



U.S. warns Russia against Ukraine invasion

Context:

The United States will impose “severe economic harm” on Russia and boost its military presence in Eastern Europe should Moscow invade Ukraine, the White House warned

Relevance:

GS-II: International Relations

Dimensions of the Article:

1. About the Russia – Ukraine crisis
2. Recent Developments
3. Russia’s moves
4. What are Russia’s and the West’s interests in Ukraine?
5. What are the Minsk agreements on the Ukraine conflict?
6. Conclusion: For a peaceful resolution

About the Russia – Ukraine crisis

- Despite being an independent country since 1991, as the former Soviet republic Ukraine has been perceived by Russia as being part of its sphere of influence.
- Ukraine was one of the republics within the USSR during the cold war days, and has remained a strong ally of Russia ever since, till 2013.
- While it was planning to sign an association agreement with the European Union in 2013, Russia sternly objected to it, leading to tensions.



- Russia subsequently annexed “Crimea” (Russian speaking province in Ukraine) by force and declared its sovereignty over it with people’s support.
- The Russo-Ukrainian War is an ongoing and protracted conflict between Russia and Ukraine that began in 2014, centred around the status of the Ukrainian regions of Crimea and Donbas.
- The resultant conflict has so far claimed about 10,000 lives and displaced millions with no lasting resolution in sight.
- Though the 2014-15 Minsk peace accords prohibited air strikes and heavy artillery firing, the dispute still prevails as a low-intensity combat.



The Economist

Recent Developments



- From the beginning of April 2021, Moscow has allegedly deployed thousands of troops as well as tanks and artillery near Ukraine's eastern border. It has also mobilised troops in the annexed Black Sea region of Crimea.
- This was enough to send a shock wave among the political elite in Ukraine, forcing them to appeal to the U.S. and NATO and ask for an intervention, if needed.
- In April 2021, NATO Secretary General invited Ukrainian Foreign Minister to the NATO headquarters for a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission on the security situation in Ukraine.
- It was reaffirmed that NATO would continue to provide significant political and practical support to Ukraine.
- Besides powerful rhetoric from NATO, Ukraine seems to be desperate to receive more commitments and concrete actions.
- The Ukrainian President has also used the current tension as an opportunity to push for NATO membership, arguing that 'this is the only way to end the war in Donbas'.

Russia's moves

- Arguably, the cornerstone of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is insufficient communication, especially on the part of Russia. A deficit of explicit messages from Moscow creates room for misinterpretations and exaggerations on the part of Ukraine and its western supporters.
- From the Russian perspective, the current 'military build-up' can be viewed as another round of muscle flexing and an attempt to perpetuate the narrative of a powerful and capable Russia.

What are Russia's and the West's interests in Ukraine?

- Ukraine and Russia share hundreds of years of cultural, linguistic and familial links. As part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was the second-most powerful Soviet republic after Russia, and was crucial strategically, economically and culturally. Ever since Ukraine split from the Soviet Union, both Russia and the West have vied for greater influence in the country in order to keep the balance of power in the region in their favour.
- For many in Russia and in the ethnically Russian parts of Ukraine, the shared heritage of the countries is an emotional issue that has been exploited for electoral and military purposes.
- For the United States and the European Union, Ukraine is a crucial buffer between Russia and the West. As tensions with Russia rise, the US and the EU are increasingly determined to keep Ukraine away from Russian control.
- Efforts to induct Ukraine into NATO have been ongoing for many years and seems to



have picked up pace recently. Russia has declared such a move a “red line”, with Moscow worried about the consequences of the US-led military alliances expanding right up to its doorstep.

What are the Minsk agreements on the Ukraine conflict?

MINSK I

- Ukraine and the Russian-backed separatists agreed a 12-point ceasefire deal in Minsk, the capital of Belarus in 2014.
- Its provisions included prisoner exchanges, deliveries of humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of heavy weapons.
- The agreement quickly broke down, with violations by both sides.

MINSK II

- Representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the leaders of two pro-Russian separatist regions signed a 13-point agreement in 2015 in Minsk.
- The deal set out a series of military and political steps that remain unimplemented.
- An immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, Withdrawal of all heavy weapons by both sides, Monitoring and verification by the OSCE, Dialogue on interim self-government for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and An exchange of hostages and prisoners are the primary points.

Conclusion: For a peaceful resolution

- All the stakeholders in the ongoing crisis should focus on establishing a constructive dialogue among themselves using clear and unambiguous language.
- The only way forward is to seek a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict rather than exacerbating the reality and using quid pro quo tactics.
- Both countries do need support from the global community, but not in a military form. There is a need for a platform (similarly to the Minsk Agreements) that will facilitate negotiation, mutual consensus and possible compromises, as well as engagement with



mediators.

- The long-term solution should be sought out in order to break the vicious cycle of animosity and misunderstanding.

-Source: The Hindu

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