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Russia-Ukraine war and its implications in global politics

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Abstract

The Russia-Ukraine war has been a reflective of the ascent of a new global order marked by growing military and security concerns. The paper explains the nature of this war and its implications for global politics. It is found that the undemocratic nature of global governance has been largely responsible for the present situation of global disorder and this can be remedied by ensuring democratic decision-making in global governance institutions.

Keywords: Russia-Ukraine War, global politics, war, global governance

Introduction

At present, the International Community is going through a greatly disordered phase featured by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. This war has happened to be the most aberrant global downturn in the post-cold war period since 1991. Russia invaded Ukraine on 24th February 2022 as the small country was supposed to join NATO. The apparent leaning towards militarization of the regions has probably contributed to its occurrence. Undoubtedly, the war marks a breakdown in the relationship between the West and Russia which has somewhat improved following the end of the cold war (Johney, 2022) [4]. There have also brewed questions regarding the viability of international organizations like UNO in the present situation and raised doubt over its capability in tackling or preventing such crisis situations. Again, this crisis has been a testimony to India's ties with the West as well as Russia in the context of the entrenched interconnectedness among the sovereign states. In this context, it is pertinent to elucidate the nature and connotation of Russia-Ukraine war in international politics. Also, the paper explains how the interplay and a particular pattern of behaviour among major powers greatly shape geo-political events and causes war.

War in Global Politics

War among nation-states is often fought to accomplish the highest national goals, be it national security, territorial expansion, or dominance in the global sphere. In the international sphere, the decision to wage such war is merely a political, taken by political authority, primarily with geo-political intentions. Carl von Clausewitz famously described war as "politics by other means" (Valentino, Huth, & Croco, 2006) [9]. As politics deals with problems involving relationships of power, rule, or authority, as stated by Dahl, a War, be it civil or global always revolves around the relationships of power or reign. War is indeed a political act largely initiated from a power perspective. Again, War is not simply a clash of military forces on the battlefield; it is also a contestation of wills. Will to power has been the key driving force behind the war.

In the words of Randolph Bourne, War reflects the health of the state. Evidently, the direct or indirect involvement of the USA in the global wars has been very part of its foreign policy (Astore, 2021) [1]. In the present situation, USA's military assistance to Ukraine by sending it deadly weapons reflects its habit of getting involved in such crises. Rather it has triggered the crisis by encouraging NATO's eastward expansion (Dogra, 2022) [2]. Such a type of USA intervention in the crisis is an act of war and also symbolic of its geopolitical strategy. Even Russia's foreign policy reveals that the war has been the most potent and often the sole instrument in achieving its strategic and security goals. It is true that NATO's move to create a military presence in Ukraine would be a matter of serious concern for Russia.

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However, Russia before resorting to aggressive action could have opted for negotiation and dialogue so as to avoid the present situation. Thus, major countries chose the foreign policy of war over peace to reinforce their strength more assertively, as there is no international standards or mechanism to punish those waging war or provoking its occurrence.

Another important question that strikes is 'Was this war necessitated? Did Russia invade Ukraine on humanitarian grounds for its moral duty to protect and preserve the common life of its people? Can this war be called a just war to avert an imminent attack or to prevent the anticipated future threats? Offensive realism explains Russian action in Ukraine as part of a power balancing process (Kleinschmidt, 2018) ^[6]. Russia is viewed as a rational actor seeking regional hegemony and control over its immediate neighbours due to structural imperatives. Whether this war is about power maximisation or not is still inconclusive. But Russia's concern for its endangered security can't be brushed aside. Although Russia's intention with respect to its neighbours is still ambiguous, its military action against Ukraine is a defensive reaction to the NATO expansion and USA's active engagement in Ukraine politics supporting fascist forces. Furthermore, the view of offensive realism that Russia's action of invading Ukraine to maintain its regional hegemony was deemed to be incorrect against the view of defensive realism that the security concern of Russia could have been respected to avoid the war. The inclusion of Russian neighbors in NATO would result in the full encirclement of Russia by the USA and its allies.

