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Hawks and doves: Financial market perception of Western support for Ukraine

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01|2023 Hawks and Doves: Financial Market Perception of Western Support for Ukraine

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Hawks and Doves: Financial Market Perception of Western Support for Ukraine

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Mit der Reihe „IAB-Discussion Paper“ will das Forschungsinstitut der Bundesagentur für Arbeit den Dialog mit der externen Wissenschaft intensivieren. Durch die rasche Verbreitung von Forschungsergebnissen über das Internet soll noch vor Drucklegung Kritik angeregt und Qualität gesichert werden.

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Abstract

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the West has been intensively discussing its support strategy. Hawkish positions of strengthening Ukraine via armaments, financial resources, and sanctions against Russia compete with dovish views of avoiding further escalation of the military and geopolitical conflict. News from the war became a dominating factor for international politics and the world economy. In this paper, we analyse how international financial markets perceived this news, especially on Western positions. We create a comprehensive data set of news related to the war and measure reactions of five key financial markets. The results show that stronger support for Ukraine had a negative impact in the first weeks of the war. Thus, financial markets seem to have perceived it as a risk of further escalation threatening global economic activity. However, we find the perceptions strongly changed when the Ukrainian position in the war improved. Since that time, a hawkish line was a positive signal for financial markets. The results also confirm that the war and escalation in general had harmful effects on international financial markets.

Zusammenfassung

Seit dem russischen Angriff auf die Ukraine am 24. Februar 2022 diskutiert der Westen intensiv über seine Unterstützungsstrategie. Positionen einer Stärkung der Ukraine durch die Bereitstellung von Rüstungsgütern, Finanzmitteln und Sanktionen gegen Russland konkurrieren mit zurückhaltenden Ansichten, die eine weitere Eskalation des militärischen und geopolitischen Konflikts vermeiden wollen. Die Meldungen aus dem Krieg wurden zu einem bestimmenden Moment, sowohl für die internationale Politik als auch für die Weltwirtschaft. In diesem Beitrag analysieren wir, wie die internationalen Finanzmärkte diese Nachrichten wahrgenommen haben, insbesondere hinsichtlich der westlichen Positionen. Wir erstellen einen umfassenden Datensatz mit kriegsbezogenen Nachrichten und messen die Reaktionen von fünf zentralen Finanzmärkten. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass eine stärkere Unterstützung der Ukraine in den ersten Wochen des Krieges einen negativen Einfluss hatte. Folglich schienen die Finanzmärkte darin die Gefahr einer weiteren Eskalation zu sehen, welche die globale Wirtschaftstätigkeit bedrohe. Allerdings zeigt sich, dass sich mit einer verbesserten ukrainischen Position im Krieg die Einschätzungen stark veränderten. Seither wird die Linie einer aktiven Stärkung der Ukraine als positives Signal für die Finanzmärkte gesehen. Die Ergebnisse bestätigen auch, dass der Krieg und die Eskalation im Allgemeinen schädliche Wirkungen auf die internationalen Finanzmärkte hatten.

JEL classification

G14, H56.

Keywords

Conflict, Event Study, Financial Markets, News, Russia, Sanctions, Ukraine

Data

The dataset on war-related news is available online at: https://www.uni-trier.de/fileadmin/fb4/prof/VWL/EWF/Data_Sets/Dataset_UA_War_News.xlsx

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1 Introduction

Since February 24, 2022, the Russian war against Ukraine has dominated the headlines and the international political agenda. From the local nature, which was characteristic for battles through 2014–2022, the events very soon unfolded into a full war. While Ukraine acts in its own interest and not on behalf of third parties, the constellation resembles a proxy-major war in the sense of Copeland (2000) as many Western governments support Ukraine with armaments, financial resources, and sanctions against Russia without a direct involvement in the battlefield. Beyond the tragic local consequences, war, sanctions, and the energy crisis are having an immense impact on the global economy (e.g. Garicano et al. 2022). This concerns many sectors such as energy, agriculture, and commodities. For example, energy-intensive manufacturing was immediately affected after the start of the war (Hutter and Weber 2022), prices showed a quick and strong reaction (Ozili 2022), and trade flows were redirected (Hutter et al. 2022).

News of war events have become important not only locally but also for global financial markets. Empirical evidence shows that conflicts in the world typically affect stock and commodity prices (Schneider and Troeger 2006, Guidolin and La Ferrara 2010). Before the Russian attack in 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has been shown to affect both Russian and Ukrainian stock markets in 2013 and 2014 (Hoffmann and Neuenkirch 2017). The 2022 Russian war against Ukraine was not an exception. Researchers unveiled the effect of geopolitical risk on market prices depending on those markets' distances from the conflict region (Federle et al. 2022, Chițu et al. 2022, Hossain and Masum 2022).

With regard to the Russian attack, appropriate reactions have been intensely discussed in the West. Concerning financial aid, military aid, and sanctions, typically hawkish and dovish positions have to be distinguished. Our work sheds light on the significance of war-related news for financial markets, especially focusing on such decisions of the West. We uncover in how far specific news are conceived as positive or negative signals from the viewpoint of the world economy. Military aid, financial aid, and sanctions may be seen either as stabilizing the Ukrainian position or as steps of further escalation threatening global economic activity. We cover five key financial markets, namely US and European stocks (mirroring a general business outlook), oil and gas for the energy dimension, and wheat representing agriculture.

In this paper, we create a systematic data set on news from Ukraine linked to the Russia-Ukraine war. Our sample period spans from February 24 to July 12, 2022. Besides military aid, financial aid and sanctions, news categories comprise combat escalation, the export situation (concerning agriculture, mining, and logistics), and the local situation (concerning resilience, humanitarian issues, and economic development). The latter categories are crucial for our analysis as control variables. For instance, it is likely that news on sanctions often coincide with escalation, so escalation must be controlled for in order to isolate the effect of sanctions. Our comprehensive news data set allows for such differentiations.

Regarding military aid, financial aid, and sanctions, it is of special interest if perceptions changed over time as the war saw dramatic turns and geopolitical beliefs were re-evaluated. For instance, was adopting a hawkish line seen more critically in the first phase of the war and more positively when Ukraine recorded successes? Accordingly, we check for the potential change in perception

of the different types of the news over time in the five financial markets by performing automated breakpoint tests.¹

Indeed, we find that market perception varied over time and that aid and sanctions are received much more positively in the second subsample. That is, clear support for Ukraine is now a positive sign for international markets, while it was not in the first weeks when war prospects were worse and support may have been seen as an escalation risk. In a similar vein, Chițu et al. (2022) show that for the first 14 days into the war, the effect of the physical proximity to Kyiv was more visible in stock returns than 40 days into the war. Importantly, our results also confirm that the war and escalation in general had harmful effects on international financial markets. Finally, we document the robustness of our results with respect to an alternative timing of the war-related news and potential non-linearities in the markets' response to these. We also show that it is news about sanctions that matters for markets and not the number of actually sanctioned Russian entities.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the course of the war and potential breakpoints in detail. Section 3 describes the creation of the news data set and the empirical methodology. Section 4 discusses the estimation results. Section 5 concludes.

2 The course of the war

Within our sample period, the course of the war has made an important turn from the defeat of Ukraine as the most probable outcome during the first month to the successful defensive operations of Ukrainian forces and (even) counteroffensive operations later on. Our hypothesis is that the markets' perception of the war also has changed. Accordingly, the reaction on war-related news should be different after a (yet to be determined) breakpoint. A more detailed description and mapping of the course of the war can be found in Annex 2. Additional background information on Western aid and sanctions as well as the economic situation in Ukraine can be found in Annex 3.

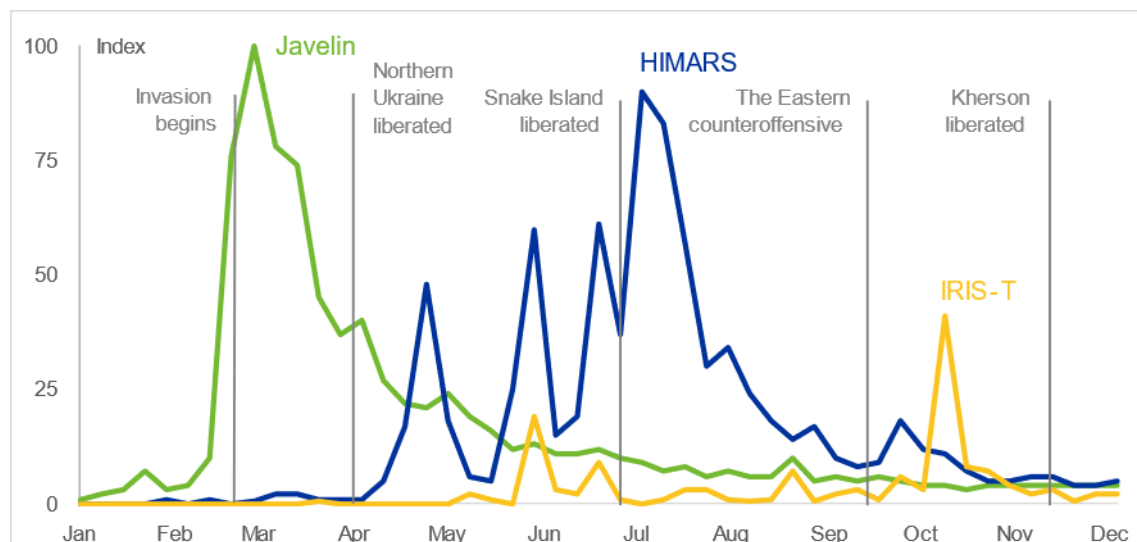
The first weeks from February 24 to early April were marked by Russian rapid success. Within less than a month, Russian troops occupied parts of the Sumy, Chernihiv, and Kyiv regions in the North, Kharkiv, Luhansk, and Donetsk regions in the East, and Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions in the South. Thereby, Russian forces have occupied the large cities of Kherson and Melitopol, surrounded and captured Mariupol after its 86 days resistance, and got within several kilometres distance to Kyiv and Kharkiv—two of Ukraine's biggest cities. The prevailing Western perception was that Ukraine's resistance would break within days or weeks from the time when Western intelligence data on a planned invasion was made available in December 2021. The

¹ A related branch of the existing literature examines time-variation in asset price responses. A popular focus hereby is to distinguish the reaction during expansions and recessions (e.g. Andersen et al. 2007) or with a varying degree of volatility in financial markets (e.g. Ehrmann and Fratzscher 2005). Other time patterns, such as a secular decline or a structural break, are also considered in the literature (e.g. Faust et al. 2007, Fratzscher 2009, Ehrmann et al. 2011). An early contribution using a time-varying parameter approach is provided by Cocco and Fischer (1989) and a more general test for time variation is given in Goldberg and Grisse (2013). However, our sample period is too short for these (more sophisticated) methods to detect time variation in the response of financial markets. With less than 100 observations and several categories of war-related news we have to resort to automated structural break tests.

world was preparing to hand over anti-tank guided missiles, such as NLAW and Javelins, to Ukrainian guerrillas.² During that period, a negative and defeatist sentiment predominated. However, Ukraine's successful defence and then counteroffensive in the North in early April has broken this narrative and given a start to the second period, which was and is more optimistic towards Ukraine's perspectives on the battlefield.

By April 4, Russian troops have been pushed out of the Kyiv region and withdrawn quickly from the Sumy and Chernihiv regions, completely leaving the North. On April 13, the Russian flagship warship Moskva sank, which was even more symbolic given that this ship threatened the Ukrainian defenders during the Russian attack on Snake Island in Ukraine's territorial waters. The slow but steady shift in the global perception of the war and Ukraine's ability to fight back might be best illustrated by the increasing complexity and firepower of weapons that the West was ready to provide to Ukraine. This is also underscored by Figure 1 that illustrates the search interest of Ukrainian users for certain types of military assistance over time.

