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## The Question of the International Isolation of the Russian Federation

*On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched what is called in Russian political jargon as a ‘special military operation’ against Ukraine. In response to Russia’s war against Ukraine, the United States of America and developed Western countries have introduced individual and economic sanctions against Russian natural and legal persons. Barely a year after the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, by 2023 Russia had already become the most sanctioned country in the world,<sup>2</sup> and with 14,081 active sanctions, it won a dubious victory by surpassing the combined results of the seven most sanctioned countries. Based on the large number of sanctions, Russia should have been isolated in international economic and political relations, but despite expectations, the Russian economy and politics survived the ordeal by 2024. The study examines Russia’s attempted international isolation.*

**Keywords:** ‘special military operation’, isolation, sanctions, ‘Global South’

### Introduction: The attempt to isolate Russia internationally

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched what is called in Russian political jargon as a “special military operation” against Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> The present study examines the international reception of Russian advocacy and, in Russian jargon, the attempted isolation of the ‘collective West’ from Russian expansionism and the emergence of a network system to strengthen Russian resilience.

The hypothesis of the study is that Russia’s international isolation is not feasible because, on the one hand, most of the African states of the Global South and, on the other, India and China, as prosperous representatives of the world economy, are interested – for different reasons but with different motivations – in developing trade, political and economic relations with the Russian Federation.

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<sup>2</sup> ZANDT 2023.

<sup>3</sup> BERNEK et al. 2024; ANDRÉKÓ 2022.

Given the number of sanctions that have been called for and applied against Russia, and the large number of resolutions and positions condemning Russia in international fora, Russia should have already broken or at least should have isolated politically and commercially. Political and economic sanctions against Russia were initially enacted not in 2022, but rather in March 2014, following the annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup> The focus of this study is mainly on the analysis of political reactions, while economic sanctions are only mentioned for those geopolitical situations where they are necessary for understanding (the analysis of economic sanctions could be the subject of a separate study). The research uses a quantitative approach based mainly on resolutions and statements of the UN General Assemblies, media sources of daily political and economic knowledge and the results of various studies to support the hypothesis.

## The practical stages of the efforts to establish a political quarantine

In 2014, a draft resolution on the referendum on the status of Crimea was already discussed in the UN Security Council, but Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, used its veto to block it.<sup>5</sup> The Western states then referred the issue to the General Assembly, where it is still on the agenda because Russia – like no other permanent member – cannot use its veto. At the same time, the weakness of the General Assembly is that it can only make recommendations as opposed to binding Security Council resolutions. Despite this, both the US-dominated West and Russia have gone on the diplomatic offensive for the votes of member states, because the General Assembly's position can act as a feedback system on the current positions of the 193 countries of the UN. The resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 March 2014 concerning Ukraine's territorial integrity reaffirmed the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The voting results indicated 100 votes in favour, 11 against, 58 abstentions, and 24 members who did not participate in the vote. However, it did not recognise the legality of the changes in the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol based on the results of the Crimean referendum held on 16 March 2014.<sup>6</sup>

Eight years later, on 24 March 2022, the UN General Assembly voted again about the Russian–Ukrainian war, and again in favour of Ukraine's territorial integrity. The vote took place a month after Russian forces crossed Ukraine's borders and began 'limited military operations'. The significance of the Assembly's decision is that, with 140 votes in favour, 5 against, 38 abstentions and 10 members who did not participate in the vote, a political document condemning Russia was in fact adopted.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations 2014; 2022d.

<sup>5</sup> Lenta 2014.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations 2014.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations 2022c.

As part of the diplomatic offensive in favour of Ukraine, Kiev and the pro-Ukrainian West called for a resolution condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine on 24 August 2022,<sup>8</sup> but that resolution, which was even weaker in legal terms than the Assembly resolution, was supported by only 57 states. (It should be noted that the core of the anti-Russian bloc is well defined, listed in a Russian presidential decree of 1 March 2022<sup>9</sup> under the heading of a so-called 'list of unfriendly countries'<sup>10</sup> which includes 48 states.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, in the context of the situation in Ukraine, there are 8 African states which always vote against Russia.<sup>12</sup>

On 12 October 2022, the referendums in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya regions put the issue of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict back on the agenda of the UN General Assembly. The resolution 'Territorial integrity of Ukraine: safeguarding the principles of the UN Charter' was adopted with 143 votes in favour, 5 against, 35 abstentions. The UN General Assembly described the referendums held by Russia as 'illegal' and 'contrary to international law' and called on Russia to reverse its decision to annex the territories. Given that the General Assembly did not adopt a binding legal act on the referendums, Russia did not even consider a possible overruling of its decisions.<sup>13</sup>

