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The Russo-Ukraine War-2022 The Case of a Weak Nation-State in the Baffled International Security

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Abstract

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 paved the way for the creation of "Unipolar World", an order led by the US as the sole super power free from a powerful rival. This scenario encouraged Americans to pursue their national interests around the world by employing any means, especially the military option without any retaliation from Russia; a perception based on its weakness. This is exactly what occurred at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 when Ukraine, one of the weakest East European countries, emerged as the battleground between the US and Russia. Since then, the Ukrainians are in turmoil, losing their most strategic eastern part, especially Crimea. And, tragically, there is no end in sight for the ruinous Ukrainian people except "genuine diplomacy" based on mutual compromise among the warring parties. The objective of this study; exclusively based on descriptive cum qualitative form of research, is to highlight the prevalent fragile international security environment which pose multifaceted existential threats to weak states around the world in the aftermath of Russo-Ukraine War that catastrophically impact the territorial integrity of poor / dependent nations. Moreover, the study specifically leads the Third World states to learn one lesson from the ongoing war which has baffled international security that neglecting diplomacy is an inexcusable error in international relations which a country's leadership must thwart in the best interest of their people.

Keywords: *The Russo-Ukraine War, International security, Military option, International relations*

1. Introduction

The world has become a place compounded by labyrinthine streets and alleys amidst endless blind turns and uneven surfaces, all of which have escalated unpredictability and uncertainty scales of security, thus leading to unprecedentedly menacing security environment (UNO, 2022). There are a number of causes that have converted the world into a reckless place where the first seed has been planted by fast-heightening geo-political carving up which has virtually created multiple "Centres of Powers" (emerging powers) (Kennedy, 1987); all pursuing their own objectives devoid of any morals, ethics and regard for international law. The

situation has been aggravated further by the induction of non-state actors by the sponsored powers in the troubled regions (Valensi, 2021). The most glaring examples in this regard are the Middle East since decades while presently it is the southeastern region of Europe; precisely Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Lithuania, Poland, and Armenia. Amidst this scenario, specifically highlighted by the Secretary General of United Nations, Antonio Guterres at the Munich Security Conference (Germany) on February 18, 2022, every nation state is confronting the security dilemma posing serious threats to its ideology, society and, the worst, to its survival as an which is supposed to be poised to contribute constructively for the prosperity of its people in particular, and the world in general (UNO, 2022). Meanwhile, the Lord Richard Dannatt (former British Chief of the General Staff) has professed about a "New Status quo" in the wake of Russia-Ukraine War in which the former is expected to prevail over its adversaries (Desk, 2022). On the other, China's rise has already jolted the "Balance of Power", thereby declining the US led western powers' influence. This scenario poses serious threats to small and poor states of the world; especially the states like Ukraine, Poland, Armenia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, amidst the baffled international security. Presently, the Ukrainian population's forced migration has caused the human psychological catastrophe thereby putting thousands of innocent lives especially children and youth at the life-threatening risks due to the non-availability of basic human needs (Maslow, 1954). Most importantly, this scenario has posed another unprecedented dilemma for the displaced youth which has been deprived ruthlessly of opportunities to develop themselves aimed at contributing towards the well being of their nation. Unambiguously, there will be innumerous crises of self-identity among children and youth, especially the female segment of population (Goble, 1971). There is an imminent crisis of self-actualization among the young generation (Maslow, 1943; 1991). One must not ignore that the young generation is gravely confronted with the scenario where they would merely be pursuing for survival; a quandary with regard to self-transcendence (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

1.1. Focus of the Study

An endeavor has been made to explain the prevalent international security environment posing threats to vulnerable regions in the wake of Russo-Ukraine War especially in the southeastern part of Europe that catastrophically affect the security of a weak nation-states like Ukraine and almost the entire third world, and finally suggest viable course of action to succeed through the quagmire of bewildered geo-politics.

