

# Russia's Goals and Priorities in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

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**Abstract.** *Based on Colin Gray's defense planning theory, Russia's territorial control in Ukraine reflects a clear strategic defense objective to strengthen its position in Eastern Europe. The success of Russia's defense strategy is influenced by the interplay between political policies, military power, and the ability to adapt to close-range conflict situations. This territorial control is not merely a result of military conflict but also an integral part of a long-term plan to achieve broader political goals. Additionally, the motivation of Russian human resources in Ukraine demonstrates a well-planned and directed strategic approach. The high number of volunteers and the motivation of troops indicate Russia's efforts to achieve its objectives through optimizing human resource partnerships. The prioritization of Ukraine's natural resources also reflects Russia's strategy to enhance its geopolitical position and fulfill its economic needs. This resource control not only provides financial advantages but also strengthens Russia's military capabilities. Therefore, the interplay between political policies, military power, and the ability to adapt to dynamic situations is a key factor in Russia's defense strategy during this conflict.*

**Keywords:** *Defense Strategy, Russia, Ukraine, Geopolitics, Natural Resources*

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## INTRODUCTION

National defense is a civil and military force organized by a country to guarantee the integrity of its territory, protect its people, and/or protect its interests. The concept of national defense has two functions, namely military defense and non-military defense. The function of military defense includes military operations related to war and military operations other than war. While the function of non-military defense is to strengthen national resources, both non-military forces and civil defense. This non-military defense includes the function of handling natural disasters, humanitarian operations, defense psychology related to socio-cultural awareness, economy and national defense, and technological developments. Arnold Wolfers concluded that the main problem for any country is to increase its ability to prevent or repel attacks. (Susilo, 2021)

In realizing effective defense, a good strategy is needed with planning. The concept of defense strategy is still a subject of study that continues to develop by defense and security experts to this day. This is because defense strategy is a very important framework in determining the direction and objectives of a country's defense policy making. Defense strategy requires a mature plan before its real application in the field. This mature planning is very necessary because conditions in the field can continue to change with all the possibilities that can occur. Poor planning in defense and security can not only endanger the existence of a country, but can also endanger all citizens in it. (Sarjito, 2023). This defense planning can be seen from the strategy carried out by Russia in carrying out a military invasion of Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine conflict that occurred in 2022.

The beginning of the new Ukrainian government that is pro-European is the beginning of a long feud between Russia and Ukraine. In February 2014 there was an important incident between Russia and Ukraine after President Viktor Yanukovich resigned from his position where in that year Russia annexed Crimea as one of Russia's regions and the Donbas war between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian separatist groups. The occurrence of both conflicts was marked by the Revolution of Dignity that occurred in Ukraine. From 2014 to 2022, many other events occurred as a result of the two initial events in 2014. These events include naval incidents, electronic and cyber warfare, political tensions between the two countries and their supporting countries, to the increase in Russian military strength on the Russian-Ukrainian border.

It peaked on February 24, 2022 where the conflict spread rapidly when Russia carried out a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine (Andriani & Attata, 2022). On February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared a military intervention in Ukraine. The main reason Russia launched a military attack on Ukraine was to end the violations committed by the Ukrainian government against Russians in Ukraine. The violations by Russia constituted an act of genocide against ethnic Russians committed by Ukraine in its territory. Russia also said that the violations had been going on for 8 years from 2014 to 2022. In fact, history has recorded that a conflict that ends in war involving the military will have very major consequences in the defense and security sectors of both countries.

The impacts that will occur can be in the form of threatening the sovereignty of the warring countries, declining diplomatic relations and cooperation in various sectors of the country, to high levels of use of natural and human resources. The war between Russia and Ukraine has also caused a humanitarian crisis that could shake the stability of relations between Russia and other countries geopolitically. The conditions created in every war, including Russia-Ukraine, are the large number of casualties from both civilian and military sides, the destruction of infrastructure and public facilities that have been built, the high budget expenditure to finance the war, and the increase in refugees as victims directly affected by the war. (Massaguni et al., 2022)

From 2021 to early 2022, Russia built up a massive military force on the Ukrainian border. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO as a defense pact organization responded to this as a threat of an invasion of Ukraine. However, NATO's statement was denied by Russian President Vladimir Putin. President Putin argued that NATO's expansion of the territory to include Ukraine as one of its members could endanger Russia and become a real threat of conflict. Russia also demanded that Ukraine not join any military alliance. On February 21, 2022, Russia officially recognized the independence of the pro-Russian separatist regions, namely Donbas and Luhans as independent countries and separate from Ukraine. On the same day, Russia also sent its troops to the region.

