**The Future of Neutrality on Ukraine (Part II)**

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Ukraine’s invasion was inevitable-given attempts like these were never deemed as out of the ordinary for Moscow. When you search the Russo-Ukraine War online, it shows that the conflict officially started on the 20th of February, 2014. It isn’t entirely wrong.

Russia has a 1400-mile border with Ukraine and has always used that to its advantage to make sure the young independent nation didn’t become a disputed issue in the international community. Apparently, actions ought to speak louder than words. In late 2014 and early 2015-in collaboration with the Belarusians- The Minsk agreements were agreed to and signed. These would essentially order a ceasefire and support diplomatic channels to help establish the state (literally) of the Donbas region. Now-keep in mind-this was after the takeover of Crimea from Ukraine, and tensions were at an all-time high.

This was around the time the international community would have stepped in and put a stop to it. Unfortunately, it was deemed more of an internal matter and no one even mentioned it, citing their ‘neutrality’ on Ukraine’s Sovereignty. And as hypocritical as it was, it was true-no one wanted to put their geopolitical support systems on the line for a nation that is a gateway to the western world.

Today, the same neutrality persists in some nations. And the state of play isn’t smart-it’s egocentric. And it only benefits a minority of countries in the short run. It is in fact a short-term policy from the governments who see their tenure shortened by the invisible but catastrophic effect of the War.

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After February 2022, and the latest invasion of Ukrainian territory, European countries including Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland, and Vatican-who were previously neutral on the issue of the territorial dispute-now called for territorial ‘integrity’. These countries now sent some of the largest volumes of aid to Ukraine and started to correlate their own chances of being the next of many with a target on their backs.

A year into the war, some countries still stand unopposed to the idea of maintaining a friendlier relationship with the aggressor in this case-signifying what is rigidity on some of these fronts. In last April’s UN vote on the removal of Russia from the Human Right Council, 93 nations-who mostly classify as high-income countries-voted for the resolution, 24 voted against them and 76 voted either NV or abstained altogether. Now, these are countries like South Africa, which see themselves at a turning point-economically-but find themselves entirely excluded from a traditional bloc of countries. It’s a race to the top for some nations like Pakistan, which rely heavily on Russian supply chains for oil, and American goods for almost everything else.

Pakistan spent the better part of last year on its domestic issues and only got to an assertion with the Ukraine War in late June and early July. When they did, they pursued the same kind of language, dismissing prospects of cutting ties or sanctioning Russia over its human rights violations. According to Dr Muhammad Abdul Kalam, Russia’s trade with Pakistan is valued at about 700 million dollars while Ukraine’s trade with Pakistan is valued at 800 million. With Ukraine, Pakistan tenets a strong support system for wheat and other agricultural products and after the war began, strong supply chains were broken only to cause shortages in both countries.

Internally, no one in Pakistan acknowledges that the food shortages are accounted for by the war, but it’s an open secret for experts who see the supply shocks as no more than a coincidence. And since there is no acknowledgement of a broken supply chain, the nation is in no position to hold talks or request aid from other nations. And so, this will go on until its economy-along with other economies-are at a breaking point and have no option but to take a side. Now take note, there is no one pushing these countries to pick a side. They may signal that they are under pressure, but at the end of the day, the buck stops with them and they are responsible for their diplomatic insinuations.

One would often hear words like ‘dialogue’, ‘diplomacy’, and ‘de-escalation’ from these nations. In some cases, like Iran-where Russia is the primary supplier of arms-officials like to chart a rosy picture for Ukraine, and often disregard their ironic situations. It is perhaps the example of Iran that seems to be spilling out as an existential threat to Russia. Iran and Russia have embarked on what many may cite as an unsustainable relationship, where the two have accelerated their ties by exchanging more weapons and military equipment seen than ever before. Now, even more so, given the strong re-routing of affairs through their common ally-China

Here we are, circling back to China, who is the most important player in all of this and is perhaps the global leader of neutrality and that too selflessly. China is perhaps the only winner of neutrality in this conflict-and arguably every global conflict. China has only one ally-China itself-and it will go to all lengths to ensure that it is triumphant at the end of the day. This week, in a visit to Russia, Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated his support for a peace deal, all while enabling the aggressor-Russia with more indications of support and lethal aid-according to intelligence reports. China is willing to step in and even face one of its mildest adversaries-Russia-to help expand itself, all based on a tussle for the race to the top. With every passing day comes a new conflict that China is ready to profit off of. It is the rest of the global community’s job to not follow through with the second-largest economy’s controversial decisions, and listen to their officials.

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