

South Africa's Non-Aligned Stance on the Russia-Ukraine War: Implications on South Africa's Economic Trade Relations



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ABSTRACT

The foreign policy of non-alignment adopted by various states during the Russia-Ukraine war has been interpreted differently in the landscape of global politics. One perspective views non-alignment as tacit support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while the other sees it as a way for countries to protect their national interests. The study explored the non-alignment stance of the South African government on the Russia-Ukraine war and its effect on the economy of the state. It observed the trade relations that South Africa has with states that condemned the acts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Not only that but also, the trade relations of South Africa with states that used the non-alignment foreign policy in the Russia-Ukraine war. The response of South Africa's markets to the non-alignment stance on the Russia-Ukraine war was also examined. The paper made use of the qualitative research method and secondary data. Furthermore, the study employed document analysis as a research technique. The study findings show that the non-alignment stance of South Africa had minimal and short-term implications for the country. However, the position of non-alignment by the South African government has been perceived to be controversial and supporting the actions of Russia in the war. The paper concluded that South Africa's stance has minimal effect on the state's economy. The study contributes to knowledge by demonstrating the implications of South Africa's Non-Aligned Stance On The Russia-Ukraine War on South Africa's Economic Trade Relations.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Nagy, in February 2023, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution demanding that the Russian government stop the invasion of Ukraine.¹ While 180 member states attended, 141 voted in favor, 5 against, and 35, including South Africa, abstained. South Africa's abstention was seen as a non-aligned stance on the war.² In other words, abstaining states did not want to take a side in supporting or rejecting Russia's actions.

¹ N. Nagy, "The Case of David vs. Goliath? Reflections on the International Regulation of the Use of Force in Relation to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict," in *Threats to Peace and International Security: Asia versus West: Current Challenges in a New Geopolitical Situation* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023), 47–61.

² Ravinder Kaur, "The Ukraine Question: How Should the South Respond?," *International Politics* 60, no. 1 (2023): 264–68.

The BRICS bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has been criticised by the international community for its members' reluctance to take a condemning stance on the Russia-Ukraine war.³ Additionally, the economic sanctions on Russia are also contributing to the global economic decline. Scholars such as McKaiser regard South Africa's position of non-alignment as unfortunate by elaborating that the United States of America (USA) economic sanctions placed on Russia can be further attached to Russia's allies.⁴ The South African government together with other BRICS members are allies to the government of Russia. The two aforementioned scholars have highlighted the global economic implications of the Russia-Ukraine war. However, less attention has been given to the potential impact of South Africa's non-alignment on South Africa's trade with the rest of the world.

Ali et al. indicate that the Russia-Ukraine war has a negative impact on the African continent, further challenging the economies of African states.⁵ Furthermore, they have alluded that Africa's major economic sector, the energy sector, which focuses on oil and food has suffered due to war in the sense that the price of oil and food imports to Africa has skyrocketed and led to inflation. Duho et al. have asserted that the Russia-Ukraine war is causing major economic devastations among the regional economic blocs found in Africa, by using the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Communities of West African States (ECOWAS) as examples.⁶ Moreover, they have indicated that due to ECOWAS's oil production capacity, it was going to be impacted slightly as some of the states in ECOWAS such as Nigeria will benefit economically from the war due to oil production. However, they also indicated that SADC states are the ones that are most impacted by the war in the sense that the price of oil has increased and the best fertilizers that are produced by Ukraine are becoming scarce for agricultural economies in SADC. According to Ali et al. and Duho et al. there has been less attention on the implications of the Russia-Ukraine war on South Africa post the non-alignment stance by the South African government at UNGA in February 2023.⁷ Therefore, the gap in research motivates this study to be undertaken seeking to address the following research objectives:

- To explore the South African government's trade relations with pro-Ukraine supporters
- To explore South Africa's trade relations with the non-aligned states to the Russia-Ukraine war (BRICS, China, India)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Russia-Ukraine war has raged on for a few years and international governmental organizations like the United Nations have made little effort to mediate the conflict.⁸ The UN Security Council's (UNSC) effectiveness has thus been compromised. Russia's veto power and China's non-aligned stance have continuously hindered the council's ability to act.⁹ Equally important, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been compromised due to the veto power of Russia and China's non-alignment stance. Consequently, despite the February 2023 UN resolution calling for a ceasefire, the UN's inability to act due to the reasons mentioned above suggests it may be perceived as a bystander in the conflict.

