

## **Russian-Ukraine Conflict in the New Global Order and Its Impact on the Indo-Pak Region: A Critical Analysis**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research paper examines the on-going conflict between Ukraine and Russia in order to explore its influence on the global political chess board especially in the Indo-Pak region. The conflict began in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and fortified separatist movements in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. It explores the historical context of the conflict including the shared history of Ukraine and Russia and probes the gradual evolution of the tensions between the two states into recent political quagmire. This qualitative research investigates into the geopolitical consequences of the current conflict on the regional security milieu and evaluates the relationship between Russia and the West as well. The conflict escalated in 2022 when President Putin ordered a large-scale invasion in Ukraine ensuing significant loss of lives and millions of Ukrainians fled the country to take refuge. Furthermore, multifaceted reactions of countries in the global South to the war and the potential implications of their actions have also been examined in this research. The US security cooperation with Ukraine, economic sanctions on Russia and the geopolitical consequences of the conflict in Ukraine on the regional power structure are important attributes to study the changing global power dynamics. The war has affected the political and economic facets of the Indo-Pak region as well. The fuel prices escalated and the food products' trade affected a lot in the region. The conclusion highlights the urgent need for a peaceful resolution through negotiations and expresses a dire need for the development of new global security architecture.

**Key Words:** Ukraine and Russia, Political, Global, India, Pakistan

## **Introduction**

The historical background of the Ukraine-Russia conflict and its transformation into the present political scenario are quite important in the changing security dynamics of the globe. Ukraine and Russia belongs to the same heritage. Mongol conquered the land in 13<sup>th</sup> century and the next invaders were Poland and Lithuania in 14<sup>th</sup> century who had a strong cultural impact on the Ukrainian people (Subtelny, 2009). The Ukraine was under different empires' rule and there was a brief period of independent era in 1917. (Schmidt, 2020). The Russian empire took control of much of the Ukrainian territory and at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century it was extended to Poland, Caucasus and Central Asia (Kohut, 2001). The Ukrainian people have a sizeable minority in Soviet Russia i.e., 18%. Ukraine was under the Russian control after 1921. (Kappeler, 2014). Ukraine was able to become a sovereign state after the disintegration of Russia in 1991 (Turchyn et al., 2020).

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia started efforts to prevent Ukraine from aligning with the West. Under President Putin's leadership, Russian meddling in Ukraine's politics became more pronounced as seen in its open support for Yanukovich in the election that was having pro-Russian tendencies. The Ukrainian President Yanukovich in 2013 renounced the possibility of trade partnership agreement with EU owing to the Russian pressure which resulted in a country wide outrage against him culminating his removal from power. Petro Poroshenko (5<sup>th</sup> President of Ukraine 2014-19) was victorious and the signed of the EU association agreement Since then, Ukraine has closed the door on Putin's Eurasian Economic Union and resultantly Moscow turned to annex Crimea and encouraged separatist movements in pro-Russian regions of eastern and southern Ukraine i.e., Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014 (Johnson et.al. 2021). The geopolitical crisis in Ukraine has far-reaching consequences on the global stage especially on the relationship between Russia and the West. Since Ukraine gained independence in 1991, the United States has been supporting Ukraine in military and economic areas.

The war between Russia and Ukraine has been a matter of international attention since 2014, but the circumstances escalated in February 2022 when President Putin ordered a large-scale invasion in Ukraine. The conflict has resulted in significant loss of lives and over 5,000,000 Ukrainians have left the country. Putin's aim is to retain Ukraine within Russia's sphere of influence and he believes that many Ukrainians still have pro-Russian sentiments. However, the conflict has fetched Ukrainians of all backgrounds together in support of their government and owing to this; Ukrainian President Zelensky's endorsement ratings have been increased. Russian invasion in Ukraine has destabilized the power equilibrium in the region and its strategy towards the post-Soviet states has been seen to change the contemporary global political order. The reaction of states towards the Russian war explains the geo-political and geo-economic struggle in the Global South and Global North; while demand of a peaceful settlement of the dispute is the need of hour. The impact has not been limited to Europe only, as the Indo-Pak region is

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also affected due to the crisis. The foreign policy, economic and political policies has been under pressure due to the ongoing dynamics of the conflict. It is essential to build a new global security architecture that guarantees peace and security for all.