Figure 1: Search interests of Ukrainian users for certain types of military assistance



Notes: Index is set to 100 for the peak popularity.

Source: Vyshlinsky et al. (2022).

A similar shift in the global perception occurred in the economic and political sphere. After several months of fiscal struggles in Ukraine and domestic monetary expansion to cover the gap in the state budget, Western financial aid became more regular and predictable and helped to stabilize the state finances. Another important turn for Ukraine was — after some initial scepticism — the acceptance as European Union (EU) candidate country in June.

Regarding economic sanctions on Russia, the US, the EU, and other countries were also moving gradually. The EU has been Russia's largest economic partner and relied heavily on Russian energy exports (in particular natural gas), whereas the US never had a substantial economic relationship with Russia in the first place (Congressional Research Service 2022). This results in

² <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/guerrilla-tactics-offer-ukraines-best-chance-against-putins-invasion-force/>.

lower (expected) costs of sanctions for the US and might explain that the US launched oil and gas embargo procedures in Senate in early March.³ In contrast, the EU has been hesitant and only included a coal embargo into the 5th package of sanctions in early April and a phased-out oil embargo (for maritime supplies) into the 6th package of sanctions in early June.

To summarize, the course of the war changed over time and Western economic and political support for Ukraine (including sanctions on Russia) steadily increased after some initial hesitance. Therefore, one could also expect a shift in financial markets' perception of war-related news. To check for such a breakpoint in perception during our sample period February–July 2022, one should — based on the considerations above — focus on the period April–May. The automated statistical check for breakpoints (see below in Section 3) confirms this prior.

3 Data and empirical methodology

3.1 Data on war-related news

In a first step, we build a country-level dataset for Ukraine containing news from February 24 to July 12, 2022. The English-language Interfax Ukraine economic section yields a total of 7,109 news items over that period.⁴ We classify the data manually using a two-staged process. First, we assign a “sectoral code” to each news item and, second, we assess the “direction” of the event for each news story. After classifying each news story separately, we do a double-checking process and review each set of news items for a separate sectoral code and direction to ensure these indeed belong to the same group.

Our approach to classifying the news items includes a breakdown along the following lines (see Table 1 below). It allows us to separate military, local, and international types of news (1st code symbol) and then smaller segments within the broader categories (2nd code symbol). We also assign each news item a direction (binary, 3rd code symbol). Examples of this classification process can be found in Annex 1, Table A1.1 and Table A1.2. The categories are chosen based on the judgement on the most important developments for a war period: advances in the military front, foreign support, and local economic news (distinguishing separate categories of sectoral news for commodity markets and for logistics as a major bottleneck for exports).

³ This resulted in the Ban Russian Energy Imports Act in early April.

⁴ Interfax is one of Ukraine's biggest news agencies and has been considered a reliable information provider in the political and economic information market since 1992. See <https://en.interfax.com.ua/>. A caveat of this or any other data source might be that it is not covering all the relevant events in Ukraine. However, given its reputation and detailed coverage of economic and political events (including Ukrainian defeats in the ongoing war), we selected Interfax out of the Top 5 Ukrainian news agencies. Finally, news agency data, compared to online analytical or economic/political online media sources, minimises the risk of fake news and having a large number of irrelevant articles

Table 1: News items breakdown into categories

Category	Description	# of items
Combat De-Escalation	Military, de-escalation (Russia retreat, international missions coming, embassies returning, diplomatic negotiations ongoing, refugees coming back)	182
Combat Escalation	Military, escalation (combat actions, damages, military-caused ecological threats, war crimes, civilian losses, refugees fleeing the country)	575
More Military Aid/UA Strength	More military aid (military aid from abroad, large donations to the military, weapon procurement)	294
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	Less military aid (statements on weakening of support of Ukraine from the West, destruction of military production assets in Ukraine etc.)	13
Humanitarian Aid	Humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced people, local and international	154
Export News Positive	Positive for exports: positive developments in agriculture, metals/mining and logistics (better access to sea ports and railway transportation, strong corporate results, access to finance etc.)	278
Export News Negative	Negative for exports: negative developments in agriculture, metals/mining and logistics (seaports blockade, railway transportation bottlenecks, damage inflicted by the Russian military aggression, weak corporate results etc.)	232
More Financial Aid/Support	More foreign non-military support (incl. financial aid and EU integration)	506
Less Financial Aid/Support	Less foreign non-military support negative (incl. financial aid irregularities, delays, EU skepticism etc.)	25
Stronger Sanctions	Strengthening of sanctions, multinational companies leaving Russia	663
Weaker Sanctions	Weakening of sanctions, multinational companies working in Russia, sanctions evasion	96
Local News Resilience	Local news on resilience and growth, less restriction, better public policies, more sustainable currency and public finance situation, better public access to job market and services like education, healthcare etc.	838
Local News Fragility	Local news on fragility, crisis, worse public access to services, more restrictive government policies, weaker currency, riskier situation in public finance, corruption issues etc.	515
Total		4371

Note: Some examples for the coding procedure can be found in Annex 1, Table A1.1 and Table A1.2. The full representation of the categories can be found in Annex 1, Table A1.3 and Table A1.4.

Source: Interfax; own description.

We select all news items that belong to these categories and sorted out unrelated items (e.g. local public events announcements, occasional news from unrelated foreign countries, data on market quotations of bonds, interest rates etc.) and the items without a clear direction or with very minor, virtually absent implications (outdated news items based on pre-war press releases, politicians' encouragements and biddings, and irrelevant or minor news). The final news items set contains 4,371 news items. After the initial categorization, we merge the finer categories into larger news items clusters, which yields the classification in Table 1. The more detailed representation of the categories can be found in Annex 1, Table A1.3 and Table A1.4.

3.2 Empirical methodology and financial market data

In a second step, we employ the news indicators as key explanatory variables in a set of linear regressions. The general specification is as follows:

$$r_t = \alpha + \beta_1 r_{t-1} + \beta_2 i_{t-1} + \gamma X_t + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

r_t is the return of a financial series of interest, α a constant term, r_{t-1} the lagged return to control for market persistence, i_{t-1} the change in the US three-month T-bill to proxy for changes in the global monetary policy environment (following, e.g. Hayo and Kutan 2005, Fender et al. 2012), X_t the vector of war-related news described in Section 3.1, and ε_t is the error term. Eq. (1) is estimated with least squares and heteroskedasticity- and autocorrelation robust standard errors.⁵

As financial series, we utilize the returns of the S&P 500 and the Eurostoxx 50 for a US (or global) and European stock market perspective. Returns of ICE Brent Futures and Dutch TTF Natural Gas 1 Month Gas Futures cover the main energy markets, whereas returns of Chicago SRW Wheat Futures are included to account for the agricultural sector.⁶ In particular, the choice of wheat futures is motivated by the role of Ukraine as major supplier of these goods, whereas both energy series are accounted for because of Russia's role in their supply.

All series are close-to-close returns and trading stops at 4:00 pm Eastern Time for all markets except the Eurostoxx, which closes at 6:00 pm Central European Time. This corresponds to a 7:00 pm Kyiv time closure of the Eurostoxx 50 and an 11:00 pm Kyiv time closure of all other markets. Almost all news items on Interfax are published before 7:00 pm Kyiv time. Hence, the news enters Eq. (1) on the day of its publication. News items that were published on a non-trading day were moved to the next trading day.

As we conjecture a potential change in the perception of war-related news by financial markets over time, we estimate Eq. (1) for the full sample period (February 24 to July 12) and test for a structural break. In our automated breakpoint detection procedure, we restrict the subsamples to a minimum of 30 observations, which yields a total of 35 potential breakpoints. We then estimate two separate models for the subsamples that generate the lowest joint residual sum of squares (RSS). Figure A4.1 in Annex 4 plots the RSS with the endpoint of the first subsample on the x-axis. In the case of the Eurostoxx 50 (April 7), oil (April 6), gas (April 6), and wheat (April 8), the first subsample ends right after the liberation of Northern Ukraine. For the S&P 500 (16 May), we detect the breakpoint at a later time, that is, after the start of the Ukrainian counteroffensive north and east of Kharkiv. This rather late break date for S&P 500 compared to the other markets appears to be driven by days with multiple news in the same category. When we use a concave function of the news variable (i.e. a log plus one transformation; see Section 4.2 and Table A4.4), the break date results as early as April 12. In all cases, the RSS decreases by at least 24 percent

⁵ Our sample is too short for a successful GARCH modelling approach. Indeed, GARCH(1,1) estimations do only converge for a part of the market considered in this paper. In addition, our breakpoint analysis is unfeasible with such an approach given the limited number of observations at hand.

⁶ Data is obtained from Bloomberg or the Wall Street Journal. For the very few missing values in the Eurostoxx 50 series, we used linear interpolation. Controlling for these imputed values with the help of dummy variables does not have a qualitatively relevant effect on our results.

when allowing for different coefficients across subsamples.⁷ Hence, this procedure reveals changes in financial markets' response to war-related news.

Table A4.1 in Annex 4 shows descriptive statistics for the five financial market return series (also split into two subsamples based on the test procedure outlined above). On average, we observe negative returns for both stock market series with no noticeable differences across the subsamples. In the case of oil and wheat futures, however, the returns are — on average — positive in the first subsample and negative in the second period. This is indicative of the steep increase in the prices of these goods at the beginning of the war and the later observed normalization tendency. In the case of gas futures, Table A4.1 shows an increase in both subsamples, reflecting the tight conditions in this market ever since the start of the Russian invasion (which relaxed only later in the year). Turning to the volatility of the series, we find a lower standard deviation in the second subsample for the Eurostoxx, oil futures, gas futures, and wheat futures, which, however, is not resembled in the S&P 500. These descriptive results further underline the need to analyse potential differences in the financial markets' perception of the war over time. However, it remains to be seen if the descriptive differences in the financial market return series can be explained by a change in the response to the war-related news over time.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that our analysis is based on a couple of assumptions. First, we assume that there are no confounding factors. This assumption can be easily justified as the war in the Ukraine is the overarching topic in the first half of 2022 in international politics and financial markets. In addition, we control for changes in the global monetary policy environment. Second, it is typically the unexpected component of an event that should actually matter for financial market participants. In an ideal world, we would extract such a news component from market expectations as it is done in the literature on macroeconomic news or monetary policy decisions (following, e.g., Ehrmann and Fratzscher 2004, 2005) and their impact on financial markets. However, in the absence of such a series, we consider the actually observed news as second-best proxy. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that the number of news items for a given topic on a given day might serve as a good indicator for the intensity of news in that category.

4 Estimation results

4.1 Baseline results

Table 2–Table 6 show the results of Eq. (1) for both stock return series as well as the returns of oil, gas, and wheat futures. All left-hand side variables are measured in percent. Hence, the coefficients represent the effects of an additional item in a news category in percentage points. We first focus on the variables related to the research question, that is, those reflecting Western support for Ukraine (military aid, financial aid, and sanctions).

⁷ This is also reflected in significant Chow tests (at the ten percent level) in all markets except the S&P 500. The $\chi^2(16)$ test statistics are as follows: S&P 500: 19.68 [p-val. 0.24], Eurostoxx 50: 25.14 [0.07], oil: 32.61 [0.01], gas: 45.57 [0.00], wheat: 24.70 [0.08]. As shown in Table 2 below, the estimation results for the S&P 500 returns show breaks in some of the coefficients, but a joint test of the 16 coefficients does not reject the null hypothesis of no structural break.