Three days later, on February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. And not long after the start of the invasion, many countries in the world, especially from NATO, imposed many sanctions on Russia, both on agencies and individuals. Russia and Ukraine, along with Belarus, were once part of a state called Kievan Rus that existed 1,200 years ago in the Dnieper Valley, which is now Ukraine. Kievan Rus included all of modern Ukraine, parts of Belarus, and western Russia. It is no surprise that Vladimir Putin considers Russia and Ukraine to be one country. Of course, Putin was very disappointed to learn that Ukraine chose to join the Western NATO group rather than remain in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with Russia. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a community of independent states consisting of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and several other former Soviet Union countries that agreed to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This dissolution was marked by the resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union.

The CIS was formed through the CIS Charter, which was signed by the leaders of its member states, including Boris Yeltsin (the first president of Russia) and Leonid Kravchuk (the first president of Ukraine). Initially, Russia and Ukraine had peaceful and good relations until the first conflict occurred in 2005. After independence, relations between Ukraine and Russia became

increasingly tense, especially after Viktor Yushchenko was elected president of Ukraine in 2005. Yushchenko tended to align Ukraine more towards the West and the European Union, which exacerbated tensions with Russia. Relations between Ukraine and Russia began to improve after Viktor Yanukovich, a pro-Russian figure who wanted Ukraine to move closer to Moscow, replaced Yushchenko as president in the 2010 election.

In November 2013, tensions erupted in Ukraine when demonstrations erupted in the capital, Kiev. Pro-Russian President Yanukovich faced widespread opposition to his policies of rejecting an economic integration agreement with the European Union [Click or tap here to enter text](#). The demonstrations escalated into a full-scale conflict in response to a security crackdown, reaching a peak in the first quarter of 2014, when the Ukrainian Parliament ousted Yanukovich from power in February. Yanukovich's ouster caused tension and confusion within the Ukrainian government. The government split into two groups: pro-European and pro-Russian. Supporters of the European Union were largely drawn from people and politicians in mainland Ukraine, while supporters of Russia were primarily drawn from people and politicians in Crimea, a peninsula near the Black Sea.

In 2014, Crimea, a region in southern Ukraine with a large Russian and Tatar-speaking population, asked Russia for help in resolving its internal conflict. The Russian government agreed to the request and sent troops to take control of Crimea. This was done because of Crimea's strategic geopolitical position, which was important for Russia to strengthen its influence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The European Union, which has witnessed Russia's intervention in the conflict in Ukraine, condemned the move. (Mawaty et al., 2021). Then, in July 2014, the situation in Ukraine worsened, and the United States and the European Union began to be hostile to Russia.

The war between Russia and Ukraine that began in February 2022 was also triggered by Ukraine's desire to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Ukraine hopes to reduce tensions with Russia through NATO membership. NATO is a defense and security organization that includes European countries, the United States, and Canada. Several former Soviet Union countries, such as Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia, have also become NATO members. Russia's excessive interference in Ukraine's internal affairs made Ukraine feel that its sovereignty was threatened, thus motivating them to join NATO (Syuryansyah & Berthanila, 2022). Ukraine feels unable to compete with Russia's superior military power. The conflict between the two countries peaked when President Putin recognized the independence of two pro-Russian separatist regions in eastern Ukraine, namely Donetsk and Luhansk. (Said & Samosir, 2017).

Parties to the war are required to comply with international laws of war such as the Hague Convention and the Geneva Convention. However, these treaties only regulate the protection of enemy troops, not civilians, including journalists and refugees. This is stipulated in Article 14 of the 1949 Geneva Convention IV on Refugees. In fact, Russia can accept refugees from Kiev and its surroundings because refugees are considered to have lost their citizenship. However, according to a report by the Ukrainian Defense Intelligence Ministry on March 11, 2022, Russia was accused of shooting dead seven refugees from Kiev, one of whom was a child. If these allegations are true, then Russia has committed war crimes by killing innocent civilians and refugees, as well as crimes against humanity as stipulated in the Nuremberg Charter. (Luban, 2004).