2. Prevalent International Security Environment

2.1. The World amidst the Second Cold War

In the wake of fragmented geo-political scenario, there exists a strong rational to believe that the world is in the state of Second Cold War which is more complicated than its predecessor (Trenin, 2014) . During the Cold War I, there were two major adversarial powers that maintained a working apparatus aimed at weighing probability factors related to uncertainties in order to thwart crises through track-II diplomacy (Robert Service, 2015). Presently, that *modus operandi* to avert the disaster does not exist. The policy and decision makers of present times, despite their knowledge and multifarious experiences, are handicapped of resolving emergent situations like their predecessors. There is no vagueness about the complex security situation, but lack of conduciveness to accommodate each other has compounded the situation (Dupont, 2020). Moreover, there is an environment of mistrust coupled with disloyalty among/between protagonists, especially China and the United States that have restrained themselves to maintain some trusted means of communication to address any misunderstanding which could prove disastrous, if left unattended (Tran, 2021). However, there are authentic reports that US and Russia are engaged into secret talks on the Russo-Ukraine War facilitated by Türkiye which the US officials have denied (Sabbagh and Tondo, 2022). But, this is an inseparable component of international diplomacy that must be recognized as a norm in geopolitics. Even, if it is taking place, it must be considered a step towards a right direction. It must never be ignored that under these circumstances, at times diplomacy does not work (Freeman, 2016). Ironically, history is riddled with episodes where major powers intoxicated with their military might and economic dominance made peace in this world untenable for the purpose of their national interests (Abrams, 2022). The whole world especially strategically vulnerable regions like East and the southeast Europe, the Middle East and South and southeast Asia have perpetually, rather extensively experienced blatant disregard for the United Nations' charter which elucidates that all disputes between/among states should be resolved through peaceful mechanisms which do not endanger international security structure (Aron and Smith, 1954). According to the statement of UN Charter, all member states are required to desist from threats or employment of force against any nation especially jeopardizing its territorial

integrity as well as the political sovereignty. Considering pragmatically, there exists a mechanism which calls for peace and justice among nations. However, there are paradigms in international relations since the times of Thucydides (460-400 BC) (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010) where the UN Charter was violated by employing various means to dishonor it (UNO, 2022). In this particular regard, major powers played their role for vested interests. There exists no ambiguity that presently Ukraine in a state of lurch is the victim of major powers' quest for their national interests. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has repeatedly urged upon his allies, especially the US to supply more weapons, ammunition and equipment whose wearing out during the war has accelerated beyond estimates which is a normal phenomenon during combats. He insisted that sanctions against Russia are required to be more stringent which, presently lack their impact because a substantial component of European leadership is demonstrating assertiveness (Harris *et al.*, 2022). In the meantime, he bluntly stated that NATO has displayed lukewarm response to the Ukraine crisis; an unprecedented occurrence since the World War II. He criticized the leadership of NATO whose 'open-door policy' has not been applicable to Ukraine (Press, 2022). This scenario furnishes a 'great lesson' in unequivocal terms that under the prevalent domain of international security, national/vested interests supersede all factors including ethics and morals. It is incomprehensible to imagine that what magnitude of cruelty exists among our leadership followed by media which is totally devoid of the plight of displaced population of Ukraine. According to the UN news, the recent escalation in war has sky-rocketed the humanitarian essential supplies augmented by prompt services which have confronted steep disruption leading to huge displacement of people. It is estimated that about 12 million people within Ukraine required urgent relief and protection, whereas more than 4 million immigrants need prompt assistance in neighboring countries during the winter season (News, 2022).

2.2. The Zero-Sum Game Environment

These insecure environments have been created by unmanageably divaricated geopolitics in which states demonstrate inflexible approaches aimed at securing their objectives in the garb of "national interests at all cost" by resorting to zero-sum game strategy. There is blatant disrespect for the international law and a standard mechanism which advocates trust-building by means of diplomatic discourse. This particular scenario of international insecurity has proliferated crises by internationalizing disputes that embroil global and regional powers with their interests (Nikolas, 2015). In this regard, the Middle East since decades and now southeastern Europe present the most conspicuous cases in point, especially Ukraine, Poland, Armenia in Europe and Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya in the Middle East. Afghanistan is yet another example (Riedel, 2020). It is highly pertinent to remember that there are a majority of militarily weak and economically poor states around the world which are bearing the brunt of uncertain conditions. There exists a strong rational to ascertain that the prevalent world scheme accords conduciveness in converting regional conflicts into massive unrest which possess the potential to lead to civil wars (de Waal, 2019). Afghanistan (Asia), Burkina Faso (Africa), Central African Republic (Africa), Democratic Republic of Congo (Africa), Somalia (Africa), South Sudan (Africa), Syria (Asia) and Ukraine (Europe) are some notable states where civil disorders ultimately developed themselves into full-fledged civil wars with the multifaceted support of foreign powers having their own strategic goals. This is a divaricating phenomenon that constitutes more fragmentation of calamitous situations; a state in which each separate case lures in outside (non-state) actors, thus leading the mess to more perplexity, especially Ukraine under the prevalent scenario (Roth, 2022). This is how internal/external coalitions change their members, shift alliances, amend agenda and switch loyalties, all aimed at making affairs worse (Ataman, 2003). This is exactly happening inside and outside Ukraine.

