



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Digital Humanities***The international law violations in the Russian special military operation in Ukraine case and the international community's efforts to protect**Driss Ed. Daran<sup>1&2\*</sup>, Fatima Ezzohra Elhajraoui<sup>3</sup> & Riad Al Ajlani<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates<sup>2</sup>Faculté Polydisciplinaire de Khouribga, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal, Morocco<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Ibn-Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco<sup>4</sup>College of Law, United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates\*Correspondence: [ilyass2222@hotmail.com](mailto:ilyass2222@hotmail.com)**ABSTRACT**

The Russian incursion into Ukraine represents the foremost challenge to the post-1945 international legal framework, raising essential questions regarding sovereignty, the prohibition of force, and the effectiveness of international institutions. Russia has attempted to justify its conduct by claiming self-defence and alleging genocide in Donbas; however, this analysis demonstrates that these assertions are inconsistent with the UN Charter, the Genocide Convention, and customary international law. The article employs a normative legal framework to examine international treaties, judicial rulings, and academic discussions to assess the legality of Russia's activities and the adequacy of responses from the UN, the International Criminal Court, and the International Court of Justice. The findings indicate a dual crisis: the collapse of the universal accord on the prohibition of aggression and the incapacity to execute it due to power politics. The study situates the Ukraine conflict within the broader discussion of humanitarian intervention, Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and institutional reform, thereby enriching academic discourse on the resilience of the international legal order and the potential for accountability concerning great-power violations.

**KEYWORDS:** international law, aggression, international humanitarian law, ICC, ICJ, Russia, Ukraine

**Research Journal in Advanced Humanities**

Volume 7, Issue 1, 2026

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

**ARTICLE HISTORY**

Submitted: 16 September 2025

Accepted: 09 December 2025

Published: 21 March 2026

**HOW TO CITE**

Ed. Daran, D., Elhajraoui, F. E., & Al Ajlani, R. (2026). The international law violations in the Russian special military operation in Ukraine case and the international community's efforts to protect. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.58256/nt1ntp54>



Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global, an imprint of Royallite Publishers Limited

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## Introduction

The full-scale military invasion of Ukraine that was initiated by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, is one of the most significant threats to the security of Europe since the end of World War II (Brunk, 2022). Russian forces have since carried out widespread attacks across Ukrainian territory, employing both ground operations and aerial bombardments. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops and civilians have died as a direct consequence of these atrocities. Russia has violated the basic ban on the use of force by launching an unprovoked assault on Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, ignoring the UN Charter, the foundational document of the international legal system that emerged after World War II.

There have been other reports of breaches of "*International Humanitarian Law (IHL)*" during the war, including this transgression. Intentional assaults on civilian infrastructure, torture, sexual assault, and other types of abuse against civilians fall under this class. War crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, and aggression are all examples of atrocity crimes that might be committed as a result of such behaviour. Domestic, hybrid, or international legal processes are necessary to hold those accountable, including political and military leaders, for these acts (O'Meara, 2022).

A significant part of the response to these infractions and efforts to prevent future breaches has been the international community. Numerous prestigious international organizations have begun looking into and responding to Russia's actions, including the UNHRC, the ICC, and the ICJ.

The "*United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHRC)*" appointed a sovereign international commission to investigate allegations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) breaches in Ukraine related to Russia's actions (Syaefudin, 2024). It is the Commission's duty to inform the Council of its conclusions and suggestions, especially those pertaining to responsibility.

In 2015, Ukraine granted the International Criminal Court power to examine crimes occurring inside its territory, leading to the initiation of a formal inquiry into potential war crimes (Ablamskyi et al., 2023). During this time, the European Court of Human Rights is investigating several complaints of abuses of human rights in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. A case was submitted by Ukraine to the International Court of Justice on February 26, 2022, in accordance with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Ukraine believes that Russia has made a false accusation against Ukraine, claiming that it has committed genocide in the provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk. This served as a pretext for the organization to initiate what it referred to as a "Special Military Operation." In accordance with international law, this action does not have any legal foundation (Azarov et al. D. D., 2023).

The Russian incursion into Ukraine represents one of the most significant challenges to the global legal framework since 1945. This conflict is distinct from numerous others in the Global South as it directly engages a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the entity responsible for maintaining global peace and security. Russia has attempted to employ legally dubious justifications like as collective self-defense and alleged genocide in Donbasta alter the fundamental tenets of international law, so rendering aggression seemingly acceptable.

### *This case encompasses three interrelated issues:*

**Erosion of Normative Consensus:** The invasion contravenes the UN Charter's prohibition on the use of force, thereby undermining the credibility of this fundamental principle if transgressions remain unpunished.

The ineffectiveness of the UNSC, due to Russia's veto power, highlights critical shortcomings in collective security institutions, necessitating urgent discussions on institutional change and alternative enforcement mechanisms.

The Ukraine crisis is likely to establish a precedent for how nations address sovereignty, humanitarian law, and accountability moving forward. The outcome will determine whether international law evolves into a dynamic framework capable of restraining big powers or is supplanted by realpolitik.

The Russian incursion into Ukraine represents not just a regional crisis but also an examination of the robustness and adaptability of international law in the 21st century.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the degree to which Russia's activities violate fundamental principles of international law and to evaluate the degree to which the international community has responded to these breaches.

## Research Objectives:

This study aims to thoroughly examine the legal, institutional, and normative consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the future of international law. The objectives are threefold:

- To assess the extent to which Russia's actions violate established principles of international law, specifically the ban on the use of force, non-intervention, and international humanitarian law.
- To evaluate the responses of global entities such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, and the International Court of Justice in addressing these violations.
- To assess the broader implications of this case on the credibility, enforcement, and future development of international legal standards.