As the war conflict continued despite the attention, interest and resolutions of the UN, the largest international political forum, the question of narrowing Russia's political space and isolating it completely remained a topic of political discourse. On 14 November 2022, a draft resolution on Russian compensation for damage caused to Kiev was submitted to the UN General Assembly, which provides for the creation of an international register of damages that could collect and keep documentary evidence of the amount of damages Kiev could claim from Russia. The document was adopted with 94 votes in favour, 14 against, 73 abstentions and 11 members that stayed away from voting.<sup>14</sup>

The next major diplomatic event took place on the anniversary of the outbreak of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, and on 23 February 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution prepared and tabled by the Western countries on the principles on which a comprehensive, just and sustainable peace in Ukraine is based, with 141 votes in favour, 7 against, 32 abstentions.<sup>15</sup> The General Assembly called on UN member states and international organisations to give much greater support to the diplomatic efforts of the United States. Russian diplomacy has described this UN resolution – like others – not as an objective but as an outright 'anti-Russian' document and effort because it only sets out obligations for Russia without taking Russian arguments and points of view into account at all. The resolution demands that Russia immediately withdraw its armed forces from the territory of Ukraine, cease its attacks on Ukraine's critical infrastructure, and warn

<sup>8</sup> United Nations 2022b.

<sup>9</sup> JAMSIKOVA 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Government of Russian Federation 2022.

<sup>11</sup> On the basis of the Russian presidential decree, Australia, Albania, Andorra, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Micronesia, the Principality of Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Northern Macedonia, Singapore, Taiwan (China), Ukraine, Montenegro, Japan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the 28 Member States of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America are considered 'unfriendly countries'.

<sup>12</sup> Benin, Chad, Cape Verde, Chad, Liberia, Malawi, Niger, Seychelles, Somalia.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations 2022d.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations 2022a.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations 2023a.

against attacks on 'civilian targets, including residential buildings, schools and hospitals'. There are no similar calls for Kiev, nor is there any mention of the Ukrainian military action against the Donbass region and the ban on systematic shelling of the territory, which is invoked as a Russian argument for war. Moscow saw the resolution as biased and anti-Russian from the outset, as evidenced by the fact that before the draft was submitted to the UN General Assembly for adoption, the majority of member states voted against the three-paragraph amendment to the resolution tabled by Belarus. Minsk suggested that the resolution should have been expanded to reflect the complexity of the problem. According to the proposal, the paragraphs to be inserted would have called for a ban on sending arms to Ukraine, for the parties to start negotiations immediately without preconditions, and condemned the use of the Minsk agreements by Western leaders to block the negotiations.<sup>16</sup>

The next milestone in the political quarantine of Russia was the decision of 26 April 2023 on cooperation between the UN and the Council of Europe. The document regulating this cooperation, which has been reduced to a propaganda tool, is technical in nature, containing general provisions governing cooperation between the World Organisation and regional organisations, adopted regularly and always by consensus. Yet its propagandistic nature is now manifested in the insertion of a paragraph of an explicitly political nature condemning Russia in the text detailing the technical procedure. The peculiarity of the procedure is shown by the fact that the resolution adopted with 122 votes in favour, 5 against, 18 abstentions and 48 members that stayed away from voting was perceived by both the US and the Ukrainian media as a significant decision reflecting a widespread international condemnation of Russia.<sup>17</sup>

Diplomatic action and cooperation against Russia also entered an active phase outside the UN walls. On 24 June 2023, a long-secret meeting took place in Copenhagen, the full list of participants, consisting of some 30 states, was not made public.<sup>18</sup> All that is known is that the talks, which excluded Russia, were attended by representatives of the countries' most supportive of Ukraine, the EU, the Global South, India, Turkey, Brazil, South Africa and Saudi Arabia. The meeting aimed to persuade the abstaining states to accept the Ukrainian 'peace formula' and ultimately to achieve the complete isolation of Russia. According to leaked media reports, the Copenhagen meeting was not successful because, on the one hand, the countries of the Global South did not pledge their support for the Ukrainian peace plan and, on the other, China did not accept the invitation.

