

LIBYA: AN IN DEPTH ANALYSIS | TIME TO DISBAND NATO

VOL 1 ISSUE 1 APRIL-MAY 2022
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GEO STRATEGY

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON GEOSTRATEGY & MORE



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Russia Reclaiming its Region

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AN ATTEMPT TO ANALYSE FORCES OF HISTORY



World is undergoing transition. The existing structures of business, technology, politics, finance, etc. that holds the world order together are under extreme stress. Structures are crumbling and at many places the sutures holding the structure are unraveling.

Coming years are going to be full of destruction. This will clear space for construction of new edifice. This decade would be exactly opposite of the 1990s where the world witnessed the arrival of technologies which made our lives convenient and the end of the cold war. There was an overall sense of happiness and growth. There were crises and wars, yet the good exceeded the bad by good margin. All good runs come to an end.

In the last decade, we have witnessed ideas which we all hold close to our hearts getting challenged. Nothing is sacrosanct. It makes people confused, restless, angry and violent. There is a lot of resentment and anger against institutions and politico-economic superstructure.

Life has always been hard. Now it's becoming suffocating for most people across the globe. The pandemic gave people time to assess what they actually wanted in life. The Covid-19 crisis gave space to people to look beyond the razzmatazz of entertainment, media and work has kept people so busy that they never had time to sit back and analyse. People have recalibrated their dreams and desires. In future they would expect the political elite to deliver them.

This is not going to be easy as the present structures of society will not be in sync with them. Those structures will have to go.

This bimonthly e-magazine is a humble attempt to understand, analyse, evaluate and document the forces which will shape the world. We would be covering all aspects of world affairs, be it geopolitics, military, security, religion, culture, business, technology or science. We will make an effort to document the developments, which will shape the future.

In the inaugural issue we are covering the Russia-Ukraine war and its impact on military, warfare, business and other areas. This issue is an attempt to analyse how the war is changing the current world order.

The issue also covers developments in India's immediate and extended neighbourhood.

We hope this inaugural issue of *GeoStrategy* will be a good read. ■

ROHIT SRIVASTAVA

Editor, *GeoStrategy*

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PAYING FOR MYOPIC POLICY

Sri Lanka is facing its biggest financial crisis since its independence. The crisis is an outcome of visionless borrowing. All loans have to be paid. The current crisis is an outcome of the pandemic, fertilizer policy and global price escalation due to the Russia-Ukraine war.

by **ROHIT SRIVASTAVA**

The pearl island of Sri Lanka is facing a severe financial and political crisis. A rebel group of parliamentarians from the ruling party has demanded the resignation of Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksha or will have to face a confidence vote. “If the Premier does not step down from the post, in the face of public opposition parliamentarians will have to remove him through a no-confidence motion,” Jayantha Samaraweera, the National Organizer of the National Freedom Front said.

He also demanded the formation of an interim government under the President. The demand for the resignation of the current government is on the rise. And so is the public agitation. Standing defiant against the opposition, PM Rajapaksha, on April 22, said that he is confident that the current problem would be solved soon.

The island nation is witnessing large scale public protests for over a month. To control the large scale protest President of Sri Lanka Gotabaya Rajapaksha imposed the State of Emergency on April 1, which gave sweeping powers to the security establishments. He was forced to revoke it on April 5.

THE CRISIS

What Sri Lanka is witnessing is a severe economic crisis resulting from nearly exhausted foreign reserves which are insufficient to pay for the imports and debts. On January 19, Sri Lanka had over USD 6 billion of gross foreign currency reserves. By November '21, it fell to one billion dollars. The government was forced to put restrictions on the import of luxury items, including vehicles.

This in turn has devaluated its national currency, resulting in high inflation and the inability to import essential items like energy, fertilizers, food, medical essentials including medicines and other essential items in the country. The resulting shortage has led to further price escalation. Almost 40 per cent of the sovereign debt of the government is a foreign debt of which international sovereign bonds constitute the largest share. China, Japan and World Bank share equal parts. The country has a trade deficit of around USD 10 billion and foreign debt obligation of around USD 7 billion.

The Island is facing severe power cuts up to 13 hours daily which is hampering its industrial output. It has entered into a vicious cycle. Reportedly, the price of one kg of rice has shot to 500 SLR. The coun-

try had to cancel school exams due to a shortage of ink and paper. This is how severe the situation is.

The economy of Sri Lanka has been hit badly due to the pandemic as tourism is one of its main foreign currency earners. Out of USD 80 billion GDP (nominal) over USD 3.5 billion was the contribution of tourism in 2019, which fell to less than half a billion due to the pandemic in 2021. Simultaneously, the worker's remittance saw a reduction of three billion due to the pandemic. The war between Russia and Ukraine came as a big blow as the two nations are Sri Lanka's largest importers of tea and also a source of tourists. As the global prices of food and fuel skyrocketed, the nation had a severe shortage of foreign currency.

Everything seems to be going wrong for the nation. But things would not have come to this if the government had taken loans wisely. Currently, the debt-GDP ratio is around 119 per cent.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

According to a study of MP IDSA, “Bangladesh has extended USD200 million currency swap facility. China extended a USD1.5 billion swap facility. Sri Lanka has also received USD700 million from China Development Bank. India has so far committed financial assistance to the tune of USD 2.4 billion which includes: (a) USD 400 million under the SAARC currency swap arrangement; (b) deferral of A.C.U. settlement of USD 515.2 million by two months; (c) USD 500 million for importing fuel from India; and (d) USD 1 billion for importing food, essential items, and medicine. In addition to this, Indian Oil Corporation has supplied 40,000 MT of fuel on 60 days of credit. As part of the financial assistance package, India has also agreed to positively contribute to enhancing Sri Lanka's energy security by signing an MoU to jointly develop the Trincomalee oil tank farms; and by providing all kinds of assistance to tap Indian tourists for strengthening Sri Lanka's tourism sector as well as enhancing Indian investments in Sri Lanka.”

The government of Rajapaksa is defiant and confident that its policy measures would bring the island nation out of the crisis. As the political opposition demand for an interim government is increasing, the chances of Rajapaksa government survival are dwindling. Whether the current dispensation will lead the nation out of crisis or a new government, time will tell. Till then let's hope for the best for the Sri Lankan people. ■

INDIAN MILITARY – TOOL FOR MULTIPOLARITY

Multipolar World is almost a reality now. India is going to be one of the poles of this world order. India needs to revisit its military doctrine.

by **MAJ GEN DR RAJAN KOCHHAR**

Indian Naval Ship INS Sumitra berthed at Sabang Port in Indonesia



PHOTO: www.indianembassyjakarta.gov.in

Recent events of threat to the World's peace have sent ripples all over. It all commenced with the Chinese incursions into Ladakh, unrest in Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and Azerbaijan at war, the Israeli attack on Hamas in Gaza and now the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. It all showed a great transformation of the world's thinking towards influencing disputes with coercion and violence. Is this the manifestation of a new world order wherein, the peace process has been given a back seat? Or are we seeing an era of uncertainty with the diminishing influence of the United Nations and a major shift to multipolar world order?

It may be likely that in times to come we may even see a resurgence of the Cold War into alignments of nations into two major power blocs. It is very evident that the US has certainly pushed China and Russia closer with its inept handling of the Ukraine conflict.

SHIFTING OF GOAL POSTS

In the present decade, we have seen a major shift in the centrality of the role of the US in influencing events the world over. Afghanistan has been a major fiasco for them and so has Ukraine now. The lack of strategic thinking and poor leadership has led to this impasse. Over the years, the major powers of the world like the USA, China, Russia and France have become more pragmatic in realising the avoidance of stockpiling weapons of mass destruction and working towards its gradual elimination. However, this has remained rhetoric without translating on the ground. Today we have nine nuclear states that possess nuclear warheads and are a constant threat to world peace.