### **Russian or Western Ally: The Pendulum of Ukrainian Political Chess Board**

In 2004, the elections in Ukraine marked the victory of the pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich who was successful by defeating the pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko. The results were not accepted widely by the Ukrainian population and they started mass protests culminating the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (Karatnycky, 2005). The protestors used social media and applied creative techniques such as art exhibition and public debates to organize the masses. Most of the protestors were not belonging to specific parties. Civil society came forward to uphold the rule of law. They had to face brutal response from police but they remained firm and became successful in re-election in December 2004 (Aslund & McFall, 2006). Yushchenko was able to succeed and it represented a distinct phenomenon of cultural and societal change as well as a tilt towards the West.

The pendulum of Ukrainian politics swung back to Russia as Yanukovich became successful in winning of the elections in 2010. The Ukrainian request to join NATO has been in the lime light since 2004 at the time of colour revolution which was marked by the between the pro-Western and pro-Russian leaders (Vázquez, 2022). The Russian aggression on Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine gas crisis in 2009 were clear indications that NATO extension in the region is unbearable to the Russian policy makers. A trade agreement was going to be signed between EU and Ukraine in 2013 but it was renounced by the Ukrainian authorities. There began a mass protest against the decision. The protests explain the Ukrainian tendencies towards their liking and disliking the pro-Russian or a pro-Western set-up (Mankoff, 2022).

Russian invasion in Ukraine is considered to be the largest military campaign in Europe in this century. A large number of loss of lives amid large scale armies build up reveals the gravity of the situation (Davis, 2023). It is a contentious issue in the world and has important bearings over the security of the globe and specially on Europe. It is an attempt to divide the Ukrainian people to enter in the Russian sphere or to join the West by maintaining its national identity. The political liberalization's concept of Gorbachev (1985–91) in Russia seems to be shattered by the Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2022 (Stoner, 2023).

### **NATO and the Western Response to Military Confrontation in Crimea**

In 2014, Russian army invaded Crimea. The pro-Russian protestors and the Ukrainian army had many skirmishes in Eastern Ukraine culminating the death toll

over 10,000 people. It was coupled with the displacement of millions of Ukrainians. The cultural fault lines alongside the historic realities aggravated the situation between West and the Russians. The tensions crossed the zenith when Ukraine wanted to join NATO which was considered as a red line for Moscow. The ethnic identities of Ukraine have been divided into a faction with a very strong sense of nationalism as seen in the western and central areas while people in eastern and southern regions have a nostalgia for pro-Russian policies.

The rebels in Dunbas region were supported by Russian military during the annexation of the Crimea in 2014. Russia did not want to give any room for the Western powers to manipulate the Ukrainian fragile situation and engaged in Donbas areas. The peace of the region was shattered by the deaths of thousands of people during the war. NATO's power was called into question by such brutalities in Ukraine as it requested for NATO's membership. NATO started to prepare for the defense of the eastern side and the US supported Poland by F-16, AWACS (airborne warning and control system) and manpower. NATO also increased its military exercises in Poland and also expressed security concerns for the Balkan states, Finland and Sweden (Wolff, 2015). The states provided funds to Ukraine for support and survival. The NATO members presented their services to train the Ukrainian military in 2015. NATO desired for a quick and effective response in case of further Russian possible invasion in NATO member states. The eastern side of the NATO was under clouds and US provided an armour brigade to strengthen it in 2017. It was also seen that all the NATO members were not zealous to engage Russia over its brutalities in Ukraine as the German response was extremely cautious (Belkin et al., 2014). Ukraine was not a NATO member so NATO could not support it fully under its umbrella. This situation aggravated the tensions between NATO and Russia but short of a full-fledged war between NATO and Russia.

### **The Quest of Survival: Cooperation between West & Ukraine**

The cooperation between Ukraine and US started soon after Ukrainian independence. The US support has been in various fields such as to enhance its military potentials, to strengthen border force and to eradicate corruption in the state (Congressional Research Service, 2019). To secure itself from the Russian aggression, the US has given support such as weapons and provided help in training the military personals. The aid program was not limited to the military side but economic assistance was also provided to Ukrainian people. The US also provided support to modernise the security infrastructure and various military institutions of Ukraine. Technical aid is being provided by the US to improve border security and human trafficking as well (Congressional Research Service, 2022).