From 5 to 6 August 2023, 42 states were represented at the now highly publicised consultations in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, following the Copenhagen meeting.<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that Russia again was not invited to this forum, the main aim being to strengthen anti-Russian attitudes and international commitment to the Ukrainian peace formula, in line with the Copenhagen talks. It was presented as a special achievement that Moscow's BRICS partners, China and the countries of the Global South, were invited to the meeting without Russia and managed to get them to negotiate, which is a factual proof of Russia's declining role and influence in the world, according to the Western and Ukrainian position.

<sup>16</sup> Kommersant 2023.

<sup>17</sup> GORSKOV 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Euractiv 2023.

<sup>19</sup> PRADHAN 2023.

More than 160 delegations – including delegations from the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, in addition to several UN Member States – were invited to the Ukraine Conference in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, on 15–16 June 2024, but in the end a total of 92 countries and organisations were represented, of which only 57 participants were at the level of Heads of State or Government. The BRICS nations, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, exhibited varying degrees of participation in relation to Moscow. Specifically, China was notably absent, while Brazil attended as an observer. Additionally, India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey – recently aspiring to join BRICS – participated at a lower diplomatic level.<sup>20</sup> Many states of the Global South were absent. The fragility of the policies of African states is reflected in the fact that leaders of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, and Somalia have taken the initiative to head their respective delegations. As for South America, Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Ecuador were represented at the level of Heads of State.<sup>21</sup> The Swiss organisers intended the peace conference not to be limited to Kiev's 'peace formula', as they also wanted to put other peace proposals on the agenda, based on the UN Charter and key principles of international law.

The Kremlin is communicating the results of the International Economic Forums, held annually in St Petersburg since 1997, as a pro-Russia action, and contrasting it with the pro-Ukraine narrative in the West. While the Ukraine Peace Conference primarily focuses on political matters, in contrast to the more economically oriented St. Petersburg conference, it is pertinent to analyse the international backing for these events in order to evaluate the success of Western isolationist strategies. These show that 130 states and territories participated in 2023<sup>22</sup> and 139 in 2024 (one and a half times the number of participants in the conference organised under the Ukrainian peace formula).<sup>23</sup>

The efforts to isolate Russia are also contrasted with the success and continued expansion of the BRICS forums,<sup>24</sup> which are taking place despite Western sanctions. The BRICS group was formed in 2006 with Brazil, Russia, India and China, with South Africa joining in 2010. Informally, around 40 countries have expressed their intention to join the group at various times, but 23 countries have formally applied to join BRICS, of which six countries have gained full membership from 1 January 2024: Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Iran. Delegations from 70 states were invited to the conference on 22 August 2023, of which 60 were represented at a senior level. (It should be noted that the Copenhagen conference just a few months earlier had only about half as many participants, and the Jeddah conference a few days earlier had only about three-quarters as many.)

<sup>20</sup> KEATEN–MADHANI 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Swissinfo 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Kommersant 2024.

<sup>23</sup> St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2024.

<sup>24</sup> AGONNUDE–GLEBOV 2023.

## Efforts to isolate Russia in numbers and reality

The polling data suggests that the Russian Federation has come under political pressure (combined with economic sanctions) that has drastically limited its room for manoeuvre and options in the international political arena. As the UN General Assembly data show, in five of the seven high-profile votes, a majority of 193 member states voted in favour of resolutions against Russia's interests, including three with a majority of just over 70% (see Table 1). In fact, the results of the BRICS forum held in Johannesburg on 26 August 2023 show that its political (and closely related economic and trade) relations are still alive and that its influence is being maintained and its weight is growing in the direction of certain states. But how could this happen if the Assembly decisions keep Russia under constant pressure?

*Table 1: Results of international negotiations to isolate the Russian Federation*

Time/Venue	In favour of decision	Against decision	Abstained	Did not vote
27.03.2014 UN General Assembly	100	11	58	24
02.03.2022 UN General Assembly	141	5	35	12
24.08.2022 United States Mission to the UN	57	-	-	-
12.10.2022 UN General Assembly	143	5	35	10
14.11.2022 UN General Assembly	94	14	74	11
23.02.2023 UN General Assembly	141	7	32	13
26.04.2023 UN and EC (paragraph against Russia)*	122 (81)	5 (10)	18 (48)	48 (54)
Time/Venue	Invited		Participated (state and organisation)	
14.06.2023 PNGF: Russia, Saint Petersburg	n. d.		130	
24.06.2023 Denmark, Copenhagen	n. d.		~ 30	
06.08.2023 Saudi Arabia, Jeddah	n. d.		42	
22.08.2023 BRICS: South Africa, Johannesburg	70		60**	
05.06.2024 PNGF: Russia, St. Petersburg	n. d.		139	
15.06.2024 Switzerland, Bürgenstock	170		92 (57 at head of state/ government level)	