Nuclear deterrence has gained prominence as an instrument of warfighting. It is evident after what we saw in Ukraine that this capability will drive the future of the multipolar world. The Non-Proliferation Treaty and Missile Technology Control Regime regime will remain inconsequential and nations will now start developing nuclear war capability to safeguard their national interests and sovereignty. This does not auger well for an environment of peace and harmony.

TOWARDS A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

In simple terms, a multipolar world is one where power is distributed among several states rather than being dominated by one or two states. During the Cold War, the world was divided into two major power blocs, leading analysts to call it a 'bipolar' world.

The Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during his recent visit to China made a statement that "amid the current, serious stage in the history of international relations, Russia and China will move to a multi-polar world, fair world order and together with likeminded people will create a just, democratic and a multi-polar world order."

In various forums, India has also echoed these sentiments and called for a reformed multilateralism which reflects an appreciation of contemporary geopolitical realities as an urgent need for the future. India values a multipolar international law, premised upon respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, resolution of disputes through peaceful negotiations and free and open access for all.

MILITARY – SHAPING GEOPOLITICS

Having discussed various factors related to the emergence of a multi-polar world, it becomes important to understand how this military power can shape the geopolitical environment as it prevails today.

When we look at a comprehensive national power (CNP) of a nation, its military power forms a very important component. This has to be viewed in terms of the size of its armed forces, its firepower, land, sea and air-based systems, advanced air defence systems, technology and capability for surveillance and reconnaissance. It's not enough for a nation to be able to defend itself but also to have the capability to strike at will into enemy territory as and when the need arises.

Today we see a great transformation in the nature of warfare. The conventional systems have given way to a hybrid concept wherein, cyber, space and information will be the key elements. The use of non-state actors will also get played upon to shape the conflict. A nation that possesses a military capability, in terms of having an arsenal of super-sonic and hypersonic missiles, an effective air defence system, stealth aircraft, nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers and at the same time have the nuclear weapons will be a force to reckon with. Apart from this, it would also be important to project this military power beyond your seashores and therefore the need to establish military bases in proximity to friendly countries from where sustenance and support can be envisaged.

Once the military of a nation acquires these capabilities it would be in a position to shape the geopolitical environment and become an important part of the now emerging multi-polar world.

Nuclear deterrence has gained prominence as an instrument of warfighting. It is evident after what we saw in Ukraine that this capability will drive the future of the multipolar world.

The most important part of this military capability will be a maritime power. Tomorrow's geo-political landscape will be shaped by the control of the sea. China has demonstrated this capability by its domination of the South China Sea and so has the US by its hegemony in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore in our context, the control and domination of the Indian Ocean become extremely important.

Therefore, the emerging multipolar world manifests opportunities and challenges for India. India by all means is at the cusp to be reckoned as an economic and military power and has shaped its foreign policy to be more realistic, far-reaching and effective in shaping its global relevance and importance.

India's relative weight and influence have been increasing over the past three decades. It has made great strides to sharpen its military prowess and is in possession of nuclear weapons and super-sonic missiles. Its influence on its neighbours is gaining momentum. Recently, when Sri Lanka plunged into an economic crisis it was India that rose to the occasion and offered a one billion dollar line of credit and shipped 40,000 tonnes of rice as immediate aid.

Many underline the massive size of the Indian market as a more permanent attraction, which could always be leveraged. Clearly, in common with other nations, including Russia, China,

and European/Asian states, the US also has a great interest in the humongous consumption potential of the Indian populace.

Another outcome that would make multipolarity attractive for New Delhi is the always lurking possibility of a regime change in China precipitated by an economic free-fall, large-scale social disorder, a destabilising power struggle or some combination of these factors. Though the regime in Beijing has apparently examined and analysed the collapse of the Soviet Union in very great detail, it may not be able to evade the logic of history, and the human instinct for liberty and freedom from the power of the state. The pandemic and the debt traps being experienced by many of the beneficiaries of Beijing's largesse through the Belt and Road Initiative have severely eroded its soft power, and this does not bode well for the continued exponential increase of the Chinese economy, which is central to the success of the Chinese Communist Party.

INDIA - MILITARY POWER

The Indian nuclear doctrine presupposes creating conditions that will ensure the survival of the country's nuclear arsenal against an adversary's first strike, whether it is counter value, counterforce, or both. Nuclear submarines are indeed the most survivable assets when equipped with SLBMs. It is for this reason that India has

The Indian Armed Forces have been undergoing rapid modernisation over the years. There has been a progressive up-gradation of our weapon systems and platforms in keeping with our threat perceptions.

invested so much to develop a credible Triad.

In the maritime domain, India has a tremendous geographical reach into the Indian Ocean. This provides naval dominance over the Sea Lanes of Communication that carry 80 per cent of China's oil imports. Since 2008, the PLAN has been sending warships to the Indian Ocean for anti-piracy missions, and in recent years, PLAN deployments in the Indian Ocean Region have averaged seven to eight warships every year.

A Chinese military base in Djibouti and the development of ports at Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Payra in Bangladesh, and Kyaukpyu in Myanmar have added to Indian concerns. However, despite the increasing presence of PLAN in the Indian Ocean, it is generally accepted that as of now, "neither China nor Pakistan can seriously threaten India's main axes of maritime approach.

To enhance cooperation in the national and maritime security and safety, trade connectivity, infrastructure and economic development, the strategic partners India and Indonesia are jointly developing the strategic Sabang deep-sea port which also lies close to India's southernmost territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The port will give India better access to the South East Asia mar-

kets and provide a strategic hedge at a time China is increasing its presence in the Strait of Malacca (as also the larger Indian Ocean).

India also has an airbase in Tajikistan at Gissar Military Aerodrome (GMA), India's first overseas base operated along with Tajikistan and aimed at giving a strategic heft to their military operations and training.

The GMA, popularly known as the Ayni airbase named after the village Ayni, is just west of the Tajik capital Dushanbe. It has been administered by India along with Tajikistan for nearly two decades.

INDIA'S MILITARY MODERNISATION

The key drivers of India's military modernisation were lessons learned from past wars, the changing regional and international milieu and the outlook and ambition of key decision-makers. During the Bangladesh crisis, the US and China acted threateningly toward India. The presence of the US aircraft carrier, Enterprise, in the Indian Ocean during the war had unnerved the Indian leaders and subsequently shaped their strategic perception and outlook. This led to a major modernisation drive to safeguard our maritime borders, which stretched up to almost 7500 km.

The Indian Armed Forces have been undergoing rapid modernisation over the years. There has been a progressive up-gradation of our weapon systems and platforms in keeping with our threat perceptions.

As has said by Martin Van Creveld (Technology and War), "The greatest victories that have been won in war do not depend upon a simple superiority of technology, but rather on a meshing of one side's advantages with the other's weakness so as to produce the greatest possible gap between the two."

Modernization of armed forces is a complex process; it involves all the possible changes in the material capacity to meet the strategic objective. Modernization is the expression of the growth of national ambition. India is the responsible power in the multi-polar world. Currently, a dominant power in the Indian Ocean, south Asian region and as envisaged by Price Waterhouse Cooper, it is the second-largest economy by 2050. There is the assigned role for India based on these perceptions.