News on more military aid leads to a decrease in S&P returns in the full sample period and the first subsample (columns 1 and 2 of Table 2) and an increase in wheat futures in the first subsample (column 1 of Table 6). The latter effect corroborates the discussions of a potential shortage in the worldwide wheat supply, particularly during the early phase of the war. In a similar vein, news on less military aid leads to higher Eurostoxx returns (column 2 of Table 3) in the first subsample and lower US returns in the second subsample (column 3 of Table 3) — where the coefficient was still positive in the first subsample (but imprecisely measured). Opposing signs for the first and second subsample can also be observed for gas futures where less military aid for Ukraine was appreciated by participants in the first subsample, but led to higher returns in the second one (columns 2 and 3 of Table 5). Lastly, wheat futures decreased after that type of news when considering the full sample period and — to a larger extent — in the first subsample (columns 1 and 2 of Table 6). The same pattern, even though not statistically significant, emerges for more military aid in the gas market and less military aid in the oil market.

News on more financial aid is found to decrease US stock returns in the first subsample (column 2 in Table 2) and European stock returns when considering the full sample period (column 1 in Table 3). The latter effect appears to be driven by the first subsample, where the coefficient is less precisely estimated, though. Still, these results resemble the response to military aid news as financial markets prefer less support in the first subsample and more support in the second subsample. However, for the remaining markets, estimation uncertainty for the financial aid effects is large. These less distinct results as compared to those for military aid indicate a clear pecking order in terms of the markets' response to different aid categories.

Table 2: Results for S&P 500 returns

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until May 16	(3) From May 17
Lag(S&P 500 Returns)	0.042 (0.102)	0.062 (0.158)	0.006 (0.193)
Lag(3-M T-Bill Change)	-1.229 (2.108)	-2.409 (5.021)	3.253 (3.172)
Combat De-Escalation	0.033 (0.060)	0.019 (0.067)	0.468 (0.518)
Combat Escalation	-0.044 (0.032)	-0.055* (0.032)	-0.320* (0.173)
More Military Aid/UA Strength	-0.190** (0.080)	-0.258** (0.114)	-0.033 (0.181)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.427 (0.501)	0.955 (0.630)	-1.529* (0.758)
Humanitarian Aid	-0.099 (0.127)	0.039 (0.128)	-1.345** (0.531)
Local News Resilience	0.035 (0.043)	0.055 (0.047)	0.112 (0.117)
Local News Fragility	0.125** (0.061)	0.079 (0.080)	0.075 (0.103)
Export News Positive	-0.040 (0.083)	0.039 (0.126)	-0.176 (0.144)
Export News Negative	-0.054 (0.095)	-0.049 (0.112)	0.063 (0.189)
More Financial Aid/Support	-0.115 (0.076)	-0.226*** (0.078)	0.024 (0.132)
Less Financial Aid/Support	0.202 (0.270)	0.141 (0.382)	-0.163 (0.410)
Stronger Sanctions	0.140*** (0.042)	0.143*** (0.049)	0.399** (0.162)
Weaker Sanctions	-0.072 (0.165)	-0.172 (0.223)	0.203 (0.446)
Constant	-0.266 (0.607)	0.263 (1.027)	-1.158 (1.046)
Observations	94	57	37
R ²	0.202	0.345	0.456

Note: Table shows the results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively. Figure A4.1 shows the results for the breakpoint tests.

Source: Own calculations.

Table 3: Results for Eurostoxx 50 returns

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 7	(3) From April 8
Lag(Eurostoxx 50 Returns)	0.036 (0.095)	0.189 (0.228)	0.072 (0.135)
Lag(3-M T-Bill Change)	-0.037 (2.296)	-9.760 (8.136)	1.874 (2.594)
Combat De-Escalation	-0.004 (0.069)	0.026 (0.114)	-0.202 (0.203)
Combat Escalation	-0.139* (0.071)	-0.157** (0.056)	-0.126 (0.085)
More Military Aid/UA Strength	-0.053 (0.076)	-0.546 (0.335)	0.041 (0.093)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.816 (0.611)	3.786** (1.323)	-0.011 (0.455)
Humanitarian Aid	-0.094 (0.141)	-0.051 (0.276)	-0.246 (0.183)
Local News Resilience	0.006 (0.041)	-0.318* (0.179)	0.061 (0.051)
Local News Fragility	0.036 (0.077)	0.273 (0.322)	-0.018 (0.079)
Export News Positive	0.015 (0.078)	0.298 (0.489)	-0.028 (0.088)
Export News Negative	-0.126 (0.106)	-0.262 (0.216)	-0.035 (0.137)
More Financial Aid/Support	-0.171** (0.075)	-0.292 (0.252)	-0.094 (0.095)
Less Financial Aid/Support	0.292 (0.356)	-0.266 (0.436)	0.523 (0.497)
Stronger Sanctions	0.165** (0.067)	0.335*** (0.097)	0.113* (0.067)
Weaker Sanctions	-0.001 (0.221)	0.411 (0.417)	0.121 (0.234)
Constant	0.625 (0.642)	1.287 (1.367)	0.104 (0.744)
Observations	94	31	63
R ²	0.247	0.668	0.193

Note: Table shows the results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively. Figure A4.1 shows the results for the breakpoint tests.

Source: Own calculations.

Table 4: Results for Brent futures returns

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 6	(3) From April 7
Lag(Brent Fut. Returns)	-0.036 (0.093)	-0.169 (0.281)	-0.025 (0.117)
Lag(3-M T-Bill Change)	-8.774 (6.446)	-10.595 (16.801)	-6.182 (7.460)
Combat De-Escalation	-0.347** (0.141)	-0.693* (0.363)	-0.054 (0.347)
Combat Escalation	0.213 (0.165)	0.030 (0.184)	0.707*** (0.213)
More Military Aid/UA Strength	0.022 (0.195)	-0.120 (0.891)	0.008 (0.181)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.183 (1.070)	-3.760 (3.035)	1.135 (0.751)
Humanitarian Aid	0.136 (0.279)	0.237 (0.648)	-0.127 (0.294)
Local News Resilience	-0.019 (0.077)	0.601 (0.535)	-0.075 (0.074)
Local News Fragility	-0.111 (0.155)	-2.029* (0.958)	-0.020 (0.168)
Export News Positive	0.041 (0.154)	-1.659 (1.261)	0.165 (0.151)
Export News Negative	0.259 (0.207)	1.832* (0.953)	0.086 (0.258)
More Financial Aid/Support	-0.018 (0.154)	0.106 (0.546)	-0.245 (0.184)
Less Financial Aid/Support	-0.384 (0.865)	-0.355 (2.312)	1.172 (0.829)
Stronger Sanctions	-0.184 (0.189)	-0.196 (0.298)	-0.126 (0.134)
Weaker Sanctions	0.643 (0.454)	-1.440 (1.212)	0.656 (0.442)
Constant	0.107 (1.443)	7.499** (3.441)	-1.464 (1.856)
Observations	94	30	64
R ²	0.153	0.508	0.366

Note: Table shows the results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively. Figure A4.1 shows the results for the breakpoint tests.

Source: Own calculations.

Table 5: Results for gas futures returns

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 6	(3) From April 7
Lag(Gas Fut. Returns)	-0.081 (0.171)	-0.350 (0.203)	0.025 (0.200)
Lag(3-M T-Bill Change)	18.377 (15.921)	-29.519 (57.242)	20.988* (10.900)
Combat De-Escalation	0.208 (0.330)	-0.626 (0.809)	-0.643 (0.687)
Combat Escalation	-0.047 (0.700)	-0.534 (0.638)	0.385 (0.472)
More Military Aid/UA Strength	-0.167 (0.512)	3.295 (2.279)	-0.174 (0.328)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.748 (2.922)	-18.043* (8.440)	4.350*** (1.469)
Humanitarian Aid	-0.129 (1.036)	2.049 (2.109)	0.054 (0.527)
Local News Resilience	0.208 (0.239)	3.831** (1.526)	0.006 (0.151)
Local News Fragility	0.018 (0.392)	-7.308** (2.514)	0.101 (0.257)
Export News Positive	-0.664* (0.398)	-3.108 (3.743)	-0.513* (0.285)
Export News Negative	0.689 (0.625)	6.548*** (2.069)	-0.077 (0.453)
More Financial Aid/Support	0.221 (0.333)	-2.368 (1.476)	0.270 (0.240)
Less Financial Aid/Support	-1.591 (1.542)	0.804 (4.313)	-0.467 (1.118)
Stronger Sanctions	-0.006 (0.539)	-0.187 (0.853)	-0.155 (0.232)
Weaker Sanctions	-1.634 (1.260)	-8.824** (3.899)	-1.692** (0.778)
Constant	0.078 (3.905)	10.180 (7.291)	1.299 (2.349)
Observations	94	30	64
R ²	0.088	0.548	0.240

Notes: Table shows the results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively. Figure A4.1 shows the results for the breakpoint tests.

Source: Own calculations.

Table 6: Results for wheat futures returns

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 8	(3) From April 11
Lag(Wheat Fut. Returns)	0.079 (0.138)	0.069 (0.222)	-0.005 (0.181)
Lag(3-M T-Bill Change)	2.382 (4.602)	9.273 (22.442)	-0.797 (4.505)
Combat De-Escalation	-0.313** (0.130)	-0.532 (0.362)	0.567 (0.340)
Combat Escalation	0.105 (0.132)	0.076 (0.142)	0.281 (0.239)
More Military Aid/UA Strength	0.321 (0.216)	1.942* (1.058)	-0.039 (0.169)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	-2.380** (1.195)	-7.779** (2.951)	-0.741 (0.967)
Humanitarian Aid	0.143 (0.394)	0.997 (0.791)	0.078 (0.302)
Local News Resilience	-0.027 (0.095)	0.589 (0.724)	-0.126 (0.096)
Local News Fragility	-0.148 (0.139)	-0.961 (1.156)	-0.102 (0.123)
Export News Positive	-0.052 (0.216)	0.236 (1.436)	0.056 (0.190)
Export News Negative	0.493* (0.255)	1.345 (0.968)	0.275 (0.275)
More Financial Aid/Support	0.117 (0.141)	-0.086 (0.778)	-0.064 (0.123)
Less Financial Aid/Support	-0.742 (0.831)	0.323 (1.379)	-1.098 (0.742)
Stronger Sanctions	0.001 (0.124)	-0.309 (0.261)	-0.093 (0.132)
Weaker Sanctions	1.043** (0.502)	0.708 (1.710)	0.708 (0.528)
Constant	-2.569 (2.100)	-6.684 (5.919)	-0.410 (1.797)
Observations	94	32	62
R ²	0.212	0.495	0.268

Notes: Table shows the results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively. Figure A4.1 shows the results for the breakpoint tests.

Source: Own calculations.

News on stronger sanctions generally leads to higher stock returns (columns 1–3 in Table 2 and Table 3). This mirrors a hawkish line, since overall business evaluation improves despite the fact the sanctions regularly imply also restrictions for domestic firms. News on weaker sanctions, which might be seen as a relief for the strained energy market, is reflected in lower gas returns in both subsamples (columns 2 and 3 of Table 5). This type of news is also associated with higher wheat returns (column 1 of Table 6), most likely because of the difficulties in exporting Ukrainian wheat; these might be seen as further increasing if the West takes a lenient view on Russia in terms of sanctions. The positive effect of sanctions is stronger for US stocks in the second subsample, which resembles the hypothesized more hawkish stance of market participants during that phase. Similarly, the beneficial effect of weaker sanctions in the gas market can be particularly observed in the first subsample, reflecting the more dovish market stance at that time, and not so much in the second subsample. A similar, albeit insignificant, pattern can be observed for the results of oil futures. Finally, it has to be noted that the response of European stock returns appears to be odds with the interpretation of a more dovish stance of financial markets in the first subsample and a more hawkish one in the second subsample. The fact that this is the single exception calls for a closer analysis. Indeed, we find that the result can be explained by the much earlier breakpoint as compared to the S&P 500. A re-estimation of the Eurostoxx 50 models when forcing the first subsample to end on May 16 (i.e., the same endpoint as for the S&P 500) yields the following coefficients for stronger sanctions: 0.169** (0.078) for the first subsample and 0.283* (0.149) for the second subsample. Hence, these results are also in line with the pattern of a more hawkish stance in the second subsample. Furthermore, in contrast to the US, Europe has been highly dependent on energy imports from Russia (e.g., Congressional Research Service 2022). Most energy-related sanctions from the EU-side appear rather late in the sample, in line with the less positive Eurostoxx reaction to sanctions during that time.