\* *United Nations 2023b*

\*\* *Novaya Gazeta 2023.*

*Source: compiled by the author based on UN and international media data (United Nations 2023b; United States Mission to the United Nations 2022; MASUNGWINI 2023)*

The analysis of the situation is carried out in three steps. First, we examine the available data and look at the possible correlations from a mathematical point of view. Secondly, we look behind the numbers to examine the circle that did not vote in favour of the proposals to condemn Russian action in Ukraine, i.e., that effectively contributed to preventing Russia's isolation from taking place. In the third step, we summarise the results of the analysis and make a short-term forecast of developments.

## **Analysis of data from international forums condemning Russia**

Looking at the data, it is striking that among the decisions that effectively condemn Russia, three stand out, all of which have the same pattern. The voting patterns of the General Assembly resolutions of 2 March 2022, 12 October 2022 and 23 February 2023 not only show the highest number of votes in favour, but also minimal differences in the other voting categories. This indicates that there has been no significant change in the proportion of states condemning and supporting Russian action since the start of the 'special military operation'. Consequently, it can be concluded that the number of states backing Ukraine and the collective West has not increased further, even though the fighting in Ukraine has become increasingly deadly and aggressive. On the other hand, the three figures taken in isolation also show that the established support base around Russia has remained intact, and that relations with Russia have not been severed or weakened among those who have remained steadfastly pro-Moscow. At the same time, relations between Russia and the EU have reached a low point.<sup>25</sup>

If we look at the results of the less pronounced resolutions between the three votes with the most striking results, we can also see that, with the decline in active pro-Ukraine campaigns, the number of people voting yes to resolutions condemning Russia has dropped significantly. The most glaring was the joint statement issued on 24 August 2022 under the leadership of the US mission to the UN, which was considered to be weightless, with the document condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine signed only by the pro-Ukraine and US-dominated Western group that constitutes the core of the efforts to isolate Russia. The decision to issue the statement was taken by the US Mission to the UN after failing to get enough support in the General Assembly to table another anti-Russia resolution on the occasion of Ukraine's national Independence Day.

The resolution of 14 November 2022 came barely a month after the resolution condemning Russia by a large majority, so with 94 votes in favour, it is surprising that the anti-Russian camp has fallen by 35% in just over a month. What makes the data so peculiar is that it is far from a political quarantine of Moscow, as the more than 70% support of the UN member states a month earlier has melted to less than half of the UN member states, at just 48.7%.

Of particular interest is the outcome of the election of 26 April 2023 to politicise the technical resolution on the regularisation of relations between the UN and the ET. 63% of states voted in favour of the document containing general provisions governing cooperation between the World Organisation and regional organisations, which was interpreted as evidence of condemnation of Moscow by Ukraine and its Western allies, who had called for the inclusion of a paragraph condemning Russia. Even if the 122 votes in favour were indeed a clear stigmatisation of Russia as an aggressor, it could not be ignored that the 143 states with the most votes in favour have now dwindled to 122. This figure drops even further if we take into account the number of states that commented on the initial technical resolution at the time of the vote. A separate vote was also taken on the over-politicised paragraph condemning Russia, which resulted in only 81 states

<sup>25</sup> TASS 2023.



approving the paragraph. In this case, the number of states openly condemning Russia's policy was therefore revised to 81, and their share of the total UN membership to 42%.

The weakening of the impact of efforts to isolate Russia is also reflected in the outcome of three international negotiations outside the UN framework to increase support for Ukraine. The Copenhagen talks on 24 June 2023, followed by the Jeddah talks almost a month and a half later and the June 2024 talks in Buergenstock, were openly aimed at persuading states that support Russia by abstaining or not voting to do so and to politically separate it from Moscow. The three forums ended without convincing the states that had not yet condemned Moscow.

The proportion of states that condemn and disapprove of Russia in UN votes should be supplemented by an important piece of information, not noticeably visible because of the equal voting value of UN member states that does not affect the legal outcome of the votes but is important because of the practical infeasibility of maintaining continuity in Russia's economic-trade and political relations and its exclusion. The General Assembly resolution of 12 October 2022 has so far gathered the 143 votes of the majority of states supporting the isolation of Russia. This outcome, perceived by the US-led Western bloc, which advocates for Ukraine, reflects the opinion of the majority of the world community. However, in reality, states representing two-thirds of the world's population have rejected documents openly condemning Russia by voting no, abstaining or staying away from voting. As a result, a significant inference is that they do not view themselves as obligated by the non-legally binding resolution and will persist in upholding both their established trade and evolving political relations with Russia, exercising their sovereign rights. Another important conclusion is that as long as India and China do not support the UN resolutions, there is no chance of isolating the Russian economy and Russian politics internationally.