CONCLUSION

India confronts the challenge of reviewing and reorienting the strategic vision of Indian multilateralism. India has undertaken the challenge of recasting multilateralism by adopting a strategic approach to promoting active participation in multilateral forums, including regional groupings, for both economic and security reasons.

It has also played an active role in neighbourhood regional organisations including the SAARC, and BIMSTEC, as well as in the East Asia summit and other groupings centred on ASEAN. So far, the Modi government has deftly combined politico-strategic concerns with economic advantages.

Coupled with this, India's military might as well its nuclear capability will also play a key role in shaping our role in a multipolar world. There are huge challenges ahead of us. ■

Maj Gen Dr Rajan Kochhar, VSM (Retd) is an Indian Army Veteran. He has served in various important assignments in the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East. His recent book on "Breaking the Chinese Myth" has been a best seller on Amazon.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN PAKISTAN

The more things change in Pakistan, the more they remain the same. After the court led ouster of Nawaz Sharif and his debarment from holding public office, general opinion was that the Sharif family has lost the favour of Pakistan Army forever. But, Sharifs are back to business with the Army's blessings.

by **ROHIT SRIVASTAVA**

On April 11, former Chief Minister of Punjab province and leader of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Shehbaz Sharif took oath as the new Prime Minister of Pakistan. He replaced cricketer turned politician Imran Khan who lost a no-confidence vote in the national assembly.

In the last general election of 2018, Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) emerged as the largest party with 149 seats, followed by PML(N) with 82 and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) with 54 seats in an assembly of 342 seats. No party had a clear majority and Imran Khan formed a coalition government with other minor parties. The election results were not surprising. The results were as anticipated. It was a known secret that the Pakistan Army was backing the PTI.

The electoral democracy of Pakistan is an army controlled charade. GHQ at Rawalpindi from where the charade is planned, directed and executed. The last years of General Parvez Musharraf's rule (1999-08) were disastrous. It dented the Army's moral authority over Pakistan's consciousness and created a strong desire for democratic rule within the country. The argument of necessity which the Pakistan army used repeatedly, since Field Marshal Ayub Khan's era in 1959, to take control over the country, may not find many takers.

The intervention of Saudis to save then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2000 from execution during the Musharraf rule and reestablishing him as Prime Minister in 2013 was one of the crucial developments in the political history of Pakistan. For the first time, the Pakistan Army was restrained from doing what it wanted.

The disastrous rule of Imran Khan had left the Pakistan Army with no option but to bring a new government at the helm. His government could not make any segment of the society happy. From economy to foreign relations everything is in tatters. One of the biggest gaffes of Imran Khan was visiting Russia on the eve of the declaration of the special operation in Ukraine. This was especially significant for a country which was a member of the cold war era coalition against the USSR.

The next few months are very crucial for Pakistan. It would be



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing the National Assembly.

interesting to see how the PML(N) and PPP government resurrect the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor, recalibrate its relationship with the United States and bring economic relief at a time of global economic crisis.

Pakistan's economy cannot bring the country out of the current mess. There is a bigger plot behind the replacement of the Imran Khan government. The Pakistan Army must have worked out a plan along with the PML(N) and PPP.

As the world is going through a rejig, Pakistan, a country which is relevant only because of its geostrategic location, would once again happily side with the highest bidder. In all this rejigging one thing will remain constant, Pakistan's sinister design for India. A prosperous and stable Pakistan will only bring trouble for India. This will remain true till this British colonial construct exists on the globe. ■

DIALOGUE TO UNDERSTAND

The geopolitical reshuffle has thrown a massive diplomatic challenge to India. West wants India to join its camp and is ready to provide the much needed military technology. India can't afford to ignore its long-cherished all-weather relationship with Russia. The recently held 2+2 dialogue between India and US was an effort to understand each other's perspectives.

by **ROHIT SRIVASTAVA**

Indian Minister for External Affairs Dr S. Jaishankar created quite a buzz when he retorted to the aggressive questioning by the American press on India's stand on Russia. He in no uncertain terms questioned the double standards of West.

While defending India's purchase of Russian oil, Dr Jaishankar said, "I would suggest that your attention should be focused on Europe, which probably - we do buy some energy which is necessary for our energy security, but I suspect looking at the figures, probably our total purchases for the month would be less than what Europe does in an afternoon."

Dr, Jaishankar was in the USA along with Minister of Defence Rajnath Singh for the fourth US-India 2+ 2 Ministerial Dialogue with US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on April 11.

On another occasion, rebutting the allegations of human rights violation in India, Dr Jaishankar said, "I would tell you that we also take our views on other people's human rights situation, including that of the United States...especially when they pertain to our community."

This was a rebuttal to the US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken's statement on human rights violations in India. This marred the otherwise cordial meeting where two sides.

Before the 2+2, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joseph Biden had a virtual meeting where the two leaders discussed Ukraine among other issues.

"I spoke to the Presidents of both Ukraine and Russia over the phone several times. I not only appealed for peace but also suggested President Putin have direct talks with the President of Ukraine. The subject of Ukraine has also been discussed in great detail in our Parliament," the Indian Prime Minister said.

"The news of the recent killings of innocent civilians in Bucha city was very worrying. We condemned it immediately and have also demanded a fair probe. We hope that the ongoing dialogue between Russia and Ukraine will pave the way for peace," Modi added.

White House in a statement on the meeting said, "The Leaders will advance ongoing conversations about the development of an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and delivering high-quality infrastructure."

After the completion of the 2+2, the two sides released a joint

statement which laid out the framework for enhanced defence cooperation and also signed an agreement on space cooperation.

According to the joint statement, "The United States reaffirmed its continued support for India's permanent membership in a reformed UNSC and India's entry to the Nuclear Suppliers' Group."

"The Ministers reaffirmed the vital role of secure, resilient, reliable, and diverse supply chains for Critical and Emerging Technologies (CET)...such as advanced communication technology, artificial intelligence, quantum science, STEM, semiconductors and biotechnology," it said.

On defence cooperation, the ministers "underlined the importance of building a comprehensive framework" for the exchange of information between the militaries in real-time across domains. They "welcomed the progress made toward full implementation of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) to support the exchange of geospatial information."

On the defence industrial cooperation, "the Ministers welcomed ongoing projects under the auspices of the U.S.-India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), including a project agreement to co-develop Air-Launched UAVs. They called on both sides to consider additional DTTI projects, such as a counter-unmanned aerial systems (UAS) system and an Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) platform."

The sides agreed to "work closely across their respective governments on co-production, co-development, cooperative testing of advanced systems, investment promotion, and the development of Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities in India. To further enhance defence industrial cooperation in the naval sector, both sides agreed to explore possibilities of utilizing the Indian shipyards for repair and maintenance of ships of the U.S. Maritime Sealift Command (MSC) to support mid-voyage repair of U.S. Naval ships."

The two sides also plan to conduct an inaugural Defence Space Dialogue in 2022.

India and the US have been discussing defence co-development for many years but things have not moved much. DTTI has still to deliver. If India implements all the expressed objectives of joint statements, India would not be a neutral state who follows bilateral relations. ■

RUSSIA RECLAIMING ITS REGION

History and Geography are interconnected at the umbilical cord of any nation. They create boundaries that need to be defended at every cost, or else the nation's future gets jeopardised. What we are witnessing in Ukraine is Russia taking proactive steps to ensure its future is better secured.

by **ROHIT SRIVASTAVA**



PHOTO: British Government



While the UN Security Council was discussing the Ukraine crisis, the Russian President, taking the world by surprise, on February 24, declared the launch of a special operation in Ukraine. Speaking to the nation on State TV, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced, “Anyone who tries to interfere with us, or even more so, to create threats for our country and our people, must know that Russia’s response will be immediate and will lead you to such consequences as you have never before experienced in your history.”