In a second step, we look into the response to other war-related news, such as combat (de-)escalation including the humanitarian situation, export-related news, and the domestic economic and political situation. Controlling for these variables is important for a clear answer to our research question since there might be correlation patterns (e.g. between conflict escalation and sanctions) that could confound our results. Indeed, an estimation of Eq. (1) without these categories (not shown, but available on request) yields a (much) worse fit as the one reported in Table 2–Table 6 and sometimes also (substantial) differences in the estimates for news on military aid, financial aid, and sanctions.⁸

In general, news on combat escalation is bad news for stocks markets as indicated by the decline in US and European returns (columns 2 and 3 in Table 2 and columns 1 and 2 in Table 3) and for oil futures as reflected in the rise of returns during the second subsample (column 3 in Table 4). For the latter market, we also observe a decrease in returns after news on combat de-escalation (columns 1 and 2 in Table 4). A similar easing of the strained conditions can be found for wheat future returns (column 1 in Table 6). In the case of news on humanitarian aid, we only find a significant negative response of US stock returns in the second subsample (column 3 of Table 2).

⁸ When comparing the full sample estimations with and without the other war-related news, the R^2 is 34–63 percent lower in the models that only focus on “Western” news. In addition, the effects of, for instance, more military aid, more financial aid, and stronger sanctions would be underestimated (in absolute terms) in the stock return models when not controlling for the other news categories.

Hence, conflict escalations (including a larger need for humanitarian aid) is bad for financial markets, whereas de-escalation is appreciated.

Turning to exports, we find a decrease in the returns of gas futures in the first subsample and the full sample period (columns 1 and 3 of Table 5) after positive news. In addition, we detect an increase in the returns of oil futures and gas futures in the first subsample (column 2 of Table 4 and Table 5) and wheat futures when considering the full sample period (column 1 of Table 6) after negative news. Accordingly, commodity markets are positively (negatively) affected if there are fewer (more) restrictions to the worldwide supply of goods.

Lastly, we look into the response of financial markets to other domestic economic and political news. Local news pointing towards a more resilient Ukraine leads to lower European stock returns and an increase in gas futures in the first subsample (column 2 of Table 3 and Table 5). In a similar vein, we observe higher stock returns in the US (column 1 in Table 2) as well as lower returns of oil and gas futures in the first subsample (column 2 in Table 4 and Table 5) after local news indicating a more fragile Ukraine. These results fit the financial markets' response to Western news: signs of a resilient Ukraine were not appreciated during the first phase of the war.

The most important take away from the results of the controls, however, is that our key findings hold when accounting for a broad set of war-related news. We can conclude that financial markets had a more dovish stance during the first phase of the war and a more hawkish later on, while conflict and escalation in general had harmful effects on international financial markets over the full sample period. Lastly, our results are also not confounded by other export-related news or domestic economic and political news.

Thus far, we did not put much emphasis on the interpretation of the absolute size of the news effects. As an illustration, one might resort to the response of the S&P 500 to news about stronger sanctions. During the full sample period, an additional item in that category leads to an increase of 0.14 percentage points (pp). The corresponding effects in the first and second subsamples are 0.14 pp and 0.40 pp, respectively. These figures can be put into context by looking into the frequency of news items in Table 1 and the standard deviation of the financial series in Table A4.1. This underscores that the response to war-related news does not only feature a structural break over time. In addition, the estimated effects are of economic relevance.

4.2 Robustness checks

Next, we explore the robustness of our results along different dimensions. First, we test if our timing of war-related news is appropriate and allow all news items to enter Eq. (1) contemporaneously and additionally with a lag of one day. Given the large number of categories, this procedure is only feasible for the full-sample estimations. Table A4.2 compares the adjusted R² and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) for the models in Tables 2–6 and models where we additionally include the lagged news variables. All augmented models are worse in these two statistics and an exclusion restriction on all lagged terms cannot be rejected at the 10 percent level. The only exception is the Eurostoxx 50 where the adjusted R² of the augmented model is higher and the exclusion restriction is rejected (while the BIC is still worse when compared to the more parsimonious specification). The results of the larger model (available on request) indicate that the coefficients in column 1 in Table 3 are virtually unchanged by the additional regressors.

In addition, the first lag of more (less) financial aid is found to be significantly negative (positive). Accordingly, these results fit in the general pattern of the full-sample market response to news (cf. Section 4.1).

Second, we explore if our results for the response to news on sanctions hold when additionally controlling for actual sanctions that came into effect (cf. Figure A3.1). Accordingly, we augment Eq. (1) by the logarithm of the cumulative number of actually sanctioned Russian entities. The results can be found in Table A4.3 and indicate that controlling for actual sanctions does not crowd out the effect of the news variables. The Eurostoxx 50 in the second subsample is the only exception; however, we only observe a minor change in the market response in this case. Finally, we find the number of sanctioned entities to be significant just once. Hence, it is indeed news on sanctions that matters for markets and not the number of sanctioned entities.

Third, we re-estimate Eq. (1) using the broader Eurostoxx 600 as indicator of European stock returns. The results in Table A4.4 are very similar to those in Table 3, again with the response to sanctions in the second subsample being the only minor exception. In addition, the structural break in the Eurostoxx 600 (April 11) can be found at almost the same day as for the Eurostoxx 50 (April 7). Hence, the result patterns for European stocks can be found in a narrow and a broad stock index.

Finally, we consider potential non-linearities in the response of financial markets to news. It might be the case that markets respond differently to a change from, say, zero items to one in a given variable as opposed to a change from five to six. We impose such a concave pattern by applying a log plus one transformation to all news variables and re-estimate Eq. (1). Table A4.5–Table A4.9 show the results. Interestingly, all structural breaks (including the one for S&P 500) are now found in early- to mid-April, that is, right after the liberation of Northern Ukraine. In addition, the general pattern for the “Western support” variables is replicated when accounting for potential non-linearities. Markets appreciated a more dovish stance during the first phase of the war and a more hawkish stance later on.

To summarize, our results are robust to an alternative timing of the war-related news, using a broader European stock index, and potential non-linearities in the markets’ response to news. We also show that it is news about sanctions that matters for markets and not the number of actually sanctioned Russian entities.

5 Conclusions

Since Russia began the war against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the West has been intensively discussing its support strategy. Hawkish positions of strengthening Ukraine via armaments, financial resources, and sanctions against Russia compete with dovish views of avoiding further escalation of the military and geopolitical conflict. News from the war became a dominating factor for international politics and the world economy.

In the underlying study, we created a comprehensive data set of news related to the war in Ukraine. We focus on decisions of the West, that is, military aid, financial aid, and sanctions. Further news categories comprise combat escalation, the export situation, and the local

situation. Building on this data, we measure reactions of international financial markets to this news. We cover five key financial markets, namely US and European stocks, oil and gas for the energy dimension, and wheat representing agriculture.

The results show that stronger support for Ukraine had a negative impact in the first weeks of the war. Thus, financial markets appear to have perceived it as a risk of further escalation threatening global economic activity. However, we find the perceptions strongly changed when the Ukrainian position in the war improved. Since that time, a hawkish line was a positive signal for financial markets. This means that clear support for Ukraine has been viewed as stabilizing business prospects and relaxing the situation in strained energy and commodity markets. Importantly, the results also confirm that the war and escalation in general had harmful effects on international financial markets.

Our results are robust to an alternative timing of the war-related news and potential non-linearities in the markets' response to these. We also show that it is news about sanctions that matters for markets and not the number of actually sanctioned Russian entities. Finally, our paper provides novel insights with respect to time-variation in asset price responses to news. While the existing literature finds such variation due to business cycles, financial market turbulences, and other secular trends (cf. footnote 1), we additionally provide evidence for the market perception of conflicts in this context.

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Appendix

Annex 1. The procedure for news item categorization

Table A1.1: Examples of the news item classification

Headline	Date	Code	Direction
Estonia allocates EUR 200,000 for emergency assistance to Ukrainian residents affected by war, - MFA	2/24/2022	13	2
Mobile operators, Ukrtelecom agree to provide communication to Ukrainians even if no funds on their accounts	2/24/2022	22	1
National security services to turn off all state registers until situation in Ukraine stabilizes, number of documents in Diia not to be available - Digital Transformation Ministry	2/24/2022	21	2
Zelensky speaks with Trudeau about imposition of additional tough sanctions against Russia	2/24/2022	32	0
Britain bans Aeroflot flights - Johnson	2/24/2022	32	1

Notes: After classifying each news story separately, we do a double-checking process and review each set of news items for a separate sectoral code and direction to ensure these belong to the same group.

Source: Interfax; own description.

Table A1.2: Example of the double-check for military escalation news and for news on logistical problems

Headline	Date	Code	Direction
Air threat declared in Kyiv, residents asked to go to shelters - Kyiv City Administration	2/24/2022	11	2
Active battles continue in Hostomel near Kyiv, there is danger of landing of Russian forces in govt quarter of Kyiv, - advisor Podoliak	2/24/2022	11	2
Rada to consider issues of general mobilization, defense procurement on Thursday, - MP Rudyk	2/24/2022	11	2
Russia inflicts over 30 strikes on civilian, military infrastructure as of 13.00, - AFU General Staff	2/24/2022	11	2
Arestovych warns of possibility of further shelling, including Kyiv	2/24/2022	11	2
Bulk carrier NAMURA QUEEN on fire due to missile strike in Pivdenny seaport	2/25/2022	25	2
Ukraine suspends flights until Feb 27 inclusively	2/25/2022	25	2
Ferrexpo sends force majeure notices to customers due to suspension of shipments at port	2/25/2022	25	2
Moldova suspends railway communication with Ukraine	2/25/2022	25	2
Shurma urges citizens to pay with payment cards due to difficulties with cash delivery	3/1/2022	25	2

Notes: In each case, we access not only a headline, but a text within the news item, which was not represented in the tables above for the sake of brevity.

Source: Interfax; own description.

Table A1.3: Detailed classification of news items

CAT	Description
111	Military, de-escalation (Russian retreat, international missions coming, embassies returning, diplomatic negotiations ongoing, refugees coming back)
112	Military, escalation (combat actions, damages, military-caused ecological threats, war crimes, civilian losses, refugees fleeing the country)
121	More military aid (military aid from abroad, large donations to the military, weapon procurement)
122	Less military aid (statements on weakening of support of Ukraine from the West, destruction of military production assets in Ukraine etc.)
131	Humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced people, local and international
211	Local news on resilience and growth, less restrictions, better public policies, more sustainable currency and public finance situation
212	Local news on fragility, crisis, worse public access to services, more restrictive government policies, weaker currency, riskier situation in public finance, corruption issues
221	Better public access to commercial goods and services, housing, job market and public services like education, healthcare etc.
222	Worse public access to commercial goods and services, housing, job market and services like education, healthcare etc.
231	Agriculture: positive developments (sewing campaign, access to credit, positive corporate news)
232	Agriculture: negative developments (damages and losses, lack of access to resources etc.)
241	Metals and mining: positive developments (positive corporate news)
242	Metals and mining: negative developments (damages, negative corporate news)
251	Logistics: positive developments (better railway logistics, opening of the sea corridor, better access to Danube ports, EU transport network integration)
252	Logistics: negative developments (damages and losses to infrastructure, Russia blocking sea ports, decline on goods transporting etc.)
261	Other business news: positive developments
262	Other business news: negative developments
311	More foreign non-military support (incl. financial aid and EU integration)
312	Less foreign non-military support negative (incl. financial aid irregularities, delays, EU skepticism etc.)
321	Strengthening of sanctions, multinational companies leaving Russia
322	Weakening of sanctions, multinational companies working in Russia, sanctions evasion

Source: Interfax; own description.