From a global perspective, research by Zhao and Chang Liao suggests that the Chinese government has adopted a non-aligned stance on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.¹⁰ Furthermore, they state that the non-alignment stance has been practiced by both China and Russia in matters that are related to peace resolution in global politics. Moreover, they also indicated that China's position as non-aligned to the war

³ Zamokuhle Mbandlwa, "The Impact of the Conflict between Russia and Ukraine on the Global Economy," *Lat. Am. J. Pharm* 42 (2023): 1.

⁴ E. McKaiser, "South Africa's Nonsensical Nonalignment," *Foreign Policy*, May 17, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/05/19/south-africa-ramaphosa-russia-brigety-nonalignment/>.

⁵ Abdelaaziz Ait Ali et al., "The Economic Implications of the War in Ukraine for Africa and Morocco," *Policy Center for the New South, PB-11/22, February, 2022*.

⁶ King Carl Tornam Duho et al., "Exploring the Russo-Ukrainian Crisis and Its Impact on African Countries: A Cross-Regional Analysis," 2022.

⁷ Ali et al., "The Economic Implications of the War in Ukraine for Africa and Morocco"; Duho et al., "Exploring the Russo-Ukrainian Crisis and Its Impact on African Countries: A Cross-Regional Analysis."

⁸ Shlomo Shpiro, "The United Nations and the Ukraine War: The Limits of International Conflict Resolution," *Security Science Journal* 4, no. 1 (2023): 25–36.

⁹ Shpiro, "The United Nations and the Ukraine War: The Limits of International Conflict Resolution."

¹⁰ Huasheng Zhao, "Explaining China's Reaction to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis," *China International Strategy Review* 5, no. 1 (2023): 24–46; Nien-Chung Chang-Liao, "The Limits of Strategic Partnerships: Implications for China's Role in the Russia-Ukraine War," *Contemporary Security Policy* 44, no. 2 (2023): 226–47.

is based on the strategic partnership that it has with Russia that they do not want to compromise, and they believe that the war between Russia and Ukraine is provoked by the USA and NATO. As a result, the Chinese government is one of the 35 governments that took a non-alignment posture due to the preservation of their national interest.

According to Orhan, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has negatively impacted the global economy and its markets.¹¹ This is largely due to the importance of exports from both Russia and Ukraine, particularly their production of energy (oil and gas) and wheat. In addition, the Russia-Ukraine war has affected the global commodities resulting in an increase in prices of oil, gas and wheat, because both Russia and Ukraine export those products. Equally concerning, the Russia-Ukraine war has the potential to reduce global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 1%, potentially leading to a subsequent inflation increase of over 2.5%. Scholarly work by Mbah and Wasum demonstrates that the world's most economically developed states that are members of NATO, such as the USA, Canada, and the UK, have imposed economic sanctions on Russia, restricting trade between them.¹² The sanctions have also been put on the Russian Oligarchs, who are the elites that are close to the Russian government. However, the economic sanctions not only affect the Russian economy but the global economy due to Russia being the major exporter of natural gas, oil and wheat throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Therefore, the unavailability of Russian exports has resulted in the drop of oil trade within the world.

As Duho et al. point out, the cascading effects of the Russia-Ukraine war have spread from Europe and severely impacted Africa's growing economies, which were already struggling financially due to the COVID-19 crisis.¹³ In addition, the conflict continues to rip apart the African economies that are highly dependent on trade between Russia and Ukraine. Scholars such as Bin-Nashwan et al. introduce another perspective, highlighting how African states are affected by the Russia-Ukraine war by pointing out that the African Union (AU) has adopted the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which emphasizes the development of African states at an equal pace.¹⁴ However, due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, there has been food security and natural gas scarcity within the continent of Africa, as a result, it jeopardizes Agenda 2030 SDG. According to Nkuna and Ajala, the South African government has taken a foreign policy position of non-alignment regarding the Russia-Ukraine war based on the country's national interest which include trade with both Ukraine and Russia.¹⁵ Nkuna argues that South Africa's non-aligned stance is largely motivated by its membership in BRICS.¹⁶ Whereas Alaja indicates that the non-alignment stance is due to neo-imperialism where the African states are caught in the middle between choosing the West or the East.¹⁷ Therefore, this assertion by the two scholars demonstrates that South Africa is a key player in global politics and its stance on Russia-Ukraine non-alignment should be explored with specific attention to the impact of the war on the country's economy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Realism is an international relations theory which posits that states in global politics act in pursuit of their own national interests, aiming to maximize power, security, autonomy, and prestige.¹⁸ Additionally, national interest guides a state's foreign policy and decision-making. Moreover, realism emphasizes that states lack permanent friends or enemies, making self-preservation a top priority. In addition, the realism theory acknowledges that the state does not have a permanent friend or permanent enemy, hence it is very important that the state at any given time should prioritize itself before others. Walt argues that states have