In the nearly two and a half years since February 2022, the voting record on UN resolutions shows a rhythmic surge in the condemnation of Russia and, in line with that, support for Ukraine. Anti-Russian resolutions reached their highest levels of support in March 2022, October 2022 and February 2023. While the Ukrainian Foreign Minister has highlighted on his Twitter page the strength of global support for Ukraine,<sup>26</sup> the period between these three events has been showing a significant drop in the willingness to vote against Russian policies. This shows that keeping the issue at the level of interest has required considerable background work, meaning that without efforts to isolate Russia, Moscow may be able to quickly restore its influence in areas where it has been momentarily marginalised. The Western bloc, led by the United States, has encountered a threshold of approximately 143 allied nations that it can effectively mobilize in its favour.

The votes on UN resolutions also point to another context. A total of 45 to 50 states have, for their part, abstained from denouncing Moscow in any situation. These are the states that the Russian leadership regards as friendly countries in the short and medium term, and the number of these states is almost on a par with the Western bloc, dominated mainly by the USA, which condemns Russia! The following therefore examines the range of those who support Russia in one way or another, to determine the extent of their ties with Moscow.

<sup>26</sup> RBC 2023.



## States that refuse to condemn and isolate Russia

On issues concerning Russia, the positions of China and India, as the two largest populations in the world, are of paramount importance and are often invoked in Russian political arguments. Since 2014, they have abstained from voting on all Assembly resolutions on the Ukraine conflict, distancing themselves from the West's strong condemnation of Russia and effectively acting as supporters of Russian interests. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the US-dominated West is constantly making diplomatic efforts to politically persuade both states which as strengthening and emerging regional powers are interested in the creation of a new multipolar regional world order.<sup>27</sup> In doing so, they are necessarily at odds with the West's position, and their relations with the US and other Western states are not without tension. In the short to medium term, their interests in the development of a new world order coincide with Russia's foreign policy stance, and a Moscow – Beijing – New Delhi axis is likely to slowly emerge.

The Middle East is an unavoidable region in the international political arena that can influence the outcome of decisions in the management and control of energy markets. An analysis of the resolutions of the UN General Assemblies reveals that of the 14 countries in the Middle East,<sup>28</sup> two states – Iran and Syria – can be described as friendly to Russian foreign policy interests and which voted against, abstained or did not vote (hereafter uniformly referred to as 'not in favour'), and four states – Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – which opposed Russian policy and voted in line with the Western Bloc states. The shift in the scale of geopolitical influence could mean a reversal in the voting attitudes of some states, with Saudi Arabia and Turkey increasingly emerging as regional powers in their own right, and thus in short term likely to be pitted against the interests of the NATO- and US-dominated Western community. This may result in an apparent congruence with Russian interests, but in reality, it is more a matter of an autonomous regional centre putting its own interests first. The other Middle Eastern states are 'wobbly' states from a Russian perspective, and it is the diplomatic responsibility of both Russia (and the Western Bloc) to engage with these countries effectively prior to any significant electoral decisions. Thus, Bahrain, Jordan, the UAE, Israel, Yemen and Oman are more likely to be 'wavering' states influenced by the Western Bloc in terms of votes, because they typically voted in favour of the Western position in the Russia-Ukraine war, while Iraq and Lebanon are the most persuadable partners from the Russian point of view in terms of support for the Russian position. (In processing the data, the study also included Egypt among the countries of the African continent, although it is associated more broadly with the Arab world, the countries of the Middle East.)

It would logically follow that the Middle Eastern states (not including the Baltic states), which the Russian political leadership considers a legitimate zone of Russian influence, are united in their support for Moscow's foreign policy aspirations. In contrast, of the 11 CIS countries<sup>29</sup> (excluding the opposing parties, i.e. Ukraine and Russia), Moldova,

<sup>27</sup> BERNEK et al. 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Jordan, Oman (Palestine has observer status at the UN), Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

<sup>29</sup> Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

together with Romania, has always voted along Western interests, as has Georgia, which is outside the CIS. A change in Russophile policy is expected from Armenia (and perhaps even Kazakhstan), where there is a significant shift in foreign policy towards the West, the impact of which is likely to be felt in the short term in the UN voting.