The era of Barack Obama was marked with the aid programs mainly focussed on domestic reforms. The institutions were helped to fight against corruption and US-Ukraine partnership was having the agenda to improve democratic conditions

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and initiate economic reforms that would assist the state in raising the conditions of the masses (Pifer, 2016). The Trump's administration was following suit as support was given to enhance domestic changes towards democracy and rule of law. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated in 2017 that "anti-corruption agency ought to be backed, given resources, and protected" (Tillerson, 2017).

President Biden also supported the Ukrainian efforts to change its domestic structure and reforms agenda. Secretary Blinken focussed on assisting Ukraine to fight against Russia as well as to promote internal changes to fight against corruption. Secretary Blinken, during a trip to Kyiv in May 2021, identified two major issues that Ukraine is confronted with i.e., external aggression from Russia and internal aggression in the form of corruption, oligarchs and individuals prioritizing their own interests over those of the Ukrainian citizens (Kramer & Sanger, 2021).

Economic sanctions by EU and US on Russia due to its invasion in Ukraine expressed concerns of the global powers for the security dynamics of the region. Various types of sanctions were exercised including the bans of visa, arms embargo and freezing of assets of various companies to pressurize Russia (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

The states such as Canada, Australia and Japan also imposed sanctions on Russia. The sanctions were made public and some of them were imposed on President Putin himself. (Welt et al., 2022). It was also said that Russian banks were removed from SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) banking system so that Russia may succumb to the economic pressure (Shavit et al., 2022).

## **Regional and Global Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis**

Ukrainian issue has regional geopolitical ramifications. The attack on Ukraine has jolted the global order and the relations between Russia and the West are at their lowest ebb. The US and Russia are now face to face with each other as it has potentially challenged the US superiority in the Russian region. The US and the Western states have put sanctions to restrain the growing tentacles of the Russian influence in the region but it seems to be insufficient to contain Russia at the 1990's level. The attack on Ukraine has been expressed as irredentism by the Russian side but it has escalated fears and tension in various other states having sizable Russian minorities. Ukraine has been in a state of a buffer country from 1991 between Russia and the West. The conflict has changed its status into a frontline state engaged in a fight for survival. The other states, which got independence from Russia as a result of Russian disintegration, have been under extreme pressure from this invasion (Kotoulas, & Pusztá, 2022). Belarus has been sandwiched between Ukraine and Russia. Another neighbouring state i.e., Moldova also have sizable Russian speaking population. Transnistria has been a troubled area for Moldova and the current crisis may escalate tensions in this

breakaway province as Russian military exercise in 2014 near its border raised security risks over there. The Baltic states i.e., Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia has Russian speaking population but these states are members of NATO that enhances their defence potentials. Russia has violated air spaces closer to their borders owing to have concerns over Russian population treatment in the neighbouring states. The involvement of more countries and destabilization of markets can alter the world order. The war in Ukraine can be seen as a sign of the shift from the Western-dominated post-Cold War international system towards a more pragmatic, chaotic, and multipolar (Kusa, 2022).

Russia's actions towards Ukraine cannot be fully understood without considering its geopolitical strategy towards post-Soviet states from their inception (Geopolityka., 2018). As the largest country in the world, Russia has a vast potential for energy resources including natural gas, oil and nuclear energy. These resources are key instruments in Russia's international politics which have helped it as a world power. The concept of Russian Federation of Foreign politics and dynamic balance, introduced by Vladimir Putin in 1999, aimed to establish Russia's unique position in the world without confrontation with the West by achieving five main aims including the renewal of Russia's position as a key player in the form of earlier Soviet Union and increasing cooperation with Asia. Different geographical regions are distinguished in Russia's foreign policy and the post-Soviet states are observed as being within its sphere of influence. Conflict may arise from the absence of recognition for Russia's powerful status in the international arena and the active interest of several countries in western organizations like the European Union or NATO (Demedziuk, 2017).

Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2022 has altered the global security dynamics. It has been in the lime light of world potics since then. The sanctions on Russia by the global powers seem to be insufficient as Russian forces has not been recalled. The war has escalated the inflation and there is a shortage of supplies of amenties of life and hampered the economic growth of the West and Eupropen states are under extreme energy and economic pressure (Mbah & Wasum, 2022). Policymakers of various European states are seeking alternatives for constant supplies of commodities as some of them have significantly reliance on Russia and Ukraine for energy and other imports.