Table A1.4: Formulas for the merger of CATs (Table A1.3) into categories (Table 1)

Category	Formula
Combat De-Escalation	= 111
Combat Escalation	= 112
More Military Aid/UA Strength	= 121
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	= 122
Humanitarian Aid	= 131
Local News Resilience	= 211 + 221 + 261
Local News Fragility	= 212 + 222 + 262
Export News Positive	= 231 + 241 + 251
Export News Negative	= 232 + 242 + 252
More Financial Aid/Support	= 311
Less Financial Aid/Support	= 312
Stronger Sanctions	= 321
Weaker Sanctions	= 322

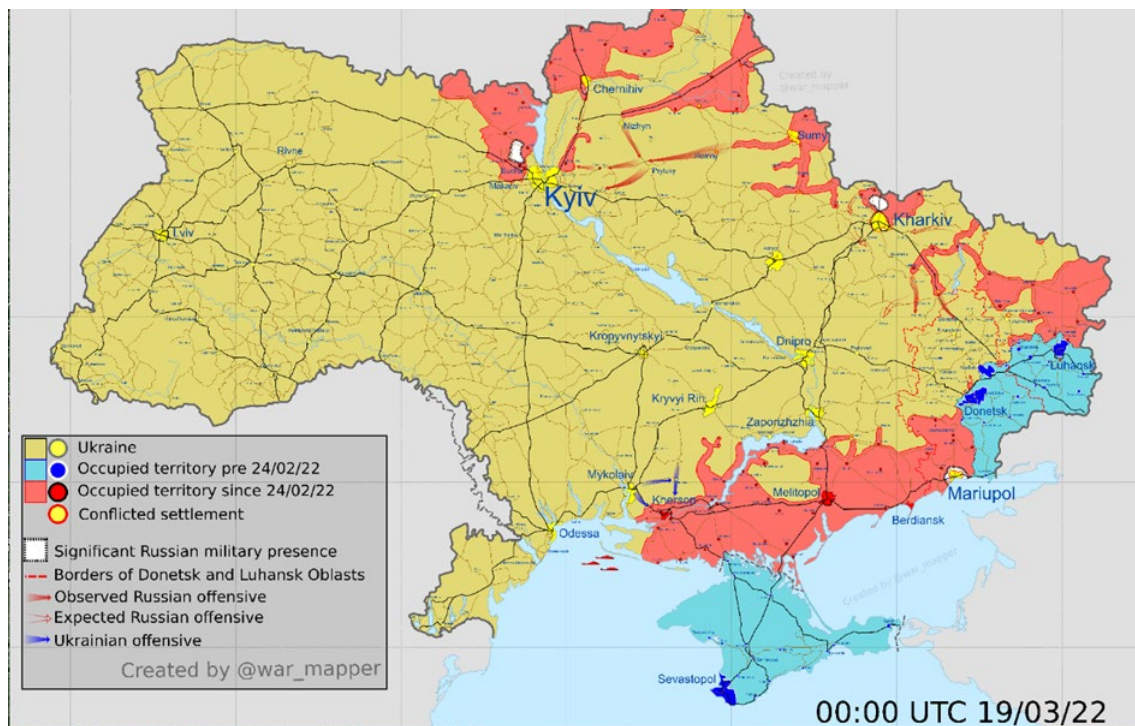
Source: Interfax; own description.

Annex 2. The course of the war in maps

To follow the course of the war in maps, we use the @War Mapper as a source of daily updates. The information on which the mapping is based is collected from open sources and provides an approximation of the course of the war.

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The invasion begun with missile strikes on the entire country. The ground offensive was rapid, and within less than a month Russian troops occupied parts of the Sumy, Chernihiv, and Kyiv regions in the North, Kharkiv, Lugansk, and Donetsk regions in the East, and Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions in the South. Thereby, Russian forces have occupied the large cities of Kherson and Melitopol, surrounded and captured Mariupol after its 86 days resistance, and got within several kilometres distance to Kyiv and Kharkiv – two of Ukraine’s biggest cities as shown in Figure A2.1.

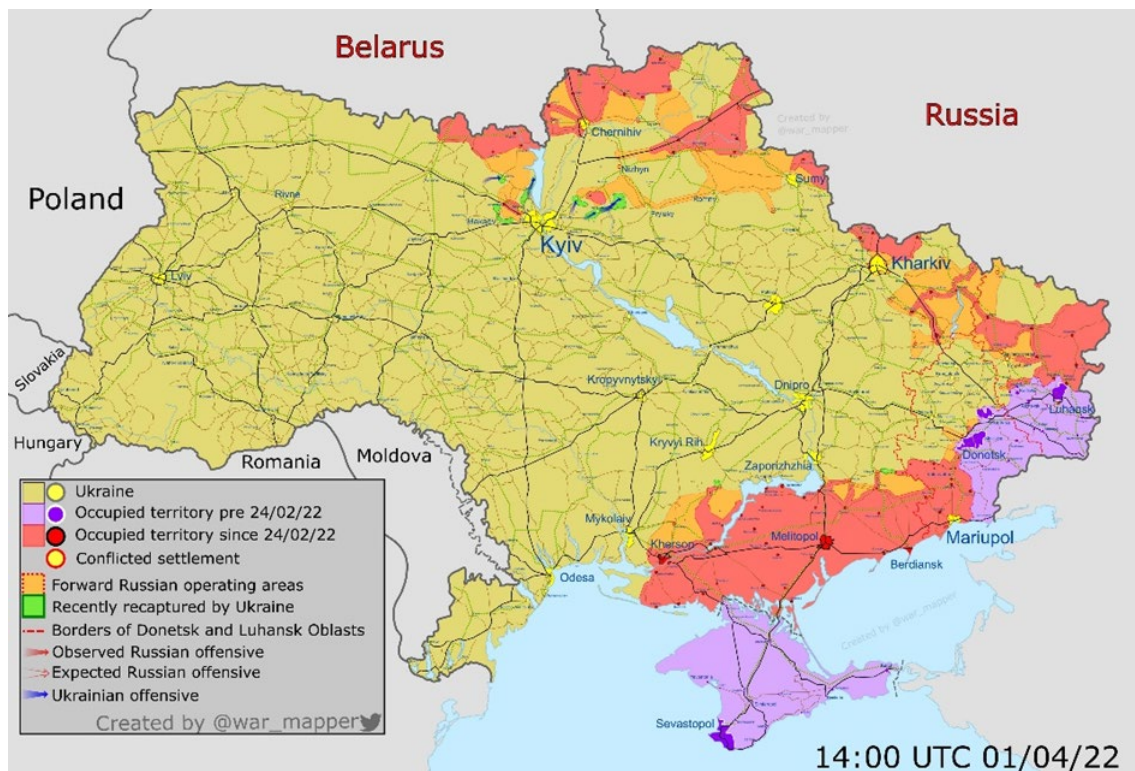
Figure A2.1: Situation on the ground as of March 19, 2022



Source: @war_mapper

After the initial shock, Ukrainian defence improved and then the situation slowly started to reverse. On April 1, the War Mapper reported that Ukraine has retaken a significant number of settlements to the east and west of Kyiv, which is shown by the green areas (Figure A2.2).

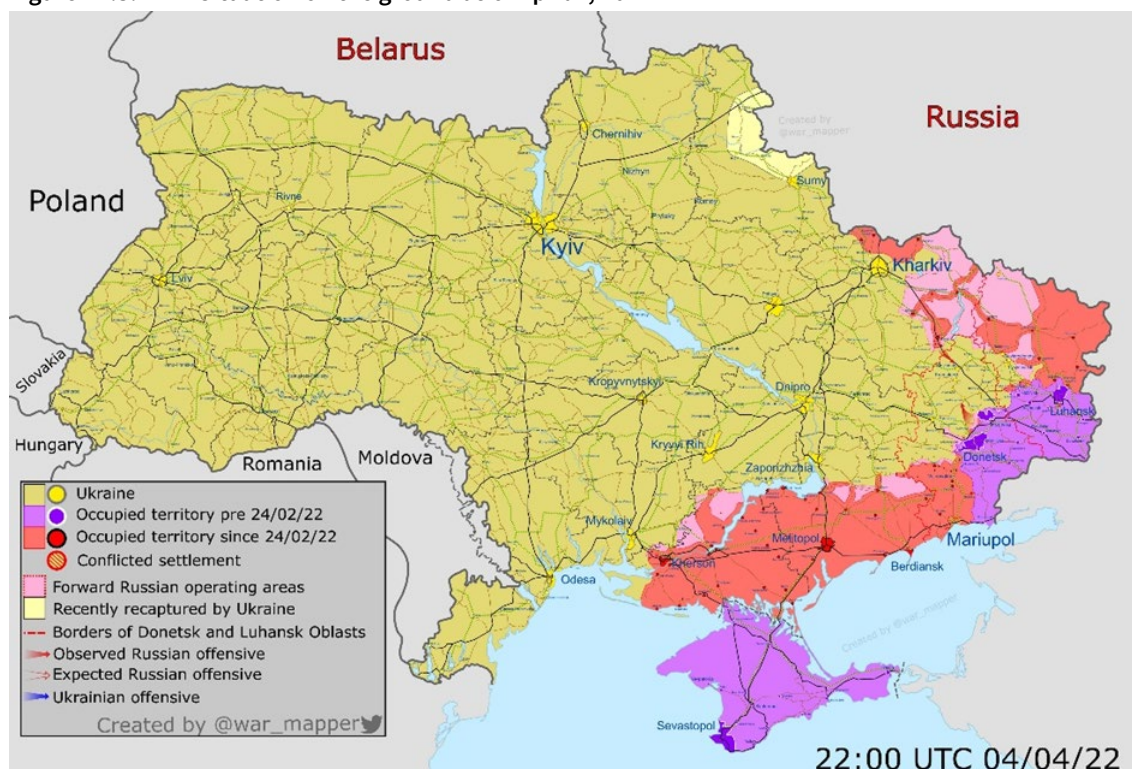
Figure A2.2: Situation on the ground as of April 1, 2022



Source: @war_mapper

By April 4, Russian troops have been pushed out of the Kyiv region and withdrawn quickly from the Sumy and Chernihiv regions, completely leaving the North as shown in Figure A2.3. On April 13, the Russian flagman warship Moskva sank, which was even more symbolic given that this ship threatened the Ukrainian defenders during the Russian attack on Snake Island in Ukraine's territorial waters. However, the Russian offensive in the East and South continued, and Ukraine was defending its positions against the prevailing troops of the aggressor.

