



## UKRAINE CONFLICT'S IMPACT ON PAKISTAN FOREIGN POLICY

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### ABSTRACT

*The situation in Ukraine has significantly impacted Pakistan's foreign policy, affecting a variety of areas and posing difficulties and options for the nation's international relations. This essay seeks to offer a thorough study of the conflict's repercussions on domestic and international politics, as well as its ramifications for trade, energy, food security, and shifting alliances.*

*Despite Ukraine's distance from Pakistan, the crisis there has had an impact on world politics, changing the balance of power and necessitating tactical changes. Understanding Pakistan's reaction in its foreign policy depends on knowing how the conflict will affect regional and global affairs. This study investigates the effects of the conflict and sheds light on Pakistan's participation in the changing geopolitical environment.*

*The conflict may have an impact on trade, food security, and the energy sector, to name a few industries. Global supply chains and trade routes could be disrupted, which would change economic dynamics. Additionally, because the conflict may affect trade routes and access to resources, issues to food security may appear. Geopolitical changes may cause volatility and uncertainty in the energy sector's energy supply and pricing.*

*Comparative analysis of Ukraine's exports of military equipment to Pakistan and India can shed light on how the regional defense partnerships are changing. Understanding the choices both nations made when purchasing military hardware from Ukraine aids in clarifying Pakistan's foreign policy philosophies and strategic considerations.*

*Pakistan's foreign policy has been significantly impacted by the situation in Ukraine. A thorough comprehension of the dynamics at play can be attained by analyzing the conflict's effects on various sectors, looking at shifting partnerships, and comprehending the decisions and difficulties faced by Pakistan. Policymakers, academics, and analysts who want to understand Pakistan's foreign policy in the wake of the Ukraine conflict can benefit greatly from this research.*

*As it manages its connections with Russia and Western countries, particularly the United States and Europe, Pakistan faces a challenging diplomatic scenario. Pakistan*



*may be reluctant to support Russia in the UN General Assembly because to prior bad camp politics experiences, which could make Pakistan vulnerable to pressure from the West to change its mind. Given the protracted nature of the conflict, Pakistan is advised to maintain diplomatic ties with Russia and China to manage the crisis. To minimize potential effects, careful observation, thoughtful action, and neutral positioning are essential. To guarantee peaceful outcomes and avert escalation, Pakistan should prioritize national security and defense capabilities while concentrating on strengthening economic ties with both Russia and the Ukraine.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has multifaceted implications for Pakistan, extending beyond its economic ramifications to encompass geopolitical and geostrategic considerations. Pakistan must devise a resolution to tackle the issue of grain supplies and food security crisis arising from the conflict. If Pakistan does not conduct a thorough evaluation of its strategic alternatives and global positioning in light of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and fails to make informed and prudent decisions that are crucial for its geo-economic, political, and strategic survival, it may face a heightened risk of economic vulnerability. This could exacerbate its existing fiscal account balance challenges, resulting in increased pressure on economic growth.

Pakistan need to pay close attention to any possible conflict spillover impacts, especially in surrounding areas. Create backup plans and collaborate closely with regional partners to reduce any negative effects on security, the economy, or the humanitarian situation. Even if we don't directly have a stake in the war, a foreign policy study shows that it has had an impact on regional powers, their position in the conflict, how it interacts with their own particular sectors, and global relations in general.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has had a complex influence on the foreign policy of Pakistan. The issue at hand has posed diplomatic obstacles, elicited apprehension regarding the stability of the region and energy dynamics, underscored the necessity for diplomatic negotiations and efforts towards conflict resolution, and emphasised the significance of being equipped for defence. Pakistan has demonstrated a commitment to impartiality, preservation of regional stability, and the pursuit of nonviolent conflict resolution in its response to the ongoing conflict. As the conflict undergoes further developments, Pakistan will be required to consistently modify its foreign policy strategy in order to efficiently tackle the consequences and advance its interests in the area.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE UKRAINE CONFLICT**

Deep historical origins of the Ukrainian war have influenced the way things are now. With the west having more ties to Western Europe and the east being more impacted by Russian culture, this division has historical and regional foundations (The Guardian, 2023). Allegations of electoral



fraud in the presidential election led to a series of protests known as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 (Sylwia Demedziuk, 2017). Following widespread condemnation of Russia's conduct by the international community, Russia was subject to sanctions.<sup>i</sup> Between Ukraine, Russia, and the separatist organisations, a number of cease-fire agreements have been struck; most notably, the Minsk agreements in 2014 and 2015. Historical, cultural, political, and geopolitical aspects all play a role in the complicated war in Ukraine.<sup>ii</sup> The stability of Ukraine's domestic situation, regional dynamics, and Western-Russian relations have all been significantly impacted. The Ukrainian government accuse<sup>iii</sup>d Russia of engaging in direct military intervention, while Russia denied this and called its combatants in Ukraine "volunteers." A full-scale war broke out as the battle grew more intense in Feb 2022, killing many people and uprooting many civilians. It's critical to remember that there are many internal and external forces at play in the complex war in Ukraine. In terms of Russia's relations with the West and the broader regional dynamics in Eastern Europe, it has geopolitical repercussions.