¹¹ Ebru Orhan, "The Effects of the Russia-Ukraine War on Global Trade," *Journal of International Trade, Logistics and Law* 8, no. 1 (2022): 141–46.

¹² Ruth Endam Mbah and Divine Forcha Wasum, "Russian-Ukraine 2022 War: A Review of the Economic Impact of Russian-Ukraine Crisis on the USA, UK, Canada, and Europe," *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 9, no. 3 (2022): 144–53.

¹³ Duho et al., "Exploring the Russo-Ukrainian Crisis and Its Impact on African Countries: A Cross-Regional Analysis."

¹⁴ Saeed Awadh Bin-Nashwan, M Kabir Hassan, and Aishath Muneeza, "Russia-Ukraine Conflict: 2030 Agenda for SDGs Hangs in the Balance," *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* 40, no. 1 (2022): 3–16.

¹⁵ Vongani Muhluri Nkuna, "Russia-South Africa Relations within the Context of the Ukraine Invasion.," *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2023); Olayinka Ajala, "The Case for Neutrality: Understanding African Stances on the Russia-Ukraine Conflict," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2 (2022).

¹⁶ Nkuna, "Russia-South Africa Relations within the Context of the Ukraine Invasion."

¹⁷ Ajala, "The Case for Neutrality: Understanding African Stances on the Russia-Ukraine Conflict."

¹⁸ Burak Şakir Şeker and Hasret Çomak, "Antarctic and Arctic Maritime Security Interaction within Liberalism, Realism and Critical Theories," *Global Maritime Geopolitics, Transnational Press London Ltd*, 2022, 9–24.

a solemn responsibility to address socioeconomic security concerns independent of external influence.¹⁹ Equally important, he elaborates that in the international relations realist perspective, the state should not depend on other states to assist in decision-making, as a result, the state should practice self-reliance.

Amid the Russia-Ukraine War, the South African government chose neutrality. It avoided condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and continued to hold military drills with China and Russia within South Africa.²⁰ Additionally, US President Biden summoned South African President Ramaphosa to the White House to understand South Africa's (RSA) stance. However, RSA maintained its firm stance on the war. This makes realism relevant to South Africa's non-aligned stance on the Russia-Ukraine war. The South African government's decision to remain neutral appears unilateral, uninfluenced by other states to choose sides. At the same time, it becomes clearer that despite the external pressure that South Africa received from other states, it is still able to maintain its stance on the Russia-Ukraine war. The realism theory becomes relevant in the study looking at the economic implications that might arise due to the war. For example, the unilateral decision on the stance is also motivated by South Africa's socio-economic factors.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research methodology and relied on secondary data to address the objectives of the study. This included literature from books, news outlets, academic search engines like Google Scholar, and university library catalogs. The study employed a descriptive research design to analyze South Africa's non-aligned position in the Russia-Ukraine war, with a particular focus on the economic consequences of this stance. Since the study relied on secondary data, a comprehensive review of the literature had to be undertaken.

A Brief History of the Russia-Ukraine War

The Russia-Ukraine war has been a global catastrophe, in the sense that it has been going on for over a few years and resulted in many casualties. Scholars such as Mearsheimer and Driedge argue that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been inevitable for years, since the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991.²¹ Furthermore, scholars such as Forsberg and Patomaki have stipulated that Ukraine had been one of the USSR republics since 1921, however, the collapse of the USSR led to Ukraine gaining its independence and declaring itself as a sovereign state.²² Additionally, Russia and Ukraine share deep cultural, religious, linguistic, and ancestral ties, having historically been one nation.

