JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 2, Issue 4, No. 1 / December 2024
https://www.jopd.com.ng

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW RESEARCH TECHNIQUE: CHALLENGES IN THE STUDY OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

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Abstract
The application of systematic review approach in answering socio-political questions, although adjudged to be quite meticulous and reliable, has not been fully embraced in the field of political science. While systematic review has a robust and long history of usage within the medical and clinical sciences where it originated and its utilization dates back to the early 20th century, it is only in the last three decades that it caught the attention of political researchers as a potentially veritable tools of conducting political inquiries. Political tenets, such as systematic analysis of data, rigorous data collection process, validity and reliability requirements, are all embedded in the application of systematic reviews, where there is a high reliance on evidence-based data collection process. The objective of this study, is to document and apply this approach in answering the question of how various regions perceived the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Many articles have been written on this particular conflict that shows regions perceptions of the crises. This research selected and systematically reviewed few articles that cut across the Western region, Asian region and the African region to determine their perspectives of this conflict and how these perceptions have influenced their level of involvements in the crisis. The findings of the study show that most Western based articles and governments and their alliances across other regions, considered Russia as the aggressor that need to be stopped at all cost, this believe is what informed the level of support they have given to Ukraine thus far. On the other hand, Asia journals and governments, while not supporting the invasion, considered Western countries and their military alliance North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansionist conduct into Russia area of influence as the primary reason for Russian actions in Ukraine, this is why most Asian countries have not provided any material support to neither side of the warring countries. African perception is that of neutral disposition without overtly committing resources and personnel to ally with any of the warring parties. The study therefore recommends that the U.S. and its Western and other collaborators should stop the expansionist tendencies of NATO into Russia area of influence. Russia should also stop this conflict and other oppressive activities in Ukraine on the premise that the U.S. and its cohorts give concrete commitment to stop further military expansion in the Asia region. Also, the global community should come together to assist Ukraine to rebuild its destroyed infrastructure and her economy in general. The study finds the application of systematic review as a veritable tool to objectively harness cross-sectional views and arrive at an unbiased conclusion.

Key words: *Conflict, Research, Review, Systematic, perspective*

Introduction

Systematic review is a painstaking research approach which makes attempt at reproducible data collection, appraisal and synthesizing to answer a predetermined question. It is evidence-based empirical investigation of a phenomenon that is guided by a set of protocol that the researcher wishes to apply in order to find answer to a socio-political question. This study is

an exposition of the applicability of systematic review in political studies in order to make it more accessible and usable in political inquiries. While there are other research methodologies in the field of political science, an increase in the usage of systematic review will make political research findings richer and more scientific as it has a high level of replication which is the hallmark of scientific inquiry.

There are three main types of methodology namely; quantitative (only quantitative primary research studies), qualitative (only qualitative research studies), and mixed method (based on both quantitative and qualitative research studies) (Bettany-Saltikov, 2012). In short methodology is a scientific approach which begins with (a) specific review question, (b) identifies all relevant studies, (c) appraises their qualities and (d) summarizes their results using a scientific methodology. For the benefit of doubt, this work is more of qualitative methodology paper.

According to Yannascoli, Schenker, Carey, Ahn and Baldwin (2013), a systematic review is an effort to comprehensively and thoroughly collect, appraisal and synthesize all available empirical evidence that meets predefined criteria in order to answer a research question. In the view of Nunn and Chang (2020) systematic reviews are types of reviews that use repeatable analytical methods to collect secondary data and analyze them. They are a type of evidence synthesis which formulates research questions that are broad or narrow in scope, and identify and synthesize data that are directly related to the systematic review question. By this notion, there must be a set of question the researcher wish to answer before the introduction of systematic review that will guide the process of data sourcing.

A systematic review collects secondary data from all related and included existing primary studies, and synthesis all the available and relevant evidence for review (Pract, 2021). It needs to be thorough, transparent and reproducible methodology that indicates how data were identified and the criteria upon which they were included or excluded in the extraction.

As stated by Dacombe (2018), systematic reviews have been prominent in the fields of clinical and health sciences as a method of research synthesis. They have relied on a pool of good quality systematic review to identify emerging trends in research and intervention, reinforce their practice, and to highlight areas for future works. It is however surprising that political researchers have not embrace or tend to ignore or at best marginalize its usage even when it has become prominent in the social sciences, and researchers interested in education, social work, policy studies and criminology have all adopted the approach with considerable success (Davies, 2000; Gough &Elbourne, 2002; Wallace, Croucher, Quilgars, & Baldwin, 2004; Petticrew & Robert, 2006).