The implication of the Russia-Ukraine War on Global Politics

This particular war between Russia and Ukraine might prove to be instrumental in altering the equilibrium of power between major countries in Europe as well as in the world. It has already created apprehension about the suspension of the boundary less global economy as well as of global peace and security (Maira, 2020) ^[8]. At any time, war can be fought on behalf of a major country and that may escalate to a third world war. In addition, for such a large-scale conflict that has incurred civilians' death, one party cannot be held totally guilty and another credulous. Ukraine's leader is as responsible as the Russian leader along with the propagators like NATO and the west.

Nevertheless, the war has brought Russian behaviour into critical scrutiny. While the autocratic nature of Russia brings it worldwide condemnation, the democratic nature of the USA shields it from global censure as evident. Although Russia is criticized for reacting to a sovereign country's decision of joining NATO by disrespecting the autonomy of a sovereign country, the USA's tendency to create a sphere of influence in the region of soviet republics is not viewed seriously. Again, Mearsheimer's assertion about the regional hegemony-seeking attitude of Russia and its tendency to dominate its small neighbors also carries weight here (Kleinschmidt, 2018) ^[6]. Even, Russia faced an adverse reaction from the liberals for acting as an authoritarian regime that claims authority over another sovereign country that is Ukraine. It is always seen that the USA always rationalizes its act of intervention on the ground of promoting democratization in the concerned region or the country. In the present crisis, the assumption that the loosening of Soviet control would promote democracy in

Eastern Europe is deemed by the USA as the rational ground for its act of meddling in Ukraine's affairs. Is it really the USA's mission to contain and isolate the authoritarian forces in Europe? It is ironic that the fascist forces in Ukraine have been supported by the USA in order to facilitate the country's inclusion in NATO (Dogra, 2022) ^[2]. In addition, the USA wants to control a dictatorship by extending support to a fascist force. As such, it would be inappropriate to claim that the war is an outcome of the contention between democracy and Dictatorship.

At present, there has been a consensus that the role and influence of the USA in promoting democracy has quietly diminished, though, it was a major promoter of democratization during the 1970s and 1980s. As evident, USA's intervention in the country like Afghanistan, Ukraine etc., has not helped in the expansion and consolidation of democracy in these regions. Rather, there has been a further decline in the democratic gains of the previous decades. It is quite evident that the expansion and growth of NATO have been a high priority of American Foreign Policy, not the furtherance of the democratisation process. As such, the international community is backing off from the democratisation path. The goals of the democratisation movement cannot be accomplished with the militarization of the region. However, the irony is that triggering hostility among nations is being used as a weapon for democratization.

NATO's stand in the Russia-Ukraine war

The dubious relationship between Russia and the west along with the cold war issues which dominated international political discourses for decades gave birth to NATO. NATO, in essence, represents the west. Thus, its eastward expansion represents the west's intervening policy in the eastern country's affairs and makes geopolitics more relevant. The act of expanding NATO with the inclusion of the neighbour states of Russia and that of supporting opposition forces in Ukraine are reflective of the west's containment policy against Russia (Kleinschmidt, 2018) ^[7]. Moreover, in the ongoing crisis, the West has been on the side of Ukraine but had not yet provided any security guarantee to this small country by giving membership of NATO nor had put any effort to cease the war so as to save the country from further loss. Undoubtedly, the active involvement of the USA in the matter of NATO membership has aggravated the conflicting situation. Apparently, the western attitude towards Russia has not changed in the post-cold war period. It is quite surprising how Ukraine has drifted much closer to the USA and away from Russia. That is why Russia feared being encircled by NATO members.

India's stand in the ongoing war

India followed a non-condemnatory approach, maintaining neutrality when major powers continued to intervene in other small countries, for instance during the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1957, the Soviet interventions in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) or Afghanistan (1979), or the American invasion of Iraq (2003). In such contexts of global disorders, India has always maintained strategic autonomy and a balance position. India along with other countries like South Africa, Israel, Turkey, and UAE remained abstained from the UN sanction regimes against Russia, thereby circumventing American sanctions. Even

these countries were not in favour of putting sanctions on Russia and throwing it out of the G-20. Yet, only India had to face public criticism and outrage from the west. Even it was warned of consequences for conducting any trade with Russia beyond the American sanctions. The very careful construction of a narrative that Russia's attack on Ukraine is an assault on the so-called "the Free World" has led to the isolation of Russia and extended cooperation with Ukraine. In such a free world, the west has tried to press India for giving up its strategic autonomy and take the side of the West against Russia. However, India stuck to its historical policy of neutrality without conceding to the West's pressure.