“Our plans (of special military operation) in Ukraine do not include occupying Ukrainian territory. We will aim at demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine,” he added.

Setting aside the western sanctions and opposition, Russia fired precision ammunition into the Ukrainian military installations. In the pre-dawn Ukraine, the Russian ammunition landed in the capital city of Kiyv ripping the night silence apart.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the bang created quite a shock. The sudden turn of the events surprised and shocked the Ukrainian representative at the UN emergency meeting called on to discuss the Ukraine Crisis. Reminding the UN of its responsibility to stop the war, he called on all the member states to stop the war.

Declaring Ukraine’s resolve to defend and win the war, Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, in a televised address, said: “The world can and must stop Putin. The time to act is now.”

Calling the Russian invasion a premeditated war, US President Joe Biden said: “The United States and its Allies and partners will respond in a united and decisive way.”

“We will also coordinate with our NATO Allies to ensure a strong, united response that deters any aggression against the Alliance,” he added.

Condemning the invasion, President European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, in a statement, said, “Later today, we will present a package of massive and targeted sanctions. We will target strategic sectors of the Russian economy by blocking their access to technologies and markets that are key for Russia.”

WHY THIS WAR

World opinion is sharply divided. Countries which form the west (EU, US and allies) are vehemently against the Russian action and then there are those countries that share a concern but understand the rationale and geopolitics behind the war.

The rationale for the war was well laid out by William J. Burns, former Director, CIA and US ambassador to Russia, in his diplomatic cable of 2008. Calling the NATO membership of Ukraine “an emotional and neuralgic issue for Russia,” he predicted a split in Ukraine and the possibility of civil war. “Experts continue to claim that Ukrainian NATO membership would have a major impact on Russia’s defence industry, Russian-Ukrainian family connections, and bilateral relations generally,” he added.

To understand Putin’s action in Ukraine it is important to understand the geography of Russia. It has a coastline of over 37,000 km on three oceans, yet if Russia is restricted from using the warm waters of the Black Sea, for practical purposes it would be a landlocked country for a significant part of the year.

Russia is a European country with the majority of its land in Asia. The historic discord between Western Europe and the Russian empire is now bequeathed by Russia. The vast European steppes do not provide Russia with any natural defence. Moscow must have a defence line beyond its border. The only option for Russia is to create a buffer zone for its security in Central Europe.

POST-COLD WAR

After the fall of the USSR, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was not supposed to expand toward the East into former Soviet Republics as part of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, 1990. The idea behind the treaty was to create a neutral buffer zone between the West and Russia.

But NATO did expand. Now, Ukraine wants to join NATO. Turkey is already a NATO member with whom Russia shares a chequered history. The geolocation of Ukraine is such that if it joins NATO, it would seal Russia from the south. Moscow can’t afford this.

Things panned out exactly as Burns prophesied. The eastern region of Donbas has declared independence and has formed the Republic of Donetsk and Lugansk. The region has been fighting for independence since the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Casualty Claims

In total, 141 aircraft and 110 helicopters, 566 unmanned aerial vehicles, 265 anti-aircraft missile systems, 2,526 tanks and other armored combat vehicles, 283 multiple launch rocket systems, 1,096 field artillery and mortars, as well as 2,362 units of special military vehicles of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were destroyed during the operation. Govt of Russia, on April 25.

Russian Federation once again confirms the previously opened and permanently operating for the 36th day (from March 21, 2022) round-the-clock humanitarian corridor from the Azovstal metallurgical plant for the evacuation of civilians (workers, women and children), whose alleged presence in the underground structures of the plant. The Russian

Federation publicly and officially declares that there are no obstacles to the exit of civilians from Azovstal, except for the principled decision of the Kiev authorities themselves and the commanders of nationalist formations to continue to hold civilians as a “human shield”. Colonel General Mikhail Mizintsev, Russia.

Ukraine Claims Russian loss of personnel – about 21900, tanks – 884, APV – 2258, artillery systems – 411, MLRS – 149, Anti-aircraft systems – 69, aircraft – 181, helicopters – 154, vehicles – 1566, boats – 8, fuel tanks – 76, UAV operational-tactical level – 201, special equipment – 28, mobile SRBM system – 4. (April 25).

Primakov and Gerasimov Doctrines

After the dissolution of the USSR, Russia was at the mercy of the West and its strategic space was up for grab. It required a new strategic doctrine to answer its new geopolitical challenges. In 1996, Primakov, then Foreign Minister, proposed the concept of 'Multipolarity' where Russia, China and India act as concerted power against the US imposed unipolarity. He also proposed opposition to NATO expansion and Russia should be a prime player in the space created by the end of the Soviet Union.

Russia is following this doctrine religiously. The creation of the Union State of Belarus and Russia (1999), Georgia War (2008), Annexation of Crimea (2014) and intervention in Syria (2015) are per the Primakov doctrine. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is another step in securing post-soviet Eastern Europe.

Learning the lessons from the Russo-Georgia war, a more

refined hybrid war strategy was developed by the Russian military. In 2013, General Gerasimov proposed the doctrine of 'whole of government warfare' where soft and hard power work together maintaining the ambiguity of peace and war.

This strategy worked wonders for Russia in Ukraine (2014) and in Syria where Russia ensured the survival of President Bashar al-Assad's regime. During the Syrian campaign, Russia demonstrated a variety of new weapons and information, reconnaissance and surveillance system. It successfully battled the swarm of drone attacks on its military installation showcasing its preparedness for future conflicts. Russia was the first nation to face this kind of attack.

The success of the Gerasimov doctrine forced the United States to plan new strategies and weapons to fight this new kind of war.

RUSSIAN CONTROL

Russia at present is in control of Kharkiv in the east to Kherson region in the South. Currently, Russian forces are moving west along the coastline towards regions around Mykolaiv. Russia controls the region of Donbas in the east to the southern regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson which is essential for the control over Crimea.

Further west towards the Moldova coastline on the Black Sea, Russia is bombing the port city of Odesa. The Russian advancement on the coastal line of Ukraine could convert Ukraine into a landlocked nation. This would secure the Black Sea for Russian Navy in the coming future. A landlocked Ukraine would be an economic liability for the EU and the USA.

Ukraine, as we know it today, is a creation of the Soviet Union. In 1939, part of southern Poland was added to Soviet Ukraine. Subsequently, border territories of Romania (1940), Hungary (1945), Romanian Island (1948) and Russian Crimea (1954) were added. After the breakup of the USSR, Ukraine achieved its independence in the exact form of Soviet Ukraine. Since the relationships between the former Soviet republics were friendly at that time, no efforts were made to reclaim the territories. The expansion of NATO towards the east unravelled the forgotten chapters of history. Now the ignored history is claiming lives.

THE TOTAL WAR

The western powers have unleashed a total war against Russia. Starting with economic sanctions, the West has imposed sanctions on Russia as a nation. On April 7, Russia was suspended from United Nations Human Rights Council with 93 nations voting in favour and 24 against in the 193-member Assembly. Fifty-eight abstained from the voting.

Going against the spirit and charter of the Olympics, the International Olympic Committee, on February 28, called for the exclusion of Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials from international sports competitions. Western liberalism has always called for the separation of politics and sports, but when it comes to (earlier USSR and now) Russia they always go against their stand.

Even Russian art has not been spared. The cultural institutions across Europe have banned the participation of Russian art, artists, musician and films are not allowed to participate in an exhibition or competition.