In 1922, the USSR was formed when Marxist scholars and revolutionaries Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky led the overthrow of the Romanov monarchy in what was known as the Russian Revolution.²³ The Romanov monarchy ruled Russia for centuries, oppressing the constituency by enriching the monarchy elites, while the larger population was living in poverty. As a result, it motivated communists such as Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky to mobilize the population to overthrow the bourgeois Romanov monarchy.²⁴ The events that transpired in the early 20th century in Russia shaped the formation of the USSR which consisted of 15 Republics; Russia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.²⁵ The USSR, a vast and multi-ethnic state with 15 republics, dissolved in 1991. This historical connection fuels tensions and annexation conflicts among some former Soviet states.

¹⁹ Stephen M. Walt, "Realism and security." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. 2010.

²⁰ H. Mohammed, "Why South Africa Continues to Be Neutral in Ukraine-Russia War," *Aljazeera News*, January 24, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/24/why-is-south-africa-neutral-in-ukraine-russia-war>.

²¹ John J Mearsheimer, "The Causes and Consequences of the Ukraine War," *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 21 (2022): 12–27; Jonas J Driedger, "The Stopping Power of Sources: Implied Causal Mechanisms and Historical Interpretations in (Mearsheimer's) Arguments on the Russo-Ukrainian War," *Analyse & Kritik* 45, no. 1 (2023): 137–55.

²² T. Forsberg and H. Patomäki, *Debating the War in Ukraine: Counterfactual Histories and Future Possibilities*. (Taylor & Francis, 2022).

²³ Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the eve of revolution*. (Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁴ E.J. Hobsbawm, "The End of Empires," in *After Empire* (Routledge, 2018), 12–16.

²⁵ A.J. Coale, "Nuptiality and Fertility in USSR Republics and Neighboring Populations," in *Demographic Trends and Patterns in the Soviet Union before 1999* (Routledge, 2002), 43–58.

Scholars like Carpenter and Megoran have argued that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) eastward expansion has fueled tensions between Russia and Ukraine.²⁶ Moreover, Ukraine's membership in NATO has been unpleasant to the Russian government, taking into cognizance that NATO is composed of states that are totally opposed to communist ideologies such as those practiced by Russia. NATO is an international governmental security organisation that was formed in 1949 by 12 members who were primarily opposed to the USSR and those members had an objective which was that of collective defense in the sense that the member states would unite military against the aggression of the USSR.²⁷ In addition, NATO has been recruiting many members since its formation, and that saw Ukraine requesting to become a member of the organization. Ukraine is a neighbor of the Russian Federation, therefore, the inclusion of Ukraine as a member of NATO poses a greater risk to Russia's security. It is against that background that Vladimir Putin in 2022 justified the so-called "Special Military Operation" which had the objective to annex the government of Ukraine.²⁸

South Africa's Trade Post Non-Alignment with Ukraine Allies

South Africa-Ukraine Trade Relations

Scholars like Kebe and Nadarajah point out that South Africa and Ukraine are trade partners, primarily dealing in grain commodities like wheat.²⁹ Moreover, they have indicated that 30% of South Africa's grain imports are from Russia and Ukraine through the black sea, with 26% coming from Russia and only 4% from Ukraine. On the other hand, Rose *et al.* also indicated that amidst the Russia-Ukraine war grain trade from the Black Sea for South Africa deteriorated, and currently, South Africa's grain imports are from Argentina, Australia, and Poland.³⁰ As a result, it clearly demonstrates that the war had a negative impact on the trade relations between South Africa and Ukraine which influenced the economy of the country. It is important to note that even before the war, Ukraine was not a major grain exporter to South Africa. Therefore, South Africa's non-aligned stance may further affect trade with Ukraine, but the pre-war volume suggests a limited impact.

Statistics from Trading Economics show that Ukraine's exports to South Africa calculated in 2021 indicated that it was at over \$30 million, whereas in 2022 it was at \$27.64 million.³¹ Furthermore, it also provided the figures of South Africa's imports to Ukraine which in 2021 were at well over \$40 million and in 2022 they were at \$38. 27 million.³² Consequently, the figures provided by Trading Economics clearly indicate that pre-Russia and Ukraine conflict in 2021 the trade relations between South Africa were good, however during the conflict there has been a slight decline in trade. Therefore, it is inevitable that the non-alignment stance by South Africa on the Russia-Ukraine war will further worsen the economic trade between South Africa and Ukraine.