## Research Questions:

In accordance with these objectives, the analysis is directed by the subsequent research inquiries:

- To what extent does Russia's invasion of Ukraine contravene fundamental principles of international law, and how do these transgressions compare to previous instances of state aggression?
- How effectively have international organizations addressed these violations, and what institutional challenges have impeded their actions?
- What implications could this discord have for the authority and legitimacy of international law in the long term regarding global order and the regulation of state behaviour?

## Literature Review

The Russian military intervention in Ukraine represents significant breaches of international law across many legal frameworks. Russia's activities defy essential principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity as outlined in the UN Charter, violate the definitions of war crimes and aggression established by the Rome Statute, and infringe upon the mandates of International Humanitarian Law for civilian protection (Shamim, 2024). The invasion infringes upon Ukrainian sovereignty, the self-determination of nations, human rights, and the 1949 Geneva Conventions (Adelcio Machado dos Santos, 2022). Russia's efforts to rationalize its actions via assertions of self-defence or humanitarian assistance are unfounded, as the operation amounts to aggression, war crimes, and potentially genocide (Baskakova, 2023). The dispute erodes the basis of the modern international legal order, as the UN General Assembly conducts emergency extraordinary sessions due to Russia's Security Council membership obstructing conventional enforcement methods (Lamm, 2024). International reactions including fines, exclusion from global organizations, and legal actions aimed at accountability and compensation.

The Russian special military operation in Ukraine represents a blatant infringement of essential principles of international law. Numerous scholars affirm that Russia's activities violate the principles of state sovereignty, which are fundamental to international law (Muhammad Shidqi, 2023). The operation contravenes multiple essential international legal frameworks, including the UN Charter's ban on the use of force against state sovereignty, the Rome Statute's delineations of war crimes and aggression, and the mandates of International Humanitarian Law for civilian protection (Shamim, 2024). Russia's military activities contravene the contemporary international legal framework by violating universal norms and its obligations to uphold Ukraine's independence and sovereignty (Lamm, 2024). Notwithstanding Russian assertions of peacekeeping and genocide prevention, these rationales lack legal foundation, constituting egregious crimes that adversely affect international security and community relations (Khater, 2022). The conflict underscores substantial difficulties in prosecuting crimes via international bodies such as the ICC and the UN Security Council (Shamim, 2024).

The Russia-Ukraine war has rekindled discussions over humanitarian intervention, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and state sovereignty within international law. Russia has controversially claimed the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) to rationalize its "special military operation" against Ukraine, despite the doctrine's humanitarian objectives (Enrico Zannarini, 2023). This involvement is deemed unlawful under international law and contrary with the principles of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) (Enrico Zannarini, 2023). The international community's hesitance to engage militarily in Ukraine arises from concerns about provoking a wider European conflict and Russia's veto authority as a permanent member of the Security Council

(Awa Njoworia Valerie Adamu, 2023). Russia consistently conflates R2P with humanitarian intervention, rooted in its historical resistance to Western-led interventions since the 1990s Yugoslav conflicts and Kosovo (Natasha Kuhrt, 2015). This methodology embodies Russia's state-centric conception of international law and its pursuit of legitimacy within the global system (D. Averre, 2015). The crisis underscores essential conflicts between the concepts of sovereignty and the obligations of humanitarian protection in modern international relations.

Studies on the efficacy of international institutions uncover substantial obstacles and diverse analytical methodologies. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) functions under intricate institutional limitations as both a judicial body and a UN entity, with its role in the UN framework considerably influencing its workload and efficacy (Tom Ginsburg, 2021). Researchers have delineated four principal criteria for assessing the efficacy of international adjudicators: case-specific compliance, systemic precedential impacts, integration within domestic legal frameworks, and contributions to the evolution of international law (Helfer, 2013). International organizations encounter significant issues related to corruption. Evidence indicates that significant shareholders, notably the United States, have utilized Bretton Woods institutions to allocate resources to strategically favoured nations, while vote manipulation transpires across UN matters, and autocratic regimes exploit UN human rights mechanisms to legitimize abuses (J. Vreeland, 2019). Notwithstanding these problems, the ICJ upholds its position as the sole court with universal jurisdiction, enhancing the efficacy of international law through its judicial rulings (Philippe Couvreur, 2016).

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has shown substantial deficiencies in international law enforcement institutions and the overarching rule-based international order. (Çakmak, 2023) contends that the war exemplifies a deterioration of the rule-based international order, especially concerning the legal frameworks governing the use of force between nations. Numerous researchers recognize systemic crises in international law's capacity to prevent and resolve disputes. (Dawa Choden, 2023) interrogate the pertinence of international law in maintaining peace, highlighting its inadequacy in safeguarding human rights amid war. (Atul Alexander, 2023) identifies structural deficiencies such as consent prerequisites, veto authorities, insufficient accountability, and feeble punishment frameworks that hinder effective responses. (Driss Ed.daran, 2023) illustrate the ineffectiveness of collective security systems non addressing jus ad bellum transgressions, notwithstanding Ukraine's successful legislative countermeasures. These studies jointly demonstrate that although international law concepts are fundamental, enforcement mechanisms lack the political will and structural capacity to effectively handle significant power breaches.

### **Theoretical and Legal Framework**

The study analyses the Russian perspective on international legal tenets on sovereignty, non-intervention, and the prohibition of force, especially in relation to the Ukraine conflict. Russia's conduct in Ukraine has been assessed as transgressions of these essential principles. (Santiago Suarez Ortiz et al., 2023) contend that Russia's actions represent unlawful interference through the use of force, resulting in international culpability and an obligation to provide reparations. (Buchan, 2017) particularly characterize Russia's 2014 action in Crimea as unlawful intervention rather than as a legitimate use of force, dismissing Russia's reasons, which include the protection of Russian citizens and the endorsement of self-determination. (Natasha Kuhrt, 2015) observes Russia's amalgamation of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine with humanitarian intervention, linking this perspective to actions in the 1990s and opposition to US hegemony. (Buchan, 2017) critiques perceptions of Russia's erratic sovereignty strategy, identifying a shared narrative among Russian elites that intertwines non-interference with obligations to ethnic groups, all underpinned by anti-Western emotions during the 2014 Ukraine crisis.