The geopolitical environment of Eastern Europe has changed as a result of the conflict. Concerns over regional security and border integrity have been expressed as a result of the war. It has brought attention to the vulnerability of nations with substantial language or ethnic divides, as well as the possibility of outside meddling in domestic affairs. Relations between Russia and the West, especially those with the United States and the European Union, have been severely strained by the conflict. Geopolitical tensions have escalated as a result of the sanctions that Western nations have imposed on Russia in reaction to its activities in Ukraine. Regarding the use of hybrid warfare, information warfare, and cyberattacks in particular, the battle has broader ramifications for international security. The measures utilised by both sides in the conflict have sparked worries that similar tactics could be employed in subsequent regional conflicts or against other nations.<sup>1</sup> The crisis has been as the focus of international diplomatic and mediating efforts. But the continuous nature of the dispute and the slow pace of resolution have brought to light the difficulties of diplomatic interventions in intricate conflicts. The Ukraine conflict's effects on regional and world politics are still changing, and finding a solution to it is still a pressing concern on the global stage. Alliances have changed, security and energy dynamics have been questioned, and international norms and institutions have been put to the test (Sestanovich, 2023).

## **UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF THE UKRAINE CONFLICT ON PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY**

### **Potential Impact on Pakistan's Trade**

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has the potential to affect Pakistan's trade, albeit with limited direct impact. The ongoing conflict and political instability in Ukraine have the potential to impede trade routes and transportation networks, thereby potentially impacting Pakistan's trade activities, particularly if it depends on those routes for the import and export of goods. The magnitude of this



impact is contingent upon the particular trade connections and substitutes accessible to Pakistan. Pakistan, being a nation that imports energy, could potentially experience indirect ramifications from any disturbances or fluctuations in the worldwide energy market (Jr., What America Will and Will Not Do in Ukraine, 2022).

The occurrence of instability in any given region of the world can potentially lead to adverse effects on investor confidence and the overall state of the global economy. The ongoing conflict may lead Pakistan to contemplate the diversification of its trade partnerships. In the event of trade disruptions or supply chain reliability concerns within the region, Pakistan may opt to pursue alternative trading partners or investigate novel market opportunities. Pakistan's involvement in the international trade system renders it susceptible to potential repercussions stemming from alterations in trade policies, tariffs, or trade conflicts that may arise as a consequence of the ongoing conflict. The mitigation of any potential impact from the war in Ukraine will be contingent upon Pakistan's trade policies, diversification efforts, and adaptability to evolving global trade dynamics (Balmforth, 2022)

### **Issue of Food Security**

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has the potential to affect food security in Pakistan, albeit with restricted direct consequences. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, being a significant agricultural producer, has the potential to exert an impact on the global food prices, especially for commodities such as wheat, maize, and barley (RIST, 2022). Potential disturbances in agricultural production or trade as a result of the conflict may result in price fluctuations in the international market, which could have an indirect impact on food prices in Pakistan, given its status as a consumer of diverse food commodities. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has the potential to induce Pakistan to explore alternative options for its food imports. In the event of apprehensions regarding the dependability or constancy of supply from Ukraine or other impacted areas, Pakistan could potentially investigate alternative providers as a means of safeguarding its food security (Dea Bankova, 2022)

### **Impact on Pakistan's Energy Sector**

Pakistan, being a nation that imports energy experienced indirect consequences from any disturbances or fluctuations in the worldwide natural gas market. The current perturbation in the energy supply chain from the primary global supplier, Russia, is leading to an escalation in energy costs across the globe. This phenomenon possesses the capacity to exhaust our nation's reserves, consequently diminishing the purchasing power of the country to a greater extent (Khetran, 2022), The ongoing conflict is expected to have a direct impact on 39% of Pakistan's total wheat imports during the previous fiscal year came from the Ukraine. The conflict at hand has the potential to trigger a significant chain reaction, resulting in a considerable increase in electricity rates, a rise in interest rates by central banks and a surge in demand for wage increases to meet the heightened cost of living.



