**Security crisis in Europe**

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It is easy to criticise, and it is more difficult to do something constructive. Sometimes, situations deteriorate and we all see things going in a downward spiral, yet, we allow it to happen as if it were inevitable, a law of nature that we can do nothing about. We get used to bad situations, yes, even in our time when we are not really fatalists, but have science and experience to solve issues. We have knowledge; we have resources; we have experts and specialists; we have ways and means that can lead us out of crises and difficulties. Yet, we don’t always do what we could and should, strange as it may sound.

In today’s article, I shall draw attention to the unresolved security crisis related to Russia and the West, notably involving Ukraine, that goes on without solutions being implemented, and, without we having done the right things to avoid the situation escalating into the current crisis. The current conflict between Russia and the West is a conflict having escalated especially since 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea, and it has since gone further over Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

[US in its ‘weakest position,’ Raisi tells Russia’s State Duma](https://nation.com.pk/21-Jan-2022/us-in-its-weakest-position-raisi-tells-russia-s-state-duma)

The crisis was allowed to begin thirty years ago when USSR collapsed, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was created, and several former Soviet states in Eastern Europe were allowed to become entirely independent states, even members of NATO and the European Union (EU), such as the three small Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved and NATO had agreed with Russia not to move further eastwards, although this promise was not kept.

There has been debate about Georgia, but not much about Moldova, with regards to future security. In the middle of Europe, there is also Belarus, also called White Russia. It is the last dictatorship in Europe and therefore also not allowed in as a member of the Council of Europe (CE), which has 47 member states. NATO has been enlarged to include 30 member states. Russia is a CE member; close to a quarter of Russia’s territory is in Europe, and the rest is in Asia.

The problematic state is currently Ukraine since Russia does not want it to become too close to Western Europe and certainly not a member of NATO, which would mean that Russia would have on its doorsteps the world’s largest military alliance next door to its southern military headquarters on the Black Sea and the Crimea peninsula. In the eastern parts of Ukraine, Russian is actually the mother tongue in several areas, or mixed Russian and Ukrainian in other areas. Some of these parts have pro-Russian populations. If they were actually part of Russia, there would be land access from Russia to Crimea. The West fears for an expansionist Russia that would annex even these territories, and would see it as totally unacceptable. Whether Russia has such intentions is not known. Let it be mentioned that Ukraine has a population of about 45 million and Russia has about 145 million. They are both advanced and big countries in many fields, and both would benefit from good cooperation.

[Iran, Russia, China to begin joint naval drill on Friday](https://nation.com.pk/21-Jan-2022/iran-russia-china-to-begin-joint-naval-drill-on-friday)

Although it is stressed by the West in the current situation that all countries have the right to decide their security policies and alliances without interference of foreign states, even if neighbours don’t like it or find it provocative. This is used by the West in defence of Ukraine not only having cooperation agreements with NATO and EU, but also if the country at some future stage should choose to become a full member of EU, and even of NATO. The latter is probably quite unlikely as several NATO countries, and NATO as a whole, might not want Ukraine as a member, and certainly not in the near future.

Further to the north, Finland is bordering Russia, and after WWII it had to cede some land to its big and powerful neighbour to the east. Today Finland is neutral; it is a member of the EU and a Western-oriented country. The same goes for Finland’s neighbour Sweden, which is also neutral, yet, seen as even more Western-oriented than Finland. The conservative party in Sweden, which about eight years ago had the prime minister of the country for seven years, wants Sweden to become a NATO member. However, currently with a social democratic PM and government, that is not actively pursued. I believe it would be difficult for the two countries to change their non-aligned and neutral policies unless Russia gave a positive nod to it.

[PM Imran Khan backs Lahore Qalandars to win PSL 7](https://nation.com.pk/21-Jan-2022/pm-imran-khan-backs-lahore-qalandars-to-win-psl-7)

Norway, to the west and north of Sweden, with borders with Russia and Finland, is a NATO member and was even a founding member of the defence alliance in 1949. It is a fact that the social democrats in power in Norway that time whisked Norway into NATO without much public debate. However, it is likely that the Norwegians would have opted for NATO membership even if there had been more debate. Today, there is little debate about it in Norway, but earlier, including in the early 1960s and later, central Norwegian politicians have questioned the country’s NATO ties. Currently, though, NATO’s secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg is a Norwegian, and he is a former long-time PM of Norway. It is interesting to know that when he was leader of the youth wing of the social democratic party, he followed the organization’s line opposing NATO membership; much water has run under the bridge since then. It should be noted that all the Nordic countries have cordial cooperation with Russia. Let us cultivate such policies in future, too, for the mentioned countries, and also the Baltic states, and the countries further south, indeed Ukraine, which today has a conflict with Russia, yes, a war in the east of Ukraine.

[UN mission in Mali resumes flights after suspension](https://nation.com.pk/21-Jan-2022/un-mission-in-mali-resumes-flights-after-suspension)

I began my article by asking questions about how the current security situation could deteriorate to the current level without it being stopped. Today, the West’s arguments are all about Russia having to take the blame, not about the West itself having some fault. True, it was wrong of Russia to annex Crimea in 2014, but at least to some extent it was caused by the West, specifically related to that territory and also related to other situations in Europe and beyond, including Iraq, Syria and Libya.

I believe much of the problem today between Russia and the West is caused by a lack of talks. Also, it is a fact that NATO’s budget is some ten times larger than Russia’s military budget, and it is a fact that NATO has had operations outside its own defence territory, including all the way away in Afghanistan. It has been a NATO policy to increase each member’s defence budget to two per cent of each country’s GDP.

Although the current security crisis in Europe is serious, I believe it is unlikely to go out of hand and end in direct armed conflict and war. Like the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, let us hope that when the two sides of Russia and the West become sensible and sober, they will not feel the need for show-off. Let us hope that the crisis will end better than the Cuban situation. Let us revisit and learn from our past mistakes and have peaceful dialogue that can lead to future prosperity for all.