**Understanding the Russia-Ukraine War (Part II)**

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The western media is perhaps proving the best validation to Huntington’s thesis and that this is a war for civilisation.

In a segment of the US-based NBC news, the reporter told the channel: “To put it bluntly, these are not refugees from Syria, these are refugees from Ukraine. They’re Christians, they’re white.” On a UK channel ITV, a journalist commented: “The unthinkable has happened. This is not a developing, third-world nation; this is Europe.”

It must be understood that the western world has collectively reacted strongly to the invasion of Russia, as Europe had imagined that it had evolved beyond vulgar military conflicts for dominance. This sentiment is being expressed by the laymen and the statesman alike, because the formation of the European Union and a common currency, the Euro, was achieved in this spirit. Brexit was seen as a betrayal.

The greatest non-military assault by the US and the western powers has been to launch an economic assault on Russia. The US has imposed sanctions on Russia. They are also using the western controlled global banking system to strike Russia. Russian institutions and individuals are to be cut off from SWIFT in an effort to bring the Russian economy to its knees. Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, said, “Cutting banks off will stop them from conducting most of their financial transactions worldwide and effectively block Russian exports and imports.”

The Trans-Atlantic coalition would also try to cripple Russia’s central bank by freezing its transactions and making it “impossible for the central bank to liquidate assets.”

Russia was prepared for sanctions, but blocking its central bank will nullify the USD 630 billion foreign currency reserves Russia built to sanction-proof its economy. Switzerland has made an unprecedented move of abandoning neutrality and has implemented sweeping business and financial sanctions on Russia and Russians.

As a result of these collective moves, the Russian Ruble has hit a record low.

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German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced on Saturday that his government was approving a transfer of antitank weapons to the Ukrainian military. Germany is also providing three-year work permits to refugees.

In other recent news, British courts have surprisingly not allowed freezing the assets of Russian oligarchs in the western financial system.

The West is hoping to topple Vladimir Putin through internal unrest from inflation and moral opposition to the war, with their financial manipulation. Putin, who has been in power for 22 years, has passed a law that will keep him in office till 2036. Putin has banned Facebook and Twitter and has announced harsh punishments for opposing the war.

As for financial manoeuvres, Russia is ahead of the curve. It developed its own domestic SWIFT system, to counter US sanctions, and should China team up, it may very well end western dominance on the global financial system.

A new Sino-Russian financial system could even pull in the G-20 and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and African nations allied to China as well as Arab states in the Russian sphere.

This move would be a game-changer in geopolitics if it transpires.

On another note, the overall Western response is also the best tafsir (explanation) of this verse from the Quran, which the Western world uses against Muslims.

“O You who have attained to faith! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies: they are but allies of one another.” (Quran 5:52)

The unfortunate Ukrainian situation begets the question that was Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit unhinged by the start of the war, a diplomatic faux pas?

Pakistan is an important country of the world due to its geo-strategic location of being nestled between India, Iran, China and the Great Game (Afghanistan).

Pakistan has been mercilessly maligned by India and the international media at large. Our long-standing relationship with the US has been rocky. Our relationship with China is solid, but due to China’s image issues, the alliance does not help Pakistan internationally. The Muslim states of Afghanistan, Turkey, Iran and the Middle Eastern states are not exactly our allies.

Pakistan helped Turkey fund its war of independence in 1924, during the “Khilafat Movement” led by Moulana Shoukat Ali. The Pakistani military fought alongside Egypt, Syria and Jordan during the Arab-Israeli wars. Pakistani troops defended the Ka’ba in the 1979 siege of Makkah by militants. Pakistan pretty much destroyed its economy and its international image fighting the 40-year-old proxy war for Afghanistan.

Yet Pakistan, a nuclear power with a strong military, has no real friends in the Islamic world-which is technically the Islamic Civilisation.

At such a time, Pakistan’s move to establish trade ties with Russia is a prudent measure. Prime Minister Imran Khan was able to sign energy agreements to procure gas since our reserves are dwindling.

Pakistan’s new strategy to be a neutral country that keeps relations with all major world powers is a wise one. It will pay off in the long run. This will also enable us to counter India’s hostile narrative aimed to isolate us and declare us a pariah state.

A similar strategy was followed by Ho-Chi-Min of Vietnam. He had initially been smitten with French socialism. However, early in his days in France, his encounters educated him about the yet-to-be penned concept of the “Clash of Civilisations.” Ho-Chi-Min then skillfully engaged all imperial powers and eventually led Vietnam to freedom.

(Concluded)

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