### **Comparison of Ukraine's Military Hardware Export to India & Pakistan**

Ukraine has engaged in the sale of weaponry to both India and Pakistan, with a higher monetary value of arms being sold to India. The main focus of Ukraine's commercial activities in India was centered on the sale of turbines for deployment on Indian Navy vessels, alongside efforts to provide additional services, including collaborative modernization of the An-32 transport aircraft currently in use by the Indian military. In recent times, Kyiv has engaged in the sale of engines for Pakistani tanks as a component of their modernization initiative, and has also extended an offer to sell Oplot tanks to Islamabad. Over the course of the last twenty years, Ukraine has served as a limited provider of military equipment and related services to both India and Pakistan (Claudia Chia, 2021). Kyiv has been engaged in trade with both India and Pakistan for a prolonged period of time. As per the report published in the Kyiv Post, Pakistan entered into an agreement with Ukraine in September 2021 for the purpose of maintaining its Ilyushin IL-78 refuelling tankers. As per the newspaper report, the Kyiv authorities have not disclosed the exact value of the deal. However, the Ukrainian foreign arms trade agency has indicated that the two nations have entered into 12 working contracts, amounting to a total of \$150 million (Mahrukh Khan, 2022). Over time, the Indian media has taken note of instances such as Ukraine's proposal to modernise Pakistani tanks or its attempt to sell its own tanks to Islamabad. Nonetheless, it appears illogical to censure Ukraine for its exportation of military equipment to Pakistan, given that the nation responsible for invading Ukraine has engaged in comparable actions. Maintaining cordial relations with both the Western powers and Russia is deemed to be in the best interest of India, as per the perspective of the Indian government. This conclusion is applicable to everyone. The sale of arms to both India and Pakistan was deemed to be in Ukraine's national interest, as per the definition provided by Kyiv.

### **ANALYSIS OF SHIFTING PARTNERSHIPS AND PAKISTAN FOREIGN POLICY**

The geopolitical landscape and alliances can be influenced by various factors and developments. NATO has supported Ukraine and condemned Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. NATO member countries have provided political and humanitarian support to Ukraine and have increased their military presence in Eastern Europe as a deterrent to Russian aggression. The EU has been supportive of Ukraine and has imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its actions (Taka, 2022).

The United States has been a vocal supporter of Ukraine's territorial integrity and has provided significant military and financial aid. The U.S. has also imposed sanctions on Russia and has been involved in diplomatic efforts to find a resolution to the conflict. The dynamics of geopolitical landscape and alliances are subject to diverse factors and developments. Therefore, it is prudent to refer to current and credible sources for the latest information on the Ukraine conflict and alliances.

### **India's Projection as Peace Maker; Myth or Reality**

India's reaction to the Russian incursion into Ukraine has been unique in comparison to other prominent democracies and U.S. allies in terms of its distinctiveness. Despite India's unease with



Moscow's military actions, it has chosen to maintain a deliberate stance of impartiality towards Russia in the public sphere (Ravi Buddhavarapu, 2022). The country in question has refrained from participating in consecutive voting sessions held by the United Nations Security Council, General Assembly, and Human Rights Council, which denounced the aggressive actions of Russia in Ukraine. Additionally, the country has yet to publicly acknowledge Russia as the initiator of the aforementioned crisis. It is interesting to notice India's odd posture, which supports the United States in confronting Chinese belligerence in the Indo-Pacific area while also showing some forbearance towards the much more serious Russian aggression in Europe. India indirectly expressed its displeasure with Moscow's conduct (Mary Hunter, 2022). This was achieved by disclosing in a subdued tone that Indian Prime Minister had challenging dialogues with Russians. Additionally, Modi held discussions with Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with the dual purpose of seeking assistance in repatriating numerous Indian students stranded in Ukraine and extending humanitarian aid to Kyiv. India expressed its dismay towards the actions of Russia, however, it refrained from overtly denouncing Moscow. India's stance of public neutrality in response to the Russian invasion can be attributed to its primary concerns regarding China and Pakistan. Since 1955, Russia has been considered a reliable ally of India. This was made clear when Soviet PM Nikita Khrushchev officially declared Moscow's support for India's claims on Jammu and Kashmir, in contrast to the ambivalent or resistance of the West. On six occasions, the Soviet Union exercised its veto power in the United Nations Security Council in support of India.

India's neutral stance aligns it with the authoritarian Russian government represented by Putin, rather than with the nation of Russia itself. This places India in the same category as China and Pakistan, who are recognised as India's opponents and have exhibited conduct towards India that is comparable to Russia's actions towards Ukraine. It seems that New Delhi has made a profitable decision, not solely based on self-interest. As per an Indian commentator, India finds itself in a favourable position, being pursued by both the Quad and China and Russia simultaneously. The relinquishment of its values by India seems to have yielded favourable outcomes when weighed against the potential detriments that could have arisen from abandoning its interests. The effectiveness of India's current approach to strengthening its relationship with Russia by refraining from denouncing its incursion into Ukraine is uncertain. It is unclear whether this approach will impede the ongoing trend towards closer ties between Russia and China. Additionally, this approach may further diminish Russia's already weak motivation to strengthen its ties with Pakistan.