There are a lot of features in systematic review that are considered useful in the study of political phenomena these include the synthesis of a large amount of data while minimizing bias, the ability to fitter quality of existing research, and the potential for meta-analysis of the findings of different studies. It might also allow claims to be made about the effectiveness of political innovations or identify areas where existing research lacks depth and rigour. In a broad sense, the systematic review as a methodology that identifies existing researches, select and evaluate their contributions, analyses and synthesizes them and make a presentation in such a manner that allow for a clear conclusion to be drawn makes it amenable to a wild range of different approaches.

Buttressing the fact that political scientists should adopt more of systematic review in their studies. Dacombe (2018) asserted that political science researchers are already familiar with the idea of synthesis of existing research in their works. Literature review is a common approach that everyone working in the social discipline at some point have done. This is particularly important to political science because in carrying out systematic review, the research is actually interrogating the approach of the existing research conducted. Therefore

by aligning with the set standard of a primary research, systematic reviews are able to demonstrate significant advantages by reducing bias (Davies, 2000), increase transparency (Petticrew, 2001), and recording results, and synthesis in a manner which is transparent enough to allow replication (Hansen &Reiper, 2009).

While systematic review is a type of literature review, it however confers added advantages. It is 'a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review' (Siddaway, Wood & Hedges, 2019). It has the characteristics of being methodological, comprehensive, transparent and capacity to be replicated. It involves a systematic search process to locate all relevant published and unpublished works that address one or more aspects research question.

Research Objectives

This study is driven by the following Objectives:

1. To examine the shared perspectives of researchers who have written copiously on the war between Russia and Ukraine,
2. To examine the official pronouncements of different governments on the war and
3. To examine the relationship between regional views and the degree of support extended to either of the warring parties.

Systematic Review:

The process of conducting a systematic review involves several laid out structures. These structures are to ensure painstaking and transparency in synthesizing existing evidence on a specific research question(s). The key structures in this process are;

1. Formulation of Research Question

The beginning process in systematic review is to structure out and formulate the research question. This can either be done by stating it in the form of a query in free form or to pose it in a structured and explicit way. According to Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen& Antes (2003), the problem to be addressed by the review should be specified in the form of clear, unambiguous and structured question before beginning the review work. Once this review question has been set, only minimal alteration should be allowed in order not to deviate from the question and objective of the review. Such alteration can be in the form of population adjustment.

2. Developing Review Protocol

This stage involves drafting a detailed protocol that highlights the objectives, methods, search strategy, inclusive and exclusive criteria, data extraction process and analysis plan for the systematic review. This process needs to be documented and possibly published to establish transparency of the final work.

3. Search for the Studies

The search for the related studies should be extensive across multiple databases. To capture as many citations as possible, a wide range of literature should be searched to identify relevant studies. The search strategy should be systematic and should be conducted in such a way that it can be reproducible.

4. Study Selection, Data Extraction and Quality Assessment

This is a crucial stage in the review process. The selection of studies should be based on the predefined inclusive/exclusive criteria and only studies that meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the protocol should be selected. This process entails screening titles, abstracts and full texts of the studies. Extracting relevant data from the selected studies using a

standardized data extraction form. This form will itemize the study characteristics, participant demography, intervention details, outcomes and study result.

Selected studies should be subjected to a more refined quality assessment by the use of general critical appraisal guides and design-based quality checklists. It also assesses the methodological quality and the risk of bias for the included studies using appropriate tools. This step helps evaluate the strength of evidence in the systematic review.

5. Data Synthesis

Summarizing the evidence consists of tabulation of studies characteristics, qualities and effects as well as use of statistical methods for exploring differences between studies and combining their effects (meta-analysis), to provide an overall estimate of the effect size. This step may involve assessing heterogeneity across studies. If an overall meta-analysis cannot be achieved, subgroup meta-analysis should be feasible.

6. Interpretation of Findings

The result of the findings should be interpreted within the context of the research question and objectives of the systematic review. It should consider the quality of evidence, consistency of result generated and possible bias noticed. It will conclude be discussing implications for practice, policy and future research.

