



## One Year of Russia-Ukraine Conflict

**Prelims:** New START treaty, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Black Sea Food grain initiative.

**Mains:** Impacts of Russia-Ukraine conflict on India, Global impacts.

### Why in News?

A year after start of [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#), there are still signs of escalation everywhere. Calculations on both sides that this would be a short, swift war have proved wrong.

- The anniversary of war comes in the **backdrop of Russia's withdrawal from** [New START treaty](#).

### What is the Current Status of the War?

- The West has recently announced the **supply of more advanced weapons to Ukraine**, deepening its involvement in the conflict.
  - In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin has already reinforced Russian positions along the 1,000-km long frontline in Ukraine.
- **Risks of a direct confrontation** between **Russia** and the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#), both nuclear powers, are also on the rise as the war is extended.

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**MID-NOV:** 54% of territory captured by Russia reclaimed by Ukraine.

- **Russia** wanted to **install a Moscow friendly regime** and to take the whole of Ukraine's east and south, stretching from **Kharkiv in the northeast** through the **Donbas in the east** (which comprises Luhansk and Donetsk) to **Odesa**, the **Black Sea port city in the southwest**, turning the country into a land-locked rump. **Russia has failed to meet any of these objectives.**
- Nevertheless, **Russia has taken substantial portions of Ukrainian territories**, including **Mariupol**. Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine peaked in March 2022, when it controlled some 22% of pre-2014 Ukraine.
- **Ukraine recaptured some land in Kharkiv and Kherson.** But still, Russia controls some 17% of Ukraine.
- Focused fighting has been going on in some flashpoints along the frontline including Bakhmut, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia.

## What has been the West's Response?

- **Approach:**
  - Punish Russia's economy through sanctions and thereby weaken its war machine.
  - Arming Ukraine to counter the Russian offensive.
- **Major Aid Providers:**
  - The **U.S. is Ukraine's biggest aid provider** — it has pledged military and financial assistance worth over USD 70 billion.
  - The **EU has pledged \$37 billion** and among the EU countries, the **U.K. and Germany** top the list.
- **Evaluation of Western Response:**
  - While the approach of arming Ukraine has been **effective in at least halting the Russian advances**, **hurting Russia economically** has been a **double-edged sword**.

- **Sanctions on Russia**, one of the **top global producers of oil and gas**, hit the global economy hard, **worsening an inflationary crisis across the West, particularly in Europe**.
- Russia also took a hit, but it found **alternative markets for its energy exports in Asia**, redrawing the global energy export landscape. In 2022, despite sanctions, Russia **raised its oil output by 2% and boosted oil export earnings by 20%**.
- The **Russian economy** was estimated to have contracted by 2% in 2023, but, according to the IMF, it is **expected to grow 0.3% in 2023** and 2.1% in 2024.
- In comparison, Germany, Europe's largest economy, is expected to grow 0.1% in 2023, while the U.K., Ukraine's second biggest backer, is projected to contract by 0.6%.

## Is there a Possibility for a Negotiated Settlement?

- Both sides **had exchanged several drafts about a potential peace plan in March 2022**, but the **U.S. and the U.K. staunchly opposed** Ukraine reaching any agreement with Russia. **Talks collapsed in March**.
- In July 2022, **Turkey brokered a deal** on taking out Russian and Ukrainian food grains through the Black Sea known as **Black Sea Food grain initiative**. Also, Warring parties had reached some prisoner exchange agreements.
- But barring these, talks between the two sides are non-existent.
  - **Russia**, despite the slow progress of its "special military operation", **remains adamant**.
  - **Mr. Zelensky** recently stated that he **would not reach any agreement with Russia making territorial compromises**.
  - There is absolutely **no push from the West for talks**.
  - **China** has stepped in with its own **peace initiative**, which is not in public domain yet.
- For any peace plan to succeed a few **Key issues** are to be addressed.
  - Ukraine's territorial concerns.
  - Russia's security concerns.
  - **Washington and Moscow should reach some kind of understanding** as Ukraine, given its dependence on the West, would require clearance from west for any final settlement.
    - However, in context of Russian withdrawal from New START Treaty, **possibility of such settlement in the near future looks bleak**.

## How has the War Reshaped Geopolitics?

- **Increased focus on Security and Defence:**
  - The war has **re-energized the Europe-US security alliance**. **NATO** has opened its door to the **proposed inclusion of Sweden and Finland**, that will, once in (Turkey's approval is awaited), form the new military frontiers of the alliance against Russia.
- **Trust Deficit:**
  - The trust deficit **between Russia and the West is at an-all time high**. The US-led alliance is pouring weapons into Ukraine.
    - Though US President seems reluctant to accept all of Ukraine's demands, including for combat aircraft including F16s, perhaps mindful of the risk of widening the war.
- **China Factor:**
  - Moscow formalized its friendship with China in 2022 as "limitless". But China also does not want to jeopardize its Europe ties.
  - **China has not contributed with weapons to Russia** and also expressed its reservation **against nuclear war**.
  - However, the **US and Europe remain concerned about Chinese arms supplies** to Russia.

## What has been India's Stand?

- The Ukraine war has been an **opportunity to practice strategic autonomy**. Adopting a neutrality India has maintained its relationship with Moscow while iterating support to global

peace.

- India **worked around Western sanctions to buy oil from Russia**. As much as **25% of India's oil purchase is now from Russia**, from less than 2% before the war.
- Recently, **India abstained** on a UNGA resolution on first anniversary of the war, asking Russia to withdraw from its territory as the resolution had limitations in reaching the lasting goal of securing lasting peace.
  - India has **abstained on all three votes so far** on the Ukraine crisis at the UN General Assembly since Russian invasion.
- But the longer the war continues, the more pressure on India from the Western alliance to choose the "right side".
- India has expressed the hope that it can use its [G-20](#) **presidency to bring peace**.

## Way Forward

- There is an urgent **need for the parties of the war to return to negotiation table** as the escalation of hostilities and violence is in no one's interest.
- International principles and jurisprudence make it clear that parties to a conflict should **ensure civilians and civilian infrastructure are not targeted**, and the global order is based on international law, the UN Charter and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states. These principles must be upheld without any exception.

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