The 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is a pivotal instrument in international law, serving as the basis for prosecuting the "crime of crimes" (C. Tams, 2014). Recent academic discourse posits that Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, commencing on February 24, 2022, qualifies as genocide under this Convention (Azarov et al. D. K., 2022). Evidence comprises Russia's methodical assaults on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, depriving communities of crucial services, and the targeting of cultural heritage sites (A. Zamryha, 2023). Researchers discern genocidal intent through the rhetoric of Russian leaders and their pseudo-historical rationalizations for the invasion, in conjunction with illicit actions such as homicides, the forcible relocation of Ukrainian children to Russia, and the intentional creation of conditions

designed to annihilate the Ukrainian nation (Azarov et al. D. K., 2022). International institutions, such as the International Criminal Court and UN specialized organizations, are pivotal in the prevention and prosecution of such crimes (A. Zamryha, 2023).

The analytical framework of state responsibility compared to individual accountability within the Russian setting uncovers intricate dimensions of legal and political responsibility. Russia's aggression towards Ukraine signifies the first extensive armed conflict in central Europe, endangering international order and prompting essential inquiries regarding the potential for accountability concerning both state and individual criminal conduct (V. Shatilo et al., 2023). The economic rationale of international law indicates that state responsibility functions akin to vicarious liability, incentivizing nations to regulate wrongdoers under their oversight, whilst individual liability pertains to direct offenders (Posner, 2006). This binary approach is insufficient for addressing mass atrocities, as it omits social accountability for endorsing repressive policies (Subotić, 2011). In hybrid authoritarian regimes such as Russia, government relies on interactive arrangements with civil society actors, which challenges the concept of Russian exceptionalism and facilitates comparative examination (Davies et al., 2016).

## Research Methodology

This study uses a normative legal research technique to evaluate the legality of state actions in relation to international law. The research focuses on the ideal characteristics of law and the appropriate application of existing legal frameworks, doctrines, and precedents to specific circumstances. The Russian invasion into Ukraine has been justified on legal grounds such as self-defence, national safeguarding, and genocide. The analysis uses credible legal sources such as the Charter of the United Nations, Geneva Conventions, United Nations Resolutions and Declarations, International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court case law, and scholarly contributions from international law experts. The method's validity is justified by its doctrinal precision, policy relevance, and the link between law and foreign policy. The research provides a fundamental framework for a critical assessment of Russia's invasion, the adequacy of institutional responses, and the implications for the development of international law.

## Research Analysis

### 1. Russia's Actions and the Principal Rules of International Law in Its Invasion of Ukraine

#### 1.1 The Principle of the Prohibition of the Use of Force

It is a basic tenet of international law that the use of violence between states in the resolution of international disputes is prohibited. When another sovereign state's political independence or territorial integrity is violated by the use of force, this becomes a breach of international law (Marxsen, 2015). In this context, Russia's military actions against Ukraine represent a clear violation of this principle and have escalated a crisis that endangers international peace and security.

According to the United Nations Charter, Article 2, paragraph 4, it is prohibited for any member state to use force or the threat of force against the political independence or territorial integrity of any other state (United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945). The invasion of Ukraine by Russia was a blatant illustration of this principle being violated. Article 51, which guarantees the right to self-defense, and Article 42, which allows for the use of force that has been approved by the United Nations Security Council, are the only two exceptions that are included in the Charter. (United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945)

Beyond these formal exceptions, some legal scholars and commentators have proposed a third, unofficial exception grounded in evolving norms and limited practice: humanitarian intervention, or more broadly, the "*Responsibility to Protect (R2P)*" doctrine. However, under current international consensus, humanitarian intervention without Security Council authorization remains impermissible. Due to the fact that Russia did not get such authority in this instance, the invasion is considered to be legally impossible.

The sole legal rationale that Russia has presented is the right to self-defense, which in accordance with Article 51 permits the use of force in the event that an armed assault is launched against a state that is a member of the United Nations. (United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945) However, for this justification to hold, there must be clear, demonstrable evidence of such an attack. Additional requirements are

added by customary international law, which states that there must be an overwhelming and urgent need to defend oneself, leaving no time for discussion or choice of methods, and that any action used in response must be proportionate and contained to the danger.

President Vladimir Putin and Russian officials have invoked Article 51 to claim a right to collective self-defence of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, alleging that Ukraine was committing genocide in these areas (Szpak, 2023). However, these arguments are flawed both in fact and in law. Donetsk and Luhansk lack recognition as sovereign nations under international law and are not United Nations members; hence, they do not possess the right to collective self-defense as outlined in Article 51 (Lagerwall, 2023).

In addition, there is no solid proof to support the claims of genocide. Genocide is defined as “the systematic and intentional killing of a large number of people because of their race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, or gender” by the “*Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide*”. (Assembly, 1948,) There is no verifiable indication that Ukraine engaged in such acts or possessed the intent to commit genocide in eastern Ukraine. Even if serious human rights violations had occurred, neither the Genocide Convention nor the UN Charter permits unilateral use of force in response.