Indo-Pak regional politics has been characterised by the conflict between India and Pakistan. Chinese influence in the regional politics has been seen to contain India. The US is supportive of India to limit the Chinese growth. In this scenario, the Ukrainian conflict was seen as a litmus test to identify the US' supportive governments in the region. Pakistan was silent in voting against the Russian attack and US government including the European Union were not happy to see Pakistani stance. The European Union wrote a letter to Pakistan to show their concerns over Pakistani stance.

Indian government behaved diplomatic way and due to the strategic importance of India in the regional politics, the US and the European Union were

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not very furious against India. Chinese government was not very vocal against Russia and asked for a diplomatic resolution of dispute.

### **Russian's Faulty Expectations Regarding Resistance in Ukraine**

The Donbas conflict in 2014 resulted in economic sanctions from the US and EU that stifled Russia's economy, while in 2016 NATO reinforced its military capabilities along Russian borders. The US abandoned the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019 later condemning Russia of noncompliance. This move enables nuclear deployments in Asia around the Russian periphery and in Central and Eastern Europe (Mankoff, 2022).

In February 2022, Putin ordered an all-out invasion of Ukraine. However, the failure of the assault on major Ukrainian cities and sustained foreign support for Ukrainian insurgency has forced Russia back to Donbas in spring 2022. U.S. and EU imposed sanctions have extremely hit Russia with the prospect of looming default (Tsepova, 2022). The war has enhanced Putin's standing in elections but also provoked migration of educated Russians and embargo at home. Putin's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 represents smacks of desperation, denying the separate Ukrainian identity and state that culminated a firm guaranteed resistance from Ukraine. Western authorities are supporting an insurgency against Russian atrocities. Putin believes that many Ukrainians still identify with Russia and that foreign manipulation has pushed Ukraine away from Russia. Russia's efforts to stop Ukraine's drift towards Europe have been met with disaster in the past and Putin is now betting that armed force can thrive where other forms of invasions have failed.

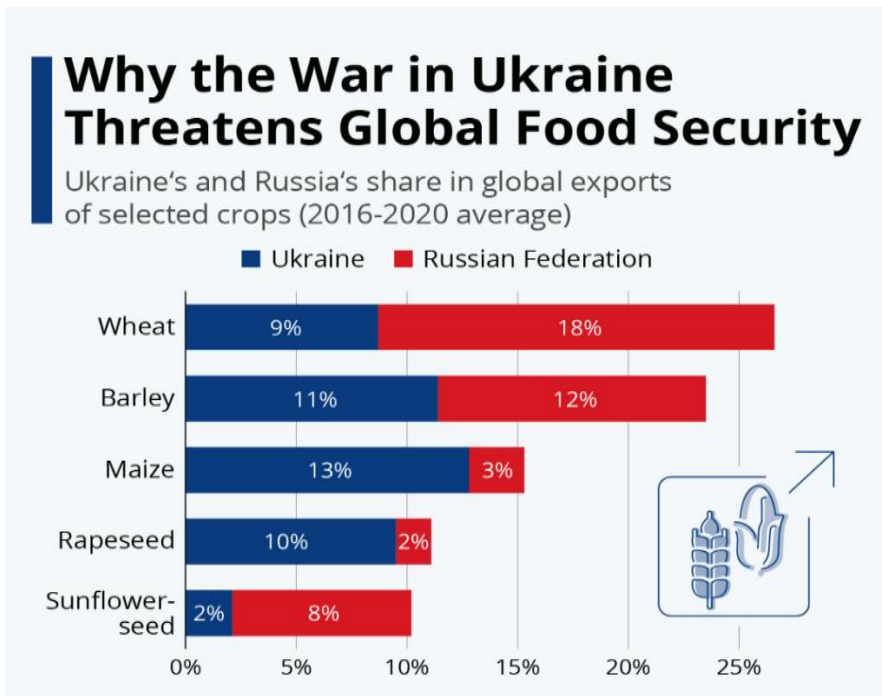
The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is based on the same mistaken expectations about Ukrainian identity that Russian leadership was having in the past and Ukrainian confrontation has already far exceeded the Moscow's expectations. Forces agonized with tens of thousands of Russian casualties and even pro-Russian politicians and oligarchs coming out against the invasion. Putin's military invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has not gone according to plan resulting in significant loss of lives and failed objectives for Russia. Over 5,000,000 Ukrainians have fled the country. Despite this, the conflict has brought Ukrainians of all backgrounds together in support of their government which has boosted Zelensky's approval ratings.

