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RUSSIA-UKRAINE TERRITORIAL DISPUTES AND THEIR ECONOMIC IMPACT ON EUROPE: A CASE STUDY OF GERMANY

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Abstract
The 2022 full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine has had profound economic impacts beyond the conflict zone, affecting Europe broadly and Germany in particular. This paper explores the economic repercussions of the war on Europe, focusing on Germany's vulnerabilities due to its historical dependence on Russian energy, analyzed through the lens of Dependency Theory. The conflict disrupted energy supplies, triggered inflation, and forced significant shifts in trade and industrial policies. The study examines Germany's crisis response, highlighting its pivot toward renewable energy and diversification of energy sources. The findings illustrate how geopolitical conflicts can expose the economic fragility of advanced economies and emphasize the interconnectedness of global economic systems during crises.

INTRODUCTION

The territorial conflict between Russia and Ukraine that led to the all-out Russian invasion of Ukraine in Feb 2022 is one of the most important geopolitical events in modern European history. The conflict is based on complicated political, historical (and ethnic) tensions since the breakup of the Soviet Union but has created a significant humanitarian, political, and economic crisis in Europe and beyond (Plokhy, S., 2015) with respect to the conflict in its current form. Although most of the immediate damage has been contained to the territories of Ukraine, the impact of the war has been felt deep within the heart of Europe, particularly amongst countries with close trading relations with Russia.

These economic reverberations come to a head in Germany: The European Union's largest economy and behemoth long dependent on Russian energy imports. Before the war, Germany relied on Russia for over 50% of its natural gas supply, primarily106 from pipelines such as Nord Stream 1 (Hafner, M. & Raimondi, P. P, 2020). The war and later sanctions on Russia created a sudden disruption in this energy flow, so Germany had to diversify its imports at higher cost which was inflationary, caused production slowdowns and increased public anxiety about the economy's stability. Through the lens of Dependency Theory, this research paper examines the specific economic weaknesses of Germany and how they have

developed over time as asymmetrical dependencies in the international trade structure. The paper analyses the impact of the war on German industrial output, trade patterns, energy security, and the policy responses in these domains. In doing so, it hopes to provide insight into how territorial disputes in one area can have significant economic consequences on interlinked economies across the globe.

3.Theoretical framework

This study applies Dependency Theory to analyze the economic repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine territorial conflict on Europe, focusing specifically on Germany. Originating in the mid-20th century through the works of scholars like Raúl Prebisch and later expanded by thinkers such as Andre Gunder Frank and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Dependency Theory posits that global economic systems are structured to benefit developed "core" nations at the expense of less developed "peripheral" or "semi-peripheral" countries (Dos Santos, T.Frank, A. G. , 1970,1967)

Though Germany is traditionally considered a core nation, Dependency Theory provides a useful framework to assess its vulnerabilities due to its reliance on external resources—particularly Russian energy. Prior to the 2022 war, Germany sourced more than half of its natural gas from Russia via pipelines such as Nord Stream 1, establishing a critical dependency that shaped its foreign and economic policies (Hafner, M. & Raimondi, P. P, 2020). The outbreak of war and subsequent sanctions against Russia led to significant disruptions in Germany's energy supply, causing sharp increases in energy costs, inflation, and a slowdown in industrial production.

From a dependency perspective, this situation highlights the paradox where even economically advanced nations become dependent on semi-peripheral states for critical resources. The energy crisis prompted by the war forced Germany to rapidly diversify its energy portfolio, invest in LNG infrastructure, and accelerate renewable energy initiatives—reflecting an urgent need to reduce external dependency and regain economic stability (Tagliapietra, 2022).

Using Dependency Theory allows this paper to interpret Germany's economic response not just as a national crisis, but as part of a larger, structural dependency embedded in global economic relations. It also underlines the broader European vulnerability stemming from the continent's interlinked reliance on Russian energy, ultimately demonstrating how geopolitical conflicts can expose and challenge the economic foundations of even the most developed nations.