According to the latest data from the official network of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or commonly known as UNHCR, it has reached the figure of millions of people from Ukraine who have become refugees since February 24, 2022. More than 7.9 million refugees from Ukraine are registered in Europe. (OCHA, 2022). This means that more than 17 percent of Ukraine's total population, which is around 45 million people according to 2016 data, has become refugees. Nearly twenty percent of Ukrainians have fled their country to neighboring countries in Europe, and the number of refugees fleeing to Asia has also increased since the invasion began on February 24. This number is expected to continue to increase as the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues.

Amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict, a series of battles have taken place in rapid succession. One example of such a battle is the Battle of Kiev, where Russia attempted to seize and control the Ukrainian capital. (BBC, 2024). Ukraine's strong desire to join NATO, which is seen as a defense and military organization created to compete with the Soviet Union in the past, has angered Russian President Vladimir Putin. If Ukraine joins NATO, the organization will be right at Russia's "gateway." This could lead to the establishment of a NATO military base in Kiev, which is close to Moscow, the Russian capital, which is seen as threatening Russia's security. (Kirby, 2023). In response to this potential threat, President Putin decided to invade Ukraine, with the aim of conquering several regions in the country on February 24, 2022, which eventually sparked a war between Russia and Ukraine.

Russia as the largest former Soviet Union country has a military power that is much greater than Ukraine. The defense technology developed by Russia is also currently among the most modern in the world today. This makes Russia one of the countries with the strongest military in the world (Kirby, 2023). But beyond all these advantages, it turns out that in this battle Russia was successfully held back, even pushed back by Ukraine. The Battle of Kiev marks a crucial phase in the wider conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine's success in holding back the Russian attack in several areas including the capital shows a fairly good defense and security strategy and planning, as well as the importance of international support in facing aggression. This battle also shows Russia's strategic miscalculation and the strength of the Ukrainian national spirit that is united in defending their country's sovereignty (OCHA, 2022).

The impact of this conflict is marked by the withdrawal of Russian troops from the battle points in Ukraine and the return of Russian-occupied territories under Ukrainian control and authority. Colin Gray stated that strategy in defense planning functions as a link that explains the role of implementing the strategy itself. According to Gray, strategy acts as a bridge connecting politicians with their policies and political interests on the one hand, and the military tasked with implementing the policy on the other. Gray also emphasized that the function of strategy is an effort to utilize military power to implement defense policies that have been set by politicians (Gray, 2014). Gray's approach suggests that strategy is not just a plan, but rather a tool that ensures that political goals are achieved through coordinated military action.

This shows the importance of coordination between the two parties, where politicians formulate policies that are then implemented by the military using appropriate strategies. In this context, strategy plays a vital role in ensuring that a country's defense policy is not only formulated but also implemented effectively. This involves careful planning, a deep understanding of the political and military situation, and the ability to adjust actions based on developments in the field. Thus, strategy serves as a guarantee that political goals can be achieved through the use of organized and directed military power: (1) Considering that strategy is always related to politics, it is not surprising if we state that the choice of policy ambitions in politics that is considered wise has so far been a key factor influencing the entire defense planning process (Baylis et al., 2022).

Excessive or unrealistic political ambitions can lead to ineffective or even counterproductive allocation of resources in supporting national defense; (2) The defense planning process may not be able to specifically anticipate the goals that each politician wants to achieve, but it must be able to understand what is more important and what is less important to a country's national security. (Baylis et al., 2022). It is important to ensure that the threats that are most detrimental to the country can be addressed or at least neutralized within the capabilities that the country can afford, without creating new problems.

## **METHODS**

This research uses qualitative research methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This research is conducted to understand the differences in exploring social and human issues, especially related to Russia's defense strategy in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In addition, this research will use scientific data in the discussion process. This research will be conducted with a descriptive

analytical approach, which emphasizes the process of data collection and analysis. This method is inductive, where researchers focus on the meaning and deep interpretation of the data collected. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study will pay special attention to the meaning of each finding, as well as how the findings can be interpreted in the context of Russian defense strategy and planning in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Thus, this study is expected to provide comprehensive and deeper insights into the topic being studied.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Russia's Goals in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict**

In November 2024, Russian forces managed to seize about 600 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory, bringing the total area controlled by Russia to about 18% of the entire territory of Ukraine (VOA, 2024). In November 2024, Russian troops managed to seize about 600 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory, bringing the total area captured to include all of Crimea and more than 80% of the Donbas region (Luhansk and Donetsk), as well as more than 70% of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. Russian control amounts to about 18% of the total area of Ukraine (Tempo.Internasional, 2024). Russian military movements have also shown rapid progress in recent months, with reports that they have taken control of a number of new villages in the Donetsk region, including Novotroitske and Zorya (Arbar, 2024b).