Trade Relations between South Africa and the United States of America

South Africa's non-aligned stance in the Russia-Ukraine conflict has caused international ripples, particularly for the US government as it was seen as an action of supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In addition, the Ambassador of the USA to South Africa Reuben Brigety in May 2023 made a bold statement that accused the South African government of supplying Russia with ammunition amidst the war in Ukraine.³³ For this reason, the government of South Africa provided clarification on the

²⁶ Ted Galen Carpenter, "Many Predicted Nato Expansion Would Lead to War. Those Warnings Were Ignored," *The Guardian* 28 (2022); Nick Megoran, "Russian Troops out! No to NATO Expansion!" *A Pacific Geopolitics for a New Europe*, *Political Geography* 98 (2022): 102699.

²⁷ Marco Rimanelli, "NATO vs. Russia: from the USSR's Threat of World War III to NATO Enlargements to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, 1949-2023." *Florida Political Chronicle* 29, no. 1 (2022).

²⁸ V.M. Zubok, "Myths and Realities of Putinism and NATO Expansion," in *Evaluating NATO Enlargement: From Cold War Victory to the Russia-Ukraine War* (Cham: Springer International Publishing., 2023), 145–59.

²⁹ Malick Kebe and Saralees Nadarajah, "Change Point Analysis of the Effects of the Russo-Ukrainian War on Wheat Flour Prices in Selected African Countries," *Applied Economics* 56, no. 30 (2024): 3621–35.

³⁰ Adam Rose, Zhenhua Chen, and Dan Wei, "The Economic Impacts of Russia–Ukraine War Export Disruptions of Grain Commodities," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy* 45, no. 2 (2023): 645–65.

³¹ Trading Economics, "South Africa Exports to Ukraine," 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/exports/ukraine>.

³² Trading Economics, "South Africa Exports to Ukraine."

³³ M. Ditabo, "Non-Aligned' Nonchalance: SA Won't Be Forced to Choose Sides in Russia-Ukraine Conflict-Ramaphosa," *News24*, May 23, 2023; M. Mukherjee and H. Popper, "South Africa Is 'actively Non-Aligned' on Ukraine War, Says Government.," *Reuters*, May 13, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africa-is-actively-non-aligned-ukraine-war-says-government-2023-05-13/>.

accusation by stating that it did not supply military weapons to Russia and further elaborated that its non-alignment stance is because of its foreign policy and national interest. Drawing from these allegations by the USA and the way in which the government of South Africa responded, it demonstrates that the relationship between South Africa and the USA was compromised by the stance that the government of South Africa took to remain neutral during the Russia-Ukraine war.

The US legislature enacted the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000. This public law serves as a guide for US foreign policy regarding trade with African states.³⁴ The South African government is one of the beneficiaries of AGOA and in the continent of Africa, it is the largest economy that trades with the USA.³⁵ As a result, South Africa remains a strategic partner of the USA in Africa. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has outlined that the AGOA serves as a tool that fosters bilateral trade relations between South Africa and the United States of America.³⁶ In addition, DIRCO has indicated figures that in 2020 the overall trade between the USA and South Africa has been R189 billion with South Africa exporting R116,21 billion worth of goods to the USA, while the USA only imports R72,10 billion. Thus, making the trade relations between the two countries beneficial and progressive for economic growth.

The South African Revenue Service (SARS) reports that the US is South Africa's second-largest trading partner after China, for both imports and exports as of 2023.³⁷ Moreover, SARS provides statistics on the South Africa-USA trade, which indicates that for the year 2022, the government of South Africa exported R178 billion to the USA and imported R 133.95 billion worth of goods from the USA. Equally important as of April 2023 SARS released the latest statistics on the USA-South Africa trade where the figures indicate that the exports of South African goods to the USA were recorded at R51.37 billion, whereas the imports of goods from the USA were valued at R 50.60 billion. In brief, the figures for 2023 from SARS are very impressive despite the position of non-alignment by South Africa.

South Africa's Trade Relations with Non-Aligned States (BRICS bloc)

South Africa's Trade Relations with Russia

South Africa's non-aligned posture has come out with greater criticism from Western nations, who view South Africa as a traitor to the Ukrainian population by not supporting either Russia or Ukraine.³⁸ Moreover, the decision by South Africa threatened the economic relations of the country with the Western countries stating that they will reduce trading with South Africa.³⁹ As a result, South Africa had to really on the economic partners of the BRICS bloc to its markets from collapsing during the turmoil. Therefore, it becomes more relevant to assess the economic trade relations that South Africa has with the BRICS bloc and whether the trade was significant to the economy of South Africa during the war.