Also, China has emerged as a strong competitor of India in the South Asian region. In such context, India's tilt towards the west in the ongoing war would eventually leave its competitor stronger as well as fiercer towards India itself. Again, Russia has proved to be a true friend of India during the critical period of its war with the neighbors like China and Pakistan. Moreover, the relationship with Russia is important to India for geopolitical reasons such as continental security and interests. India's call for an independent inquiry into the brutal killings of civilians in the Bucha region of Kyiv in the ongoing war reveals India's stand on pragmatic realism, not on biasness. Even in the present context when India is viewed by the west as a counterweight to China in the Indo-pacific region, any coercive action taken against India would be prejudicial to the USA's interest in this region. Besides, India's post-cold war approach is based on strategic autonomy, involving membership of diverse groups such as the BRICS, G-20, SCO, QUAD, etc. India's policy of multi-alignment as reflected in its tendency to expand its engagement with all the major powers asserts its strategic autonomy in such a disordered world (Kaura, 2022)^[5].

Role of institutions of global governance during Crisis time

The terrible havoc caused by the explosion of nuclear bombs in the Second World War resulting in the death of millions of civilians rationally has become a deterrent to the errant nations willing to wage war. At present time, possession of nuclear power by most countries is itself viewed as a deterrent in initiating war. Yet, the war happened to be a reality in the present context of global interconnectedness. The unstoppable armed war between Russia and Ukraine and the resultant terror inflicted on the civilians of Ukraine indicates the ineffectiveness of international laws, like the Hague and Geneva conventions in preventing the killing of civilians. The primary cause behind their ineffectiveness is the lack any formal enforcement mechanisms. As such, the sovereign states are deemed free to violate them at will for securing their own national interests. The status of these conventions could be well assessed from the words of Thomas Hobbes that "covenants without sword are mere words" (Valentino, Huth & Croco, 2006)^[9]. Moreover, the suspension of Russia's membership in the Human Rights Council by the UNGA has not impacted much in stopping the ongoing war. As such, the credibility of the organization is doubtful. It is a failing on the part of the institutions of global governance to keep the world united. The inclusion of Russia in the European Union in the year 1998 was the signal of the beginning of cooperation between the east and the west in

the aftermath of the Soviet collapse in 1991. Yet, the expulsion of Russia from the organisation after its invasion of Crimea signalled the latent indisposition of the West in maintaining the relationship with Russia and in handling the situation through the dialogical process.

Furthermore, the institutions of global governance like the United Nations and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are deemed to be controlled by the western countries. In such a larger forum, the democratic will does not prevail due to the veto power of the permanent member countries. The undemocratic nature of global governance is responsible for the present chaotic situation. Such prevailing nature is also a hindrance to the move toward an enabling and equitable world. If the global community is failed to restrain the countries from waging war and creating a chaotic situation in the global sphere, it is largely due to the undemocratic nature of global governance. Hence, the need of the hour is to democratize the existing structures of global governance. Armed intervention and sanctions would not help in restoring democracy or promoting global democracy. Although the world leaders have reiterated that war can be halted only through negotiation and dialogue, but had not substantially contributed to such a consultative and democratic process.

Conclusion

The hegemony of the east or the west or the unipolarity of the USA is not desirable for a healthy, and equitable global community. A multi-polar world with equitable global governance is desirable in the present state of affairs. The tendency among major powers in triggering strategic divides and waging a proxy war in small countries must be self-restrained. Moreover, USA's implicit propensity to reinstate its supremacy in global politics and revert from a multipolar world to a unipolar world needs to be changed. Thus, the democratic nature of global governance with the guarantee of equitable rights to all the sovereign nations is imperative.

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