Analysts note that Russia set a new record for territorial gains, with nearly 235 square kilometers captured in a single week in November 2024 (Tempo.Internasional, 2024). By the end of November 2024, the total territory occupied by Russia in Ukraine will reach 68,050 square kilometers, which is equivalent to the area of Singapore (Arbar, 2024b). Russia has managed to recapture nearly 200 settlements from Ukraine so far this year, marking significant progress in territorial control. President Vladimir Putin claimed that Russian forces now hold strategic control across the entire line of contact, indicating success in achieving the objectives of their military operations. In this context, territorial control is not just the result of military operations, but also reflects a broader strategy and in-depth defense planning. (JPN Utama, 2024)

In the case of Russia, the decision to escalate military operations and retake territory can be seen as a response to the perceived threat faced by the country. Russia may feel that control of certain areas is essential to its national security and internal political stability. Russia's success in retaking residential areas in Ukraine shows that it has formulated an effective defense strategy based on a deep understanding of its strategic environment. However, the challenges ahead related to the international response and the need to maintain domestic legitimacy will continue to influence the direction of Russia's defense policy going forward.

Information from August 2024 shows that Russian forces managed to make their fastest advance in more than two years. This success occurred despite Ukraine's surprise offensive and defensive operations to maintain their positions. (ISW, 2024). According to military analysts from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), this progress is largely due to several factors, such as a phased attack strategy and air and artillery pressure. The phased attack, focusing on strategic areas such as Donetsk and Luhansk, allowed Russia to systematically capture key areas without expending excessive resources. Furthermore, the use of heavy artillery and intensive air strikes weakened Ukrainian defenses, forcing their troops to retreat to more defensible positions. Russia also used disinformation tactics aimed at dividing public opinion and weakening the morale of Ukrainian troops. (Kofman, 2024)

Elsewhere, there has been a significant increase in the number of volunteers joining the Russian military, with around 430,000 signing contracts this year. This provides Russia with more human resources to support its operations in Ukraine. (JPN Utama, 2024). In addition, the morale and motivation of Russian troops is also reported to be high, thanks to decent pay and moral support (Mustaqim, 2024). Russia's defense goal in increasing the number of volunteers can be seen as an attempt to achieve stability and territorial control in Ukraine. By strengthening

human power, Russia seeks to ensure that it can continue military operations effectively and hold the territory it has captured.

The increase in the number of volunteers shows that Russia is able to mobilize the civilian population to support its military objectives. This reflects the country's ability to optimize human resource potential as part of a broader defense strategy. In addition, high motivation among troops, driven by financial incentives and moral support, creates a more effective military force. In this regard, the decision to increase volunteer recruitment can be seen as a response to the political need to demonstrate strength and commitment in the conflict with Ukraine. Success in defense planning often depends on the ability to align political objectives with available military forces.

Broadly speaking, it can be said that Russia's goal is to secure its territory from perceived threats, especially related to NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe. President Vladimir Putin has consistently stated that Ukraine's integration into NATO would be a direct threat to Russia's security. Therefore, efforts to control Ukraine, especially strategic areas such as Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea, are important for Russia to create a buffer zone (Charap et al., 2021). Russia is also seeking to maintain its status as a major nuclear power and demonstrate military strength to deter Western interference in its conflict with Ukraine. (Luc, 2024)

Russia has long viewed NATO expansion as a direct threat to its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Although Ukraine is not yet a NATO member, its aspiration to join the alliance is seen as a provocative move that could change the balance of power in the region. In this context, President Vladimir Putin has consistently stated that Ukraine's membership in NATO would result in the deployment of Western military infrastructure that could potentially threaten Russia. NATO was formed in 1949 as a defense alliance to counter the influence of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO has expanded its membership to include Eastern European countries, further strengthening Russia's perception that the alliance poses an existential threat. In its latest security doctrine, Russia asserts that NATO expansion is a major challenge to its national security. (Sandi, 2022)