Post invasion on February 24, EU member nations began imposing wide-ranging, crippling economic sanctions on Russia targeting its business, export, import, banking and financial institutions. Calling Russia's USD 1.5 trillion economy, 11th in the world, a "fortress Economy", CNN Business defined the western sanction as an economic war to "tip the Russian economy into a deep recession." The strength of the Russian economy comes from it being a self-sufficient nation and supplier of 40 per cent of gas and 25 per cent of the oil needs of Europe.

As part of the concerted effort against Russia, Germany has put on hold the Euro 10 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline between Russia and Germany. The pipeline runs parallel to Nord Stream 1 under the Baltic Sea. The USA, UK, Poland and Ukraine have been opposing the pipeline since 2006. This is being looked like an effort to reduce dependence on Russian energy supplies. One of the fundamental truths of Russia-Europe relations is that Europe is a net importer of energy and minerals from Russia which are essential for its industrial output.

Despite sanctions, Europe is still importing energy from Russia. Its banks have been cut off from dollar trade and the international banking messaging system of SWIFT. The whole effort is to cripple the Russian economy and make its foreign exchange reserves of USD 630 billion redundant. Russian foreign reserve is a war chest that the country collected to protect its currency against sanctions imposed on it in 2014.

Economic sanctions and war in Ukraine have created massive inflation across the world and everyone is paying a price for the sanctions. There is massive food inflation and a shortage of wheat, fertilizers and edible oil across the globe which is making the poorest nations suffer the most. Why are they made to suffer?

There were efforts to ban Russian media houses from social media to restrict the spread of the Russian perspective on war. Even though

Rouble back to pre-war rates

Russian Rouble has regained its pre-war status. On April 25, Rouble strengthened to 77 versus Euro. This is as strong as it was in last October.

Moskva Sinking

The flag ship of Russian Black Sea fleet Moskva, lead ship of Slava class missile cruiser, was the biggest Russian casualty of war. On April 13, Ukraine claimed to have hit Moskva with Neptune anti-ship cruise missiles. The Russian Ministry of Defence claimed it was due to munition explosion. The video surfaced on social media showed a big hole on the port side of the vessel. The ship sank while being towed to Sevastopol for repairs and refit.

The over 11000 tons ship, armed with 16 P-1000 Vulcan anti-ship missile launchers joined the Russian Navy in 1983 and was

refurbished in 2020 and was to remain in service till 2040.

US Assistance to Ukraine

On April 21, President Biden authorized a Presidential Drawdown of security assistance valued at up to \$800 million tailored to meet critical Ukrainian needs for today's fight as Russian forces launch a renewed offensive in eastern Ukraine. This authorization is the eighth drawdown of equipment from DoD inventories for Ukraine since August 2021 bringing the U.S. commitment to more than \$4 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the Biden Administration. The package includes 72, 155mm Howitzers with 144,000 rounds, 72 Tactical Vehicles, over 121 Phoenix Ghost Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems and Field equipment and spare parts.

the Russian media pages are working but they come with a warning. The war has shown that the western corporate even though not owned by the governments, obediently follow government policies. The western multinationals have exited the Russian market leaving behind assets worth billions of dollars. Switzerland, a country which was neutral during the world wars, has also imposed sanctions and frozen Russian assets worth USD 8 billion.

NEW WORLD ORDER

On March 2, UN General Assembly put to vote the resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine. The resolution received 141 votes in favour and five against with 35 abstentions. The five countries that opposed the resolution were Russia, Syria, Eritrea, North Korea and Belarus. The 35 abstainers constitute most of the significant nations in terms of landmass, population and economy, including, heavyweights like China, India, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Pakistan etc. If the abstainers and opposers of the resolutions are combined then they together constitute a major part of the Eurasian landmass and global economy. Many of these nations like Iran, Iraq, and Syria, are vehemently opposed to the west. If one looks at the map of nations not voting in favour of the resolution almost the whole of Asia is not with the West.

Countries are pondering over of possibility of trade through national currencies. Russia and China have developed parallel versions of SWIFT namely System for Transfer of Financial Messages and Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), respectively.

These developments can severely undermine the western grip

over the global financial system. The economic sanctions have made countries realise that the global financial institutions need to be more democratic and they are tools of western hegemony. Nations across the globe are reconsidering the trade through cryptocurrencies and alternate methods of fund transfer.

This war is changing the dynamics of world affairs. In the coming years, the world will witness the realignment of relationships and demand for the democratisation of global institutions with power being shared equally among members. The inbuilt disparity will have to go.

Russia is not fighting a war for securing Donbas but chaperoning a new world order.

IN THE END

Shouldn't the US and NATO be blamed for the war and casualties? On the diplomatic chessboard, the US played its moves to encircle Russia and the price is being paid by common Ukrainian. The sad part is that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is being hailed as a hero by the west, had every opportunity to avoid the war.

Instead of trying to douse the fire, the EU and the US are arming Ukraine to fight it out. The massive flow of portable air defence, anti-armour, artillery and ammunition are being used to arm militia and military. Reportedly some of these unaccounted weapons have appeared on the black market. One shudders to think what if any lone wolf Islamist gets hold of one of these air defence missiles and brings down an airliner? This is a fair possibility. Ignoring all the rationale, it seems the west is ready to fight Russia till the last Ukrainian. ■

Recognition of Donetsk and Lugansk

Russia on February 21 recognised Ukraine's eastern regions of Donetsk and Lugansk as Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic. Russia also signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with them.

Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik represented Donetsk and Lugansk respectively at the signing of the friendship treaty. The eastern breakaway factions are fighting against Kyiv since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 by Russia.

RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR: WHAT NEXT

The war in Ukraine has entered a new phase after the Russian pullback from the North. The two-month-long war was expected to be a short and swift victory for Russia. Things did not go as expected. It is pertinent to analyse this war which is changing the world as we know it and has lessons for military planners.

by **COL PRAMOD NINAN (RETD)**



PHOTO: Lencer / commons.wikimedia.org

The Russian military buildup on its borders with Ukraine began in the last few months of last year. Russia launched a full-scale offensive into Ukraine on February 24. After more than 40 days of the war, Russia has withdrawn its forces from the northern cities of Kyiv and Chernihiv and focused more on to eastern cities of Ukraine in the Donetsk and Luhansk region¹. Ukrainian forces have recaptured areas around Kyiv and to the north of the city. Kyiv did not fall, it has nevertheless, resulted in large scale destruction of lives and property. Russia has renewed its efforts in Eastern Ukraine with a redefined goal. The threat from Russian forces around Kyiv now has become insignificant, Ukraine may be able to reorganize and reinforce in the East. The fighting has therefore swung from the North to the Eastern region. This arcane adaptation of renewed strategy needs deep analysis. This leads to the larger question of What was the aim of the Russian invasion?

THE RUSSIAN AIM

A nation goes to war with the sole aim to win and thus achieve geopolitical or geostrategic objectives. Victory in war can be achieved only by an invasion with a definite political and well planned military strategy. The precursor to any invasion is the political will, which the Russians were well found with. The invasion was aimed to demilitarize and achieve certain political aims by coercing Ukraine to submit to its terms. Yet, there has been an inexplicable withdrawal by the Russian forces from the northern regions after having made some initial progress. If the day to day progress of this war is analysed, there are a large number of unanswered questions.

- What was the military aim and objectives of Russia?
- Why has there been a mid-course shift in the aim?
- Was the destruction of Ukrainian cities planned?
- How well prepared was Russia in launching the offensive in February 2022?

Certainly, as the situation can be read, the midcourse shift of objectives may not augur well for Russia. What could have been the initial aim of Russia?

