian-occupied regions of the Kherson area, described the situation as a "fiery hell" and announced the deployment of additional forces. However, it took two days for Russia to acknowledge that Ukrainian forces had established a foothold, following the retraction of earlier reports of a withdrawal by Russian state media.

The conflict in Bakhmut was a focal point of Russian efforts, according to experts



from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW). Despite Ukraine's gains in surrounding territories over the summer, including the villages of Kupyansk and Andriivka, fighting in Bakhmut persisted for several months. Avdiivka, near Donetsk, also saw advances by Russian forces. President Zelensky noted on November 14, 2023, that while fighting was intensifying near the town, Russian forces were sustaining losses in their attempts to seize it. The UK Ministry of Defence highlighted the town's political significance, suggesting that Russia may be aiming to encircle it due to its proximity to Donetsk. Recent developments suggested that Russian forces were advancing toward a critical coke and chemical facility north of Avdiivka, currently held by Ukrainian forces. The Ministry of Defence warned that if Russian forces captured the factory, resupplying Avdiivka would become increasingly challenging for Ukraine. However, they anticipated significant casualties if Russian soldiers attempted an attack. In addition to ground offensives, Ukraine escalated strikes on the Crimean Peninsula as part of its counteroffensive. A missile attack on the port of Sevastopol on September 22, 2023, resulted in the deaths of 34 Russian officers and significant damage to naval infrastructure. Further attacks targeted a powerful Russian air defense system and



radar sites, posing a threat to Russia's Black Sea fleet operations. Russia's Black Sea navy also threatened Ukraine's grain export routes, prompting alternative shipping methods via the Danube River ports.

By 2024, Ukraine's counteroffensive had slowed, and the war transitioned into a phase of grinding attrition. Russia retained control over roughly 20% of Ukrainian territory, making incremental gains in the east. Both sides suffered significant casualties, and the battlefield situation remained highly fluid. Throughout 2024, Russia continued heavy bombardments of Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv, Odessa, and Kharkiv, while Ukraine intensified its drone and missile strikes deep into Russian territory. Attacks on Russian military and logistical infrastructure, including oil refineries and air bases, signaled a shift in Ukraine's strategy. International support for Ukraine remained strong but faced challenges.

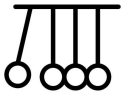
Since January 2022, Ukraine had received approximately \$407 billion in aid, with over \$118 billion coming from the United States. However, concerns over donor fatigue emerged, particularly in the U.S. and Europe, where political debates over continued military assistance intensified.

As of early 2025, the situation remains uncertain. Ukraine continues to resist Russian aggression, using both military and diplomatic channels to counter Moscow's advances. While the front lines have remained largely static in recent months, both sides continue to exchange drone and artillery strikes daily. The international community continues to closely monitor the war, emphasizing the need for a peaceful resolution and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity. Meanwhile, humanitarian efforts persist, providing aid to those affected by the ongoing conflict. Ukraine remains determined to defend its sovereignty, but the war's outcome is far from clear. The next phase of the conflict will likely depend on continued Western support, the resilience of Ukraine's forces, and Russia's ability to sustain its prolonged war effort.

## Historical Overview

After the collapse of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in 1991, (during president Gorbachev's rule) caused by an unsuccessful coup against his government, the Western world sealed the fate of the Soviet Union encouraging prior soviet states to declare independence and joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In the situation of Ukraine, every year on August 24th — Independence Day — Ukraine indicates three decades of liberation from the influence of the Soviet puppet government, a celebration that traces back to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. On that large day the Ukrainian Parliament decided by an extraordinary 92% of votes, to leave the Soviet Union.



During its existence, the USSR, also known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was made up of fifteen member republics.

These republics, which were located in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, differed greatly in terms of their terrain, populations, and cultures. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of the USSR; after World War II, it became the leading world power and engaged in a protracted Cold War conflict with the US that influenced international politics for decades.

It was a powerful economic and military force that made substantial contributions to scientific and technological developments, especially in the field of space exploration. But in the end, the USSR's totalitarian political structure and centralized command economy proved intolerable, which resulted in its disintegration in 1991. The Soviet Union's influence is still felt in geopolitics, historical memory, and the socioeconomic development of its successor states. Although Ukraine kept a neutral status in European politics for a long time, recent



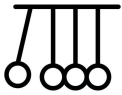
actions by the Russian Federation have led Ukraine to consider joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Such a move would secure military aid from Western nations like the United States, the United Kingdom and France, in times of conflict; this need has grown as tensions with Russia have surged, especially after Ukraine's initial NATO membership bid in 1992.