Force is explicitly forbidden by other international legal instruments as well. One example is the 2014 Minsk Agreements, which aimed to end the fighting in eastern Ukraine by establishing a ceasefire and a peaceful conclusion. (Åtland, 2020) These agreements were mediated by the “*Trilateral Contact Group*”, which included Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE. However, these agreements are considered vague, lacking binding enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, Russia openly repudiated the accords before to initiating its comprehensive invasion on February 24, 2022, so compromising its claim of adherence to the pact. (Bosica, 2023)

The “*Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928)*” or the “*Pact of Paris*”, which is also known as the “*General Treaty for Renunciation of Violence as an Instrument of National Policy*”, likewise forbids the use of violence to settle international disputes (Koplow, 2014). As two of the Soviet Union’s successor republics, Russia and Ukraine are both legally obligated by this pact. Although largely symbolic in modern international law, the pact reinforces the overarching commitment to peaceful dispute resolution. In the case of a disagreement on who is legally responsible, however, the United Nations Charter will take priority over any other international arrangement (United Nations, Charter of the United Nations,, 24 October 1945,)

In conclusion, Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine lacks legal justification under the prevailing framework of international law. Its actions contravene the core principles of the UN Charter and other international legal commitments aimed at preserving peace and stability.

## 1.2 Violation of the Principle of Non-Intervention in the Internal Affairs of States

States are prohibited from intervening in the domestic affairs of other sovereign states under international law. The sovereign right of each nation to establish its political, economic, social, and cultural systems without external interference is recognized. This fundamental principle is embedded in numerous international legal instruments, including the “1970 UN General Assembly Resolution” 2625 (“*Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States*”) and Article 2(7) of the UN Charter (Moyn, 2020). No nation or coalition of nations may authorize its citizens to meddle in the domestic or foreign policy of any other nation, as stated in the Declaration. Such interference, including military action, economic coercion, or political subversion, breaches international norms.

Although the UN is controlled of various organs that address global issues related to peace, security, law, and development, including the ICJ and the “*International Law Commission (ILC)*”, the organization is not a supranational authority. It lacks the power to enforce laws independently or compel states to ratify or adhere to treaties. The UN operates within the limits of its Charter and cannot interfere with the sovereignty of member states.

The military operations of Russia in Ukraine directly violate the non-interventionist principle. Under Article 1 of UN General Assembly Resolution 3314, acts of aggression include military operations on Ukrainian territory and armed force deployment. (Glusman, 2024). One state’s use of military action against another state’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence in defiance of the United Nations Charter is defined as aggression in the resolution. Article 2, paragraph 4 of the United Nations Charter acknowledges this concept and forbids the use or threat of force against the political or geographical integrity of any State. Russia’s actions,

particularly the use of armed force to sway Ukraine's political trajectory and territorial integrity, unequivocally transgress the limits of acceptable state behaviour as delineated by international law.

States found in violation of the UN Charter may face punitive actions, including sanctions. Article 5 of the Charter permits the suspension of membership rights if preventive or coercive measures are adopted by the Security Council. (United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945,) Sanctions can take various non-military forms, economic, diplomatic, or otherwise, and aim to exert pressure without resorting to force. Consequent to Russia's aggression, the "*Security Council*", although hampered by Russia's veto power, and the broader international community have taken steps such as economic sanctions and trade embargoes to curtail Russia's influence and pressure it to cease hostilities.

The conflict has global repercussions, including economic instability and resource shortages, prompting increased attention from international bodies. The power to address concerns voiced by both member and non-member states regarding international peace and security lies with the General Assembly, as stated in Article 11, paragraph 2, of the United Nations Charter. The General Assembly may also alert the Security Council to potential threats to peace under Article 11, paragraph 3. (United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945,)

To address conflicts like the one in Ukraine, the UN employs several conflict-resolution strategies:

- **Preventive Diplomacy:** Initiatives to prevent disputes from escalating or spreading.
- **Peacemaking:** Diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes under Chapter VI of the Charter.
- **Peacekeeping:** Deployment of UN forces to maintain stability post-agreement.
- **Peacebuilding:** Measures to support post-conflict recovery and prevent relapse.
- **Peace Enforcement:** Actions authorized by the Security Council to address threats to peace.

The efficacy of these tactics is mostly contingent upon the political resolve of member states and the collaboration of the conflicting parties. While the UN Secretary-General can offer mediation and facilitate negotiations, outcomes are not guaranteed.

Additional responsibilities emerge under the Geneva Conventions, particularly for the safeguarding of at-risk people. Article 24 of the 1949 Geneva Convention mandates that belligerent parties safeguard the welfare of children under the age of 15, including orphans and those estranged from their relatives (Grover, 2012). Protecting vulnerable civilians from harm during brutal conflicts has always been a priority for humanitarian groups like the "*International Committee of the Red Cross*".

The UNGA held an Emergency Special Session to discuss the issue in reaction to the growing fighting. This session culminated in a landmark decision on April 7, 2022, resulting in Russia's suspension from the UN Human Rights Council owing to serious allegations of egregious human rights abuses in Ukraine (Bogdanova, 2023). There were 93 votes in support of the resolution, 24 votes against it, and 58 votes abstained from voting. This action demonstrates the international community's commitment to preserving international legal norms and human rights, as well as its criticism of the measures taken by Russia.

### 1.3 Violations of International Humanitarian Law

The Russian military has been conducting operations in recent months that have featured repeated ground and aircraft attacks, the majority of which have targeted residential areas. In addition to the bombing of a maternity hospital in Mariupol on March 9, attacks on several healthcare institutions, and the assault on the Amstor retail centre in Kremenchuk on June 27, there have been other notable occurrences. Taking such activities is a blatant violation of IHL, which expressly forbids the deliberate targeting of individuals or civilian infrastructure (Zaid. Z. A et al., 2024).