4.Application of dependency theory

Dependency Theory, developed by scholars like Theotonio Dos Santos (1970) and Andre Gunder Frank (1967), argues that economic relationships between wealthy and less wealthy nations often create asymmetric dependencies that disadvantage the latter. While the theory was initially designed to analyze underdevelopment in the Global South, it also offers valuable insights into how developed economies can become vulnerable through strategic dependencies — such as on energy, raw materials, or trade from politically unstable or authoritarian states.

1.Germany's Dependency on Russian Energy

Before the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Germany imported more than 55% of its natural gas and significant amounts of oil and coal from Russia (International Energy Agency (IEA), 2022). This long-standing energy reliance exemplifies the kind of structural dependency described in Dependency Theory. Although Germany is a highly developed economy, its industrial base and energy infrastructure became deeply tied to a single foreign supplier, making it economically vulnerable to external shocks — in this case, geopolitical aggression by Russia (Al Mesaifri, T., & Askari, M. U. , 2025).

2.Asymmetric Relationship and Power Imbalance

From a dependency perspective, Russia, despite being economically less diversified, held disproportionate leverage over Germany through energy exports. As (Dos Santos, T.Frank, A. G. , 1970,1967) explains, dependency is not only about economic flow but also about the political influence that one country can exert over another due to unequal relations. Germany's reluctance to fully sanction Russia's energy sector in the early stages of the war reflected this imbalance.

3. Crisis and Restructuring

The war forced Germany to rapidly diversify its energy sources, invest in renewables, and re-evaluate its foreign trade strategies. This aligns with Dependency Theory's claim that crises often expose the hidden vulnerabilities of dependent economies, pushing them to restructure or realign in search of greater autonomy (Frank, 1967) .

5.Germany's Pre-War Economic Ties with Russia

Prior to the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, Germany maintained deep and long-standing economic relations with Russia, particularly in the energy sector. These ties were part of a strategic economic partnership that developed over several decades and became increasingly central to Germany's industrial and energy policies.

1.Enenrgy dependency

Germany was heavily **dependent on Russian fossil fuels**, especially natural gas. By 2021, over **55% of Germany's natural gas imports** came from Russia, along with significant shares of coal and oil (International Energy Agency (IEA), 2022). This dependence was the result of long-term energy cooperation agreements, including large infrastructure projects like **Nord Stream 1**, which directly connected Russian gas fields to Germany via the Baltic Sea.

The proposed **Nord Stream 2** pipeline, although completed by late 2021, was suspended by the German government just days before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022. The project was controversial both domestically and internationally, with critics arguing that it deepened Germany's strategic vulnerability to Russian geopolitical influence (Goldthau, A., & Sitter, N., 2022).

2.Industrial interdependency

Russia was not only a key energy supplier but also an **important trading partner**. In 2021, bilateral trade between Germany and Russia was valued at over **€59 billion,** with Germany exporting machinery, vehicles, and chemicals while importing raw materials and energy (German Federal Statistical Office, 2022). This trade relationship supported Germany's manufacturing sectors by providing cheap energy and raw materials necessary for industrial production.

3.Political-Economic Strategy

Germany's economic ties with Russia were also **politically motivated**, rooted in the idea of "Wandel durch Handel" (change through trade). This strategy suggested that **economic interdependence could promote political stability and gradual democratization** in Russia. As a result, successive German governments, particularly under Chancellor Angela Merkel, pursued deeper commercial relations with Moscow, despite growing concerns over Russia's aggressive foreign policy after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Mankoff J. , 2014).

6.Methodology

The Methodology section outline that how the research was conducted. It provides a clear description of the research design, data sources, theoretical framework, and analytical approach used to explore Germany's economic situation in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war.

1.Research Design

The study used a **mixed case study** approach. This means the focus wasn't on numerical data or statistics alone, but on understanding **how and why** Germany's economy was affected by its ties to Russia during the conflict. A case study allows for an in-depth look at one country—Germany—in a specific geopolitical context.