Back in 2008 Ukraine sought a Membership Action Plan by NATO after getting backing from President George W. Bush — this indicated a formal search for inclusion; however their application was halted when France and Germany, following Russia's objection decided not to extend their support in 2008. Russia's strong opposition to Ukraine's NATO membership primarily stems from the fear of Western competitors establishing a presence in a neighboring country. In response, Western powers have recently deployed NATO troops along the Polish border to safeguard the closest neighboring NATO member state.

Following these actions, in 1999, Russia's political field changed, leading Russia into an unprecedented change of government that was going to last decades... President Vladimir Putin has not had the typical entrance into the global political sphere, in fact, it was not until 2000 that President Vladimir Putin had been a political figure.

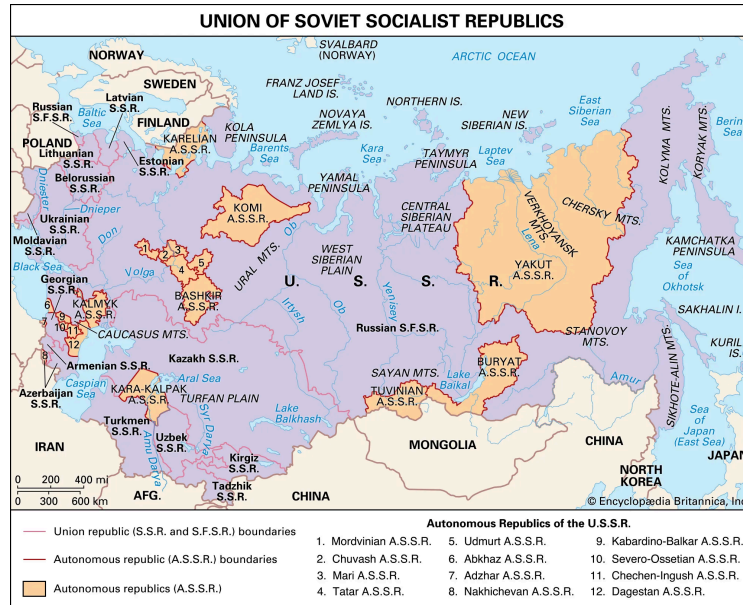
Vladimir Putin initially got his start working as a KGB agent for the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union Putin gained prominent positions within the Kremlin, such





as becoming the head of the Federal Security Service under President Boris Yeltsin. After the first president of the Russian Federation suddenly resigned from office at the end of 1999, Vladimir Putin ran for political office securing 53% of the Russian vote granting him the presidency of Russia. Vladimir Putin ran a campaign that was focused on weeding out

corruption within the Russian government as well as pushing to create a strong market economy. In order to weed out the corruption that plagued the Russian government, Putin went as far as jailing the oligarchs that were the financiers of many of the projects proposed by the government. Putin went as far as shuttering several news sources that were controlled by different oligarchs that utilized their news outlets to sway the public opinion of the Russian citizens. Following that day, president Vladimir



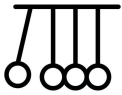
Putin's objectives for Ukraine have always been to center on keeping Russian influence in the area and keeping Ukraine from becoming overly aligned with the West, especially with NATO and the EU. Putin has wanted to keep Ukraine inside his sphere of influence as he has always seen it as an essential buffer between Russia and Western countries.

This might entail working to overthrow the current Ukrainian government, backing pro-Russian groups there, and preserving the business connections that keep Ukraine dependent on Russia. Furthermore, Putin might keep reiterating Russia's interests in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, where pro-Russian separatist movements have been active, possibly in an effort to maintain Russian control over these areas or to use them as leverage over the western world.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The Russian Federation views its actions in Ukraine as a means of protecting the rights of Russian-speaking people and ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, particularly in Crimea and Donbas. Citing historical ties and the need to safeguard its inhabitants, Russia has annexed Crimea and supports separatist movements in eastern Ukraine. Moscow justifies its involvement as a response to what it considers an adversarial Ukrainian government, denying





direct military participation and framing its actions as a defense against Ukrainian aggression while preserving its strategic influence in the region.

Ukraine, on the other hand, sees Russia's actions as direct aggression and a violation of its sovereignty. Kyiv considers the annexation of Crimea and support for separatist rebels in Donbas as unlawful encroachments on its territorial integrity. In response, Ukraine has sought both military and diplomatic means to regain control over the affected areas. To counter Russian aggression and secure its borders, Ukraine looks to Western allies, particularly the European Union and NATO, for political, economic, and military assistance.

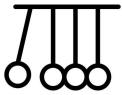
The United States of America has been one of the most vocal critics of Russia's actions in Ukraine. Condemning the annexation of Crimea and support for separatists, the U.S. has imposed sanctions on Russia and has consistently advocated for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity on the global stage. In addition to diplomatic support, the U.S. has provided substantial military aid to Ukraine, including lethal assistance such as anti-tank missiles. While backing diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, the U.S. also supports Ukraine's initiatives to combat corruption and implement governmental reforms.

