**If Pakistan at war**

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Russia’s ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine has already become a classic example of power-games and forgotten commitments…!! Next month, the war in Ukraine will enter its second year with no hope of coming to an end any time soon. The ‘demilitarization’ and ‘denazification’ of a European state started in the face of unequivocal commitments from the West to counter any such venture. Besides colossal economic losses, it has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths on both sides; caused Europe’s largest refugee crisis since WWII; displaced millions within their own country; and forced Moscow to experience its greatest emigration since the October Revolution of 1917.

Condemnation of the invasion by several countries; the UNGA’s resolution demanding a full withdrawal of Russian forces; ICJ’s ‘order’ to Russia to suspend military operations; expulsion of Russia by the Council of Europe; and, imposition of sanctions on Russia by many nations have produced zero results. Even the exit of over a thousand companies from Russia could not deter Moscow to halt its operation. The outcome of the ICC’s investigation into crimes against humanity in Ukraine since 2013 will not spring any surprises either. On the other hand, promises to counter Russia, particularly by the West, could not go beyond the provision of additional military and humanitarian assistance. In real terms, the Russian invasion remains unchecked…!!!

[PM Shehbaz to chair cabinet meeting today](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/pm-shehbaz-to-chair-cabinet-meeting-today)

What does this stale-mate situation signify? It signifies at least four factors. National interest remains the supreme baseline of any action or inaction of nation-states. Power would prevail against any and all political or moral arguments. Justifications for offering commitments and reneging thereon are both available and believable. The United Nations as an Organization has lost its mojo and the presence of an ‘aggressor’ in the Security Council as a permanent member with veto-power makes matters more complicated. Hence, conflict resolution remains in the hands of the aggressor or the other powerful actors if ever they actually desired to proceed in the right direction.

The bottom-line? You need to fight your wars on your own and must not rely on any commitments made by anyone when it comes to your own safety and security. For instance, Ukraine signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and agreed to dismantle its nuclear weapons. In return, three powerful countries agreed in the Budapest Memorandum ‘to uphold the territorial integrity’ of Ukraine. UK and the US were the two signatories. Any idea which country was the third? It was Russia, the same country which subsequently chose to invade Ukraine by launching a full-scale military operation. Unlike human relationships, the conduct of nations depends on their respective national interests at a given time and not on any principle of morality. Hence, it is important to focus on what should be done but more importantly, to examine what could be done and what is actually being done.

[PM directs PTA to immediately restore Wikipedia services](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/pm-directs-pta-to-immediately-restore-wikipedia-services)

Taking a lead from history and the Russo-Ukrainian war, Pakistan needs to re-evaluate its approach towards a possible war with India or any other enemy. Here are some pointers that need the attention of our strategists:

In the event of war, the US might be the first one to warn against it and the last one to help Pakistan in terms of resources. The mantra of sanctions will be repeated after issuing serious warning to both sides. Meanwhile, arms-producing companies would be flashing favourable tenders. There might be a hurriedly arranged debate in the UN Security Council with China issuing supportive statements in favour of Pakistan. Indeed, China would like to have the situation dissipated rather than outrightly supporting Pakistan. The UN system will once again be exposed as being ineffective in finding a formula for conflict resolution. Europe might not go beyond adopting a couple of resolutions mainly from the EU platform. For powerful nations of the world, the aim would be to avoid a situation in which an undesirable button is pressed, sending ripples of war towards the energy-rich Middle-East or beyond.

[Cold, dry weather expected in most parts of country](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/cold-dry-weather-expected-in-most-parts-of-country)

Middle-Eastern powers and the Arab world would feel the heat but not to the extent of taking sides. Even Iran would wish to keep itself away from the battlefield. Pakistan’s principled stand on Yemen, Syria, KSA-Iran rift and Iran’s nuclear programme will have a boomerang effect. As you sow, so shall you reap. Pakistan’s neutrality on the war in Ukraine might also result in a quid-pro-quo situation with regard to Russia. With the African and South American regions completely out of the picture, the Central Asian states would wish to safeguard against any attack on their own energy-rich areas rather than becoming a party to the war. Membership in strong regional arrangements might help the enemy to muster the required political support. Pakistan may have to get ready to fight on both the Eastern and Western borders as Kabul might surprise Islamabad, yet again. The likes of IS-K, Daesh, and Al-Qaida will have a field day, adding additional problems for Pakistan.

The good news? The US will make sure that the nuclear option is not exercised by either side. Keeping in view Washington’s silence on the ‘accidental’ firing of the Brahmos cruise missile by India, in all probabilities, the pressure will be more on Pakistan. Some powerful countries might like to avail the opportunity to make ‘suitable adjustments’ to Pakistan’s most revered strategic programme. In the event of a ‘deterrent’ remaining as such, it might be yet another conventional war…!!

[Senator Mushahid Hussain urges govt to initiate 'normal traffic' at Thar border](https://www.nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2023/senator-mushahid-hussain-urges-govt-to-initiate-normal-traffic-at-thar-border)

Due to the unpredictability factor, both Pakistan and India would not like to go for a full-scale war unless someone tries to be adventurous and stage another Kargil-like melodrama. War is certainly not an option for either of the countries and for that matter the world at large. But as logic and truth are the first casualties in any war, one must be prepared even for the unthinkable. Judging by the statements coming from the respective garrisons, both Islamabad and New Delhi are ‘fully prepared’ to thwart any aggression. The question is: Does Pakistan have the required economic muscle to sustain a long-drawn conventional war? Even the enemy knows the answer …!!!