**Russia-Ukraine War: Another Side**

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Twelve days on, Russia is hitting Ukraine. Four cities Third round of talks between Russia and Ukraine progressed for a temporary ceasefire to give safe passage to natives to take refuge in Belarus, Russia and other neighbouring countries. The UNHCR (United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees) says about 1.7 million have fled the war zone, including over a million to Poland. Russia is encouraging refugees to their land and Belarus. Ukraine is pressing on the residents of the war-hit cities to take refuge in peaceful cities, instead of going to Russia and Belarus. Ironically, the countries (the US, UK and some from Nato) that fueled the Russo-Ukraine conflict to become a war, are staying away from the hot pursuit. Even they are not accepting Ukrainian refugees on a humanitarian basis. Strange. Very strange. We commonly understand war politics and the economy. Surely, we need to understand refugee politics and business. This may be discussed separately.

We are flooded with information on the Russia-Ukraine war, but only from the US and Western media. The crux is Russia has invaded Ukraine and created a humanitarian crisis. The portrayal of a bad cop. May be sane until the conflict built-up factors are not taken into consideration. Unfortunately, the crisis remains the only focus. The sequence and build-up of the situation in Ukraine over the decade and the US-backed Revolution of Dignity in 2014 is being missed out from pro-US stories and analysis in Western media. Another missing link is Ukraine’s membership in Nato and EU and its consequences for Russia. Reviewing it all, retaliation seems inevitable. Most ironic for Ukraine is their instigators get aback; foreseeing a strong reaction from Russia against them. Quite sane decision of the US to stay away from the fire. It prevented Ukraine and the world from a widespread war.

All the efforts on the way are to malign Russia for invasion and to manage refugees from Ukraine. No rational focus on the solution of the conflict. The United Nations Security Council is all out to ceasefire and wider and broader negotiations between the two parties. We have no clue about the Russian concerns and agenda. The US and the West shall restore the cut off voice of the Russian side.

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For centuries, Ukraine has been a part of Russia. Just a decade back, until the US provoked its political elite, Ukraine was a peaceful country believing in co-existence with traditional ties. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia has concerns over the “protection” of the people of Donetsk and Lugansk – the two pro-Russian states. The recent Russian “special military operation” is said to demilitarize Ukraine in Donetsk and Lugansk. On the other hand, the US has announced $350 million in military aid to Ukraine while the Australian commitment is $50 million. More escalation is expected in this part of the map.

Russia has refuted the western allegations of planning to occupy the Ukrainian territory, and firing missiles and rockets on civilian peaceful facilities. The Russian authorities believe that NATO’s eastward expansion threatens Russia’s historical future as a nation. The Western powers have crossed the red line by bringing the alliance’s infrastructure closer to Russia’s borders. Ukraine is the centrepiece of the West’s strategy of containing Russia. The ultra-nationalist Ukrainian regime introduced aggressive anti-Russian policies and waged war on the people of what they call “Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Lugansk People’s Republic.” They believe Russia is open to diplomacy based on the principles of mutual respect, equality, and considering each other’s interests.

Some experts believe that President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin’s February 24 military operation against Ukraine is in accordance with Article 51 (Chapter VII) of the UN Charter and the execution of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and the Lugansk People’s Republic (LPR). The purpose of this operation is to protect the people of the two states. The threat is posed by Ukrainian nationalists who hold the people of Ukraine as hostages, using them as a human shield by deploying heavy equipment and multiple rocket launchers in residential quarters. This is a blatant violation of the international humanitarian law, including articles 51 and 58 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions.

Recently NATO leadership has been blunt in its statements that they need to accelerate and step up efforts to bring the alliance’s infrastructure closer to Russia’s borders. In December 2021, Russia made another attempt to reach an agreement with the US and its allies on the principles of European security and NATO’s non-expansion. No positive signs yet.

The prevailing situation may lead to further escalation in the region if the US and Nato continue to support anti-Russian elements in the territories adjacent to the Russian Federation. Certainly, Russia will not accept but retaliate to any further expansion of the NATO alliance’s infrastructure close to the Russian borders. The US and Nato’s ongoing military support to anti-Russia forces in Ukraine is a matter of grave concern, not for Russia alone but for the region too. Sane and rational thinking and actions accordingly, and abiding by the international laws and commitments would restore peace in the region.

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