The South African government was one of the 35 states that did not choose sides during the UN resolution by deciding to remain neutral in the war.⁴⁰ Moreover, the African National Congress (ANC) led South African government did not want to ruin the relationship that it has with the Russian Federation that spans from the days of the liberation struggle against the apartheid government. Political economics scholars such as Nkuna and McKalser share the same sentiment regarding South Africa preserving its national interests towards the Russian government.⁴¹ However, McKalser indicates that the South African economy may decline due to its non-alignment stance.⁴²

³⁴ AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act), "About AGOA," 2023, <https://agoa.info/about-agoa.html>.

³⁵ AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act), "About AGOA." David Luke, "Conclusions: It's in the World's Interest to Give Africa a New Trade Deal." *How Africa Trades* (2023): 209-217.

³⁶ DIRCO (Department of International Relations and Cooperation), "South Africa-United States Relationship," 2023, <https://www.dirco.gov.za/bilateral-relations/>.

³⁷ SARS (South African Revenue Services), "Exploring South Africa's Merchandise Trade Statistics," 2023, <https://www.sars.gov.za/customs-and-excise/trade-statistics/>.

³⁸ IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies), "The State of Non-Alignment in South Africa's Foreign Policy," 2023, <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2023/the-state-of-non-alignment-in-south-africas-foreign-policy/>.

³⁹ Malte Brosig, "Aligned or Non-aligned: South Africa's Response to the War in Ukraine," *Global Policy*, 2024.

⁴⁰ Mbandlwa, "The Impact of the Conflict between Russia and Ukraine on the Global Economy"; Kaur, "The Ukraine Question: How Should the South Respond?"

⁴¹ Nkuna, "Russia-South Africa Relations within the Context of the Ukraine Invasion"; McKalser, "South Africa's Nonsensical Nonalignment."

⁴² McKalser, "South Africa's Nonsensical Nonalignment."

The trade between the South African government and the Russian Federation has been alive and well amidst the ongoing conflict as demonstrated by SARS's figures which indicate trade between the two countries. South Africa's exports to Russia in the year 2022 were valued at R4, 62 billion whereas the imports were valued at R 9.15 billion.⁴³ Furthermore, the statistics of trade between South Africa and Russia from January 2023 to April 2023 were recorded by SARS as follows, exports to Russia were valued at R 1.26 billion, whereas the imports were at R 1.48 billion. The figures between Russia and South Africa do indicate that despite the ongoing war and the non-alignment stance by South Africa, trade has not been compromised as both countries continue to supply one other with essential goods.

South Africa-China Trade Relations

The government of South Africa and China in January 2023 celebrated the 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two states and since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, there has been a strategic comprehensive partnership.⁴⁴ Furthermore, South-Africa-China relations in 2020 established the 10-year strategic programmes of cooperation that will last till 2029, this was motivated by South Africa being China's biggest trading partner in the continent of Africa and China being South Africa's biggest trading ally globally. In addition, the South Africa-China trade relations started with a R 1 billion foreign exchange of goods in 1998 to R 544 billion in 2021. Equally important, South Africa-China bilateral relations have been strengthened by organisations such as the Forum on Africa-China Cooperation (FOCAC) and BRICS.

Scholars such as Zhao, Liao, and Nkuna have all asserted that the governments of China and South Africa took the same posture at UN 2023 by being neutral to the war due to their own national interests.⁴⁵ Therefore, the trade relations between South Africa and China have been very impressive despite their non-alignment posture as both regard one another as the biggest trade partners. According to SARS figures exports of South African goods to China in 2022 were valued at R188. 42 billion, whereas the imports from China to South Africa are at R367. 43 billion for the year 2022.⁴⁶ The statistics of imports of goods from China to South Africa in 2022 were recorded at R367.43 billion. Whereas from January 2023 to April 2023 the total value of goods imported to South Africa from China where R134. 47 billion. Moreover, the statistics from SARS do emphasise that despite the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War the government of South Africa is still enjoying trade with China taking into consideration their non-alignment stance.

South Africa-India Trade Relations

According to Mishra, the Indian government's foreign policy on the Russia-Ukraine war was to remain neutral when voting at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).⁴⁷ This posture stemmed from India's national interests with both countries, prompting a strategy to avoid creating enemies. The India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) reports that South Africa-India trade relations have been productive. South African Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flowing into India from 2000 to 2022 was valued at \$589.26 million.⁴⁸ Additionally, South Africa-India trade in 2021 reached \$17 billion, indicating strong trade figures between the two nations. In other words, the IBEF figures show that trade relations between the two states are strong and consistent over the years. Their BRICS membership likely facilitates better trade.

