**The conflict between Russia and Ukraine and World War III**

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Currently, two global geopolitical conflicts are threatening to engulf the world in World War III at any time. One is China’s possible invasion of Taiwan, while the other is Russia’s attempt to annex Ukraine.

The interests of the world’s major powers, including China and Russia, are tied to these two conflicts.

There is currently a state of war between Russia and Ukraine, which could erupt at any moment. More than 100,000 Russian troops with heavy artillery have gathered on the Russian side of bordering eastern Ukraine. Ukraine’s eastern regions are home to many rebels, mostly Russians.

The Ukrainian government has the support of European countries, England, the US, and Australia whereas Russia opposes it. Chinese, Iranian, Turkish, and other Russian allies are quietly examining the situation.

The EU, England, the US, and Australia, are also ready to help Ukraine if war breaks out. Germany and France are reluctant to demonstrate any aggression against Russia as both purchase gas and crude oil from Russia. Especially, Germany wants to resolve the issue through negotiations with Russia to prevent a possible conflict, however, as time goes by the situation is becoming tenser and tenser every day.

The US, Britain, Germany, France, Australia, and many other European countries have withdrawn most of their diplomatic personnel from Ukraine.

To understand the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, one must know the historical facts and current disputes between these two nations.

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As the Soviet Union disintegrated and several independent states emerged, in 1991, Ukraine – a large state of the former Soviet Union – became an independent nation and the largest country in Eastern Europe and the second-largest country in Europe. Besides Russia, Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova, Ukraine is bordered by the Sea of Azov or the Black Sea.

Upon independence, Ukraine declared itself an independent and sovereign country and developed close relations with European countries.

Viktor Fedorovych was a popular pro-Russian politician who became Ukraine’s fourth president in 2010. He refused to establish good relations with the European Union and to sign a political association and free trade agreement with the EU. He has strengthened relationships with Russia in many areas, including defence and sharing natural resources.

Ukraine has developed a pipeline through which Russia supplies gas to Europe. One-third of Europe’s natural gas needs are met by Russia through this pipeline. This gas is also supplied to Ukraine.

Through a system called Nord Stream, Russia supplies natural gas to Germany by sea. In a similar vein, Russia supplies crude oil by sea to Germany, Slovakia, Belarus, Poland, and the Netherlands.

It wouldn’t be wrong to say that most of the European countries’ gas and petrol supplies come from Russia.

Russia believes that if Ukraine maintains close relations, trade, and other agreements with EU countries and gains EU membership, Russia will have to depend on the policies of the EU, UK, and several US-European allies. Therefore, Russia does not want to lose control of Ukraine.

Russia wants Ukraine treated like Crimea, another former Soviet state that gained independence in 1991 and is located along the Black Sea. In 2014, Russia invaded Crimea, defeated the Crimean army, and annexed Crimea. Crimea is now largely under the control of Russia.

The eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, inhabited by Russians, are also pushing for the accession of Ukraine to Russia. Ukrainian rebels are supported by Russia.

Most eastern Ukrainians are of Russian descent, and they share the same language, culture, and history as Russians. The rebels are of the same ethnicity as Crimea and want Russia to take over Ukraine. Putin wants Ukraine to join Russia so that it does not lean towards Europe in any way and is free of influences from Europe. Russia does not want Ukraine to join the EU.

In the present situation, where the soldiers with heavy weapons are facing each other, the trumpet of war could be sounded at any moment.

Germany, France, Italy, Poland, and Slovakia are seeking a deal with Russia. On the other hand, the US wants to use this opportunity to wage war against Russia with the help of Europe and to stop Russia’s rise to power.

In November 2013, Ukraine experienced a large-scale public protest that came to be known as Euromaidan. This public protest resulted in the removal of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Fedorovych from power in 2014. The reason was that majority of people wanted open access and trade with European Union countries.

Then Ukraine’s 44-year-old president, Volodymyr Zelensky, won a landslide victory on May 20, 2019, and became the sixth president of Ukraine. Volodymyr was a newcomer to politics. As a comedian and actor, he was very popular in Ukraine, but now he is seen as a smart politician. Upon coming to power, Volodymyr promised the Ukrainian people he would end corruption, reduce inflation, improve the status of average citizens and enhance ties with European countries. Volodymyr, however, has failed to implement his agenda in the last four years, which has resulted in a decline in his popularity and political rating.

Analysts say Volodymyr is using a rift with Russia to divert attention from public issues and seeks help from Western countries and the US to save his government.

President Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, is an experienced and shrewd politician. Putin believes he can force President Volodymyr to accede to Russia with a full military force deployed on the Ukrainian border.

Within their limits, Germany and France have suggested refraining from taking part in the war. At present, Olaf Scholz, Germany’s newly elected chancellor, appears to be the most active in trying to prevent a war between Ukraine and Russia. Me Scholz regularly meets with heads of state in Europe. On February 7, Olaf Schulz will meet with US President Joe Biden in Washington.

The French President Emmanuel Macron also tried to de-escalate the war-like situation between Russia and Ukraine, but he reaffirmed his solidarity with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

US President Joe Biden recently held a virtual meeting with President Ursula von der Leyen, President Charles Michel, President of France Macron, Chancellor Olaf, Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy, Secretary-General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg, President Andrzej Duda of Poland, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom. In this meeting, Biden attempted to persuade European leaders that if Russia invaded Ukraine, all countries would side with the United States and take part in the war against Russia as allies. Then under AUKUS, Australia recently signed a defence agreement with the United Kingdom and the United States. Therefore, if war breaks out, Australia would be a part of it, and the war would spread to the Australian and Asian continents.

Joe Biden is disappointed that European leaders have not responded to US requests for action against Russia as the US expected since time is of the essence.

After losing the war in Afghanistan and getting involved in Taiwan’s issue, the United States faces constant threats from China. Russian President Putin understands that Joe Biden is a weak US President. Therefore, this is the ideal time for Russia to invade Ukraine and occupy it or force it into acceding to Russia.

President Putin knows that Germany and France will not be allies of the US in the war. This is because a war would disrupt gas and oil supplies from Russia to Germany, France, and many other European countries. A war would be disastrous for Europe’s domestic conditions.

President Biden wants to kill two birds with one stone. As far as Biden is concerned, the war against Russia should be fought by Britain, Germany, France, and other European countries. The European leaders understand and recognise this as a bloody attempt.

The European countries understand that China, Turkey, and Iran will eventually support Russia. As a result of this possible war, other continents will be involved, and World War III will ensue. Thus, European nations are unlikely to engage in a war with Russia.

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