The concept of divergence is a fundamental component of international humanitarian law (IHL). According to the legislation, all sides involved in a war must constantly differentiate between civilians and combatants, as well as between military goals and civilian objects. Attacks must be aimed purely at military objectives, as stipulated by this concept, which was first specified in the "*St. Petersburg Declaration*" and subsequently reaffirmed in "*The Hague Regulations*" as well as Articles 48, 51(2), and 52(2) of "*Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions*" (Hague Regulations, 1907). Evidence suggests that Russian forces have deliberately

targeted non-military sites, such as hospitals and commercial centers, in contravention of these legal standards. Furthermore, it seems that Russia has breached the concept of proportionality, which prohibits assaults that have the potential to cause an excessive amount of damage to civilians in comparison to the expected military gain. The *principle of precaution* has also been neglected, as IHL requires that all possible actions be taken to evade or diminish harm to civilians and civilian property during military operations (Schmitt, 2012).

Reports further indicate serious abuses by Russian personnel, including torture, mistreatment of civilians, and acts of sexual violence, each of which is a greatly considered as breach of IHL and constitutes a war crime (Atadjanov, 2024). International humanitarian law, supported by international criminal law, holds individuals accountable for war crimes, whether committed directly or through orders. Under the principle of universal jurisdiction, states may prosecute such crimes in their national courts. Acts such as the deliberate targeting of civilians, torture, and sexual violence are universally recognized as war crimes under all conflict scenarios.

The findings of the “*Independent International Commission of Enquiry on Ukraine*” were presented to the UNGA on October 18, 2022 (Kostakos G. , 2023). After conducting an investigation, the panel came to the conclusion that Russian troops had perpetrated a broad variety of war crimes and abuses of human rights during the first months of the invasion in the areas of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy (Rogatinska et al., 2023). As a result of their enquiry, they discovered that explosive weapons were used without discrimination in inhabited areas, that people were attacked as they were fleeing, and that systemic violations were committed, such as summary killings, arbitrary imprisonment, torture, and sexual violence.

Furthermore, there have been reports of unlawful deportations and enforced disappearances, with some victims, including children, still unaccounted for. The Commission emphasized the urgent need for accountability, given the scale and severity of the violations.

## 2. The Efforts of the International Community to Address Violations

### 2.1 The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

In reaction to Russia’s transgressions in Ukraine, the “*United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)*” has adopted a number of different steps. Following a request from Ukraine, the Council decided to have an imperative discussion on the worsening human rights situation caused by Russian aggression at its 49<sup>th</sup> session, which took place from the 28<sup>th</sup> of February to the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2022 (Palubinskaite, 2022). China, Cuba, Eritrea, Russia, and Venezuela were the only five of the 47 member nations to use their right to vote against the discussion. Thirteen of the member states chose to abstain from voting, including countries such as India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and the United Arab Emirates.

Following this, on 4 March 2022, the Council adopted Resolution A/49/L.1 titled “*Situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression.*” This resolution echoed the demands made earlier in the UNGA Resolution on “*Aggression against Ukraine*” passed on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 (United Nations Human Rights Council, 4 March 2022). The Russian intrusion into Ukrainian territory is strongly condemned, and a plea is made for an immediate cease of hostilities, the evacuation of Russian soldiers, and an end to breaches of human rights. The resolution also emphasized the necessity to grant unhindered and safe access to humanitarian and human rights organizations for individuals transferred from conflict-affected areas to Russian-controlled or occupied territories. In the vote on this resolution, 32 member states supported it, only two, Russia and Eritrea, opposed, and thirteen abstained. It is imperative to note that the establishment of an independent international commission of enquiry was a crucial effect of this resolution. On March 30, 2022, the President of the Human Rights Council nominated three conversant experts in human rights to fulfil a mandate that was for a period of one year (de Zayas, 2023). Their mission includes investigating all suspected violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, collecting and preserving evidence, identifying responsible individuals or entities, and making recommendations on accountability and justice.

The commission was scheduled to present an oral update during the Council’s 51<sup>st</sup> session in September-October 2022 and a full written report during the 52<sup>nd</sup> session in spring 2023 (RIZZONI, 2023). It is the intention of these conclusions to provide support for ongoing investigations being conducted by international judicial entities such as the ICC and the ICJ, in addition to legal procedures being executed at the national level. On April 7, 2022, the UNGA decided to remove Russia from its membership on the Human Rights Council (Kostakos G. , 2023). In all, 93 nations voted in favor of the proposal, 24 countries voted against it, and 58

countries did not vote at all. Following the provisions of paragraph 8 of UNGA 60/251, which permits the suspension of a Council member who has been determined to have committed grave and systematic abuses of human rights, this decision was made (Jahangir, 2007). This marked only the second instance of a member's suspension from the Council, the first being Libya in 2011 (United Nations General Assembly, 1 March 2011,). Importantly, the suspension does not affect the activities of the Monitoring Mission or the Commission of Inquiry which was constituted by the Council.

## **2.2 The International Criminal Court**

Ukraine has begun measures to give the ICC jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory, even though neither Russia nor Ukraine has signed the Rome Statute, which is the treaty that founded the ICC in 2002 (Grzebyk, 2023). Specifically, Ukraine has issued two formal declarations accepting the Court's jurisdiction, in spite of not being a State Party. These declarations have enabled the ICC to legally pursue investigations into alleged violations committed during the conflict.

The most recent declaration was submitted in 2015, following a resolution passed by the Ukrainian Parliament that recognized the ICC's jurisdiction indefinitely, effective retroactively from 20 February 2014. In doing so, Ukraine accused senior Russian officials and associated militant groups of perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity in Crimea and the Donbas regions, citing grave consequences, including mass civilian casualties.