2.Data Collection

The research relied on secondary sources. This includes:

Academic journals Government and international organization reports (e.g., German Federal Statistical Office, IEA), Policy papers and Reputable news articles

3.Theoretical Framework

The research was guided by Dependency Theory—a theory that explains how powerful countries or companies can economically control or influence

others. Although usually applied to poorer countries, here it's used to show how even a developed country like Germany became vulnerable due to economic reliance on Russia, especially for energy.

7.Discussions

The ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict continues to exert significant economic pressure on Germany, Europe's largest economy. This discussion examines the current economic impacts, focusing on energy dependency, industrial challenges, inflation, fiscal responses, and public sentiment.

1.Energy Dependency and Industrial Challenges

Germany's pre-war reliance on Russian energy was substantial, with 55% of its natural gas imports sourced from Russia. The abrupt cessation of these imports necessitated a rapid diversification of energy sources, leading to a 35% surge in energy prices. This escalation adversely affected energy-intensive industries, such as steel and chemicals, prompting the German government to advocate for subsidies to sustain these sectors The chemical industry, in particular, faced significant challenges. BASF, one of Germany's largest chemical producers, announced plans to cut up to 2,600 jobs worldwide, with a significant number in Germany, due to increased energy costs and the need to shut down energy-intensive production lines (Al Mesaifri, T., & Askari, M. U. , 2025). (Schmidt, A., & Weber, 2024)

2.inflations and Supply Chain Disruptions

The conflict has intensified inflationary pressures in Germany, primarily through elevated energy costs and disrupted supply chains. Household energy prices remain approximately 31% higher than pre-war levels, despite a decrease from their peak in October 2022 Supply chain disruptions have also impacted key industries. The automotive sector experienced production halts due to shortages of Ukrainian-sourced components like wiring harnesses. Additionally, the scarcity of critical inputs, such as neon gas essential for microchip production, further strained manufacturing sectors (Friedrich, 2023) (Bauer, J., & Reich, L, 2024).

3.Fiscal Responses and Public Sentiment

In response to the economic challenges, Germany has implemented significant fiscal measures. The government has committed to a €1 trillion investment in infrastructure and defense, including €400 billion for defense and €500 billion for infrastructure and green energy. Additionally, Germany has provided substantial support to Ukraine, including €5 billion in military aid and collaboration on developing long-range missile systems

8.Historical Background

The Russia-Ukraine war, which escalated into a full-scale invasion in February 2022, has deep historical roots that span centuries. Ukraine and Russia share a complex past, with intertwined cultural, religious, and political histories dating back to the medieval state of Kievan Rus, which both nations consider foundational to their national identities (Plokhy S. , 2017) However, tensions between the two nations have grown significantly since Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Following the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine pursued greater integration with Western institutions such as the European Union and NATO, causing friction with Russia, which views Ukraine as part of its traditional sphere of influence. The first major flashpoint occurred in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea after the Euromaidan protests in Kyiv led to the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych (Mankoff J. , 2014). This marked the beginning of armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, where Russian-backed separatists declared independence in Donetsk and Luhansk, sparking a low-intensity war that persisted for years.

The situation escalated dramatically in February 2022 when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, citing the need to "demilitarize and denazify" the country—a narrative widely dismissed by Western governments as a pretext for aggression (; Colton, Timothy J., and Samuel Charap, 2017). This invasion marked the most significant military conflict in Europe since World War II and has had profound geopolitical, humanitarian, and economic consequences not only for the two countries involved but also for the wider European and global order.

The roots of the conflict lie not only in geopolitical interests but also in cultural and historical disputes over national identity, sovereignty, and the legacy of the Soviet Union. The war can be understood as a culmination of decades of Russian resistance to Ukraine's Western alignment and aspirations for sovereignty beyond Moscow's influence.

9.Research Question

1.How has the Russia-Ukraine conflict disrupted Germany's energy imports and economic stability?
2.What policy responses has Germany implemented to reduce its economic dependency on Russia following the conflict?
3.How does Dependency Theory explain Germany's economic vulnerability in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war?