- To carry out a large scale multi-directional invasion into Ukraine as a deterrent and threaten major cities by forcing them to surrender.
- To threaten and capture Kyiv and other important Cities, thereby threatening Ukrainian power centres.
- To capture and annex the Donbas region and thereby annex the eastern and southern region in continuum with Crimea.
- To resort to 'Attrition warfare' to cause maximum degradation to weaken the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) and also to destabilise its economy by destruction.

INVASION AS A DETERRENT

Large scale invasion as deterrence is best applicable against a very weak enemy. It will aim to invade with large forces concentrated at different key centres to capture them at the earliest. This will rely on the momentum of the invading forces. An insubstantial adversary may desist war and not contest the invasion. The decision to contest the invasion would be weighed against the geopolitical gains.

Russia started its initial build-up near the Russo-Ukrainian border from March to April and further consolidated build up between October and February this year. Russian intention for the invasion

was clear and predicted by the USA and was known to the West². Fighting in Donbas escalated in February and evacuation began in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Meanwhile, war preparations were taking place in Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on February 23 appealed to the citizens of Russia to prevent a war³. Ukraine prepared its armed forces to be combat-ready and planned a strong defence strategy. The national consensus was to contest any threat to its sovereignty.

THE RUSSIAN INVASION

The invasion of Ukraine began on February 24 in a full-scaled military operation with four thrusts. The north thrust towards Kyiv, an eastern front to capture Kharkiv, a southern thrust towards Mariupol and the southeastern attacks launched at the cities of Luhansk and Donbas.

The aim of such a massive offensive would perhaps have been to choke Ukraine and capture maximum territory, thus forcing them onto the negotiation table. However, by March 25, the first phase of military operation in Ukraine was declared complete and by April 7, Russian troops deployed in the Northern offensive of Kyiv were ordered to withdraw.

Except for large scale destruction of civilian population, property and military hardware, as was reported, no recognisable political gains were achieved. There could have been many reasons for this change in strategy. It could have been stalled due to stiff resistance; lack of momentum due to lack of forces; or could have been part of an overall pre-planned strategy.

ANNEXATION OF EASTERN REGION

The northern offensive faced stiff resistance and Russia shifted its focus to the eastern region to annex the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk⁴. Russia claimed that the offensive in the North was to draw in Ukrainian forces and destroy them as a part of its strategy. Whatsoever was the plan, Russia did not achieve the aim of weakening the defenders in the North. A renewed offensive to annex the eastern and southern region in continuum with Crimea will need additional force. Also, Russians will face the same problems of fighting in built-up areas and stretched lines of logistic support.

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Recycling of Russian armoured and infantry divisions employed on the northern front, into another offensive will need time. Hence, the Russian goal in the East will need time and careful planning.

ATTRITION WARFARE

Attrition war focuses on the destruction mainly of military hardware to wear down the adversary⁵. The force that perceives it to be at a disadvantage generally resorts to attrition warfare. It may therefore not be considered as a strategy, but as an option forced upon by circumstances. No sides win in attrition warfare, which is marked by the high rate of casualties. Historically, Russia has won an attrition war against Napoleon in 1812.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in its initial phases perhaps did not aim at destruction. During the initial phase of the war, Ukrainian forces spread themselves across the settlements and placed their offensive weapons among the built-up areas. The counter bombardment by Russian forces led to the massive destruction of settlements. As the days progressed, there has been huge destruction. A parallel can be drawn with the Korean War. The Korean War lasted more than three years and is marked as one of the most destructive conflicts, with casualties more than the Vietnam War⁶.

THE RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

It is supposed that victory in war can be achieved only by offensive action. An offensive helps to maintain the initiative, forcing the enemy to react thus denying him the opportunity to pursue his objectives. Russia has been preparing for this war since the beginning of 2021, yet it appears that they launched this massive offensive without adequate military readiness. Russian strategy perhaps was to launch a massive high momentum 'Blitzkrieg' offensive for quick capture of territory. This game plan having been choked, there must have been disarray within strategy planners.

Certain dictate for an offensive as listed below seemingly have been ignored which could have been the reasons that have led to the current irresolute outcome of the Russian invasion.

- Balancing and equipping forces based on the operational plans for each Thrust line.
- Collection of tactical level intelligence.

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- Shaping of the battlefield and dominating the airspace, such that the offensive columns are not interdicted.
- Planning of special operations of air landed, air-dropped troops and vertical envelopment.
- Planning to capture Bridge heads, airfields and securing dropping Zones.
- Uninterrupted logistics support.
- Contingency planning.

The Russian invasion gives an impression of a hasty offensive. The Russian forces rushed into an offensive without combat readiness and logistic balance. Intelligence plan also seemed to be lacking, such that terrain profiling of thrust lines was not carried out using satellites. This resulted in the slowing down of mechanized columns and heavy weapons. The snow of February also worked against Russian mobile columns. These were easily targeted by Ukrainian UAVs which operated easily in unopposed airspace. Russian air defence elements could keep the Ukrainian air force under check but medium size low flying armed drones like Turkish TB-2 could operate with ease.

Despite the availability of armed drones, Ukraine failed to achieve complete success against the Russian military. Case in point, large Russian convoys which were bogged down were not destroyed completely by Ukraine. Why large scale destruction of these convoys by the Ukrainian Air Force or UAVs or Artillery weapon systems did not happen, needs scrutiny. In any case, the initial momentum of the thrusts was broken as also troops were faced with the limitations of fighting in built-up areas. This has possibly led to the breakdown of the offensive and caused large casualties to soldiers and equipment.

Ironically, the Russian offensive also has been choked by logistics issues and problems with equipment. Logistic echelons were not able to keep pace with the fighting columns. As per reports, armoured vehicles were abandoned due to a shortage of fuel. It is also believed that Russian columns had to resort to moving on paved tracks and roads due to technical issues and lack of maintenance. Offensives cannot be constrained due to logistic mismatch, as such, a logistic plan should support the operational plans. It, therefore, appears that this invasion was rushed into before firming up a clear aim or planned strategy.

Russian intelligence agencies could perhaps also have carried out psychological operations to manage public opinion in their favour. Russian cyber-attacks were not able to cause serious, crippling and lasting damage or crash Ukrainian networks. A proper attack on the infrastructure, command and control would have caused disarray within Ukraine, thus disorganizing their defence preparations.

It is debatable as to why Russians did not use multi-barrel rocket systems like TOS 1, Smerch or other BM series of weapon systems. Thermobaric ammunition and tactical missiles could have been used to cause large scale destruction within Ukraine. Russia in the initial stages did not use these weapon systems, perhaps to minimize civilian casualties or following with the principle of economy of effort. However, their use of destructive means after forty days of war may be interpreted as their strategic need to achieve the end state of being victorious.

As Russia reached a stalemate around Kyiv and decided to withdraw, questions were raised about the aim. It seemed that stretched lines of communication, overshooting of planned days of operations, troop motivation and lack of reinforcements led to this deba-

cle. Certainly, there has been a lack in the planning of the operations and wargaming of these thrusts. There is also a visible lack of contingency plans.

By April 12, Russia's revised strategy and aim to capture territory and annexe the Donbas region was clear. Renewed thrust in the East and fighting on Mariupol confirmed a shift in the aim. There were rumours of recycling the forces from the North to be employed in the East.

The renewed thrust on the East would require additional forces and it would be important to know whether Russia sends fresh forces or moves the forces from the North. The effectiveness of regrouped troops needs evaluation and takes time to be declared combat-ready. How the battle unfolds in future would tell us whether Russia has benefitted from a renewed second thrust towards Kyiv instead of East. The capture of Kyiv would have forced Ukraine to the negotiation table.

