



# Pandemic and Conflict Could Undermine Climate Action

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Two wars are raging in Ukraine and Russia: the pandemic and the conflict. The former called for the necessary redirection of funding for resilience and preparedness, and the latter is leading to the further redirection of financial flows from community resilience and climate action to military. Combined, both wars lead to a lack of funding for sustainable development at national and local levels post-war in Russia and Ukraine, as well as NATO members. Additionally, current and future economic sanctions on Russia will impoverish communities and businesses, and reduce Russia's capacity to invest in internally sustainable transitions. Concurrently Ukraine (or the re-invented "Ukraine") will need to redirect further financing for re-building and economic development.

Such a landscape will make it near impossible for both Russia and Ukraine to realize their COP26 pledges to achieve deep decarbonization and net-zero targets (Duggal, 2021), leading to their continued high dependence upon the sustenance of fossil fuels for many years into the future. The increasingly vast and diverse imposed economic and business sanctions upon Russia will substantially delimit their future debt-funded infrastructures. A possible argument may be geared toward lifecycle extensions of fossil fuel power plants, as those offer lower upfront investment costs when compared to the erection of new renewable power plants and or nuclear complexes—even if they have faster Return on Investment (ROI) prospects (Castro, 2022). The need for funding can be bridged but will demand deeper commitments for green transitions, a re-structured societal system for more engaged citizen involvement, and renewed trading partnerships where the latter will unfortunately rely upon a sustenance of fossil resources trading. Ensuring sustainable, and long term stable infrastructure, will be particularly key for liveability of cities and communities, as ensuring the functioning of those territories not only ensures human processes, but power economic engines. On the climate side, addressing sustainable policies will allow for more sensible longer-term prospects for developing sustainable cities, and for accessing developmental funds provided for this effect.

On the Ukrainian side, a challenge of scale will present itself to its allies, particularly geared on how to distribute aid and climate financing. This includes tapping into the USD\$100 billion climate fund pledged at COP26 (Ares and Loft, 2021) [or broken pledge (Timperley, 2021)], for urgent retrofits in essential infrastructures for both immediate liveability needs and post-war developments. The two avenues, however, must be structured in a way to avoid the reduction of financial flows to the Global South, Least Developing Countries (LDCs) and Small Islands Developing States [SIDS; (UN, 2022)], which are on the frontline of climate change. A global discourse will soon emerge on how funding flows need to be channeled, where, on one side, some

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will advocate that human liveability is key in climate discourses and thus needs to be funded in priority, and the other stating that loss and damage caused by climate change must take precedence in its disbursements.

The Ukraine-Russian conflict provides us with a need to ponder on how to revitalize communities in- and -post, conflict to fight a third war, that of climate change. The difficulty at present is that the former is deflecting our attention from

the latter, to its detriment, while in other geographies, like in Australia (BBC, 2022), sirens of climate emergencies are being heard.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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