Ukraine, as a country that borders Russia, has an important strategic position. Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO are increasingly worrying Moscow, as this could allow NATO troops and military infrastructure to be stationed near Russia's borders. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stressed that "further expansion of NATO is an encroachment on our security and Russia's national interests." (Republika, 2023). This created deep tensions between Russia and Western countries. In Russian security doctrine, NATO expansion is seen as a threat that cannot be ignored. The document states that "the buildup of NATO's military potential" and "the deployment of military infrastructure" near Russia's borders pose a threat to national security. (Sandi, 2022). In Moscow's view, these steps are part of a US containment policy to reduce Russia's influence in the region. (Anityo et al., 2024)

In response to NATO expansion, Russia has increased its military capabilities and conducted large-scale military exercises in the border region. This action aims to demonstrate Russia's strength and readiness in facing potential threats from the Western alliance. In addition, Russia is also trying to strengthen its alliances with non-NATO countries that share similar views on Western policies (MUHAMMAD, 2022). The perceived threat of NATO expansion has become a major driving force in Russian foreign policy. By maintaining control over strategic areas and increasing its military power, Russia seeks to create a buffer zone to protect itself from what it perceives as an existential threat. These tensions not only affect relations between Russia and the West but also have an impact on the stability of the European region as a whole.

In the face of perceived threats from NATO expansion and tensions with Ukraine, Russia has adopted a strategy of creating buffer zones by controlling strategic regions such as Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea. These regions are not only strategically valuable in a defense context, but are also part of Russia's historical and cultural identity. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has sought to maintain its influence in the former Soviet republics. NATO's eastward

expansion, including countries that were once part of the Soviet bloc, has raised deep concerns in Moscow (Suryaningtyas, 22 C.E.). In Russia's view, control of Ukrainian territory, especially that adjacent to the Russian border, is an important step towards creating a buffer zone that could protect the country from a potential military attack from the West. (Anityo et al., 2024).

Crimea was initially taken over by Russia in 2014, because Crimea has a strategic position on the Black Sea and is home to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Control of this territory provides vital access for Russia to maintain its military presence in the region. Furthermore, Donetsk and Luhansk, which are important industrial centers in Ukraine, have become the focus of armed conflict between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists. (MUHAMMAD, 2022). By taking control of Donetsk and Luhansk, Russia hopes to strengthen its control over industrial resources and create better communication lines between Crimea and other Russian-controlled territories. (CNBC, 2024). This buffer zone strategy aims to protect Russia's own national security. By controlling strategic areas, Russia seeks to create a layer of protection against external threats, especially from NATO. (Simamora & Setiyono, 2020). Russia also seeks to maintain geopolitical influence in the region. Control of these territories allows Russia to maintain its influence in Eastern Europe and prevent other former Soviet states from joining the Western alliance. (Anityo et al., 2024).

By increasing its military presence in these regions, Russia wants to show the world that it remains a dominant force that cannot be ignored in the global geopolitical arena. (indonesiadefense.com, 2024). This strategy has significant implications not only for regional security but also for international relations. Rising tensions between Russia and NATO could lead to a new arms race and increase the risk of armed conflict in the region. In addition, Russia's move to establish a buffer zone could trigger a reaction from Western countries that see the move as aggression. By controlling strategic areas such as Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea, Russia hopes to create a buffer zone that protects the country from external threats (Mustaqim, 2024). This strategy reflects Moscow's deep understanding of the importance of having control over areas it deems vital to its national security and geopolitical influence in Eastern Europe. The success or failure of this strategy may have a significant impact on the political and security dynamics in the region in the years to come.

Russia itself, as one of the world's leading military powers, continues to strive to maintain its status as a major nuclear power. In the context of increasing tensions with Western countries, especially over the conflict in Ukraine, Moscow has demonstrated significant military power to deter foreign interference. A comprehensive military modernization program has been implemented to improve technological and weapons capabilities, including the development of new, more sophisticated weapons. Russia has one of the largest armed forces in the world (Ariesta, 2024; Christiastuti, 2024). By 2024, the number of active personnel in the Russian armed forces is expected to reach around 1.5 million, making it the second largest active army after China (Global.Firepower, 2024). In an effort to increase his military strength, President Vladimir Putin has issued a decree to increase the number of active troops by 180,000, taking the total armed forces to around 2.4 million (Luc, 2024)

Russia's military modernization program is known as the State Armament Program, which aims to replace Soviet-era military equipment with modern weapons systems. It includes the development of a wide range of weapons, including new tanks, fighter aircraft, submarines and ballistic missiles (Praditya, 2024; Ramdhani, 2024). This modernization is crucial for Russia to ensure that its armed forces remain relevant and able to compete with other military powers in the world. Russia also has one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world. Under Putin's leadership, Russia has updated and modernized its nuclear arsenal, including the development of new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and missile defense systems (Anugranov, 2024). This nuclear power serves not only as a deterrent but also as a symbol of Russia's global power.

