




THE NETHERLANDS

Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russian armed forces invaded Ukraine. This followed Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement of a 'special military operation' in the Donbas region. The attack came along with Russia's recognition of the independence of the two self-proclaimed 'People's Republics' of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine. At the same time, a decree was signed enabling Russia to provide military support. With all these actions Russia is violating Ukraine's borders, international law and the Minsk agreements.

Belarus shares a border with Ukraine and Russia sent troops from there when it launched its invasion, Putin helped Mr Lukashenko cling to power in 2020, in turn, Belarus's long-time leader Mr Lukashenko has given his backing to Russia's invasion. Whereas China and India are supporting the Russians in a silent manner, Israel refuses to sell its Iron Dome to Ukraine in fears of upsetting Russia.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands became a founding member of NATO in 1949 and its relentless commitment to the international legal order gave it a much larger role in international affairs than its size would normally justify. Our consideration for issues beyond our frontiers is reflected in the Dutch constitution, which states that *"the government shall promote the development of the international legal order"*.

"WE WHO ARE VITALLY INTERESTED IN THE SECURITY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC AREA HENCEFORTH STAND UNITED IN OUR RESOLVE TO REPEL AGGRESSION, JUST AS WE STAND UNITED IN OUR RESOLVE NOT TO ATTACK OTHERS." *Dirk Stikker, Foreign Minister, speaking at the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty Washington, D.C., 4 April 1949*

The foreign policy of the Netherlands is based on four basic commitments: to the Atlantic cooperation, to European integration, to international development and to international law.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a party to thousands of international treaties, covering matters like taxation, extradition and human rights. Concluding treaties is a way to systematise our relations with other countries in a wide variety of areas. However, due to continuous Russia treaty and agreement violations, the Netherlands have a firm stance on sanctions.

Relations between the Netherlands and Russia had been good for centuries, partly because Germany lay in between, but after the Second World War the

Netherlands usually followed the lead of the United States in its relations with the USSR. Since the end of the Cold War, the Netherlands has concentrated on evolving mutually beneficial relations, mainly in the economic field with Russia.

Nowadays, relations with Russia and positions in international organizations are usually coordinated with EU, however, when important national interests such as energy relations with Russia will come into play, the Netherlands will prefer to give priority to its national interests. The Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs stated in an advisory statement: *“The Netherlands has a longstanding trade and investment relationship with Russia. It would not be realistic to subordinate it entirely to the imposition of sanctions in response to the Ukraine crisis.”*

The Netherlands does not have a tradition of autonomous strategic thinking. When problems such as the Russian occupation of the Crimea arose, it usually monitored its larger allies in NATO and EU.

The Netherlands’ position

It must be made clear that Russia’s aggression is unacceptable and that it will have severe consequences for Russia. The Netherlands condemns Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in the strongest possible terms.

The Netherlands proposes heavy sanctions to be imposed on Russia although it will also affect the Dutch economy, but that is inevitable with such an open economy.

A series of sanctions by the EU have already been adopted against Russia in response to the invasion of Ukraine. These include individual sanctions, economic sanctions, restrictions on media, and diplomatic measures.

The Netherlands’ role in this situation

The Netherlands supports EU sanctions against Russia following Russia’s attack on Ukraine. Ukraine is not a NATO Ally, which means that no troops will be sent to Ukraine for combat operations, however, the Netherlands is providing military goods to Ukraine including 200 air defence rockets and 50 anti-tank weapons. In addition, the Netherlands contributes to NATO’s deterrence and defence posture.

Over the past several months, the government has focused on de-escalation and dialogue and has called on Russia to jointly seek a diplomatic route out of this crisis. This has not succeeded.

Consequently, The Netherlands is planning to end its dependence on oil and gas from Russia by the end of this year, in response to the country's invasion of Ukraine.

Russia currently supplies 40 percent of the EU’s gas needs and some 15 percent to the Dutch. About 44 percent of Dutch energy usage is based on gas - one of the highest rates in Europe - but only about 15 percent of Dutch gas comes from Russia

The Netherlands plans on cutting Russian oil and gas imports by the end of the year, with halt on coal imports by August, ending its dependence on Russia in response to the country's invasion of Ukraine. The Dutch Government is focusing on increasing imports from other countries, as well as energy conservation and sustainability to replace the share of Russian gas with renewable energy and LNG.

Europe's largest port Rotterdam is expanding its liquid natural gas terminal and a floating terminal being built in the northern port of Eemshaven. Approximately eight billion cubic meters of extra liquefied gas can be imported before the end of the year.

Through a government statement it is estimated that Dutch gas consumption can be reduced by around nine billion cubic meters by 2025 through sustainable measures, that is more than the import from Russia about six billion cubic meters.

1. Proposal for an Agreed EU Oil Embargo

In addition, the Dutch government will try to conclude agreements with other countries to become independent of Russian oil as quickly as possible.

2. Dutch Aid

According to the World Bank, the economic damage to Ukraine is immense, on 10 April 2022, it was estimated that the Ukrainian economy will shrink by 45% this year, currently the government has a budget deficit of \$5 billion per month.

- The Netherlands is supporting Ukraine and neighbouring countries by helping war victims. It is providing humanitarian aid funding, medicines and aid supplies. The Netherlands is also supporting investigations into human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law.
- Between 27 February and 8 April, the Netherlands made € 45 million available for emergency aid, of which € 10 million went for aid to Moldova since many refugees fleeing Ukraine have fled to its neighbour.
- UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) made \$20 million available for emergency aid in Ukraine, it later added another \$40 million to this. The Netherlands is the fund's fifth largest donor.

3. Organization of Aid

Assistance to Ukraine must be organised properly. By working together and making agreements at international level, we can help ensure that aid arrives where it's needed more quickly. This will also help reduce the costs. Such agreements have to be made at three levels:

- The Ukrainian government must decide where the aid is needed, and it must coordinate its requests to foreign partners.
- International parties must work together efficiently (for instance the European Union, the United Nations, the G7 and international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF)).

- Cooperation between various Dutch government bodies, each focusing on different areas of expertise, must also be coordinated properly. That coordinating role belongs to the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. Ultimately, however, the various government bodies themselves remain responsible for the programmes that they carry out and fund.

Currently it's hard to predict how long the war in Ukraine will last and what more the extent of the damage will be. Or how Ukraine will emerge from the war. Ukraine's main needs are currently still weapons and humanitarian and financial aid.

4. Dutch Support in Reconstruction

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the House of Representatives on the war in Ukraine. In his speech he called on the Netherlands to 'adopt' a city affected by the war, and to help that city with its reconstruction efforts.

The government takes a favorable view of cooperation between Dutch and Ukrainian cities and wants to work with the Association of Ukrainian Cities to support the reconstruction efforts of Ukrainian.

Though how the reconstruction process should take shape is first and foremost up to Ukraine and its people to decide, and at the moment the Dutch government is not preparing any specific plans to help with the reconstruction of a particular city or village after the war. This is because Ukraine has not been able to assess its reconstruction needs yet, as the war is still ongoing.

5. Proposal to establish a joint platform for the reconstruction of Ukraine

It's also clear that the EU and international institutions such as the UN and the World Bank will play an important role, as these partners have the necessary expertise and contacts.