

Why is Putin moving against Ukraine now? Will war break out?



The experts think it unlikely that the United States or Europe will give a military response to Russia, proceeding instead with economic sanctions.

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AFP

Russia already knew it would receive sanctions from the United States and Europe when it initiated a **“military operation” against Ukraine**, and it has included those effects in its calculations.

This is the view held by [Iliana Rodríguez](#) and [Beata Wojna](#), international politics specialists from [Tec de Monterrey](#).

Why does Russia want to invade Ukraine? Why is it doing so **now** despite warnings from the West? **Will there be a third world war**, as people on social media are speculating?

These academics from the **Tec's School of Social Sciences and Government** answer the questions above to help our readers understand the situation from their perspective.

Iliana Rodríguez holds a PhD in international law and is a research professor.

Beata Wojna holds a PhD in International Relations as well as teaching the subject; she has also been the ambassador of Poland to Mexico.



Why is Russia interested in Ukraine?

Both specialists concur that it goes back many years, but in the recent past it began in the **era** of the **breakup** of the **Soviet Union** in 1991, with the **birth** of **15 countries** including **Ukraine**.

However, they see these key factors as being important.

Zone of influence

“(Russian President) Putin’s had a policy for several years of controlling his neighborhood, because that neighborhood is seen as a kind of buffer against the West, against the Atlantic Alliance,” explains Dr. Wojna.

“Geopolitically and economically speaking, Ukraine is the doorway to Europe, and Russia isn’t willing to give that up,” says Dr. Rodríguez.

The Russian Federation

“For some time now, Russia has been questioning the order established after the Soviet Union,” says Wojna.

She explains that Putin wants to further strengthen the Russian Federation.

Resources

As an independent country, Ukraine has positioned itself as an important player on the European stage due to its production of essential resources such as **natural gas, as well as plutonium and uranium**, emphasizes Rodríguez.

Rodríguez stresses that besides these resources, **exports of cereals** by Ukraine are a vital element for the Russian economy, not to mention its interest in Ukraine’s military forces.

“Russia isn’t willing to give that up.”

Why is Russia attacking Ukraine right now?

The Russian version is that the Donbas regions of Donetsk and Luhansk (which Russia has unilaterally just recognized as autonomous) asked for its aid to put an end to the abuses of Ukraine.

However, the specialists see **key factors** in the **timing**:

Weaknesses of the US and Europe

*“There are certain **weaknesses in the West that Russia has attempted to exploit**. There are weaknesses in the United States. We also have important changes in the European Union, such as the German chancellorship,”* summarizes Wojna.

2022 is a symbolic year

*“Last year, we celebrated 30 years since the fall of the Soviet Union. However, **this year marks 100 years since the birth of the Soviet Union**. 2022 is a year filled with symbolism for Putin and for Russia,”* adds the specialist.

Putin’s legacy

Furthermore, says Wojna, there is also the matter of Putin’s legacy. *“**He’s coming up on 22 years in power**, with the prospect of continuing until 2036. But there’s no guarantee that he’ll make it to 2036.”*

“So, what will happen if he goes away?” she continues. *“What will the Russian Federation look like? Can he be certain that everything will play out as he imagines?”* she asks.

“Above all,” she explains, *“he knows that **if he doesn’t use force, some countries in the neighborhood will slip from his grasp because they don’t want to be a part of the Russian Federation.**”*

"There are certain weaknesses in the West that Russia has attempted to exploit."

Isn't Russia afraid of sanctions from the US and Europe? Will there be a third world war?

Tec de Monterrey academics Iliana Rodríguez and Beata Wojna tell **CONECTA** they think it **unlikely that the United States and Europe will get involved in the conflict at a military level.**

Instead, the professors add, **they will continue** along the route of **economic sanctions**, such as **blocking financial flows**, the ability of Russia to pay its **sovereign debt** and paralyze the **gas pipeline**, which Putin appears to have already considered.

"Putin already knows how the West reacts and he knows what they can and can't do to him (...) there won't be a military response."

"Putin isn't worried about the sanctions they'll impose as punishment. Russia knows the risk of its own actions," says Rodríguez.

Wojna concurs: ***"Putin already has experience with sanctions (...) he already knows how the West reacts and he knows what they can and can't do to him."***

"Which is to say, there won't be a military response from the West. That much is clear."

“Even if he were to occupy all of Ukraine’s territory militarily, NATO and United States troops would not invade Ukrainian territory,” she predicts.



What’s next in this conflict between Russia and Ukraine?

Dr. Wojna foresees **3 possible scenarios** in this conflict:

1. **The regions in question remain independent**, like the regions in Georgia.
2. **The regions join the Russian Federation.**
3. **A Russian military invasion of further Ukrainian territory occurs**, triggered by exchanges of fire and incidents between armies on both sides.

“The Ukrainian authorities are being very cautious so as not to provoke that third scenario,” explains Wojna.

Meanwhile, **other political and economic issues around the world** are also likely to be **affected**.

*“One **doomsday scenario** is that Russia could **choke Europe’s** supply of **natural gas** or initiate a **cyberwar**, attacking **areas that are strategic** to a country’s **development** as happened in **Ukraine**,”* explains Rodríguez.

For countries such as Mexico, she adds, we should **consider** that **sanctions** towards **Russia** could create an **inflationary spiral**, as well as **paralysis** in **international markets**.

*“Some of the **direct effects** that we could experience would be a **brutal spike** in the **prices** of **gasoline** and **gas**, as well as **possible product shortages**,”* adds the professor.

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