Figure A2.3: Situation on the ground as of April 4, 2022

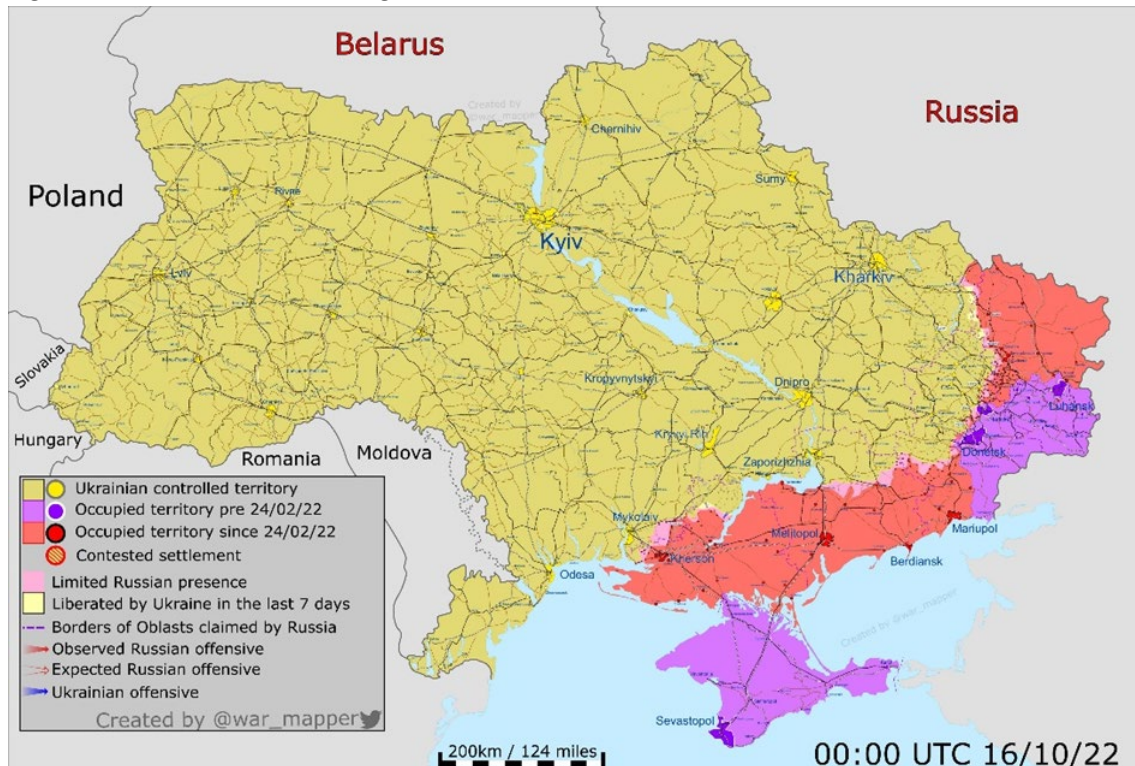


Source: @war_mapper

The second major shift in the war course began on May 3, when Ukraine carried out counteroffensive operations in the direction of Stary Saltiv near the city of Kharkiv, the second largest Ukrainian city after the capital city Kyiv. The battles were ongoing in the area with a slow but steady success of the Ukrainian side. The heart territories of the Kharkiv region were liberated by end-May. However, Russian troops were still remaining in northern borderline villages and the eastern part of the region.

Another massive Ukrainian Eastern counteroffensive started in early September. By mid-September, the vast majority of the Kharkiv region was liberated. The counteroffensive operations continued further to the cities of Izium and Lyman, south of Kharkiv, two of the key strongholds of the eastern front. During the next month Ukraine managed to advance slowly but steadily until mid-October (Figure A2.5), when it was being unable to move the frontline further. The position war in the east has started.

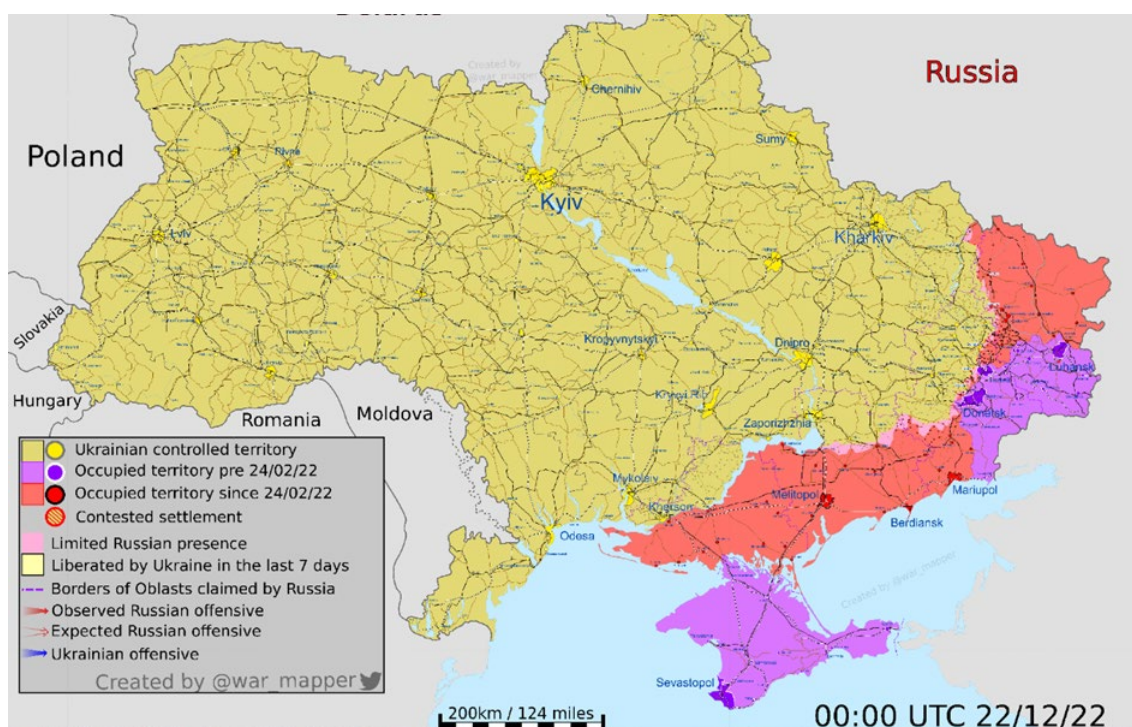
Figure A2.4: Situation on the ground as of October 16, 2022



Source: @war_mapper

The southern counteroffensive operation did not start before early November, when the rapid advance of Ukrainians allowed to liberate several villages within days and get close to the city of Kherson, a major occupied southern city. On November 12, Kherson was liberated and Russian troops were completely pushed out to the left bank of the Dnieper River.

Figure A2.5: Situation on the ground as of December 22, 2022



Source: @war_mapper

Closer to the end of the year, being unable to advance on the ground, Russia has changed its strategy to air strikes against civilian targets, such as the Ukrainian electricity infrastructure. Whereas the maps show no significant progress of each side, Russian drones and missiles have damaged or destroyed approximately 30-50 percent of Ukrainian electricity distribution capacities since mid-October, leaving the population and businesses without electricity and also without heating and water supply during the winter months.

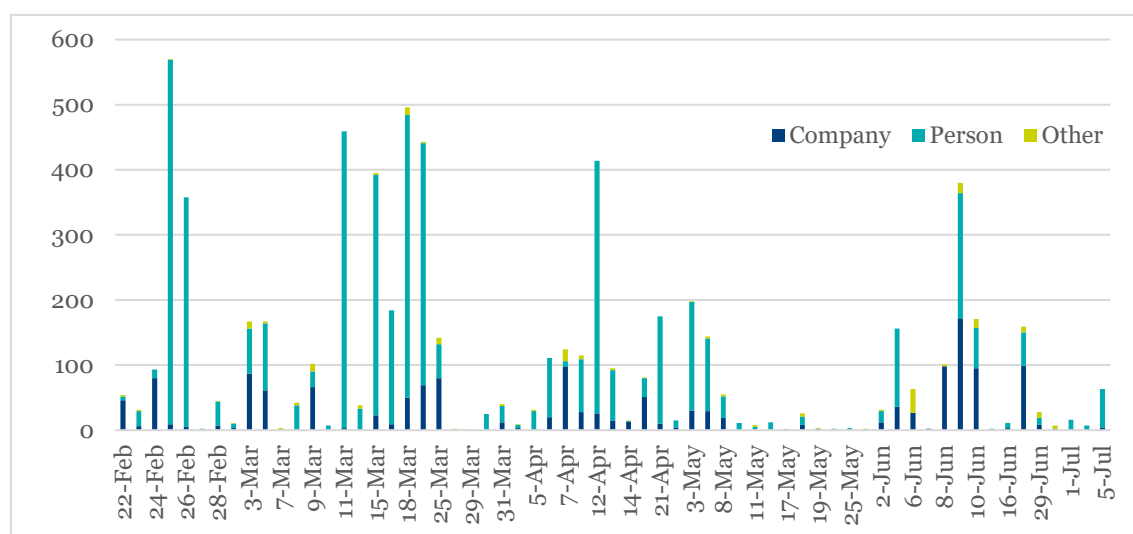
This is the most recent update on the situation as of end-December 2022 (Figure A2.5). The source of the maps is: https://mobile.twitter.com/war_mapper.

Annex 3. Background information on Western aid and sanctions and the economic situation in Ukraine

Sanctions

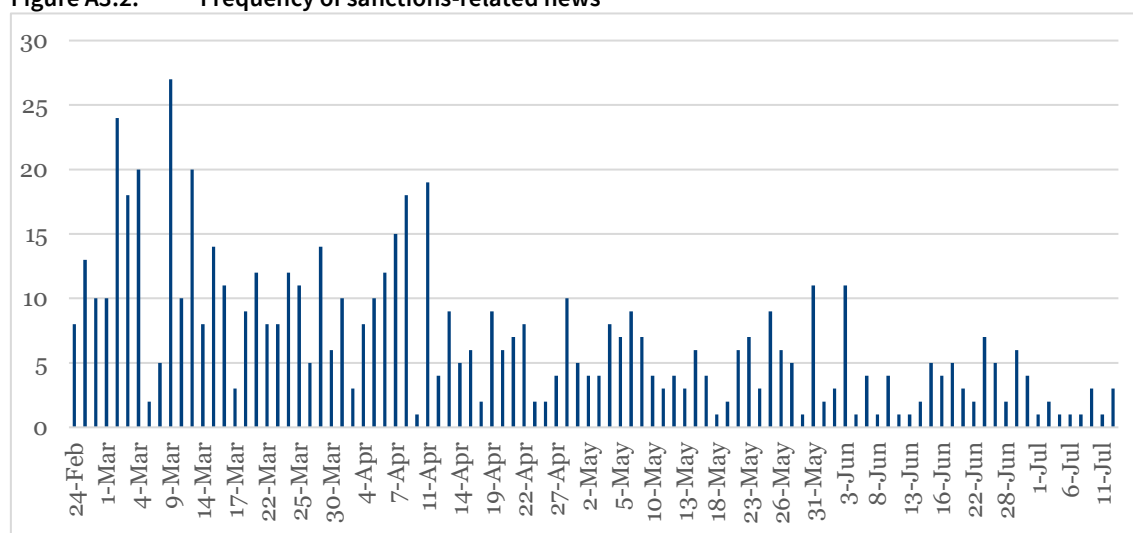
Days after the start of Russia's invasion, many Russian entities and individuals got sanctioned by the EU, US, and other authorities. Russian banks got banned from SWIFT, companies, in particular those connected to the airspace or military industry, faced trade restrictions, maritime cargo traffic suffered from sanctions on cargo ships, and assets of Russian oligarchs and politically-exposed persons were seized or frozen. Further waves of sanctions followed shortly thereafter. Figure A3.1 shows the number of Russian entities being sanctioned by Western authorities. Figure A3.2 shows — for comparison — the frequency of sanctions-related news in our dataset.

Figure A3.1: Number of Russian entities sanctioned



Source: Correctiv.org sanctions tracker.