Merits of Systematic Review

Systematic reviews have been acknowledged to have numerous advantages by its users which can also bring thoroughness in research. The followings are some of the identified merits of systematic review.

i. **It minimizes bias in its application.** The rigorous methodologies applied in systematic review are conducted to minimize bias. The process of selecting, assessing and synthesizing are to be painstakingly done in order to enhance its reliability in its usage as against traditional literature review.
ii. **Comprehensive summary.** Systematic review presents a painstaking, thorough and unbiased integration of collected existing data from their primary sources to answer predetermined question. These data are systematically searched for, selected and appraised before inclusion into the basket of data for synthesizes.
iii. **It is an evidence based decision making approach**. Systematic reviews are found to be crucial in forming evidence-based decision-making in various fields of studies such as public policy, healthcare, and social sciences by coming out with a consolidated view of what the current evidence states.
iv. **Has ability to identify knowledge gaps**. Because of its review of existing studies approach, the systematic review can highlight gaps in primary researches where they exist thereby creating a new standard which serves as a guide to future researches in the similar field of study.
v. **Capacity of being reproducible**. The process of data gathering in systematic review makes it rigorous, transparent and replicable. This advantage makes it amenable for other researchers to verify and replicate the review process and findings and this is what brings the scientific attribute into the study.
vi. **Time saving capacity**. Researchers and policy makers are able to save valuable time by synthesizing existing evidence in one source. It thereby reduces the need to research and review individual studies separately.

Overall systematic reviews are veritable instrument for synthesizing evidence-based decision-making across various fields of studies.

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Challenges of Systematic Review:

Just like its inherent merits the systematic review also faces a couple of challenges. These include;

i. **Requires huge resources.** To conduct systematic review requires intensive resources in term of time, expertise and funding. To undertake the process of thorough planning, meticulous sourcing of evidence, and selection, data extraction and synthesis are daunting. A researcher must be willing to commit time, financial resource and have a good knowledge base to undertake comprehensive systematic review.
ii. **Only possible where there are existing evidence**. Systematic review can only be possible where the researchers have access to quantum of existing evidence to tap review from. Where such evidence is unavailable, it will be fruitless to undertake the conduct of systematic review. The fact that it is evidence-based approach is a major setback in the utilization of systematic review to answer research question.
iii. **Quality of included studies.** Again, systematic review depends on the quality of primary studies conducted to come out either as good or bad review. Where such existing studies are of low quality due to wrong methodology or bias in findings, the results of the systematic review conducted will naturally be compromised.
iv. **Possibility for bias in interpretation**. Despite efforts to reduce bias in the review process, there is still potential risk of bias in the interpretation of findings. This is mostly possible when the review team have a preconceived notions of or preference regarding the research question.
v. Limited in scope. Systematic reviews may not always address every aspect of a research question. This is because there are already a predefined inclusion criteria or limitation in available data. This will potentially leave out some critical aspects that the scope did not cover.
vi. In spite of the above limitations, systematic review remains a veritable means of synthesizing evidence and decision-making. This is when it is conducted rigorously and interpreted cautiously.

Application of Systematic Review in Russian-Ukraine Conflict:

The war between Russia and Ukraine started as a conflict in 2014, following Russia's annexation of Crimea which was followed subsequent by a series of supports for Ukrainian separatist activities in the eastern part of the country (Gotz & Ekman, 2024). The current full blown out war started on the 24th of February 2022 when Russia president Vladimir Putin ordered the Russian military to forcefully cross the border and invade Ukraine. Almost two and a half years later, the war is still on going with no end in sight. Millions of women and children have been either killed or seriously affected by the war, with homes, public facilities and institutions like schools destroyed. The war is a complex geopolitical issue involving territorial disputes, ethnic tensions and broader geopolitical implications.

Ukraine on its part has been trying to push-back and with the support of its Western allies, principally the United State, it has made a major comeback after the initial shock of Russia forceful invasion. This enormous act of bravery of Ukraine have been applauded globally and this has become a source of frustration for President Putin and the Russian military, that were hoping for a quick and easy run-over in Ukraine.

The war has made significant negative economic impacts at both local, regional and global levels. The U.S and her Western counterparts and other allies around the world have pronounced and implemented series of social, financial and economic sanctions on Kremlin since the commencement of the war. Figure 1, below show a few of such sanctions.