Russia meanwhile has intensified its attacks in the East and also has increased bombardment in Mariupol. Reports indicate massive destruction in Mariupol. The port of Odesa has reportedly been bombarded. Does this mean that the war is now taking a turn towards a war of attrition? An attrition war at this stage will be a global catastrophe. The world now needs to watch out for the outcome of attacks and counterattacks as well large scale destruction in pursuit of victory. Achieving military and political aims cannot be at the cost of triggering the conflagration point.

UKRAINIAN STRATEGY

Sun Tzu had said that the main object of war is victory without protracted violence. However, warfare has become nonlinear and hence planned degradation and destruction of the enemy's combat potential has become mandatory. Degradation should be limited only to military combat elements and not civilians and their assets. Russians followed this dictum in the initial few days of the war. There were hardly any reports of targeting buildings and civilians. Ukraine has taken advantage of this to fortify and organize its defences well.

It was thought that Kyiv would fall within a few days of the Russian invasion. However, even after more than one month, the invasion did not make any viable progress. Ukrainian defensive strategy was perceptibly much stronger than the Russian offensive. The invasion force of 120 Battalion groups was considered to be large enough to rapidly sweep through Ukraine⁷. The aim would have been to make a rapid ingress and overwhelm Ukrainian defensive positions. Ukrainian Army, however, was able to blunt the ingress by targeting key elements of the offensive force, denying axes by the destruction of bridges and carrying out UAV assaults on soft logistic elements. This disrupted maintenance of the momentum of the invasion, which is one of its cardinal principles. Ukraine thus gained a lot of time to align and organize its defences as per Russian intentions.

Ukraine's strategy of selective destruction of Russian Air Defence and Early Warning Systems helped them to achieve control of its air space. This enabled them to employ UAVs to pinpoint targets for destruction.

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OPTIONS FOR UKRAINE

Ukraine's goals are unambiguous. It is to ensure national sovereignty and territorial integrity as also to restore peace and normal life. Ukrainians have been duly supported by members of the European Union, United States and the United Kingdom using planning, training, and equipping them with anti-armour, anti-air missiles and ammunitions of all kinds for resisting any Russian ingress. Ukrainians perhaps have three options to respond to this invasion.

The first option would be to contain the ongoing assault and react to any emerging situation. This would be a total defensive option in the event of renewed attacks by regrouped Russian troops. There is no initiative and it would be difficult to regain any lost territory.

The second option would be to use minimum force level to stall any Russian offensive and simultaneously use force to counterattack or carry out limited offensives. Troops that have retained defensive posture in North and North East fronts may be regrouped to carry out the limited offensive. This will help them to regain lost territory in the Donbas region.

The third option is to launch a massive all-out counter-offensive against Russia following all the dictums of an offensive. Ukraine will retain the initiative to strike at the place of its choosing at the decisive time. This offensive will force Russia to recoil from the Donbas region and concentrate to stall the Ukrainian offensive. This may seemingly be the least likely option, but the payoffs are huge.

Whatever be the option the Ukrainian aim should now be to regain maximum lost territory by any viable strategic move. While selecting their option and unfolding its strategy, due care should be taken not to escalate attrition warfare to a level of 'Bait and Bleed'.

WHAT NEXT

The Russians were more unprepared for the war than the Ukrainians. This is a hard-hitting statement, but given the military might of Russia against Ukraine and having retained the initiative of this

This is the first time that a global concern over the use of nuclear weapons has come to the fore. It may not be a full-fledged nuclear weapon but there may be a possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons. Russia has repeatedly raised the prospect of using nuclear weapons in case of other NATO countries join the war.

invasion after such prolonged planning, their aim has been diluted. The war has highlighted the need for military strategic planning aligned with political aims. Perhaps, the Russian primary strategic assumption that they are invading a weak state may now be interpreted as erroneous. There is an impression of having undertaken an over-confident effort. It certainly would have been a 'No War' situation if Ukraine was overwhelmed by Russian might and had surrendered within the first few days of the war.

The Russians now have only one option and that is to apply more pressure. This pressure can be interpreted in many ways. Militarily, they have the option to apply more force even by reducing combat potential from all over and renewing the offensive in the Donbas region. This will help them to militarily complete control of the Eastern and Southern regions in continuum with Crimea.

Russian option to launch another offensive on to Kyiv or elsewhere is unlikely but not impossible. It is not likely that Russia can organize adequate additional combat-ready force level to endeavour another offensive. So, the option would be to cause maximum damage by standoff bombardment of military establishments and public installations. Thus, gradually moving on to Attrition warfare to wear our Ukraine and forcing them to negotiate.

Russian political aim would be to win this war at any cost and bail out of this stalemate. In the face of the involvement of the West and sanctions imposed on them, they will want to achieve an end state of being victorious.

Western analysts have suggested that Russia may opt for chemical or biological warfare. Though, no responsible nation would like to cross the threshold to biological or chemical warfare. Russia is also one of the countries to have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, an international treaty that bans their development, production or use. Russia has also been known to have developed biological agents even through the cold war.

Russia signed the Biological Weapons Convention in 1972⁸. Yet, under the current circumstances use of chemical or biological weapons as a last resort is the remotest possibility by either of the States. A chemical or biological attack would be a catastrophic escalation for the region. Allegations and counter-allegations of the use of chemical agents are rife.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

This is the first time that a global concern over the use of nuclear

weapons has come to the fore. It may not be a full-fledged nuclear weapon but there may be a possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons. Russia has repeatedly raised the prospect of using nuclear weapons in case of other NATO countries join the war. The United States and NATO countries are quite concerned with these developments. The possible use of nuclear weapons was discussed at the NATO meeting in Brussels on March 24.

CONCLUSION

The manoeuvre warfare was drawing into a stalemate as the world celebrated Easter. It may be analysed whether *Bellum se ipsum alet* strategy was applied in this invasion? Even if it was, it failed miserably in all its aspects of target location, the timings and in capturing territory with minimum damage. There has been an incomprehensible strategy in this war. Modern wars are won or lost at the strategic level rather than at the operational or tactical levels. This level involves a strategic concept and combat readiness of the armed forces.

Nations should not just jump into a war or a conflict. For that matter, Nations should apply the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine and answer all the questions before planning a conflict⁹. Importantly, Nations should consider answers to the three important aspects of the doctrine; whether a vital national security interest has been threatened; is there a plausible exit strategy when faced with such a stalemate situation; is there broad international support for the cause. War is the solution only if the answers to the questions in the Powell Doctrine lead to it. May 9th is a day of significance Victory Day. Maybe the war will be led in the direction of peace. The world should watch and monitor that this supposed to be 'Blitzkrieg' does not end up as a 'Total War'. ■

Author is an Indian Army veteran. The colonel has commanded specialised Artillery Regiments equipped with Hi-tech aerial and ground-based Surveillance and target acquisition systems. He has vast applied experience in the employment of surveillance systems including UAS in various operations. Trained abroad, he has spear-headed the UAS project at Army Headquarters and been an instructor in surveillance systems.

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A file photograph of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and Russian President Putin in Paris in December 2019.

SHOCK AND AWE: LESSONS FROM THE UKRAINE WAR

More than a month into the Ukraine War, Russia has decapitated much of the Ukrainian armed forces. Contrary to the propaganda peddled by the Western media, the conflict in Europe is likely to be settled in Moscow's favour, with Ukraine neutered and effectively losing its independence. For India, the war offers a number of lessons in key areas – from using artillery effectively to the right time to deploy air power and standoff strikes.