### **China, Russia & US; Choices or Challenges for Pakistan?**

The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution, on the eve of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Russian forces from the region. The resolution was approved by an overwhelming majority. As hostilities persisted in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, global allies demonstrated their solidarity on the inaugural commemoration of Russia's incursion. The





resolution garnered a favourable vote from 141 member nations during the voting process in the United Nations General Assembly, which consists of 193 members. The resolution faced opposition from a group of 7 members, while a larger group of 32 members, including Pakistan, China, Iran, India, and several others, chose to abstain from voting (Merry, 2022).

The persistent nature of the conflict may impede the \$2.5 billion natural gas pipeline initiative between Pakistan and Russia, thereby exacerbating Pakistan's energy deficit. In addition, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are reassessing the provision of loans to nations that uphold commercial agreements with Russia. Thus, considering the position of the IMF and the distribution of voting shares, Pakistan may face pressure to adopt a more stringent approach towards Russia in order to obtain the loan. Given the current geopolitical tensions surrounding the Russia-Ukraine situation, Pakistan experienced economic consequences.

### **Opportunities & Way Forward**

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has imparted noteworthy implications and lessons for the defence preparedness of Pakistan. The present predicament of Ukraine can be attributed to its insufficient readiness for war and disarmament measures. Pakistan, having encountered various security challenges in the past, must duly acknowledge these experiences and accord priority to the enhancement of its defence capabilities. Several key points are listed below:

- (1) The inadequacy of Ukraine's military equipment and resources has underscored the significance of defence preparedness and expenditure, as it has demonstrated the potential vulnerability of a nation to external threats. Hence, a crucial takeaway for Pakistan from the Ukrainian conflict is the significance of upholding a strong defence budget.
- (2) The Ukrainian military's inadequate preparedness to confront the Russian invasion was attributed to a combination of factors, including deficient management and a comparatively modest allocation of resources towards defence spending. Pakistan, a nation confronted with substantial security challenges in its vicinity, must persist in guaranteeing that its military is sufficiently equipped and trained to address any plausible threats.
- (3) The primary takeaway from the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the ineffectiveness of prolonged or amalgamated deterrence strategies. Nations employ their strategic armaments to safeguard their own interests rather than those of other states.
- (4) The ineffectiveness of the assurances provided to Ukraine regarding nuclear disarmament in preventing the country's destruction cannot be disregarded. The aforementioned trends and patterns in the realm of international security have provided validation for Pakistan's policies pertaining to defence and nuclear armament. Attaining a position of power within the international system is widely regarded as a highly effective means of securing peace and stability for a nation's citizenry.
- (5) Notwithstanding the ongoing conflict, Ukraine has sustained diplomatic communication with Russia, which has played a crucial role in facilitating negotiations pertaining to truces



and the release of detainees. The utilisation of diplomacy has the potential to mitigate the escalation of conflicts and facilitate the creation of prospects for amicable resolution.

- (6) Pakistan must prioritise the modernization of its defence forces to effectively counter any conventional or non-conventional threats, as it confronts its own security challenges. The example set by Ukraine serves as a valuable lesson in this regard. Pakistan can ensure a stable and prosperous future for its citizens by adopting a proactive approach and learning from the mistakes of others to avoid potential crises.
- (7) The persistent nature of the conflict may impede the \$2.5 billion natural gas pipeline initiative between Pakistan and Russia, thereby exacerbating Pakistan's energy deficit. In addition, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are reassessing the provision of loans to nations that uphold commercial agreements with Russia. Thus, considering the position of the IMF and the distribution of voting shares, Pakistan may face pressure to adopt a more stringent approach towards Russia in order to obtain the loan.

## CONCLUSION

Pakistan finds itself in a diplomatically intricate situation as it seeks to maintain positive relations with both Russia and Western nations, including the United States and European countries. Pakistan's potential reluctance to take a stance against Russia at the United Nations General Assembly due to past negative experiences in camp politics may result in the West pressuring Pakistan to reconsider its position. Given the circumstances, it is advisable for the government and relevant stakeholders to uphold diplomatic relations with Russia and China for geopolitical considerations, as the resolution of this crisis is likely to be protracted. Vigilant monitoring and strategic interventions by policymakers and the Pakistani government are imperative to alleviate the possible ramifications of the crisis.

Pakistan must take a neutral posture and avoid picking a side in the war, given its close relations to both Russia and Ukraine. This strategy will aid Pakistan in preserving its reputation and prevent it from alienating any significant players. Look at ways to improve economic ties with both Russia and Ukraine. Find areas of common interest and take advantage of trade and investment possibilities to improve economic connections without sacrificing neutrality. Pakistan may not have a significant say on the realistic grounds however, in order to guarantee national security and handle any potential security issues brought on by the war, it is also important to evaluate and improve Pakistan's defence capabilities. Prioritising peaceful outcomes and preventing any escalations should guide this process.





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