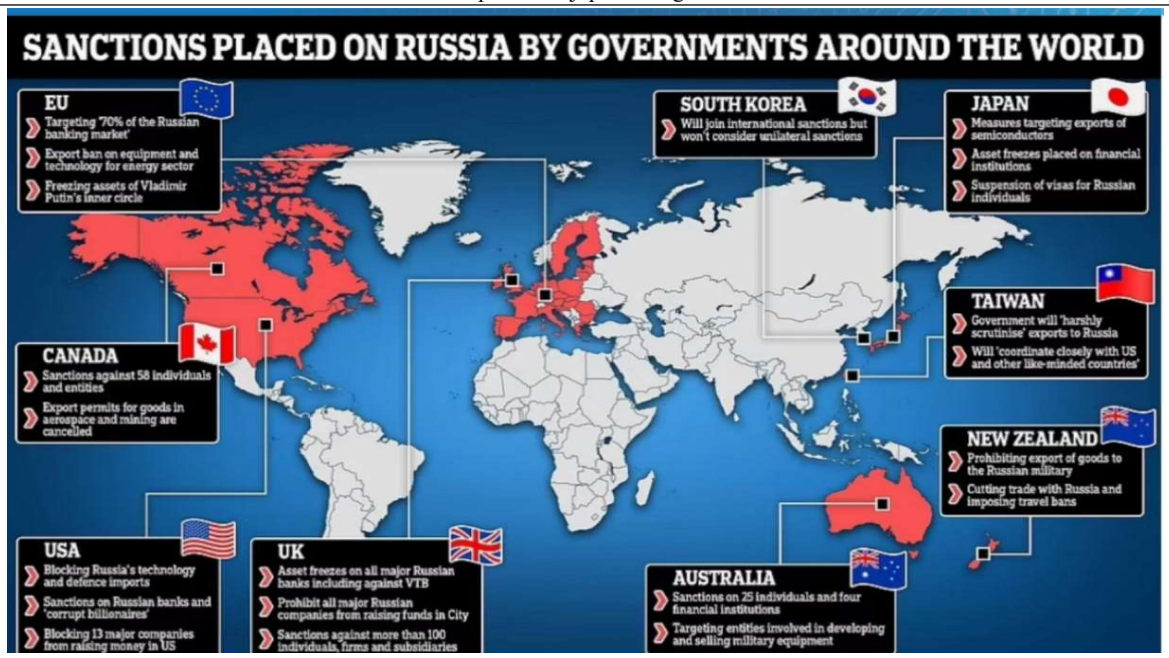


Figure 1, Culled from www.HHS.GOV/HC3.

Criteria for Systematic Review of Russia-Ukraine Conflict:

Since the outbreak of the war, there have been various perspectives concerning the reasons and causes of the war. Consequently, divergent views and blames have been leveled both from governmental sources, public opinions and from documented studies are all available for review. Therefore, the research question for the study is centered on determining the criteria, perspectives and views of governments and researchers on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and to determine the relationship between regional perspective and the degree of support expended to either of the warring parties. The objective of the research is to use the systematic review approach to examine selected articles to determine the regional socioeconomic and political perspectives of Western, Asia and Africa regions, governments and scholars on the cause, implications and solution to this raging conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The articles for this research were selected from the databases located in the three regions as indicated, Western, Asia and Africa and their perspectives and opinions were synthesized to give evidence-based position of the war. The selected articles were included in the study based on their disposition towards the research question and objective.

The standardized data extraction form was used to extract information from the selected articles. For this research, the form was structured to include; name of the Author(s) of the article, title of the Article, database or source of the article, the publication date and year, method used in the study, research findings and comments.

Below is a sample of the extracted information from some the reviewed articles as indicated in table 1.