2.3. The Rich and Poor Divide in Poor States – A Social Catastrophe

Amidst this highly precarious international security environs, there emerges one of the most disastrous situations where poor states confront extensive negligence in delivering essential services and respond to aspirations of their people which aggravate the security situation of the state. There exists no ambiguity that social unrest in a state which is already infested with depleted law and order condition marred by corruption is the mother of all menaces (Stewart, 2002). In this particular situational representation, weak states from the Third World and East and southeast Europe present the most glaring example. Threats followed by conducting contagious coups and massive unrests have become a routine matter in these regions/countries which are serving strong regional and global powers as puppets (Sany, 2022). There is no doubt that these bewildered and frustrated human environments cause unpredictability and uncertainty in the global security landscape.

There must not be any doubt that the Russo-Ukraine War will take gigantic score, not exclusive to Ukraine but on desperately poor nation-states around the globe (Menon, 2022). And, these signs are visible while the whole world is watching; some helplessly while other remorselessly.

2.4. Prevalence of Intolerant Ideologies in Poverty Stricken States

Fundamentalism coupled with extremist ideologies; all imposed by means of unconventional means of coercion, threats and armed actions have developed the scenario of terrorism in almost all regions of the world. In this particular regard, the twenty-five years of right-wing terrorism in the United States is the most obvious case in point in the prevalent scenario (Research, 2022). Meanwhile, Europe, especially East Europe spearheaded by Ukraine has also been grappled by the revival of armed extremism. There have been surge of armed/unarmed activities by a number of groups against immigrants, governments institutions especially police and related law enforcement agencies which are responsible to maintain law and order in the country while thwarting terrorist activities. The spree of violence by extremist organizations has escalated manifold in the form of armed violence against political opponents, ethnic minorities and different social groups who practice their social procedures and traditions divergent to the norms adopted by the extremists (Koehler, 2016). Extremists who, at the best, can be categorized as terrorist outfits recruited, trained, armed, operationally deployed and fully financed by outside powers have taken virtually taken over the poor countries which are rich in minerals and other energy sources. These groups are employed as an effective instrument of outside powers' foreign policy. There is a well-thought out strategy of their deployment in the areas of interests. In the first phase, selected elements from terrorist outfits are inducted in the target country where they disturb law and order situation aimed at incapacitating the state machinery and force the administration to seek assistance from outside powers (Darwich, 2021). In the second phase, outside powers intervene and prevail over the government while at the same time, strengthen their grip within the government infrastructure. In the third phase, the state virtually becomes colonialized by the foreign power. This is the most preferred option as a phenomenon in the hands of strong nations to bring poor nations to their knees. Taking a glance at the world map, especially of East and southeast Europe, Asia and Africa is sufficient to prove this contention where poor countries having unexcavated minerals and precious metals and untapped energy reservoirs are passing through a number of ordeals which have been created by outside powers with an objective of creating grounds to intervene under the pretext of United Nations umbrella (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2013) and, subsequently legitimize their control over the state's wealth through the puppet regimes. Ironically, there is no specific state to be presented as a case in point; rather every poor state located in any corner of the globe is passing through an identical scenario (Bhutto, 2012). The security environments have become highly volatile amidst terrorism inflamed by poverty, unemployment, inequality and most of all social injustice. This is the exact scenario which has jolted the security environment in Ukraine confronting the possibility of its dismemberment.

2.5. The State Mechanism devoid of Dealing with Unconventional Crises

Within the context of international security, there is no denying the fact that stronger nations have installed their likeminded influential elite which serves its master at the cost of people who remain grappled by multifaceted corruption. Poverty, hunger and unemployment have been exacerbated by unconventional (non-traditional) threats to the human security which ultimately is transformed into the national security (Ivanel, 2016). These encompass abrupt climatic changes coupled with outbreak of diseases which have exposed the insufficiency and ruination of the global economic system which has almost destroyed the state of equilibrium between the rich and poor countries. There prevails a state of discrimination, exploitation and manipulation through which the poor states are made to pass for the wholesome advantages to the stronger nations. This state of affairs have plunged the poor nations into the ruinous debt default and almost the financial collapse, thus pushing the people into an extreme nature of despair.