By demonstrating significant military power and strengthening its nuclear capacity, Russia hopes to deter Western interference in its conflict with Ukraine. The Kremlin spokesman said

these steps were a response to the "proxy war" waged by Western countries against Russia (Arbar, 2024a; Ariesta, 2024). In this context, increasing the number of troops and modernizing military equipment are considered strategic steps to protect national security. Russia's military and nuclear power play an important role in the country's defense strategy. By continuously increasing its military capacity through modernization programs and maintaining its status as a major nuclear power, Russia seeks to protect its national interests from external threats. The increasing tensions between Russia and Western countries indicate that military power will continue to be a determining factor in global dynamics.

Based on Colin's defense planning theory (Gray, 2014), Russia's territorial control and military buildup in Ukraine reflect a clear defense objective, namely strengthening its strategic position in Eastern Europe. The interaction between political policy and military power, as well as the ability to adapt to uncertainty, are important factors in the success of Russia's defense strategy. Thus, territorial control is not just the result of a military conflict, but also an integral part of a long-term plan to achieve broader political goals. Russia's human resources in Ukraine also reflect a planned and targeted strategic approach. The increase in the number of volunteers and the high motivation of the troops indicate that Russia is trying to achieve its defense objectives through optimizing human resources.

### **Russia's Priorities in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict**

In the Russian context, the main priority seems to be to strengthen its geopolitical position in Eastern Europe and secure access to strategic resources. The control of territory in Ukraine can be seen as a move to create a buffer zone against potential threats from NATO and other Western countries. Russia has managed to control a large amount of natural resources in Ukraine, including coal, oil and natural gas, and other important minerals. Russia controls about 63% of Ukraine's coal reserves, which are estimated to be worth up to \$11.9 trillion<sup>14</sup>. About 11% of Ukraine's oil reserves and 20% of Ukraine's natural gas reserves are now under Russian control<sup>14</sup>. Russia also controls 42% of its metal reserves and 33% of its rare earth deposits and other important minerals, including lithium, which is increasingly sought after in the global market (Laksono & Hambali, 2023).

According to analysis, the total value of natural resources currently controlled by Russia is around \$12.4 trillion (around Rp. 182,000 trillion) if calculated as a whole<sup>1</sup>. This includes various minerals and raw materials that are very valuable for industry. (Organization, 2023). Control of natural resources in Ukraine also provides strategic advantages for Russia in the geopolitical context. By controlling resource-rich areas, Russia can strengthen its position in the region and use this power as leverage in international negotiations (Guntur, 2023). This includes the potential to exploit marine resources in the Black Sea following the annexation of Crimea, which has great significance for energy security in Europe (Simamora & Setiyono, 2020) Overall, the acquisition of Ukraine's natural resources provides significant economic and strategic advantages for Russia, influencing its foreign policy and the dynamics of global energy markets.

Resources are a critical element in defense planning. Increasing Russia's control over Ukraine's natural resources could provide significant economic and military advantages. (Gray, 2014). For example, access to energy reserves can strengthen Russia's ability to fund military operations and increase its own energy security. In addition, control of strategic minerals such as titanium and manganese can support Russia's defense industry. Defense planning also involves the interaction between political policy and military power. In this case, Russia's aggressive actions to control natural resources in Ukraine reflect an effort to achieve a larger political goal, namely to strengthen its influence in the region. Gray notes that success in defense planning often depends on the ability to align foreign policy with available military power. On the other hand, since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has not only triggered a large-scale conflict in Europe but also has strategic implications for the global geopolitical order.

President Vladimir Putin stated that Russia is trying to counter the dominance of the West, especially led by the United States, in creating a multipolar world order. This concept of

multipolarity aims to reduce the hegemony of one pole (unipolar) which is considered to distort post-Cold War international relations. (House, 2023). Russia is seeking to strengthen its position as a significant global power by building new strategic alliances. One of the main strategies is to establish close cooperation with countries such as China, Iran and Turkey, which also have tensions with Western countries. In Russia's view, a multipolar world can provide more space for countries to determine their own destiny without pressure from hegemonic powers such as NATO and the United States (House, 2023).