Karim A.A. Khan, the Prosecutor of the ICC, made the announcement on February 28, 2022, that an initial investigation into the situation in Ukraine had begun (Khan, 2022). This investigation was initiated *proprio motu*, which means "on his initiative". He indicated that sufficient grounds existed to proceed, and on 2 March, the ICC Presidency assigned a Pre-Trial Chamber (PTC) to determine whether a full-scale investigation should be launched (Ochs, 2020). The 39 member nations of the International Criminal Court (ICC) formally referred the matter to the Court, greatly increasing its authority to investigate and punish any crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Prosecutor Khan has indicated that the enquiry would include all of the suspected offences that are connected to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This investigation will build upon the investigation that was conducted before. The Russian government and military have been accused of perpetrating atrocities that include crimes of aggression, crimes against humanity, and maybe genocide. These offenses are supplementary to war crimes. Russia's military operations contravene international law, namely the essential ban against the use of force that underpins international legal principles (Sayapin et al., 2018).

The invasion of Russia represents the crime of aggression, as defined by the Rome Statute, which occurs when a state employs military force to infringe upon the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence of another state. This includes acts such as armed attacks, bombardments, blockades of ports or coastlines, and the placement of military forces without proper legal consent. Russia's conduct, which has involved targeting civilian populations through systematic acts of violence such as murder, torture, and sexual violence, may also fulfill the criteria for crimes against humanity. These crimes, though not yet codified in a single international treaty, have long been prosecuted under international law, including at the ICC and *ad hoc* tribunals.

The ICC) has the authority to bring charges of aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide under Article 5 of the Rome Statute (Robinson, 1999). Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter forbids aggression as well; it provides the legal basis for international reaction to acts of aggression, breaches of peace, and threats to peace. In light of the magnitude and gravity of the alleged crimes, it is possible that Russian political and military authorities might be held personally liable under international criminal law for directing, aiding, or actively committing actions of this kind.

## **2.3 The International Court of Justice**

The main judicial instrument of the UN is the ICJ, established under Articles 92 to 96 of the UN Charter (United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, , 1945). Its main purposes are to settle legal conflicts between governments and provide legally binding rulings based on international law. Nonetheless, the Court's jurisdiction is restricted to situations in which governments have acknowledged its power.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine has acknowledged the mandatory jurisdiction of the ICJ, as stipulated in Article 36 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in relation to the dispute that exist between the two countries (Wulandari, 2022). It is important to take note of the fact that both Russia and Ukraine are parties to the “*Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*”, which was signed in 1948. The ICJ is granted jurisdiction over matters of this kind under the Convention. In addition to the responsibility that states that are parties to the Convention have to take the necessary steps to prevent and punish genocide, the International Court of Justice is also vested with the authority to make decisions regarding problems that pertain to the interpretation and implementation of the Convention.

The Ukrainian government took legal action against Russia on February 26, 2022, when they took their case to the ICJ, claiming that Russia had violated the Genocide Convention. Russia is attempting to use false accusations of genocide in Ukraine to legitimize its military activities. The case, which is entitled “*Allegations of Genocide under the 1948 Convention (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*,” challenges this attempt (Marchuk, 2023).

Following an expedited review, the ICJ issued provisional measures on 16 March 2022. These measures were issued to prevent further harm and escalation while the case is under consideration. The Court ordered the following:

1. The Russian Federation must promptly terminate all military actions from February 24, 2022.
2. Russia must ensure that all military or paramilitary forces it commands or supports do not advance further military operations.
3. Both Ukraine and Russia must avoid any actions that could exacerbate the dispute or hinder its peaceful resolution.

While ICJ rulings are binding, enforcement is a significant challenge. Should a state fail to comply, the matter may be referred to the “*United Nations Security Council (UNSC)*”. However, in this case, Russia’s status as a permanent UNSC member with veto power severely limits the enforceability of such judgments.

There has been widespread support for the legal action taken by Ukraine. A joint statement supportive to Ukraine’s actions before the ICJ was released on July 13, 2022, by more than forty nations, including the USA, the UK, Australia, and members of the European Union (Minkoff, 2023). The necessity of avoiding the manipulation of the Genocide Convention and ensuring that its integrity is maintained was emphasized by them.

Several nations have also formally intervened in the case. Latvia and Lithuania submitted declarations on 21 and 22 July 2022, respectively, followed by New Zealand on 28 July. The interventions that were made under Article 63 of the Statute of the ICJ highlight the worldwide interest in the accurate explanation and execution of the Genocide Convention.

The Czech Republic used its right to intervene according to Article 63, contending that the Genocide Convention encompasses responsibilities *erga omnes*, meaning obligations due to the whole of the international community (Longobardo, 2015). Czechia’s declaration highlighted its interest in supporting the ICJ in upholding the Convention’s integrity and preventing the dilution of its legal authority. In line with Article 83 of the ICJ Rules of Court, both Ukraine and Russia have been invited to submit written observations regarding Czechia’s intervention.

Russia challenged the jurisdiction of the ICJ by submitting preliminary objections on October 6, 2022. Russia said that Ukraine’s allegations could not be legally supported by the Genocide Convention, as it does not regulate the use of force between nations. Under ICJ procedures, such objections are permitted and must be resolved before the case proceeds to substantive hearings. While enforcement of ICJ judgments in politically complex situations remains uncertain, the Court’s decisions play a vital role in reaffirming international legal norms. In addition to other reactions from international bodies like the ICC, the imposition of interim sanctions supports the wider claim that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a breach of international law.