Sample of thematic analysis of selected articles

Some Thematic Synthesizes of Perspectives.				
Authors	**Title**	**Region of Domicile**	**Database**	**Perspective**
Metre, V. M., Gienger, V. G., $ Kuehnast, K. (2015)	The Ukraine-Russia Conflict: Signals and Scenarios for the Broader Region.	West	United States Institute of Peace, 2301 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC.	The current conflict between Russia and Ukraine dates back to 2014 with the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the take-over of prominent government buildings by pro-Russia separatists in the eastern region of Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin has apply the tactics of destabilization of the neighbouring nations that were formally under the Soviet Union to bring them under Russia hegemony. This article highlighted four scenarios that could account as possible drivers of Russia current war in Ukraine. These include the level of instability, whether indegenous or externally provoked, within Ukraine. Secondly, the level of stability and internal support for Putin serves as a buffer for Russia aggression in Ukraine. The article also highlighted the degree of Western response to Russian action as another possible driver, weak response to potential conflict might embolden Russian quest for regional dominance. Lastly, Putin's personal goals and objectives are a key driver in this conflict. What Putin is seeking to achieve is also a major factor in this particular conflict.
Gotz, E., & Ekman, P. (2024)	Russia's War Against Ukraine: Context, Causes, and Consequences	West	Problem of Post-Communism, 71, 3, 193-205, DOI:10.1081/1075821 6.2024.2343640	This identified three possible explanations for Russia invasion of Ukraine, which ranges from Putin's imperial ambitions, to domestic factors within Russia and external pressure. As Torbakov (2022) puts it, Russia's attack is attributable to Putin's imperial fantasies, historical nostalgia, and the resentment towards the West. There is also the notion that internal democratic consideration also propelled Russia action in Ukraine. This notion comes in two variants, firstly, there is the fear that an increasing democratization in Ukraine will have contagious effect on Russians who will likely rise up against Putin regime given the geographical, cultural and social closeness between the two countries.

Some Thematic Synthesizes of Perspectives.

Authors	Title	Region of Domicile	Database	Perspective
				The second notion hinted on the belief that Russia war with Ukraine is a tactics to deflect the Russian population away from internal problems. This point was stressed by Gomza (2022) with the notion that Putin is attempting to rebuild his popularity after the tumultuous election of 2018. The third and last explanation according to Gotz and Ekman (2024), is anchored on the notion that Russia invasion of Ukraine is a response to aggressive action by the West. In particular, this point argued that efforts by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to build a close military- strategic alliance with Ukraine elicited the ire of Moscow.
Gotz, E., & S taun, J. (2022)	Why Russia attacked Ukraine: Strategic Culture and Radicalized Narratives	West	*Contemporary Security Policy, 43*(3), 482-497. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2082633.	The article in an attempt to determine the reason for Russia attack on Ukraine, view it from the point of strategic culture. In respect of this, it identified two view points, namely that Russia has a deep-seated sense of vulnerability expecially towards the Western countries. This underscore the essence of having strategic depth and buffer zones. Secondly, there is another strand that revolves around a feeling of entitlement to great power status. It stresses that for Russia to achieve this great power vision, it must have the right to a sphere of influence within the Eurasian region. Therefore Ukraine continuous drift towards the West it perceived as a threat to Russia national security interest and great power standing. The stragegic culture of Russia have always been to exert influence over the post-Soviet space and Ukraine in particular.
Pawluszko, T. (2023)	The conflict between Russia and Ukraine: The causes of the war, security studies and the formation of an epistemic community	Asia	*Bezpieczens two Theory and Practice*, *3*, 52, 12-28. DOI:10.48269/2451-0718-btip-2023-3-001.	In explaining the reasons why Russia is in Ukraine, Pawluszko (2023) broke it down into three analytical levels. Level 1, leaders, elites and the people; level 2, the state and its policies and level 3, the international system and its rules. In discussing the first level, he itemized the personal ambitions of Vladimir Putin, the constant fear of NATO by the elites, belief in the weakness of Ukrainian politicians, conviction about the

Some Thematic Synthesizes of Perspectives.

Authors	Title	Region of Domicile	Database	Perspective
	in Poland.			weakness of the Western elites, the need for historical success and Putin's Russian supporters desire to intimidate local and external democratic politicians. At the level of state and its policies, he recognized the growing assertiveness of the Russian security strategy, the strategy for Russia to dominate the sphere of former USSR, assertive and pro-European policy of Ukraine and loss of Russia influence in the areas of the former Soviet Union. Lastly, at the third level of international system and its rules, he identified the division of the international system into opposing blocs: democratic and authoritarian regimes, the rivalry of states for hegemony in Eurasia, the growing number of fields of rivalry between China and the US creates room for local conflicts, Russia continuous conflict with the West as an allies of China, and lastly Russia wants to test the reaction of the West and increase its prestige and importance in the international system.
Reeves, J. (2023)	Southeast Asian States Have Their Own Views on the Ukraine War	Asia	Asia Policy, 18, 2, 55-63. DOI: https://doi.10.1353/asp.2023.0020	What determine the perspective from which regions look at the war between Russia and Ukraine is dependent on their perculier situation. According to this perception, whereas Western narratives on the implication of the Ukraine war focus almost exclusively on Russia's threat to the international rules-based order, most Asian states commentators primarily write about the war's consequences in socioeconomic terms. This accounted for why most Asian states tend to play neutral role in the war and tend to be more receptive of Russia's narrative of self-defense against Western encroachment and hegemony, rather then viewing Moscow's decision to initiate war as inherently aggressive. The idea of bandwagoning with great power in this war do not serve their national interest. Both policy makers and academics are fundamental committed to nonalignmnet, neutrality and flexibility in their approach to the war. There are only very few states in Asia that