In addition, Russia views Ukraine as an integral part of its historical identity and strategic security. NATO's efforts to expand its influence into Eastern Europe are seen as a direct threat to Russian security. The conflict in Ukraine, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, is used as a means by Russia to show that it will not bow to Western pressure. Putin views NATO expansion as a violation of post-Cold War promises and as a move that threatens the global balance of power (Council.on.Foreign.Relations, 2023). Russia also uses mechanisms like BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China, Afrika Selatan) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to create an alternative geopolitical bloc. This organization is projected as a pillar to strengthen multipolarity, appearing to challenge international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF which are considered pro-Western. (House, 2023)

Russia's actions have faced a backlash from many Western countries, which have imposed massive economic sanctions and provided military support to Ukraine. However, some countries such as India and China have chosen a neutral approach or have supported Russia's policies indirectly, for example through energy or trade cooperation (INSS, 2022). Russia's efforts to form a multipolar world order in the Ukrainian conflict are a strategic move to strengthen its position as one of the poles of global power. However, its success will depend greatly on Russia's ability to build strong alliances, maintain domestic stability, and face pressure from the coalition of Western countries. From history, we can see the difference in Russia's behavior towards Ukraine compared to other former Soviet Union countries that had previously joined NATO. Russia let the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, dan Lithuania) joined NATO, while Ukraine did not. This is due to several things that show the differences between the Baltic countries and Ukraine. The Baltic countries have a different history than Ukraine.

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Baltics immediately sought security by joining NATO and the European Union. They are considered to be countries that are more integrated into Western structures and have a strong commitment to democratic values and free markets (Carnelian et al., 2017). Russia may judge that the Baltic states are already too tied to the West to have much room to influence them again (Auliaz, 2023). Although the Baltic states are members of NATO, they still have some economic dependence on Russia, especially in terms of energy. Russia uses energy strategies to maintain its influence in the region, although they cannot directly block the Baltic states from joining NATO (Carnelian et al., 2017). In this context, Russia may choose not to take aggressive actions that could disrupt existing economic relations. Ukraine, on the other hand, is seen as having a more critical geostrategic position for Russia. If Ukraine joins NATO, it will create a direct border between the Western military alliance and Russia, and allow NATO to build military infrastructure near Russia's borders.

This is seen as an existential threat to Russia's national security. (Pradana & Ramadhoan, 2022). Therefore, Russia is trying hard to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO through various means, including military intervention. Russia has shown a more aggressive military response to Ukraine compared to the Baltic states. The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is a clear example of Russia's efforts to prevent Ukraine's integration into Western structures. Meanwhile, although Russia remains wary of NATO's presence in the Baltics, it seems to prefer diplomatic and economic strategies rather than direct military confrontation (Muhaimin, 2023). Ultimately, Russia's decision to allow the Baltic states to join NATO while trying to prevent Ukraine from doing so has a lot to do with differences in historical context, economic interests, and perceived threat perceptions from each country. Furthermore, Russia must also be prepared for a range of

possible responses from Ukraine and its allies. By prioritizing control of natural resources, Russia seeks to create a stronger position at the international negotiating table and reduce the risk of economic losses from sanctions or isolation.

## CONCLUSION

According to Colin Gray's defense planning theory, Russia's territorial control in Ukraine reflects a clear defense objective, namely strengthening its strategic position in Eastern Europe. The interaction between political policy and military power, as well as the ability to adapt to short-range conditions, are important factors in the success of Russia's defense strategy. Thus, territorial control is not just the result of a military conflict, but also an integral part of a long-term plan to achieve broader political goals. The motivation of Russian human resources in Ukraine also reflects a planned and directed strategic approach. The increase in the number of volunteers and the high motivation of the troops indicate that Russia is trying to achieve its maintenance objectives through human resource partnerships. This is in line with Russia's priority on natural resources in Ukraine, which reflects a clear strategic objective to strengthen its geopolitical position and support its economic needs. Control over these natural resources not only provides financial benefits but also strengthens Russia's military capabilities. The interaction between political policy and military power and the ability to adapt to changing situations are key factors in Russia's defense strategy during this conflict.

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