Figure A3.2: Frequency of sanctions-related news



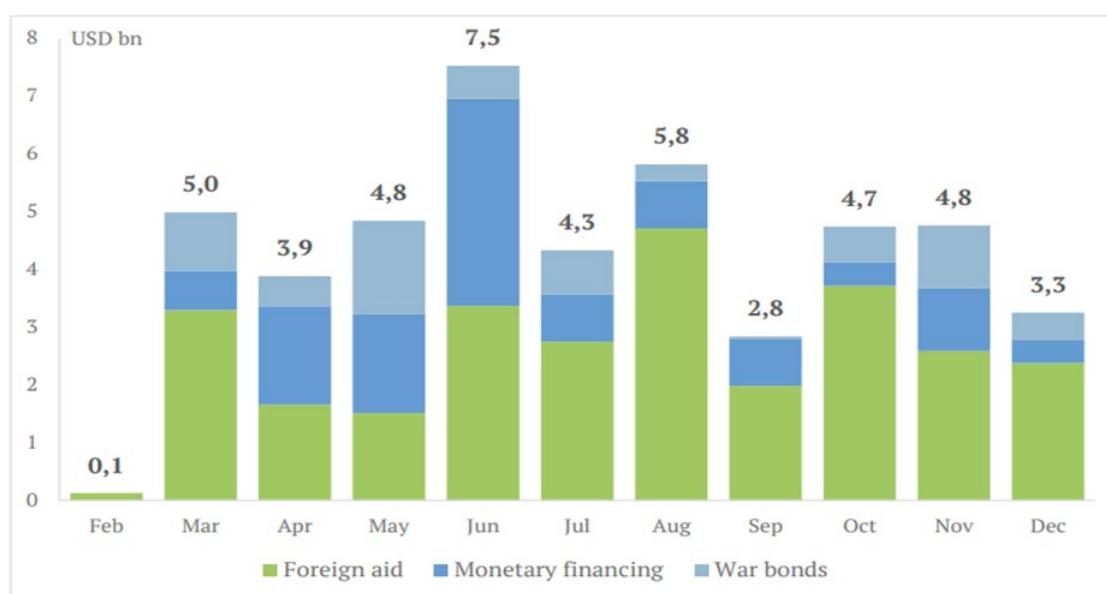
Source: Interfax.

The EU has been Russia's largest economic partner and relied heavily on Russian energy exports (in particular natural gas), whereas the US never had a substantial economic relationship with Russia in the first place (Congressional Research Service 2022). This results in lower (expected) costs of sanctions and possible countersanctions (cf. Crozet and Hinz 2020) for the US and might explain that the US launched oil and gas embargo procedures in Senate in early March. The signing of the Ban Russian Energy Imports Act prohibited the imports of Russian oil, gas, and coal into the US since early April. In contrast, the EU has been hesitant and only included a coal embargo into the 5th package of sanctions in early April and a phased-out oil embargo (for maritime supplies) into the 6th package of sanctions in early June.

Financial aid and other forms of support for Ukraine

War on a state's territory usually brings economic collapse. Indeed, this was expected of Ukraine at the beginning of the war. However, despite the unprecedented disruption in March, the government and the National Bank of Ukraine managed to maintain economic stability under extremely difficult conditions. Ukraine has survived economically and financially thanks to the lifeline provided by its Western partners. Initially, the financial assistance was not regular and was not enough to cover the budget gap. Therefore, a large share of expenditures was financed by the central bank, putting pressure on the currency and driving local prices upwards. After the first successes on the battlefield, Western financial aid became more regular and predictable, covering a substantial part of the budgetary needs as illustrated in Figure A3.3.

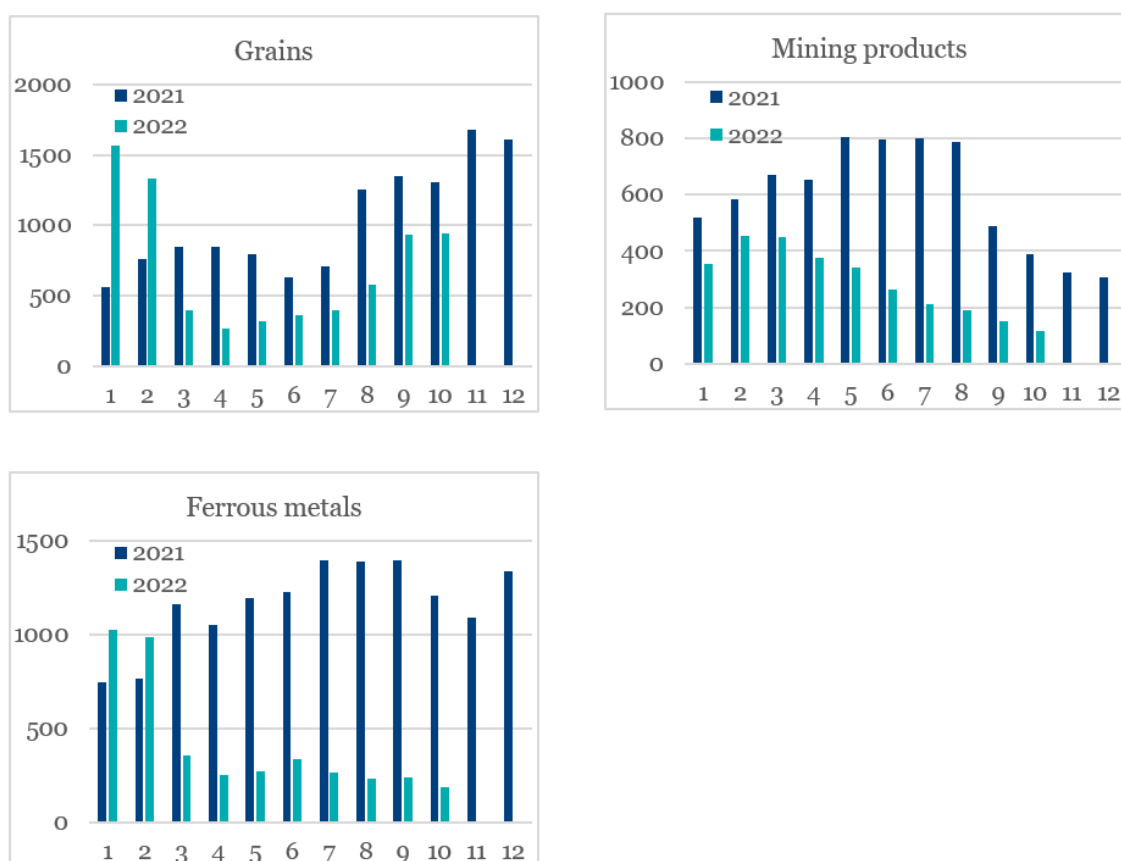
Figure A3.3: Ukraine's state budget funding sources in 2022 (in bn \$)



Source: Vyshlinsky et al. (2022).

Other equally important forms of support were the EU accession negotiations, the temporary elimination of all the trade barriers for Ukrainian goods by the EU, United Kingdom, and other countries, and integration into European electricity and transport networks. Ukraine's President signed the application for EU membership on February 28, 2022. On March 1, the European Parliament voted in favour of a resolution calling on the EU to work towards granting Ukraine the status of an EU candidate. On June 9, the European Parliament recommended granting the country candidate status, followed by the European Commission on June 17. Finally, on June 24 the European Council published the corresponding decision about Ukraine's EU candidacy.

Figure A3.4: Ukrainian exports in 2021 and 2022 (in mn USD)



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

Ukrainian economy and international trade flows

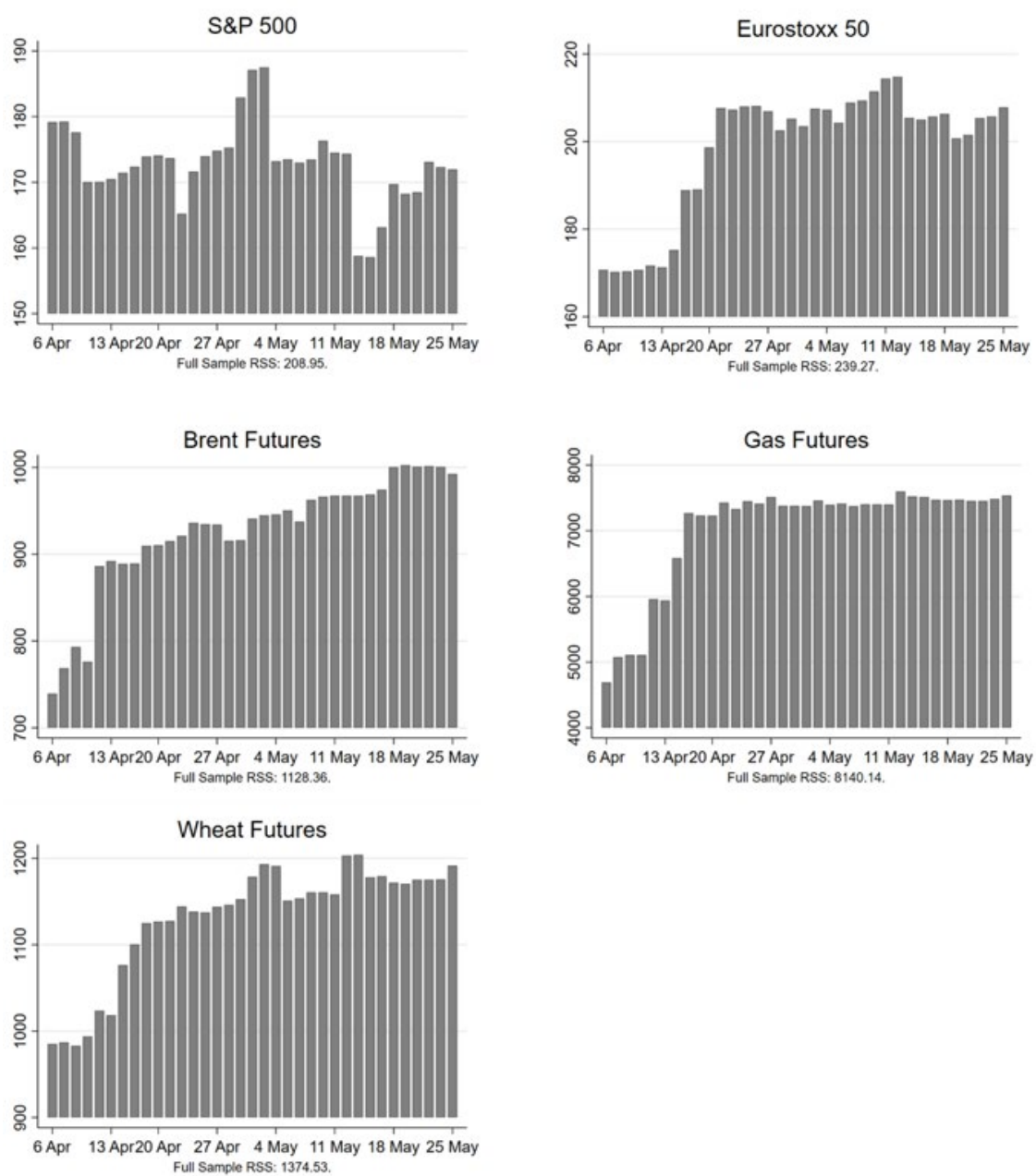
Ukrainian GDP dropped by approximately 30 percent in 2022 due to the war and fixed assets losses (not including damages inflicted by the shelling of the civilian energy infrastructure) are estimated at USD 136 bn as of November 2022.⁹ Some of the damages were also important for international trade. Before the war, Ukraine had two major industries whose dynamics might be important for global market prices: agriculture and the metals & mining industry. Among the major goods are wheat, with an 8.4 percent share in world exports in 2021, and iron ore with a 3.1 percent share.¹⁰ During the war, both industries were damaged heavily and the export flows were cut by a seaport blockade in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, disrupting the global value chains and the market supply. On July 22 (i.e. after the sample period of this paper), the so-called “Grain Corridor” agreement was signed in Turkey, allowing maritime transportation of Ukrainian grain. Iron ore and metals, however, were not included into the framework and its maritime transportation remains impossible. These (huge) drops in exports due to the war are also visualized in Figure A3.4 above.