Imports from India to South Africa in 2022 were valued at around R130.60 billion, while exports of goods from South Africa to India in 2022 were valued at R90.06 billion.⁴⁹ Furthermore, recent SARS

⁴³ SARS (South African Revenue Services), "Exploring South Africa's Merchandise Trade Statistics."

⁴⁴ RSA (Republic of South Africa), "International Relations and Cooperation on South Africa and the People's Republic of China Commemorate 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations," 2023, <https://www.gov.za/speeches/international-relations-and-cooperation-south-africa-and-people's-republic-china>.

⁴⁵ Zhao, "Explaining China's Reaction to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis"; Chang-Liao, "The Limits of Strategic Partnerships: Implications for China's Role in the Russia-Ukraine War"; Nkuna, "Russia-South Africa Relations within the Context of the Ukraine Invasion."

⁴⁶ SARS (South African Revenue Services), "Exploring South Africa's Merchandise Trade Statistics."

⁴⁷ Rahul Mishra, "From non-alignment to multi-alignment: assessing India's foreign policy shift." *The Round Table* 112, no. 1 (2023): 43-56.

⁴⁸ IBEF (India Brand Equity Foundation), "India South Africa Trade," 2023, <https://www.ibef.org/indian-exports/india-south-africa-trade>.

⁴⁹ SARS (South African Revenue Services), "Exploring South Africa's Merchandise Trade Statistics."

trade statistics for South Africa and India from January 2023 to April 2023 indicate that the value of exports of goods from South Africa to India is R28.71 billion, whereas the value of imports from India to South Africa is R42.39 billion. Despite calls for Russia's economic isolation from global markets due to its invasion of Ukraine, exploratory findings on South Africa-Russia trade demonstrate that trade with South Africa continued.⁵⁰ Trade figures suggest a healthy South Africa-Russia trade economy, and the South African government appears not to be considering sanctions against Russia.

Findings on South Africa-China trade relations indicate a close alliance. China is South Africa's number one trading partner, and South Africa is China's biggest trading partner in Africa.⁵¹ Notably, trade between these two nations, which both refrained from condemning Russia in the Ukraine invasion, continues to flourish. Their recent comprehensive strategic partnership plan is likely to promote trade for the next ten years.

India's non-aligned posture at the UNGA mirrored that of China and South Africa, suggesting a desire to avoid jeopardizing its national interests. The 2023 trade figures from SARS indicate robust growth in South Africa-India trade relations. During the challenging times of the Russia-Ukraine war, the South African government enjoys support from other BRICS member states.

The Economic Reaction of South Africa's Markets post non-alignment stance of South Africa

Business Unity South Africa's (BUSA) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has asserted that the stance by the South African foreign ministry has made a negative impact on the foreign exchange between South Africa's Rand and the USA Dollar.⁵² Moreover, this was because of the bold statement by the USA Ambassador Brigety who accused the government of South Africa of supplying weapons to Russia. As a result, the value of the Rand performed poorly as markets reacted negatively to the statement by the USA Ambassador. According to Jansen, the statement by Ambassador Brigety where he specifically referred to AGOA trade relations with South Africa threatens the bilateral trade of over R60 billion.⁵³ However, even after the statement, the South African government is not heavily dependent on AGOA trade, unlike the other AGOA beneficiaries. Therefore, ever since that statement, South Africa continues to trade with the USA and nothing has changed from their initial bilateral trade agreements.

According to Walsh, the government of South Africa was a great sympathizer of Russia during the conflict with evidence showing that during the anniversary of the Ukraine invasion, China, Russia, and South Africa performed a joint naval exercise on the waters of South Africa.⁵⁴ In addition, McKalser further supports the notion by indicating that there have been allegations by the USA on the naval Lady R ship of South Africa which was alleged to have transported weapons during the war to aid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.⁵⁵ Both scholars Walsh and McKalser assert that the stance of South Africa on non-alignment and sympathy to Russia affects the relations that South Africa has with the Western nations, most specifically, the USA which threatens economic sanctions on South Africa.⁵⁶