Some Thematic Synthesizes of Perspectives.

Authors	Title	Region of Domicile	Database	Perspective
				have expressed support for international action against Russia.
Obadare, E. (2022).	Analyzing the Russia-Ukraine conflict from an African standpoint. Council on Foreign Relations.	Africa	www.cfr.org/blog/analyzing-russia-ukraine-conflict-from-an-african-standpoint.	To most African leaders, the economic need of Africans is most paramount in their considerations. The current economic impact occasioned by the war is already biting hard on their economies without additional complication of having to take sides in a war that would have the potential of worsening their current state of food insecurity. The sanctions imposed on Russia by the West and its allies and Russia's countermeasure response have added to already existing supply chain constraints, posing threats to food security, macro-economic stability and political order in African countries that are very dependent on wheat, maize, fertilizer and gas. Shortages of these and associated price inflation very quickly translate into severe stresses in individual household welfare, and if not curbed, could translate into political protests.

Synthesizing of Perspectives on Russia Ukraine Conflict:

Varying perspectives emerged from the selected articles and governmental databases reviewed and these opinions range from outright condemnation of Russia invasion of Ukraine to docile indifference on the part of some countries and to open support of Russia aggression towards Ukraine. While it is safe to say that perspectives of countries and articles from each of the reviewed region are not unanimous in their views of condemnation or support of the war as pursue by Russia, it is however strongly asserted that regional perspectives have so much to do with opinion expressed by governments across the regions.

From the review conducted, findings indicate that most Asian writers and governments that have historical ties with Russia tend to blame the Western countries especially the United States. They perceive the U.S and its western allies as using the instrumentality of NATO to create inroad into Asia countries thereby creating security uncertainty within the region. According to Gotz and Ekman (2024), the main reason for Russia aggression towards Ukraine is traceable to Ukraine interest in becoming a member of NATO and a strong allied of the Western countries, especially the United States. The narrative that Russia's invasion is linked to NATO's expansion has been a significant point of discussion in most countries. Aside Russia other countries with this notion include Belarus, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba and although China and India have not openly expressed support for Russia they are however concerned about this expansion.

On the opposing end of the above views are those regions, countries and writers mostly of global west that hold the notion that Russia aggression in Ukraine is a condemnation act that is solely orchestrated by Putin and the Russian ruling class to create a hegemony especially within the former Soviet Union countries. The most outspoken advocate against and condemnation of Russia invasion of Ukraine is the United States government. The U.S stated that the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 is a violation of the right of a sovereign state as enshrined in international law. According to the White House (2023), in responding to this act of aggression by the Russian government, the U.S has rallied the world in response, and working with other allies to provide support to the Ukrainian government and people with security, economic and humanitarian assistance and also leading unprecedented efforts to impose costs on Russia for its aggression.

The European Union have also expressed her condemnation of this war and have reaffirmed her unwavering commitment to providing continued political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes and as intensely as needed (European Council, 2024). Following a similar path, the U.K government unequivocally condemned what it termed the unprovoked and premeditated war against Ukraine and declared that the U.K government is providing a range of economic, humanitarian and defensive military assistance to Ukraine, and is imposing additional sanctions on Russia and Belarus (Gov.UK, 2024). This condemnation of the Russian government and support for the Ukrainian government and people have reverberated around Europe and North America countries since the commencement of the war.

Aside governmental support for Ukraine and the rebuke of Russia for the ongoing war, some of the reviewed papers also expressed their individual opinion and as expected most Western journals leaned their support toward Ukraine as the victim and condemn Russia for what they perceived as unjust and unwarranted war.