⁹ Source: <https://damaged.in.ua/damage-assessment>

¹⁰ Data for year 2021 is obtained from the ITC Trademap: <https://www.trademap.org/>.

Annex 4. Data and results appendix

Figure A4.1: Results of breakpoint tests



Notes: Figure shows the residual sum of squares of both subsamples with the endpoint of the first subsample on the x-axis.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.1: Descriptive statistics of financial market returns

	Full Sample			First Subsample			Second Subsample		
	Mean	SD	#	Mean	SD	#	Mean	SD	#
S&P 500	-0.11	1.68	94	-0.09	1.61	57	-0.13	1.79	37
Eurostoxx 50	-0.14	1.85	94	-0.14	2.46	31	-0.14	1.48	63
Brent Futures	0.03	3.79	94	0.14	5.06	30	-0.02	3.06	64
Gas Futures	0.62	9.80	94	0.56	15.31	30	0.64	5.81	64
Wheat Futures	0.04	4.32	94	0.59	6.32	32	-0.25	2.81	62

Notes: Table shows the mean, standard deviation (SD), and number of observations (#) for the full sample period (February 24 to July 12, 2022) and split into two subsamples based on the breakpoint test results shown in Figure A4.1. The endpoints of the first subsample are as follows: 16 May (S&P 500), April 7 (Eurostoxx 50), April 6 (Brent Futures and Gas Futures), and April 8 (Wheat Futures).

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.2: Inclusion of lagged war-related news

	S&P 500	EStoxx 50	Brent	Gas	Wheat
Adjusted R ²	0.048	0.103	-0.010	-0.088	0.061
... incl. lagged news	0.037	0.128	-0.110	-0.106	-0.060
BIC	414.5	427.3	573.1	758.8	591.6
... incl. lagged news	453.4	459.4	618.6	788.6	638.0
Test of Restrictions	18.20	24.57	12.87	13.78	5.33
... $\chi^2(13)$	[0.15]	[0.03]	[0.46]	[0.39]	[0.97]

Notes: Table shows the adjusted R² and the BIC of the baseline estimations from Tables 2–6 and the corresponding values for models where additionally lagged war-related news are included into Eq. (1). In addition, test statistics for a joint exclusion of the lagged war-related news are displayed alongside p-values in brackets.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.3: Results controlling for the cumulative number of sanctioned entities

	(1)	(2)	(3)
S&P 500	Full Sample	Until May 16	From May 17
Stronger Sanctions	0.143*** (0.048)	0.153*** (0.055)	0.421** (0.182)
Weaker Sanctions	-0.075 (0.165)	-0.197 (0.227)	0.232 (0.465)
Log(Cumulative Sanctioned Entities)	0.009 (0.037)	0.030 (0.048)	0.141 (0.528)
Observations	94	57	37
R ²	0.202	0.352	0.458
Eurostoxx 50	Full Sample	Until April 7	From April 8
Stronger Sanctions	0.182*** (0.068)	0.330*** (0.098)	0.075 (0.067)
Weaker Sanctions	-0.014 (0.220)	0.413 (0.431)	0.070 (0.226)
Log(Cumulative Sanctioned Entities)	0.048 (0.043)	0.065 (0.087)	-0.280 (0.207)
Observations	94	31	63
R ²	0.259	0.675	0.215
Brent Futures	Full Sample	Until April 6	From April 7
Stronger Sanctions	-0.208 (0.192)	-0.210 (0.303)	-0.190 (0.122)
Weaker Sanctions	0.666 (0.466)	-1.380 (1.264)	0.608 (0.464)
Log(Cumulative Sanctioned Entities)	-0.066 (0.094)	-0.127 (0.232)	-0.390 (0.383)
Observations	94	30	64
R ²	0.158	0.514	0.376
Gas Futures	Full Sample	Until April 6	From April 7
Stronger Sanctions	-0.150 (0.520)	-0.271 (0.750)	0.074 (0.297)
Weaker Sanctions	-1.508 (1.240)	-8.140** (3.377)	-1.554* (0.816)
Log(Cumulative Sanctioned Entities)	-0.406 (0.288)	-1.393* (0.688)	1.402 (1.008)
Observations	94	30	64
R ²	0.116	0.640	0.278
Wheat Futures	Full Sample	Until April 8	From April 11
Stronger Sanctions	-0.029 (0.127)	-0.316 (0.270)	-0.143 (0.143)
Weaker Sanctions	1.071** (0.503)	0.706 (1.752)	0.656 (0.538)
Log(Cumulative Sanctioned Entities)	-0.080 (0.158)	0.100 (0.258)	-0.414 (0.519)
Observations	94	32	62
R ²	0.218	0.498	0.281

Notes: Table shows selected results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses, controlling for the cumulative number of sanctioned entities (cf. Figure A3.1). Coefficient of Log (Cumulative Sanctioned Entities) indicates the response of market returns (in pp) to a 10 percent increase in the variable. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively. Full tables are available on request.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.4: Results for Eurostoxx 600 returns

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 11	(3) From April 12
Lag(Eurostoxx 600 Returns)	0.063 (0.106)	0.126 (0.293)	0.116 (0.144)
Lag(3-M T-Bill Change)	0.082 (2.185)	-4.915 (6.506)	1.992 (2.698)
Combat De-Escalation	-0.002 (0.049)	0.028 (0.092)	-0.186 (0.167)
Combat Escalation	-0.094* (0.051)	-0.109** (0.040)	-0.096 (0.070)
More Military Aid/UA Strength	-0.043 (0.062)	-0.391 (0.226)	0.030 (0.087)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.573 (0.457)	2.548** (0.961)	-0.001 (0.404)
Humanitarian Aid	-0.096 (0.101)	-0.132 (0.186)	-0.248 (0.167)
Local News Resilience	0.002 (0.033)	-0.230* (0.128)	0.054 (0.042)
Local News Fragility	0.011 (0.061)	0.275 (0.246)	-0.032 (0.070)
Export News Positive	0.007 (0.065)	0.161 (0.290)	0.000 (0.080)
Export News Negative	-0.100 (0.091)	-0.286 (0.169)	-0.014 (0.121)
More Financial Aid/Support	-0.114* (0.059)	-0.082 (0.181)	-0.048 (0.090)
Less Financial Aid/Support	0.241 (0.302)	-0.261 (0.338)	0.410 (0.436)
Stronger Sanctions	0.114** (0.046)	0.206** (0.079)	0.080 (0.075)
Weaker Sanctions	0.020 (0.169)	0.346 (0.335)	0.151 (0.204)
Constant	0.584 (0.518)	0.965 (1.217)	-0.079 (0.662)
Observations	94	33	61
R ²	0.217	0.574	0.182

Notes: Table shows the results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.5: S&P 500: Log + 1 specification for war-related news

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 12	(3) From April 13
More Military Aid/UA Strength	-0.047 (0.029)	-0.146** (0.061)	-0.046 (0.044)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.044 (0.081)	0.179* (0.103)	-0.078 (0.094)
More Financial Aid/Support	-0.079** (0.036)	-0.133** (0.047)	-0.085 (0.065)
Less Financial Aid/Support	0.027 (0.050)	0.020 (0.081)	-0.022 (0.074)
Stronger Sanctions	0.134*** (0.042)	0.228** (0.092)	0.194*** (0.060)
Weaker Sanctions	-0.004 (0.037)	-0.041 (0.054)	0.048 (0.048)
Observations	94	34	60
R ²	0.218	0.512	0.326

Notes: Table shows selected results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. Coefficients of war-related news indicate the response of market returns (in pp) to a 10 percent increase in the variables. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.6: Eurostoxx 50: Log + 1 specification for war-related news

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 6	(3) From April 7
More Military Aid/UA Strength	0.007 (0.030)	-0.069 (0.110)	0.024 (0.035)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.127 (0.100)	0.564** (0.206)	-0.009 (0.070)
More Financial Aid/Support	-0.082** (0.040)	-0.084 (0.117)	-0.073 (0.050)
Less Financial Aid/Support	0.050 (0.050)	-0.060 (0.098)	0.068 (0.066)
Stronger Sanctions	0.104** (0.043)	0.188 (0.142)	0.099** (0.038)
Weaker Sanctions	0.044 (0.047)	0.244* (0.118)	0.034 (0.038)
Observations	94	30	64
R ²	0.207	0.604	0.257

Notes: Table shows selected results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. Coefficients of war-related news indicate the response of market returns (in pp) to a 10 percent increase in the variables. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.7: Brent futures: Log + 1 specification for war-related news

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 6	(3) From April 7
More Military Aid/UA Strength	0.033 (0.067)	-0.195 (0.304)	-0.006 (0.066)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	0.025 (0.177)	-0.433 (0.395)	0.130 (0.125)
More Financial Aid/Support	0.048 (0.072)	0.244 (0.196)	-0.153 (0.097)
Less Financial Aid/Support	-0.040 (0.115)	-0.028 (0.387)	0.153 (0.115)
Stronger Sanctions	-0.122 (0.091)	-0.211 (0.264)	-0.037 (0.071)
Weaker Sanctions	0.120 (0.080)	-0.267 (0.226)	0.163* (0.087)
Observations	94	30	64
R ²	0.193	0.571	0.420

Notes: Table shows selected results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. Coefficients of war-related news indicate the response of market returns (in pp) to a 10 percent increase in the variables. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.8: Gas futures: Log + 1 specification for war-related news

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 6	(3) From April 7
More Military Aid/UA Strength	-0.097 (0.161)	0.023 (0.725)	-0.115 (0.121)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	-0.039 (0.444)	-1.648* (0.845)	0.552** (0.261)
More Financial Aid/Support	-0.041 (0.222)	-0.664 (0.509)	0.034 (0.152)
Less Financial Aid/Support	-0.362 (0.254)	-0.188 (0.719)	-0.001 (0.188)
Stronger Sanctions	0.076 (0.241)	0.408 (0.759)	0.032 (0.171)
Weaker Sanctions	-0.413* (0.245)	-1.831** (0.698)	-0.304** (0.146)
Observations	94	30	64
R ²	0.132	0.695	0.222

Notes: Table shows selected results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. Coefficients of war-related news indicate the response of market returns (in pp) to a 10 percent increase in the variables. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively.

Source: Own calculations.

Table A4.9: Wheat futures: Log + 1 specification for war-related news

	(1) Full Sample	(2) Until April 8	(3) From April 11
More Military Aid/UA Strength	0.096 (0.075)	0.646** (0.275)	-0.022 (0.062)
Less Military Aid/UA Weakness	-0.308* (0.176)	-0.963** (0.406)	-0.191 (0.165)
More Financial Aid/Support	0.048 (0.094)	-0.012 (0.266)	-0.098 (0.082)
Less Financial Aid/Support	-0.121 (0.143)	0.055 (0.309)	-0.179 (0.134)
Stronger Sanctions	0.021 (0.096)	-0.424* (0.237)	-0.007 (0.082)
Weaker Sanctions	0.128 (0.094)	0.270 (0.268)	0.146 (0.091)
Observations	94	32	62
R ²	0.174	0.515	0.276

Notes: Table shows selected results for a least squares estimation of Eq. (1) with heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation-robust standard errors in parentheses. Coefficients of war-related news indicate the response of market returns (in pp) to a 10 percent increase in the variables. ***/**/* indicate significance at the 1%/5%/10% level, respectively.

Source: Own calculations.

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