**Of Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks**

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It’s the 23rd week of the Russia-Ukraine war. This armed conflict had no chance to expand to this extent and could intensify the impact on the region and beyond. Ukraine had surrendered long back if the US and NATO did not decide to support Ukraine against Russian provocation. Only the US military support to Ukraine has touched $7.4 billion. An independent and prosperous state, an exporter of 13 per cent of the total world’s food grain, has gone under severe debt to the US and NATO at the moment. The conflicting issues between Russia-Ukraine could have been resolved through the UN and a third-country arbitration. Just like the restoration of safe passage by Russia to the Ukrainian grain ships. The UN Secretary-General and Turkish President mediated the food grains supply between the two countries. All the pending conflicts across the globe could be resolved if the example is repeated in faith and trust. The veto-powers need to stay away from opportunism in the conflicts for the sake of regional and global peace.

On the one hand, the US and NATO support has enabled Ukraine to better negotiate their national interest. On the other hand, prolonged war has its consequences. The foremost is the clear division of the veto powers and their close friends. Once again the world is visibly divided into two blocs after decades. Perhaps, the US and NATO countries faced criticism for the first time within their own countries for pushing into war and destabilizing a country like Ukraine. All rational voices are up for a peaceful solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It may set an example for other conflicts too.

Well-reputed news agency Reuters has reported that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in his interview has urged China to use its outsized political and economic influence over Russia to bring an end to the fighting. Finally, Ukraine has realized that the US and NATO military support has not been enough to win over Russia, neither the war would resolve the conflict. For sure, both countries have to respect the opinion of the people but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has refused to accept any referendum in the Russian-occupied parts. Russia terms them the independent states. Meanwhile, Ukraine and its supporters need to ensure respect for the rights of the natives of the conflict zones.

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While preparing for negotiations between the warring countries Russia-Ukraine, the mediating countries shall ensure no US and NATO soldiers are fighting against Russia. There shall be no foreign technical support in Ukraine to operate the US armaments supplied recently. The Russian Defence Ministry has already shouted out against the presence of more than three thousand US soldiers fighting against them.

Some of the European media have noted that the supportive actions of the US and the West to Ukraine have expanded the armed conflict zone, and intensified the conflict too. The EU experts believe that the US military support, especially Himars, the rocket launchers, and other heavy weaponry to Ukraine have contributed to fueling the fire to spread unwantedly. If the Ukrainian Armed Forces use them [the US rocket launchers Himars] to attack Russian territory, this threatens a serious escalation of the situation in the region and possible involvement of new participants in the expanding conflict.

Russia has already warned the US to stay away from the war, any supply of heavy weaponry and its use against Russia would be considered a ‘direct attack’ and the consequences will be accordingly. The Russian Defence Ministry believes that the US often uses a similar technique of supplying heavy weaponry to the war zone first, followed by their direct engagement thereby further inflaming it. At the same time, the US remains sideline playing as a hidden hand.

Despite Zelensky’s promises not to use heavy weapons, in particular the American MLRS, on Russian territory, provocations by Ukraine are not ruled out. The Kyiv authorities have repeatedly confirmed their complete lack of trustworthiness and unreliability. Washington, for its part, pushes European satellites to work closely with Kyiv and aggravate relations with Moscow, forcing them to supply weapons, train Ukrainian soldiers and use their territory as a transit zone for arms supplies. This poses an additional threat to the security of Russia and its citizens and dramatically increases the risk that the armed conflict in Ukraine will escalate into a full-scale war in Europe.

Ukraine has become a territory of uncontrolled proliferation and arms smuggling. Western countries are forced to admit that they have no precise information about where the weapons supplied to the Kyiv regime are going, which uncontrollably distributes weapons to all those willing to oppose “Russian aggression”, including militants of openly extremist groups. Much of the NATO weaponry has flooded black markets, from where it finds its way to Middle Eastern countries, where it is highly likely to be used in terrorist attacks.

Earlier, the Ukrainian foreign minister announced that Ukraine might organize deliveries of military products to “needy” countries in Africa. Thus, the Kyiv government, even in conditions of an acute arms shortage for its army, is ready to sell some of its weapons, including Western weapons, to armed conflict zones in the African continent. In turn, the implementation of this scenario may lead to a deterioration of the situation and the activation of international terrorist organizations in the region.

Against this background, there has been a decrease in the level of public support in the EU countries for the initiatives of the European leadership to finance the supply of weapons and military equipment to Ukraine. According to a public opinion poll conducted by the European Commission’s Monitoring Service, only 33 per cent of European Union residents approve of military assistance to Ukraine, with the figure being even lower among the EU leaders such as Germany, France and Italy where the public support has been as low as 31, 30 and 23 per cent respectively. Germany was the top sufferer of the energy crisis as Russia cut 50 per cent of the gas supply. A green country is forced to think about the use of coal-fired power plants.

Now is the moment of realization in the Ukrainian presidency to end the fighting as the nuclear installations are at the target, and the use of nuclear weapons is being considered. China and other trustworthy countries shall play a positive role in a win-win mediation between both the warring countries. A sustainable solution would restore peace in the region. There shall be a well-defined mechanism to limit external fiddling in the conflicting zones.

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