The other main region of the diplomatic struggle for votes is Latin America, the study's scope is being the 33 states south of the US-Mexico border that are part of the Americas. Russia can count on a stable presence in Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and El Salvador. From the point of view of Russian representation, Russian diplomacy can occasionally win the support of 8-10 other 'wobbly' states, sometimes reaching between a third and almost half of the states in the region.

The data show that the entire continent of Africa has proved to be a crucial region for Russian interests (see Table 2), with countries of which the Kremlin has built close and multilateral relations over the past decades.

*Table 2: Percentage of African states not supporting UN General Assembly resolutions on Ukraine*

Time/Venue	African states as a proportion of all states not supporting resolutions (%)	Number of African states not supporting decisions (number)	African states not supporting resolutions as a percentage of the 54 African states (%)
27.03.2014. UN	37	34	63
02.03.2022. UN	50	26	48
12.10.2022. UN	48	24	44
14.11.2022. UN	39	39	72
23.02.2023. UN	46	24	44

*Source: compiled by the author based on UN and international media data*

In 2014, 34 of the 93 non-supporting countries were African, meaning that 37% of the non-supporting countries were from the African continent. The figures are even more impressive when you consider that this figure represents 63% of the 54 African states, or two-thirds of Africa. Eight years later, on 2 March 2022, African states still accounted for 50% of the 52 non-supporting states, or 48% of the African continent. In the October 2022 polls, 44% of the 50 non-supporting seats were also held by 44% of the African continent, reaching a sort of peak on 14 November 2022. On 23 February 2023 – which is the anniversary of the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict –, the number of votes in favour of the Western position was once again the same as a year earlier. Of the 52 votes against, 46% were cast by 24 African countries, representing nearly half of the continent's states, 44%. The data also showed that eight African states consistently condemned Russia. In Figure 3, the states marked in red can be seen as free from Russian influence, while the states marked in ochre, on the contrary, can be seen as stable allies, always supporting Russian ambitions. The wobbly states are largely states that support Russian political narratives, and indeed the whole continent of Africa today is in fact a continent of Russian foreign relations development and political and economic cooperation with Russia.

## **Summary: The likely evolution of efforts to isolate Russia**

In short and medium term, no significant change is expected in the ratio of states supporting and not supporting the US-led policy towards Ukraine.

Among the states in the Middle East, the economic strengthening of Turkey and Saudi Arabia and, in the case of Turkey, the further increase in military potential could encourage the two states to pursue their own interests. This may occasionally be reflected in opinions against the otherwise common Western position, but will not represent a noticeable change in the proportion of votes among the 193 UN states. Armenia's position within the CIS member states reflects a similar sentiment, as it has indicated a desire to enhance its ties with the United States and NATO. Furthermore, Armenia is contemplating its involvement in military and security frameworks led by Russia, particularly in light of the moral implications stemming from the dissolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and the perceived destructive influence of Russia in this context. A slow shift away from Russian influence can also be observed in the case of Kazakhstan, which for the time being is reflected in compliance with Western sanctions and occasional criticism of Moscow. Azerbaijan, which has been able to change its borders despite the presence of Russian peacekeepers in the region, with Turkish military and political support, can also be seen as a state that is breaking away from Russia. It is expected that in short to medium term, its value judgement will be aligned with Turkish foreign policy, making it an ally of Turkish interests rather than a Russophile state. The votes of the three states, like those of the two states in the Middle East, will also have no substantive impact on the real balance of power, but their propaganda value in influencing UN member states could make them a frequent example in the rhetoric of the Western Bloc.

Relations between China and India are historically strained and their cooperation is problematic. At the same time, their anti-Western sentiment and their interest in the development of a new world order compelled them to cooperate with Russia as active participants in the effort to break up the 'Pax Americana'. This constraint is a favourable trajectory for Russia's influence and can certainly build on their support not only in the short and medium term, but also in the long term.

The hypothesis of the study can be seen to be justified, because as long as the states with the majority of the world's population do not vote in favour of resolutions to isolate Russia, the quarantine of Moscow will not be possible, either politically or economically.

In addition, the specific situation created by the political attitudes of the African countries ensures that Russian ambitions and interests are pursued. As can be seen, most African countries are not willing to support resolutions condemning Russia for its special operation in Ukraine at UN General Assembly sessions.

A further line of research could be to examine how official Russian policy has achieved the loyalty of the majority of states on what have proved to be key African continents.

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