10.Economic Impacts of the Russia-Ukraine War on Germany

The Russia-Ukraine conflict, which began in February 2022, has had profound and multifaceted economic repercussions for Germany. As Europe's largest economy and a historically energy-dependent nation, Germany has faced significant disruptions in energy security, industrial productivity, inflation, and overall economic stability. This section explores the major economic consequences experienced by Germany from 2022 to 2025.

1.Energy Dependency and Price Inflation

Prior to the war, Germany was heavily reliant on Russian fossil fuels, sourcing around 55% of its natural gas from Russia. The outbreak of the war and the subsequent sanctions and countermeasures resulted in a rapid reduction of energy imports, leading to a major energy crisis. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the German government had to respond quickly by diversifying its energy portfolio, accelerating the development of LNG terminals, and expanding renewable energy investments to reduce dependency on Russia (International Energy Agency, 2022). However, this transition did not prevent energy prices from skyrocketing. In 2022 alone, household energy costs increased by over 35%, significantly contributing to inflation (International Energy Agency (IEA), 2022) (Al Mesaifri, T., & Askari, M. U. , 2025).

2.Industrial Decline and Economic Contraction

Energy-intensive industries in Germany, particularly chemicals and manufacturing, were severely impacted. BASF, one of the world's largest chemical producers, announced the closure of several production units and the elimination of 2,600 jobs in 2023, citing unsustainable energy costs (Industrie & Industrie, Energy and Competitiveness., 2023). The German Chemical Industry Association reported a 25% drop in chemical production in 2023, following an 8.5% decline in 2022 (VCI, 2023). The broader economic output suffered as well. (Commission, 2024) noted that Germany's GDP contracted by 0.3% in 2023, marking its entry into a technical recession. Projections for 2024 also indicated a further decline of 0.1%, making it the first time since 2004 that Germany experienced two consecutive years of negative growth.

3.Inflation and Consumer Impact

Germany experienced the highest inflation rate in decades. Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis) reported that inflation peaked at 11.6% in October 2022, primarily driven by soaring energy and food prices. While inflation moderated to 2.4% by late 2024, its prolonged presence eroded household purchasing power—especially among low-income families, who spent a larger proportion of income on essentials ((Destatis), 2024).

4.Budgetary Pressure and Refugee Support

The German government allocated €22 billion in total aid to Ukraine by mid-2023, including humanitarian and military support, while also committing a €100 billion special fund to modernize its armed forces (Ukraine war has cost Germany over €200 billion, 2023). In addition, the influx of over one million Ukrainian refugees created further demands on public housing and social welfare infrastructure. This combination of defense spending and domestic welfare expansion placed significant pressure on the national budget. DW reported that the cumulative economic cost of the war to Germany had exceeded €200 billion by early 2024.

5.Housing and Refugee Pressures

Over one million Ukrainian refugees arrived in Germany between 2022 and 2024, adding pressure to an already tight housing market. As per (Tagesschau , 2024), Germany faced a shortfall of more than 800,000 housing units, worsening rental prices and urban congestion

11.Broader Implications for Europe

Russia and Ukraine Territorial Disputes: Its Economic Impacts on Europe – A Case Study of Germany This section explores how Germany's economic shifts in response to the Russia-Ukraine war have affected the broader European Union (EU), the lessons learned for European policy, and the ways in which intra-European cooperation has been strengthened.

1.How Germany's Economic Shift Affects the Wider EU

Germany (largest economy in the EU) — key player in Europe's economic and energy policy. The Russia-Ukraine war put Germany on a fast train to change its energy structure, eliminating Russian gas from the mix and rapidly building LNG terminals and renewable energy. This change had repercussions throughout the continent (REPowerEU: Joint European Action for More Affordable, Secure and Sustainable Energy, 2022). as Germany's transition has fast-forwarded the collective efforts of the EU to wean itself off of Russian energy with the plans under REPowerEU, and has helped create a more coherent security policy around energy in general.

