



UKRAINE RUSSIA WAR: IMPACT ON INDIA

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Why The War

- The Ukraine issue has reached a critical point, with Russia following up its recognition of rebel areas in eastern Ukraine (**Donetsk and Luhansk**) with a full-fledged invasion to "**demilitarise**" and "**denazify**" Ukraine.
- This move by Moscow represents a rejection of the inviolability of European national borders as agreed to in the **Helsinki agreement in 1975**, as well as a major challenge to the global order.
- While Russia is **India's biggest and time-tested supplier of military hardware**, the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom are all vital partners that India cannot afford to antagonize. Given India's strategic interests, the balanced approach that India has taken thus far is a pragmatic way forward.

UKRAINE-RUSSIA CRISIS

Conflict at a glance

After months of tensions, on **February 24**, Russian forces launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. **Kyiv** has declared martial law, saying Ukraine will defend itself.



What is the Russia - Ukraine conflict?

- The Ukraine crisis is based on a contest about the post-Cold War central European territoriality and the resurrecting of a burnished Russian past.
- **Ukraine and Russia** have had cultural, linguistic, and familial ties for hundreds of years.
- For many in Russia and ethnically Russian regions of Ukraine, the countries' shared heritage is an emotional issue that has been used for electoral and military purposes.
- Ukraine was the **2nd-most powerful Soviet republic** after Russia as part of the Soviet Union, and it was significant strategically, economically, and culturally.
- The major causes of the ongoing conflict are the region's balance of power, Ukraine's role as a crucial buffer between Russia and the West, Ukraine's bid for NATO membership, and Russian interests in the Black Sea, all of which are accompanied by protests in Ukraine.

What is the present situation?

- The crisis is now the **largest attack by one state on another in Europe since World War II** and the first since the Balkan crisis in the 1990s.
- With the invasion of Ukraine, agreements such as **Minsk Protocols, 2014** and **Russia-NATO Act, 1997** stand all but void.
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine was **strongly condemned by the G7 nations**.
 - The United States, the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, and Japan have all **imposed sanctions**.
- China has rejected calling Russia's move an "invasion" and has urged all sides to exercise restraint.
- India did not join the Western powers in condemning Russia's intervention in Crimea, and it maintained a low profile on the issue.
 - More recently, India abstained on a UN Security Council resolution sponsored by the US that "deplores in the strongest terms" Russia's "aggression" against Ukraine, with New Delhi stating that dialogue is the only way to settle differences and disputes and voicing "regret" that the path of diplomacy was given up.
 - China along with the United Arab Emirates abstained.

What is Russia's Stance?

- NATO's expansion violated promises made prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine's accession to NATO would cross Russia's red lines, and NATO's strategic posture poses a continuing security threat to Russia.
- Even after the fall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, NATO's expansion as a politico-military alliance was a U.S. initiative meant to temper European ambitions for strategic autonomy and to counter Russia's resurgence.
- The Russian President justified the Ukraine crisis on the basis of national security and the rights of ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics.

- Russia wants the West to assure that Ukraine will never be admitted to NATO. Kyiv is currently designated as a "partner country," implying that it will be permitted to join the military alliance in the future.
- The United States and its western allies have refused to bar Ukraine from NATO, claiming that it is a sovereign country free to choose its own security alliances.

How would this conflict impact India?

- The Russia-Ukraine crisis will drive up the cost of cooking gas, petrol, and other fuels for Indian households and businesses. Higher oil prices raise freight and transportation costs.
- Depending on how long global oil prices continue high, the tensions may call the RBI's credibility in making inflation projections into question, as well as upset the government's budget calculations, particularly the fiscal deficit.
 - The rise in crude oil prices will boost India's oil import bills, and gold imports may rise again, putting pressure on the rupee.
- India's petroleum product imports from Russia are only a fraction of its total oil import bill and are hence replaceable.
- Alternative sources of fertilizer and sunflower oil, on the other hand, may not be as easy.
- Exports to Russia account for less than 1% of overall Indian exports, but pharmaceutical and tea exports, as well as shipments to CIS countries, could face challenges. Increases in freight rates could also make overall exports less competitive.

Way Forward

- However, unlike during the Cold War, the global economy is now deeply integrated. The consequences of a prolonged conflict are far too dire, particularly in terms of the loss of life and suffering that is already underway in Ukraine.
- The world is still reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affects the poorest countries and people, and it cannot afford a conflict-induced slowdown.
- It is up to Russia to implement a cease-fire and, subsequently for both sides to return to the negotiating table. Escalation is not a possible option.

- Without justifying the way in which Russia has chosen to “right” the perceived “wrongs”, the current issue somehow results from a broken European security architecture.
- A sustainable security order must reflect present realities; it cannot simply be an outgrowth of the Cold War order, and it has been driven from within.
- Furthermore, a European order that does not address Russia's concerns through genuine negotiation cannot be long-term stable.
- Reviving the Minsk peace process is a viable solution to the situation.
- As a result, the West (the United States and other Western countries) should push both sides to resume talks and honor their commitments under the Minsk agreement in order to restore relative peace on the border.

India Specific Way Forward

Geopolitical Dimension:

- As a result of Russia's actions, India has to brace itself for some immediate challenges.
- It will have to balance between pressure from one strategic partner to condemn the violation of international law and pressure from another to understand its legitimate concerns.
- India effectively managed these pressures during the 2014 Crimea annexation crisis, and it will do so again.

Economic Dimension:

- On the fiscal side, the government, which has been conservative in its revenue assumptions in the Budget, has to preemptively cut domestic fuel taxes to nip the inflationary expectations, stoke faltering consumption levels, and sustain India's fragile post-Covid-19 recovery through this global churn.

A Balanced Strategy:

- India-Russia ties have ensured that Delhi has not been completely excluded from the conversation on Afghanistan and Central Asia, while also providing some leverage with the US.

- At the same time, the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom are all important partners, and India's relationships with each of them, and with the Western world in general, go far beyond the sum of their parts.
- Delhi must maintain a constant dialogue with all sides and engage with all of its partners while keeping in mind that there is no justification for violating any country's territorial sovereignty.
- India must also make it clear to coercive countries that their "with us or against us" formulations are hardly constructive.
- The best course of action is for all parties to take a step back and focus on preventing all-out war, rather than dividing the world and returning it to the Cold War days.

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