## Discussion

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has revealed considerable structural deficiencies in international law enforcement

mechanisms. The UN Security Council's failure to enact binding resolutions because of Russia's veto power, coupled with the General Assembly's non-binding condemnations that lack enforcement mechanisms, illustrates the inherent flaws of the system (Atul Alexander, 2023). These systemic crises encompass problems of consent, deficiencies in accountability, and insufficient penalties systems (Atul Alexander, 2023). The war poses significant inquiries on the efficacy of international law in conflict prevention and the safeguarding of human rights in the presence of dominant state actors (Dawa Choden, 2023). The International Criminal Court has unparalleled problems in ensuring accountability for offenses, underscoring the continuous evolution of the nascent international legal system (Weiner, 2023). Geopolitical dynamics profoundly affect international law enforcement, as Russia's allies, especially with China, weaken collective sanctions and legal frameworks through sustained economic ties and diplomatic backing (Almohawes, 2025). These findings demonstrate the susceptibility of international law when faced with influential states with considerable geopolitical influence.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict illustrates the inherent clash between international law and power politics in modern international relations. Russia's aggression towards Ukraine constitutes a grave violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and signifies the most substantial challenge to the authority of international law in Europe since World War II (Kwiecień, 2022). The conflict underscores the malleability of international law, shaped by the desires of states during significant crises (Kwiecień, 2022). The conflict illustrates the clash between realpolitik and international law, as Russia's activities contravene the Westphalian norms of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and political independence established in the UN Charter (Driss Ed.daran, 2023). Although collective security measures have demonstrated ineffectiveness in resolving *jus ad bellum* transgressions, Ukraine has exhibited notable efficacy in legal counteractions via international judicial advocacy (Driss Ed.daran, 2023). The conflict signifies not a threat to the existence of the international legal order, but a contention regarding the interpretation of its fundamental values, such as self-determination and territorial integrity (Oklopčić, 2015; Mapako, 2022).

The Kosovo precedent has impacted subsequent territorial disputes involving Russia. (Karagiannis, 2014) analyses Russian operations in South Ossetia and Crimea, observing that Moscow employed analogous legal rationales derived from the Kosovo precedent for both actions, chiefly to obstruct NATO expansion and reclaim regional dominance. (Violante, 2014) contends that Kosovo's 2008 independence established a perilous precedent that jeopardizes international law, which Russia subsequently cited to endorse Crimean secession while contesting Western stances. (Buduroi, 2024) similarly illustrates how Russia exploits the Kosovo precedent to justify measures that infringe against Georgian and Ukrainian sovereignty. (Marat Iliyasov, 2024) offer further context by juxtaposing Russia's strategies in Chechnya with its tactics in Ukraine, uncovering consistent patterns in political strategy, military operations, and information campaigns, indicating that Russia perceives Ukraine as an extension of its territory rather than a sovereign nation.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has prompted comprehensive legal scrutiny of Russia's rationales for its invasion. Russia asserted self-defence pursuant to Article 51 of the UN Charter; however, legal scholars have thoroughly refuted these claims (J. Putra et al., 2024; Allison, 2023). Russia's activities, when evaluated through the Caroline Test and the verdicts of the International Court of Justice, did not satisfy the necessary criteria of imminency, proportionality (Ed.daran D et al., 2025), and necessity, hence deeming the invasion unlawful under international law (J. Putra et al., 2024). Russia articulated multiple legal, quasi-legal, and normative assertions in conjunction with political rhetoric and territorial irredentism, which experts describe as a misuse of legal discourse that jeopardizes fundamental world laws and norms (Allison, 2023). The conflict presents intricate questions about *jus ad bellum* and state sovereignty, with evaluations determining that Russia's military actions are devoid of legal basis (Mapako, 2022; Opatola, 2023).

### **Policy Implications**

The Russia-Ukraine crisis has shown significant deficiencies in the UN Security Council's capacity to uphold international peace and security. The veto power of Russia has incapacitated the UNSC, obstructing the passage of essential resolutions to confront the persistent attack (Adriana Jokšaitė, 2024; Gordanić, 2022). The conflict illustrates the inherent contradiction of an aggressor state possessing veto power, rendering significant reform almost unattainable under the existing UN Charter stipulations (Adriana Jokšaitė, 2024). Numerous reform suggestions have surfaced, encompassing the expansion of UNSC membership, the restriction of veto power, the

introduction of avoidance mechanisms, and the implementation of procedural modifications (Liu, 2024; George Chimdi Mbara, 2023). The intricate procedure of revising the UN Charter, coupled with the veto powers of permanent members, presents formidable barriers to reform (Gordanić, 2022). The Ukraine crisis may signify a potential “San Francisco moment” for institutional reform; nevertheless, it is likely to falter because of insufficient political will among permanent members (Gordanić, 2022).

The Russia-Ukraine war has underscored substantial jurisdictional obstacles in pursuing the crime of aggression via the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC has initiated investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity based on referrals from 43 governments; but, it lacks jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, as neither Russia nor Ukraine are signatories to the Rome Statute (Imoedemhe, 2023; Frulli, 2023). Ukraine’s association with the ICC is ambiguous, depending on provisional announcements from 2014-2015 instead of complete adoption of the Rome Statute (Frulli, 2023; A. Lankevych et al., 2024). The extraordinary global reaction has elicited apprehensions regarding selective justice, since resources have been disproportionately allocated to Ukraine in contrast to other circumstances (Frulli, 2023). Legal academics propose the creation of an international ad hoc tribunal via UN-Ukraine treaties or multilateral agreements as the optimal instrument for pursuing acts of aggression (Evhen Tsybulenko, 2023). Alternative methods involve employing universal jurisdiction principles by referencing states (Imoedemhe, 2023).