The views from Southeast Asia could be compartmentalized into three phases. At the onset of the invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022, it took the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN) just two days to react to the aggression, that is by the 26th of February they issued a joint statement through the forum of foreign ministers where they expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in Ukraine, and called on all parties to the conflict to exercise maximum restraint and resolve the crisis peacefully. This first joint statement was subsequently followed by two others as the war escalated, the second one was also in tune with the first, expressing concern about the growing humanitarian crisis and also expressing their willingness to mediate between the warring neighbour. The last statement that came on the 8th of April also expressed concern about the worsening humanitarian crisis and they also extend their support to the statement by the United Nations calling for the creation of an independent commission of inquiry on civilian casualties. Curiously, of these three statements, none directly cast blame on Russia for the invasion nor on Ukraine for it actions leading to the war. The attitude of ASEAN has remained consistent throughout the period of these statements.

With the intensity and advancement of the war, individual country has been making sole pronouncements, for instance, Singapore stood out as the first ASEAN member country to openly single out Russia for blame in the crisis. Singapore expressed strong condemnation of Russia for what it terms unprovoked attack of a sovereign country under whatever pretext. Couple with that, Singapore announced economic sanctions against Russia, banning export of military related goods and banking transactions (Baharudin, 2022). The majority of members of ASEAN have only expressed concern and have not crossed the boundary of advising for 'restraint' and 'peaceful resolution' as they called on both Russia and Ukraine. There is at least one country that have openly expressed support for Russia invasion. Myanmar's military spokesperson has praised Russia's role in opposing the U.S, calling Russia action as effort in the process of maintaining its sovereignty.

With respect to China's view on this ongoing war in Ukraine, it is widely acknowledged that China-Russia relations are at their best in history. Both countries have what they perceived as legitimate expectation in terms of security, sovereignty and national unity - for instance, Russia is on the side of China on issue of reunification, and China on the other hand supports Russia's opposition to the unjustified expansion of exclusive military bloc; such as NATO, on the ground that such action embodies a Cold War mentality. This is the frame of mind of the Chinese government and scholars.

India sees the Ukraine war as "a war between Russia and the NATO group" as succinctly put by the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, he noted that the friendship between Russia and India is "unbreakable" (Frayer, 2023). This is why when the war broke out, India only sought to evacuate Indian students studying in Ukraine out without out-rightly condemning Russia for the invasion. This position is still been maintained by India to this day, this is despite the pressure from the West. The balancing and counterbalancing going on in the Asian region, especially between, China, India and Russia is also an impediment for India to work against Russia in this crucial war that Russia feels it must win as all cost. India need Russia to counterbalance China's activities and dominance within the region especially as it relates to their persistent borderline disputes.

Africa perceptionin respect to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war is that the war would not have been allowed to happen in the first place as the war was clearly avoidable. Regrettably also is that since the outbreak of the war, not enough energy has been invested to allow for a political negotiation to take precedence, rather both sides of the conflict have taken actions and pursued negative propaganda massages which have effectively escalated the conflict to the point of threatening a possible nuclear confrontation.

It is the belief of most Africans countries that the quest by Western countries to punish Russia for the invasion of Ukraine is what informed the massive efforts that are been invested in the recruit of countries around the world, including Africa to be on the side of Ukraine. This effort is also evidence in the supply of military and non-military materials to Ukraine by Western countries and their allies. From all indications, African countries are not impressed by this recruitment efforts by the West as they consider themselves as victims of Western manipulations as well, through the instrumentality of United Nations and NATO that have resulted in both economic and humanitarian losses in the continent. It is widely believed among African leaders that most killings of African political leaders that go against the wish and dictates of the West are been orchestrated by Western leaders, prominent of such killings is the death of Muammar Gadhafi of Libya, who was gruesomely murdered in an uprising believed to have been instigated by the U. S and its allies in 2011. African countries also believe that it is their sovereign right and within their prerogative as it is for every other country to exercise their freedom of choice on any global matter without been bullied or have to live in fear of reprisal concerning what they want to do as a continent.

To most African leaders, the economic need of Africans is most paramount in their considerations. The current economic impact occasioned by the war is already biting hard on their economies without additional complication of having to take sides in a war that would have the potential of worsening their current state of food insecurity. The sanctions imposed on Russia by the West and its allies and Russia's countermeasure response have added to already existing supply chain constraints, posing threats to food security, macro-economic stability and political order in African countries that are very dependent on wheat, maize, fertilizer and gas importation. Shortages of these and associated price inflation very quickly translate into severe stresses in individual household welfare, and if not curbed, could translate into political protests.