2.Lessons for European Energy and Economic Policy

This crisis displayed into stark relief Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels and the danger of centralized energy dependence. Amid gas shortages and soaring prices in Germany, the EU understood that energy diversification, cross-border infrastructure and strategic autonomy were necessary. Source: (Manfred Hafner, Pier Paolo Raimondi, 2020) The switch from the European Green Deal to some kind of emergency energy policy response clearly shows that economic resilience has to be been integrated into long-term sustainability targets.

3.Strengthening Intra-European Cooperation

Germany Economic Change Deepened EU Cooperation. Find more just above the stores by using finer professional content Indeed, these came to constitute the key foundations of collective energy security, with joint gas procurement strategies, co-operation on storage infrastructure, and harmonized energy markets. The EU also rolled out financial solidarity mechanisms including transfers to member states that were hit hardest by shocks to energy prices. The International Energy Agency (IEA)2022 made a stress on the need for coordinated planning and regulatory flexibility to keep supply secure during the crisis.

12.Conclusion

Germany is highly dependent on Russian oil and gas, and the war of Russia and Ukraine that started in 2022has significantly affected the economy of the first, which also reflected in the economy of the European Union. The overdependence of Germany on Russian energy, especially concerning natural gas, has laid out huge weakness when geopolitical conflicts broke out. Germany had to quickly diversify its energy sources due to this sudden disconnection from an energy relationship and, by 2023, gas imports were down 32.6%. This was followed by sanctions, the supply shock made energy up 35 %, fueling inflation and economic crisis. Sustainable Business Industries, particularly energy-expensive industries such as chemicals and manufacturing, encountered operational concerns as energy prices soared. Based on data from the German Chemical Industry Association (VCI), chemical production plummeted 25% on year in 2023 compared to 2022. Inflation exploded, hitting record highs, consumer prices, as measured in October, rose 11.6%, the highest rate in more than 40 years. After over one million Ukrainian refugees came to Germany, the housing market came under even higher pressure, with elevated rental prices and low supply. Nonetheless, Germany proved how resilient it could be by speeding up investments in renewables, expanding its LNG infrastructure, and taking policy steps to improve energy security and economic resilience.

13.Implications for Future EU Policy

But what can Germany teach us about the EU — and what must the EU make sure to do differently?

Develop new energy supply sources: LEts invest on another energy supply which can provide diversity from main suppliers.

Improve Energy Infrastructure: Build cross-border energy networks so that it can deliver energy efficiently to one another Member states.

Accelerate Renewable Energy Deployment: To meet climate targets and minimize geopolitical dependencies, ramp up investment in renewable energies.

Enhancing Policy Coordination: Action should be taken to strengthen energy and economic policy coordination throughout the EU to provide a collective response to external strains.

14.Theoretical Reflections Using Dependency Theory

This so-called Dependency Theory claims that resources travel from a state that is in a position of "periphery" of a state that is poor and exploited, towards a state "core" of wealthy states, and that this process makes the cores rich at the expense of the periphery. This theory can be examined in the relations of the EU energy dynamics, especially due to the external dependence of the EU to supply energy sources on Russia. Such dependency has made economies vulnerable, as we have witnessed after the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It stressed on the need to reduce dependency, build indigenous capacities and resist entering into external dependencies that may lead to blackmail and economic instability.

15.Recommendations for Germany and the EU

For Germany:

Boost Renewable Energy Development: Keep investing in renewable energy projects to lessen dependence on foreign energy sources.

Improve Energy Efficiency: Increase how much energy can get done with in industries and homes.

Boost the resilience of your industrial base: Help Industry to adapt to the new energy reality via innovation and diversification.

Tackle the housing issue: Plan housing policies taking into consideration of displaced populations and relieve the housing market pressure

For the EU:

Attract Energy Community: Task member states to cooperate when purchasing energy and distributing it to provide equal access.

Invest in Infrastructure: From sustained electrification to reaching net-zero emissions, development and modernization of energy infrastructure is necessary to support diversified energy sources and strengthen connectivity.

Enhance Policy Coherence: Align Member State policies with EU instruments to ensure cohesion in energy security and economic resilience efforts.

Global Partners: Work with a wide range of energy suppliers to limit dependence on any one source

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