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has profoundly affected the roles of regional organizations in humanitarian aid, conflict settlement, and international security. The European Union has adopted a comprehensive strategy that includes humanitarian assistance, diplomatic initiatives, and conflict resolution measures in reaction to the humanitarian crisis (Ying, 2024). The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) have collaborated significantly through mechanisms such as the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) and the European Union Satellite Centre (SatCen), which offered impartial monitoring and reporting of ceasefire violations (Mahilaj, 2023). Both institutions encounter substantial constraints, including insufficient political will among member states and doubts regarding the efficacy of economic sanctions imposed on Russia (Mahilaj, 2023). The conflict has tested the conventional peacekeeping functions of international organizations, impacting the United Nations, OSCE, NATO, and EU through intricate political, economic, and military engagements (Özdilek, 2025). A thorough and inclusive strategy is essential for achieving sustainable peace and security in the region (Mahilaj, 2023).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is a significant challenge to the international legal framework, signifying the first overt attack against a sovereign European nation since 1945 (Peters, 2024). This fight represents one of the most profound disruptions to the global order since World War II, substantially altering international relations (Brunk, 2022). The conflict has inspired both structural and normative changes in the international system. It exposes and alters the global power dynamics while contesting the rule-based international order and established institutions (Kapitonenko, 2024). The conflict has cast doubt on the efficacy of the UN-based international order and necessitated policy adjustments among both major powers and smaller nations (Atanasiu, 2023). Notwithstanding Russia’s violation of essential international law principles, especially the ban on inter-state armed force, the conflict has ironically catalysed beneficial advancements, such as incremental UN changes and an increased humanization of international law (Peters, 2024). The ramifications of the war extend well beyond Ukraine, fostering ideological confrontations and altering global security paradigms (Kapitonenko, 2024).

### **Limitations & Future Research**

This research utilizes a rigorous normative legal framework, yet it is crucial to acknowledge specific limitations. The research is doctrinal, focusing on the interpretation of treaties, court decisions, and legal commentary. As a result, it is devoid of concrete field evidence from Ukraine, such as victim testimonies, military documentation, or on-site inquiries conducted by human rights organizations.

This constraint signifies that the study is confined primarily to the legal dimensions of Russia’s invasion, rather than the empirical reality of how violations manifest in practice. The report provides a thorough examination of relevant legal principles and institutional remedies; nevertheless, it does not assess the broader humanitarian, social, or political consequences of the conflict on the affected people.

Future research may address these shortcomings by utilizing socio-legal or mixed-method approaches,

integrating doctrinal analysis with empirical fieldwork, interviews, or quantitative data concerning civilian injuries. This work would enhance the legal perspective of the existing study by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the war's repercussions.

The current study reveals several opportunities for future research that would improve understanding of the legal and institutional challenges highlighted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine:

Future study may do systematic comparisons between Ukraine and other cases of contentious interventions, such as NATO's operations in Kosovo (1999), the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (2003), or Russia's earlier annexation of Crimea (2014). This comparative study may assist in identifying patterns in the application, contestation, and enforcement of international law across various regions globally.

This study examines the immediate reactions of international courts to judgments from the ICJ and ICC; however, future research may explore the durability and effectiveness of these judicial processes over time. The enforceability of ICJ provisional measures or ICC charges against powerful states remains ambiguous, as does the potential for enhanced compliance in response to shifts in international political situations.

The Evolution of State Practice in International Law: An intriguing area of research examines the impact of the Ukraine crisis on state interactions with international law. Future research may examine if the war sets new precedents about the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention, the use of sanctions as a legal remedy, or the erosion of Security Council authority due to the disproportionate use of veto power.

This research will increase scholarly discourse and enable practical modifications to the international legal framework, strengthening its capacity to confront violations by powerful nations.

## **Conclusion**

The acts that Russia has taken in Ukraine represent an obvious and unlawful intervention, which is characterized by the forceful deployment of armed soldiers and military equipment. These actions satisfy the legal criteria for aggression under international law and represent a serious breach of Ukraine's sovereignty. The formal declaration by Russia of the annexation of four Ukrainian regions, despite widespread international condemnation and the imposition of sanctions by Western nations, constitutes a grave violation of international law. Such territorial acquisition by force is expressly prohibited and has no legal validity. Under international law, the annexed territories remain under occupation, and their legal status remains unchanged regardless of unilateral declarations.

Furthermore, the policies enacted by the Russian Federation do not alter the legal rights or obligations associated with these territories. Instead, they underscore the urgent need for robust international mechanisms to address impunity for significant violations of international norms to support the rule of law. The principal obligation for preserving world peace and security rests with the UNSC. If a member state violates international law, the UN Security Council could theoretically impose consequences on it through a binding resolution. However, the veto power held by the five permanent members (P5), including Russia, has rendered the Security Council largely ineffective in cases involving one of its members. Russia's use of its veto to block resolutions concerning its conduct in Ukraine exemplifies this paralysis.

In such circumstances, when the Security Council is deadlocked, individual member states often resort to unilateral sanctions and other countermeasures. Meanwhile, the UNGA, although lacking the authority to issue binding decisions, has convened special emergency sessions to address the crisis and mobilize international opinion. Under Article 5 of the UN Charter, the Security Council may recommend the suspension of a member state's rights and privileges if it is subject to preventive or enforcement measures. This recommendation must be established by the General Assembly. While such measures remain rare and politically complex, they illustrate the theoretical mechanisms available to hold violators accountable within the UN system.

The ICC's continuing investigation and the temporary measures issued by the ICJ both lend credence to the international legal stance that Russia's invasion violates basic norms of international law. These legal measures show that international law is still relevant in confronting state aggression and maintaining global order, even if enforcement is still a struggle.

**Funding:**

The funding details are as follows:

**Funding Agency:** United Arab Emirates University (UAEU).

**Project & Fund No:** 12L018

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) for funding this research.

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Biographies: Authorship and Level of Contribution:** All authors have participated substantially in the manuscript's conceptualization, drafting, revision, and final approval.

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