2.6. The Sixth Generation of Warfare

Amidst all what has been mentioned in the preceding part, "digital technology" has introduced itself as the most effective instrument of the present day's international security which merits exceptionally efficient defensive strategy to be managed by highly trained and efficient security professional (Niemeyer *et al.*, 2022). Cyber attacks and artificial intelligence based weaponry have virtually taken over from conventional weapons systems. This factor must never be denied that the world has traveled into the domain of "Sixth Generation of Warfare" in which bulk of the conventional weapon systems along with their armouries have become obsolete.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine War (2022) presents the most glaring example in the modern history of warfare in which modern technology has totally altered the complexion of prevalent military strategy (Fenenko, 2004). Although, conflicts have turned into a hybrid phenomenon, but the impact of digital technology would remain predominant. In addition to it, digital communication has revolutionalised the information warfare in which propaganda augmented by conspiracy theories, hate speeches, extremism, and racism has emerged as the one of the most potent instrument of modern warfare incorporating almost the entire population as soldiers in civvies. Amidst this peculiar scenario, an exceptionally massive scale of disinformation campaign(s) one after the other against each other creates unmanageable security risks. In brief, this is the complexion of international security in which the world is reeling itself in a state of despair (Kavanagh, 2021).

2.7. The Prey of Baffled International Security Environments

The United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan stretched from February 29, 2020 to August 30, 2021 could be surprising rather extremely demoralizing for its western allies especially those states who contributed more than their counterparts. But, an episode which shocked the entire world was the "Lightening Takeover" (Blitzübernahme) of Taliban in the face of Afghan Army which was (supposedly) trained by the US military at the cost of hundreds of billions of Dollars paid by the US tax-payers. In fact, the Afghan Army's middle and lower brackets melted themselves into the Taliban ranks while the upper bracket consisting of military and civilian hierarchies who were, in fact, maintaining the US citizenship flew back to their homes safely under the safest and securest means of transportation of the time. This phenomenon is not unique to any Asian and African country. Similarly Pakistan lost about 80,000 plus personnel among whom the majority comprises innocent civilians (Thomas, 2021). After extensive study stretched over two decades, it must be absolutely clear without an iota of doubt that Afghanistan and Pakistan suffered the horrendous damages in terms of men, material and money. And, above all, both states' prestige in the entire world touched the lowest ebb. This is not at all surprising being the most common phenomenon when a big power deals with a smaller or weaker (rather dependent) state brought under servitude through the local elite comprising all segments of the nation (Center, 2022). In a specific case of Pakistan, this is the legacy of 1947 when the boundaries of South Asia were demarcated aimed at defending India from foreign invasion, especially from USSR and, Pakistan appeared on the world map as a "Frontline State" against Communism. Although, USSR disintegrated in 1991 and, Americans abandoned Pakistan in the lurch; a strategic blunder which the top US officials later acknowledged. Pakistan inherited massive gun-culture, abundance of narcotics and, most of all religious terrorism. The nation is still lurking in the same quagmire inherited by a herd of protégés who danced on the tunes of their composer while the most deprived segment of the society literally bled white.

Presently, Ukraine confronts the same scenario in which most of poor rather dependent nations breathed under the shadow of great powers. Abundantly realizing that examples of Afghanistan and Pakistan ought to be irrelevant to some critique, but the *modus operandi* adopted by major powers in a quest against Russia is distinctly similar whether in case of Afghanistan, Pakistan and, now Ukraine.

3. Conclusion

After the acquisition of their strategic objectives, major powers unrelentingly withdraw while abandoning the (dependent) nation at the mercy of chaotic conditions created by non-state actors. This operation is enthusiastically is shielded by the pseudo experts and think tanks in the west who blame the state whose territory was used as the battleground and its people who faced unimaginable sufferings. In this regard, the most glaring examples are Afghanistan and Pakistan which were being considered as the potential hubs from where terrorists especially Taliban could destabilize the whole region. However, their anticipations based on flawed assessment proved utterly wide of the mark. Presently, Afghanistan is more peaceful according to the regional security perspective. It has established excellent relations with China, Iran, India and Russia. However, Afghanis are perturbed by the discouraging response by Pakistan from where drones are attacking targets inside their territory. There exists no ambiguity that Pakistan needs to cooperate with their Afghan brethren for the sake of people of both countries. In this regard, Ukraine must learn from the Pak-Afghan experiences in the past. Ukraine must establish cordial relations with all its neighbors especially Russia. Ukraine, as a nation, must learn that within the domain of international politics nothing is permanent, except the geography of neighbors among which Russia is the strongest. However, last but never the least, stable political system, self-reliant economy and upholding of independence of institutions within the constitutional boundaries are the underpinning of good governance ensuring an honourable status among other nation states that every state

must pursue. Lastly, the Ukrainian leadership must pay attention to Dr. Henry Kissinger, Dr. Mearsheimer and a number of experts who possess realistic approach towards the Russo-Ukraine War. Looking at both sides of the coin would ultimately lead to sound decision-making.

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