African countries' reservations on condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine according to Obadare (2023) can be explored through growing Russia ties with Africa leaders. Contrary to expectation that Africa countries would line up behind the United States and its Western allies in stout defense of Ukraine and Ukrainian independence and maintenance of territorial integrity, this seems not to be the case. Despite few instances of condemnations, the response from the vast majority of African states, according to Obadare (2023), have been relatively mute in comparison to Western countries. While acknowledging that Russia has indeed launched an unprovoked attack against Ukraine, they believe that this assault is just an extension of the historical pattern where powerful Western countries, especially the United States, have violated international law and U.N rule on state sovereignty, only to turn around and preach respect and adherence to international law only where it suits them.

African Union has simply urged a ceasefire, calling on both Russia and Ukraine to "preserve the world from the consequences of planetary conflict". Specifically, Nigeria the continent's political and economic powerhouse has issued a direct condemnation either way on the war. Only seventeen countries including South Africa, Senegal, Uganda, and Mali voted to condemn Russia aggression towards Ukraine. African leader's reticence is based on some clear factors, including appeal to the 'strongman' rule of Russian president, Vladimir Putin by most hesitant democrat leaders, and just like China, Russia offers Africa leaders a model of support in which a clean human right record is not considered as a condition for friendship. Secondly, the steady intensity of Russia presence in Africa is also a factor in their act of hesitant to condemn. There is an increasing supply of Russian military equipment and co-operations across Africa.

Conclusively, Africa focus is that of peaceful resolution of the crisis without been coerced to take side one way or another in the war. As collective body the African Union, have resolved to carry out their external relationship with all sides as before without applying any form of sanction as done by the Western bloc and their allies.

Conclusion:

The Russia-Ukraine war is the most debated topic among international relations scholars around the world, especially among those in the United States, China and major countries including Russia and Ukraine immediate neighbours. The discussions have failed to reach a consensus on the nature of the conflict, position to take or how to solve it. Viewpoints vary on whether it is Russian invasion of Ukraine or a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and on whether it should be analyzed from a historical perspective or solely on its immediate context. From all indications, the underlining reason for supporting or against Russia invasion of Ukraine is primarily centered on national interest. Countries weigh the degree of their national interest fulfilment as a consideration of aliening or playing a neutral role in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

This study it is hope can help in facilitating a dialogue between countries and people who hold very different views about this war. The study is also aimed helping readers to have an understanding of the different approaches and perspectives of regions towards the conflict.

Recommendations:

As have been discussed, systematic reviews help to provide a great insight into answering political question using evidence-based approach. However, as in other methods of conducting research if not properly applied systematic review will not bring out the best result as expected. Therefore, to get the best out of the utilization of systematic review the researcher need to adhere to the following recommendations.

i. It is recommended that in using systematic review, the researcher must adhere to the principle of a thorough and systematic search strategy to include all relevant studies, including published, unpublished and gray literature in order to eliminate or at least reduce publication bias. This holistic inclusion of a wide range of article is to ensure all shade of opinions are reviewed. As seen in the case study of Russia-Ukraine conflict the review of a wide range of article from diverse regions reduced the risk of sectional bias in the findings of the study.
ii. The research question must be very clear so as to eliminate any form of ambiguity in its interpretation. Clearly defined objective of the study is highly recommended as this is what will set the tune and boundaries so that the research process will not derail into unnecessary areas.
iii. It also recommended by this study that before engaging is systematic view of any study it is imperative to look out for the latest findings in that field. This is to ensure that information and findings reported are not obsolete. In line with this systematic review require regular updates periodically in order to incorporate new research findings to maintain the study relevance.
iv. To get the best out of systematic review it is also recommended that appropriate statistical methods be used to handle variability among studies, such as meta-analysis with random effect model.
v. In order to reinforce the principle of reproducibility, which is one of the advantage of systematic review, it is advised that the documentation and report process should be carried out transparently. This process will include search methods, selection procedures, and data extraction.

vi. Because systematic review is evidence-based study, it is pertinent to evaluate the quality and risk bias of all included studies using established and sophisticated tools. This will greatly in enhancing the level of reliability of the review's findings.

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