The United Kingdom aligns with its NATO and European allies in denouncing Russia's actions. It has played a key role in coordinating international responses, including sanctions against Russia. The UK has provided military aid, equipment, and training to Ukraine's armed forces while advocating for diplomatic solutions to the conflict. Additionally, it strongly supports holding accountable those responsible for war crimes and human rights abuses committed during the war.

China has maintained a largely neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, balancing its diplomatic relations with both nations. While emphasizing the importance of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, China also acknowledges Russia's historical ties to Crimea. It advocates for dialogue and negotiation to resolve the crisis and has abstained from UN resolutions on the matter. China avoids direct condemnation or endorsement of Russia's actions, prioritizing its diplomatic and economic interests with both sides.

France, as a key member of the European Union, condemns Russia's annexation of Crimea and its backing of separatist forces in eastern Ukraine. It has been instrumental in shaping EU policies and sanctions against Russia while supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. France promotes diplomatic dialogue to resolve the crisis and has contributed humanitarian aid and assistance to Ukraine in coordination with its European partners.

The European Union collectively opposes Russia's actions in Ukraine, viewing the annexation of Crimea and support for separatists as violations of international law. In response, the EU has imposed economic sanctions on Russia while providing Ukraine with financial and diplomatic support. The EU encourages Ukrainian reforms and closer



integration with Europe while advocating for a peaceful resolution through diplomatic negotiations.

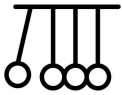
The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has reaffirmed its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and strongly condemns Russia's involvement in the conflict. NATO members have supplied Ukraine with military assistance, including weapons and training. In response to Russian aggression, NATO has also bolstered its military presence in Eastern Europe, viewing the crisis as a direct threat to regional security and stability. While supporting diplomatic solutions, NATO remains committed to deterring further Russian actions through strategic defense measures.

The BRICS group—comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—emphasizes diplomacy as the key to resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Although individual BRICS members have varying positions, the group collectively prioritizes dialogue, negotiation, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. BRICS members urge all sides to uphold international law and prevent further escalation, advocating for stability in the region while maintaining their own economic and geopolitical interests.

Western allies, including the U.S., EU, and NATO members, stand firmly in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. They have imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea and involvement in eastern Ukraine. Western nations provide Ukraine with significant political, economic, and military assistance, including financial aid, training, and non-lethal military equipment. While advocating for a diplomatic resolution, they stress adherence to international law and the necessity of continued dialogue to de-escalate tensions.

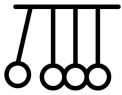
### Timeline of Events

<b>2014</b>	<i>February 20: Protests begin in Ukraine against President Yanukovich's decision to abandon an association agreement with the EU.</i>
<b>2014</b>	<i>March 16: Crimea holds a controversial referendum and votes to join Russia.</i>
<b>2014</b>	<i>April 7: Pro-Russian separatists seize government buildings in eastern Ukraine.</i>
<b>2014</b>	<i>May 25: Petro Poroshenko is elected president of Ukraine.</i>



## TURKEY'S UNHEARD VOICES

<b>2014</b>	<i>July 17: Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 is shot down over eastern Ukraine.</i>
<b>2014</b>	<i>September 5: Ceasefire agreement (Minsk Protocol) is signed.</i>
<b>2014</b>	<i>September 19: Minsk Protocol ceasefire breaks down.</i>
<b>2015</b>	<i>February 12: Minsk II ceasefire agreement is signed.</i>
<b>2015</b>	<i>September 1: Another ceasefire attempt begins.</i>
<b>2016-2020</b>	<i>Period of sporadic fighting and ceasefire violations with no significant breakthroughs.</i>
<b>2016-2020</b>	<i>Ongoing diplomatic efforts, including negotiations under the Normandy Format.</i>
<b>2021-2023</b>	<i>Tensions escalate as Russia amasses troops near the Ukrainian border.</i>
<b>2021-2023</b>	<i>Diplomatic efforts to prevent further escalation intensify.</i>
<b>2021-2023</b>	<i>Occasional flare-ups of violence in eastern Ukraine.</i>
<b>2021-2023</b>	<i>Ongoing international pressure for a peaceful resolution and respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity.</i>
<b>2024</b>	<i>Ukraine launches a major offensive in the eastern region, aiming to reclaim occupied territories.</i>
<b>2024</b>	<i>Russian President Vladimir Putin modifies Russia's nuclear doctrine, stating that Russia would treat a conventional attack by an ally of a nuclear state as grounds for Moscow to launch a nuclear strike.</i>



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<b>2025</b>	<i>Russian forces capture the strategic town of Kurakhove in eastern Ukraine after months of intense fighting.</i>
<b>2025</b>	<i>U.S. President Donald Trump announces plans to commence peace talks immediately with Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war in Ukraine.</i>