In 2022, Russian forces attacked and damaged 15% of Ukraine's privately operated information infrastructure, including servers, cables, and cell phone towers and enforced digital blackouts in some areas to control the information space. Moscow aimed to cut off access to essential services, flood the population with propaganda and undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government. This assault on the information environment poses a threat to the security and stability of Ukraine and highlights the need for international efforts to protect information infrastructure in conflict zones (Schroeder, & Dack, 2023).

The Russian effort to bring Ukraine back under its influence is not just about Ukraine's relationship with NATO or EU. Instead, it is driven by Russia's determination to keep Ukraine within its sphere of influence despite the economic and human cost of conflict. Russia may still try for its military victory but the cost would be high and the chances of maintaining a long-term protectorate over Ukraine seem to be decreasing. Ultimately, the outcome also depends on the response of the West and the willingness of Ukrainians to fight for their nation.

### **Russian Influence on the Indo-Pak Region & Global South**

The global South's reaction to the on-going conflict between Russia and Ukraine was mainly secondary as to observe reaction of other countries. Initially, Russia's imports were affected by the measures taken in response to the war, but by the end of 2022, they had almost returned to their pre-war levels due to shifting trade towards India, China, Turkey, Pakistan and other economies (DiPippo, & Palazzi, 2023). While most countries have not publicly endorsed Russia's war, many have abstained from applying sanctions to the Russian Federation. This is due to a variety of factors such as food security, energy or economic constraints, security and military dependence and common membership in multilateral organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union or specific concentration mechanisms like BRICS (Osadchuk,2023).



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations



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China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council has abstained from all resolutions condemning Russia's invasion. It has defended the principle of territorial integrity while calling for an end to the war through peaceful negotiations (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States, 2022). However, China has continued and somehow intensified its relations with the Russian Federation by increasing its imports of Russian oil and gas and helping the Kremlin to contour Western sanctions (Kremlin., 2022). India, linked to Russia by many economic and military cooperation ties, has discarded war as a means of solving international differences but it has refused to apply sanctions to the Russian Federation while upgrading Russian oil imports. Pakistan is also seeking to resolve its energy crises by trade with Russia.

South Africa, a Russian partner in BRICS, as well as China and India has not responded to Western demands of applying sanctions to Russia or sending military aid to Ukraine. Many countries in Africa have recently reinforced their relations with the Russian Federation as well as their economic dependence on China and some find it difficult to openly condemn the invasion (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2022, September 29 & Daly, 2023). However, even when countries in the global South have generally abstained from applying sanctions to the Russian Federation or its leaders; there is a generalized rejection of the invasion and many of them advocate for negotiations and for the end of the war.

### **Ramifications of Russian attack on Ukraine (2022)**

February 24th 2023 consider as the first anniversary of war, in fact the conflict began with the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Kremlin, 2014). The annexation was consolidated through a sham referendum and the immediate incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation. The conflict then spread to the Eastern part of Ukraine in 2014, where Russia provided political and military support to activists in the Donbass seeking greater autonomy. In 2022, after Russia's full invasion, both Donbass territories were allegedly integrated into the Russian Federation, along with two southern Ukrainian provinces, Kherson and Zaporizhia, after respective sham referenda (Roldán, 2023). According to Antony Blinken, the Secretary of State, the aim of US policy is to facilitate Ukraine in regaining the territory that has been taken from it since February 24, 2023(Charap & Priebe, 2023).

The on-going war between Russia and Ukraine which started with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 escalated into a full-fledged invasion in 2022. The conflict has resulted in over 13,000 deaths and the displacement of one million people. The Minsk agreements, fostered by France and Germany aimed at resolving the conflict were not complied due to low acceptance within the Ukrainian population. The recent invasion has violated the principles of UN but also consolidated the Western alliance to support Ukraine. Moreover, it can significantly change the international landscape and decay in the success of

international organisations and multilateralism. The conflict is also reflective of a broader ideological conflict between liberalism and illiberalism, democracy and autocracy. It has caused immense human suffering including loss of life, displacement, and economic disarray.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Western countries reacted with extensive and diverse sanctions against the Russian Federation, its leaders and oligarchs. These sanctions imposed by the US, EU, NATO, UK, Australia, Canada, Japan, and South Korea on Russia represented their affiliation with Ukraine (Feigenbaum, & Szubin, 2023). These are mainly aimed at affecting the Kremlin's capacity to finance the war and replenish military resources. They have a direct influence on the everyday lives of Russian citizens. The costs of the sanctions include high inflation, gas shortages and higher energy bills. However, support for the Kremlin and its war of choice still seems to be high among the population due to their projection of Russia as a main global power and a generalized historical vision of Ukraine as a minor partner or a little brother that has to go back to 'Mother Russia.'

