The big picture

Considering their relative to the region, the West should decrease its dependence on Russian fuels, and Putin must resort to peaceful solution

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Various countries and blocs, including the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom — have imposed a series of sanctions against Russia, including banks, businesses, oil refineries and military exports. Two years after the Crimean crisis, the EU's 28 member states, which had imposed economic and political sanctions, are introspected, and the country is cut off from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) international payment system. In this light, there is a need to consider the consequences of the sanctions and the implications of Russian retaliation. The West should decrease its dependence on Russia is a matter that is not to be underestimated. The EU imports a large percentage of its total gas and oil from Russia — with the Central and Eastern European countries being almost 100 per cent dependent on Russian energy. Moreover, Russian gas supplies to Europe have been cut twice in the last decade. Will Europe be able to cope with the ongoing crisis? What is the role of NATO in the ongoing crisis? What is the economic significance of Ukraine for the EU? And finally, what is the possible way forward?

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Historically, the modern Ukraine crisis began with Nikita Khrushchev's 1954 transfer of Crimea from the Russian Soviet Federal Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Federal Republic in order to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Ukraine-Russia unification. The crisis further escalated during the 1990s after the Ukraine gained its freedom. The Crimean peninsula was transferred to Ukraine from Russia because of a dictatorial state. It was in this background that the West was to assume responsibility to develop post Cold War structures, processes, perceptions, and activities by balancing the European nations's interests and strengthening the measures and liberal values, alongside keeping Russia within the framework of such changes.

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Coming to the EU interests, the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) — or differently called as the "Way of well governed countries" — that was symbolic of the ocean of political economic and security order for Europe and the neighbouring countries, which was to be shaped by the EU and NATO, was a failure. Since the break-up of the varied bloc, the EU aimed to achieve the enlargement of the EU's external border further towards the east to a region that is seen as politically and economically unstable and vulnerable to Russian influence and interference. The EU's ambitious plan to extend its influence in the former Soviet neighbourhood through tempting to avoid the overly engulfing the potential instability and armed conflicts in these regions without offering a membership to the countries.

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In this regard, the political and economic reforms brought were believed to stabilise and modernise the Ukrainian economy thereby creating a similar effect on Ukraine's political system, that would result in enhancing the stability and security of the wider Eastern neighbouring countries. However, the current crisis in Ukraine has exposed the EU's decisions-making as well as effective the energy needs of the countries dependent on Russia.

Going forward, given the mutual dependence between Russia and Europe, the West will have to find ways to decrease reliance on Russian energy. At the same time, Russia, which does not possess the economic might to fund a prolonged and expensive war, must put an end to the war.

Views expressed are personal

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Nexus of Good: Wonder out of waste

Transformation of a wasteland into a beautifully landscaped garden in Parvati Valley has provided locals a delightful recreational avenue, and is being considered for replication

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A Ali Ahmad | Shimla | 2021-03-08

Aishwarya Raj joined the Indian Forest Service in 2011, and Parvati Dimsion was his second posting after Kullu in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Having taken charge in January 2021, the first task was to assess the ground situation in different areas of his jurisdiction. On one such field visit close to the confluence of Parvati and Tosh rivers, he found a stretch of land that was full of rocks and boulders, and was also infested with heavy weed overgrowth. This was also a cause of riverside pollution. His staff informed him that the space was being misused by anti-social elements both during day and night to take their time. Aishwarya Raj was perplexed at the sight, and was at a loss to find a way to deal with the situation in future. Sharing its do something about these challenges, Aishwarya wondered how the forest land could be reclaimed into something safe and how some tools could be secured to carry out the execution of a plan. The idea was to create a beautiful landscape out of the wasteland. The idea was to create a landscape out of Wasteland that was being developed into an ecotourism project, which gave him the confidence to think in terms of a possible reserve hare as well.

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Interestingly, the Government of Himachal Pradesh, around the same time, declared its intention to set up 'Swarnim Vaidikan' across the state as part of Himachal's 50 years statehood celebration. Using this as an opportunity, Aishwarya Raj decided to develop the land into a beautiful landscape, with a small amphitheatre, open space for town dwellers and nature-seekers after. The green area was christened as 'Swarnim Swarnim Vaidikan'. So it stood at the confluence of two mighty rivers. If someone visits the place today, he would be surprised to see a beautiful landscape with a small amphitheatre, a pond with a fountain, and a small wetland with a beautiful Kachnar sapling, with a variety of tree species, creepers, shrubs and herbs along the area, frequented by a variety of beautiful birds.

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