The Department of Statistics South Africa has indicated that in the first quarter of 2023 (January to March) the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Africa had a growth of 0, 4%.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the figures by Statistics SA indicate that the economy of South Africa was doing well for the first three months of the year 2023. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has articulated that the economy of South Africa in 2023 performed poorly due to the load-shedding factor, high unemployment rate and increasing government debt (IMF, 2023). Moreover, the IMF has provided statistics of South Africa's GDP from

⁵⁰ Mbandlwa, "The Impact of the Conflict between Russia and Ukraine on the Global Economy"; Kaur, "The Ukraine Question: How Should the South Respond?"; Nkuna, "Russia-South Africa Relations within the Context of the Ukraine Invasion."; SARS (South African Revenue Services), "Exploring South Africa's Merchandise Trade Statistics"; McKalser, "South Africa's Nonsensical Nonalignment."

⁵¹ RSA (Republic of South Africa), "International Relations and Cooperation on South Africa and the People's Republic of China Commemorate 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations"; Zhao, "Explaining China's Reaction to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis"; Chang-Liao, "The Limits of Strategic Partnerships: Implications for China's Role in the Russia-Ukraine War"; SARS (South African Revenue Services), "Exploring South Africa's Merchandise Trade Statistics."

⁵² BUSA (Business Unity South Africa), "BUSA Statement on the USA'S Allegations of SA-Russia Arms Exchange," 2023.

⁵³ C. Jansen, "Without AGOA South African Citrus Loses Its Edge in the US," 2023, <https://agoa.info/news/article/16204-without-agoa-south-african-citrus-loses-its-edge-in-the-us.html>.

⁵⁴ Michael Walsh, "The Breakdown of the US-South African Strategic Partnership," 2023.

⁵⁵ McKalser, "South Africa's Nonsensical Nonalignment."

⁵⁶ Walsh, "The Breakdown of the US-South African Strategic Partnership"; McKalser, "South Africa's Nonsensical Nonalignment."

⁵⁷ Stats SA (Statistics South Africa), "South African Economy Expands by 0,4%." Stats SA., 2023, <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16379>.

2021 to 2023 which indicate that in 2021 GDP was at 4,9 %; in 2022 was at 2, 0 % and in 2023 it is projected to be at 0,1 % (IMF). In brief, the figures by the IMF indicate that there is a significant decline in the GDP of South Africa which has a negative impact on the economy. However, the decline in GDP is not fueled by South Africa's non-alignment stance on the Russia-Ukraine war.

CONCLUSION

The Russia-Ukraine war has been a nightmare in global international politics since its declaration in February 2022. The foreign policy of the 35 non-aligned nations during the war stemmed from their desire to protect their sovereignty and national interests. South Africa, for example, did not want to be associated with the US-NATO led war. Despite South Africa's non-aligned stance, the war itself is immensely affecting global trade and markets due to the lack of access to Russian oil and Ukrainian wheat. The South African government's non-alignment stance was met with aggression and threats from the USA. However, South Africa was able to overcome these challenges, and trade between South Africa and the USA is still maintained. As the study has highlighted, the economic implications of South Africa's non-alignment stance have been analyzed, particularly in terms of economic trade relations with Western countries. The study found that economic trade relations between South Africa and Ukraine were not major and were affected by the war itself, and not necessarily by South Africa's non-alignment stance. Ukraine's inability to import or export was the primary cause.

The study also discussed South Africa-USA economic trade relations. It discovered that despite sanction threats from the White House, the USA remains South Africa's second-largest trading partner, and economic trade continued to flourish amidst the threats. Furthermore, the study revealed that trade between South Africa and Russia, one of its least significant economic trading partners, was not affected by South Africa's stance. Russia was able to continue with its imports and exports during the war. China, which is South Africa's largest trading partner also took a non-aligned position. This meant that economic trade between the two nations would not have negative implications for South Africa's economy.

Interestingly, India, a member of the Global South and the BRICS economic bloc, condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, despite differing foreign policy stances on the war, South Africa and India's economic trade relations did not suffer. In fact, economic trade between the two countries grew stronger.

One of the key findings discussed in the study was that South Africa's decision to remain non-aligned was heavily motivated by the country's national interests. Finally, the study indicated that while the war has had economic implications on the world, these are not experienced equally based on alliance, geographical location, etcetera. In South Africa's case, the non-alignment stance did not negatively impact the economy. The country's ability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and continue trading with ease sustained and grew its economy.

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