February 20, 2023, President Biden's official visit to Kyiv, the first of an US president since 2008, and his reaffirmation of the US leading role in the Western alliance have strengthened relations between the US and European countries (U.S. House of Representatives, 2023). The war has impacted both the EU and NATO leading to the granting of 'candidate status' to Ukraine and Moldova and increased security concerns in neighbouring states. Germany has increased its military budget to meet NATO requirements, provided military aid to Ukraine and has suspended the North Stream II gas pipeline with Russia. These measures have had an economic impact on the countries' populations but have been possible due to massive popular support for Ukrainians' resistance to the invasion (Roldán, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

Russian interference in Ukraine's politics started soon after the Soviet Union's collapse and became more pronounced under Putin's leadership. Yanukovich's last-minute decision to abandon an EU association agreement sparked outrage among Ukrainians that leading to the Maidan protests. Putin claimed the protests were a U.S.-backed coup endeavour and commanded Yanukovich to suppress them. Ukraine became a pro-European country under Poroshenko's presidency. However, Russian annexing Crimea and encouraging separatist movements in Pro-Russian regions of eastern and southern Ukraine marked the initiation of open conflict. Zelensky adopted a harder line on the Minsk II agreement, which comprised Ukrainian sovereignty due to Russian intransigence and bad faith while also chipping away at Russian influence. Despite history, Ukraine is now a sovereign state and Russia's interference is a violation of its territorial integrity. United States has been working to support Ukraine's efforts towards establishing a strong and independent democracy through various security cooperation programs since its independence in 1991. The geopolitical rivalry between Russia and

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Ukraine has caused a strain on ties between Russia and the West impacting regional power structures. Sanctions imposed by the EU and US on Russia have been intended to put pressure on Russia to stop interfering in Ukraine and respect its territorial integrity and sovereignty. The involvement of more countries and destabilization of markets can alter the world order. The war in Ukraine can be seen as a sign of the shift from the Western-dominated post-Cold War international system towards a more pragmatic, chaotic and multipolar one. The global South has played a significant role in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Most countries in this region have not applied sanctions to the Russian Federation. They have generally rejected the invasion and called for negotiations and an end to the war. China, India, Pakistan and many other states were eager to meet the energy demands and food crises in the wake of the war and had their vested interests to fulfil.

The war shows no signs of ending. The ongoing war in Ukraine is taking a toll on Vladimir Putin's regime in Russia. The military failures, along with high casualties and worsening economic conditions, could potentially put Putin's regime at risk (Bergmann, 2023). A Gallup survey found that 70% of Ukrainians want to continue fighting till they accomplish triumph and 91% of them said success means recapturing all Ukrainian territory that was detained by Russia including Crimea. The Munich Security Index 2023 also shows that the majority of Ukrainians chose to continue fighting until complete victory (Vazquez, L. R., 2022). On the other hand, a survey on Russian citizens' opinion about the war indicates that 75% of them support the actions of Russian military forces in Ukraine but opinions about continuing the war or proceeding to negotiations are divided in half (Munich Security Conference, 2023). The war poses a menace to global security and has a domino effect on other authoritarian regimes leading to a resurgence of conflicts, hostile actions, and new alignments. There is a call for resolute international efforts to build a new global security architecture that guarantees peace and security for all.

The Indo-Pak region has been affected as well. The shifting dynamics of the war has a lasting impact on the regional politics of the Indo-Pak area as China, Russia and US has been trying hard to find more allies in the power dynamics of the global order. The quest to fulfil the energy demands and fragile economies of most of the states in the Indo-Pak region has been the deciding factor. Peaceful solution of the conflict is the need of the hour to maintain stability and equilibrium in the power struggle of the states. It is essential for Ukraine to find a path to peace and negotiate with Russia. The challenges are significant and a negotiated settlement is the best hope for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Ukraine's leaders should adopt a principled approach to negotiations that balances the need to defend Ukraine's, its territorial integrity and sovereignty with a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with Russia. It is not only the European region which is affected by the war but the Indo-Pak regional politics is equally disturbed as well.

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