**Wars of Occupation and Russian Invasion of Ukraine**

[Ambassador G R Baluch](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/ambassador-g-r-baluch/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Ambassador%20G%20R%20Baluch)

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Most of the wars are intrinsically fought as wars of occupation. Historically, this is also borne out by the fact that the aggressor is always a militarily superior power who finds a pretext and invades and later occupies the weaker country. The stronger country, after subduing the army of the target country, either annexes the vanquished territory or sets up a vessel state through surrogates, as was done in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya by the US, India in Kashmir and Sikkim, and now Russia in Eastern Ukrainian territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. There is a long list of wars of occupation waged by militarily superior countries. Some of the major wars of occupation in the second half of the 20th Century include Isreal’s war of occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem 1967, the Indian War of Occupation of Kashmir 1947 -1948, and recent annexation on August 5, 2019, Indonesian occupation of West New Guinea and later annexation in 1963, Isreal’s occupation and annexation of Golan Heights 1967-81, Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara followed by annexation in 1975. President Vladimir Putin mobilized about 150,000 troops the biggest military mobilization of troops against a European Country by another European country since the Second World War. President Putin, in an address to the nation on February 24, announced a “special military operation,” under the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance ratified by the Duma on February 22 with Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic justified his decision to invade Ukraine.

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He said, “For the United States and its allies, this is the so-called policy of containment of Russia, [which brings] obvious geopolitical benefits. And for our country, this is ultimately a matter of life and death, a matter of historical future as a people. And this is not an exaggeration – it is true. This is a real threat not just to our interests, but to the very existence of our state, its sovereignty. This is the very redline that has been talked about many times. They crossed it.” President Putin set two military objectives for his Special Military Operation: demilitarization and denization of Ukraine. Exuding his confidence as a preponderant military power as compared to his rival country, Ukraine, he called upon the Ukrainian Army personnel to surrender. He said, “Dear comrades, your fathers, grandfathers, great grandfathers did not fight the Nazis and defend our common Motherland so that today’s Neo Nazis can seize power in Ukraine. You took an oath of allegiance to the Ukrainian people, and not to the anti-national Junta that plunders Ukraine and abuses its people.””Don’t follow its criminal orders. I urge you to lay down your weapons immediately and go home. I want to make clear that all servicemen of the Ukrainian army who do so will be able to freely leave the combat zone and return to their families.” Does the February 24, 2022’s Russian invasion of Ukraine differ from others Wars of occupations waged earlier? The answer is perhaps no. There are several common threads and similarities, i.e. there is perceived historical wrong that the leader of the invading force intends to set right through military intervention, overwhelm the opponent with a superior war machine, use some legal fig leaf to justify the invasion, wage a media war with one are more alibies to win over the population of the victim /target country. Putin also invoked existential threat to his country posed by the western countries, wage a military blitzkrieg in conjunction with a media blitzkrieg, however, Russia lacked the global media infrastructure as compared to the west to launch a worldwide media campaign to promote its narrative. The BBC, CNN, DW and other western media powerhouses have completely dominated the digital space in the realm of information warfare. As a consequence of the relentless bombing of Ukrainian cities by the invading Russian forces, over a million Ukrainians have fled their homes and hearths and families; leaving behind their male members to fight back the invasion. The heart-wrenching humanitarian images showing sobbing mothers with toddlers grasped in their hands, and on strollers, standing in freezing cold has also turned the world public opinion against the Russian invasion. A lesson from the history of wars is that the antagonists do choose the timings of initiation of war, but they simply have no control over how it would end. Hence, this is a challenge for the world community to find a diplomatic solution to this aimless war which has wrought death and disaster to the warring parties. The European security architecture has been racked and new security architecture in Europe which can ensure peace and security for all will take some time to evolve. The shooting and subsequent fire near Europe’s biggest nuclear power plant at Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine was a stark reminder to the world of the risk of an accidental nuclear war, an unthinkable spectre by any stretch, given the devastation, a nuclear war would inflict on the world. Pakistan took a more neutral stance in the UN General Assembly vote on the Russian invasion of Ukraine to retain “diplomatic space for a manoeuvre.” However, what Pakistan can do at this point in time is to offer humanitarian assistance as a humanitarian goodwill gesture towards the Ukrainian people. Pakistan should also engage with China and Turkey, the two friends who could use their international diplomatic clout, towards finding a peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis.

*The writer is former Ambassador of Pakistan to Vietnam*