SOURCE: kremlin.ru

by **RAKESH KRISHNAN SIMHA**

Russia's objectives and tactics in the Ukraine War can be summed up in the words of two famous strategists. Niccolo Machiavelli, the Italian diplomat of the Renaissance Period, wrote in *The Prince*: "There is no avoiding war – it can only be postponed to the advantage of others." More than 2,300 years ago, Chanakya, the Prime Minister of the Mauryan Empire, wrote in the *Arthashastra*: "The enemy's destruction shall be brought about even at the cost of great losses in mean, material and wealth."

A key takeaway for India from the ongoing conflict in Europe is that sometimes war is unavoidable, and it should be executed with a laser-like focus. India is a stark example of a large country that has not only allowed an implacable enemy to thrive on its borders but also permitted it to emerge as a nuclear power. In contrast, Russia gave Ukraine a long rope for the past eight years, but when the Ukrainian leadership started making plans to join NATO, Russia decided Kyiv's time was up. And when the invasion happened, it was fast but measured.

What Russia did to Ukraine wasn't a blitzkrieg but rather economic and military strangulation. Since a blitzkrieg would result in huge civilian casualties and the destruction of Ukrainian cities, Russian President Vladimir Putin has decided to go for a staggered assault that is taking apart the Ukrainian Army piece by piece. This is primarily due to the fact that Russia considers Ukrainians to be no different from Russians, and incorporating Ukraine into the Russian sphere of influence is the key objective. "It's like a boa constrictor around Ukraine's neck, squeezing and squeezing and squeezing," said retired US Admiral James Foggo, former commander of US and NATO fleets in Europe.

PRECISION STRIKES

The battle for Ukraine began in the early morning hours of February 24, when Putin launched what he called a "special military operation" into the country of about 40 million, with attacks from multiple fronts and targeted toward multiple Ukrainian cities.

In war, the army with the first-mover advantage has the element of surprise on its side. Hours before Russia launched its military operations in Ukraine, Russian cyber assault teams crippled Ukrainian internet and signal communications, isolating the political leadership in Kyiv from its forward military commanders. This is exactly what the US did in Iraq in both the Gulf Wars – in 1991 and 2003.

This was followed by a ferocious artillery and missile barrage. Non-nuclear Klub and Iskander-M cruise missiles smashed into Ukraine's military's headquarters, tactical command centres, radars, air defence missiles, anti-aircraft missile units and air force bases. As many as 74 control and communication centres were knocked out of action within the first 24 hours. Over 2,119 military infrastructure targets were hit within a week. According to Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov, among them were 11 airfields belonging to the Ukrainian Air Force, three command points, a Ukrainian Navy base, 68 radar stations and one hundred and eight S-300 and Buk-M1 missile systems.

The Ukrainian Navy was also knocked out in the early rounds, with most of its warships sunk in the harbour. The Black Sea port of Odesa, Ukraine's busiest port and largest oil and gas terminal came under missile attack and quickly passed into Russian control. Russia's Black Sea Fleet had been disrupting Ukraine's maritime trade

even before the invasion. Faced with these attacks, Ukraine suspended operations at its seaports.

Next, the Ukrainian Air Force went up in smoke. By the beginning of the special operation, there were up to 250 serviceable combat aircraft and helicopters in the service of the Ukrainian armed forces. The Russian Aerospace Forces destroyed 89 combat aircraft and 57 helicopters on the ground and in the air. "Some of the Ukrainian planes flew to Romania and no longer participate in battles," said Konashenkov.

GROUND INVASION

Many so-called experts have been claiming that Russian forces have got bogged down on the Ukrainian border, but on the contrary, the Russian Army burst through Ukrainian defences – or what was left of them – and reached the outskirts of the capital Kyiv within three days of the invasion. "The scale and scope of the Russian attack is remarkable. They captured territory in three weeks that is larger than the landmass of the United Kingdom," says Larry C. Johnson, a veteran of the CIA and the State Department's Office of Counter-Terrorism, in an interview with UNZ.com.

The Russians were surprised by the world by using highly trained special forces to lead the attacks, especially in Kyiv. Moscow feared

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significant numbers of civilians would have died if Russian ground troops went into the Ukrainian capital. A significant number of these soldiers, known as the Spetsnaz, moved across the border and were spearheading the attacks. The Spetsnaz were joined by helicopters, separate guards and land and airborne diversions to conduct the assault on Ukraine.

Multi-pronged offensives were launched from Russia, Belarus and Russia controlled Donbas. According to the US-based Institute for the Study of War, the full military operation consisted of infantry divisions supported by armoured units. The main infantry and tank division attacks were launched at four spearhead incursions, creating a Northern front (launched towards Kyiv), a Southern front (originating in Crimea), and a Southeastern front (launched at the cities of Lugansk and Donbas), and an Eastern front.

All four attacks entered Ukraine at approximately 100-200 km within Ukrainian borders while occupying Ukrainian territory and encircling the main cities. By March 20, the four incursion fronts had formed a perimeter significantly within the entire border of

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eastern Ukraine and started to extensively consolidate lines of communication and support between all four fronts within Ukraine while besieging Mariupol, Kyiv, Donbas, Lugansk and other cities.

UKRAINIAN RESPONSE

The Westerners – in particular the Americans and British who had trained and equipped the Ukrainian defence forces – have been claiming that their boys played well, extracting a heavy toll on the Russian Army. Bizarrely, they gave credence to The Ghost – a Ukrainian Sukhoi jet that supposedly shot down five Russian aircraft. The Ghost was quickly busted by fact-checkers.

Without artillery and aircraft, it was amply clear that Ukraine's ability to launch counterattacks was exaggerated. This was proved by the relaxed manner in which a 40 km long Russian military column waited at the Ukrainian border for weeks without fear of strafing or shelling. In fact, many Westerners salivated at the thought of bombing the column, but no such thing happened because Ukrainian artillery and air power were nonexistent.

As Russian troops entered key Ukrainian cities and captured military bases and nuclear power plants, the Ukrainian response splintered and ineffective. Says Johnson: "We have not seen a single instance of a Ukrainian regiment or brigade-size unit attacking and defeating a comparable Russian unit. Instead, the Russians have split the Ukrainian Army into fragments and cut their lines of communication."

RAISING THE STAKES

The Russians now stepped up the tempo of the war by attacking de facto Western military bases in Western Ukraine. Significantly, they struck with deadly hypersonic missiles – perhaps the first time such missiles have been deployed in the war. This is a schadenfreude moment because some of these bases were populated with Western military advisors and mercenaries who had come not to defend Ukraine but to kill Russians.

The first blow, on March 13, was directed at Yavoriv, which was hit by a volley of 30 subsonic missiles. Witnesses told how "the sky turned red" as the missiles smashed into the site near the Polish border. According to Johnson, "Russian military strikes in western Ukraine during the past week have shocked and alarmed NATO officials.... Over 200 personnel were killed, which included American and British military and intelligence personnel, and hundreds more

wounded. Many suffered catastrophic wounds, such as amputations, and are in hospital."

On March 14, the British newspaper *The Mirror* said at least three British ex-special forces may have been killed in the strikes. The Russian Ministry of Defence announced Russia would continue attacks on foreign fighters in Ukraine. The message was loud and clear – not only can Russian forces strike the western limits of Ukraine, but the Kremlin does not care if American or other volunteer fighters were training there.

Russia then used its newest Kinzhal hypersonic missiles to destroy a weapons storage site in the country's west. "The Kinzhal aviation missile system with hypersonic aero-ballistic missiles destroyed a large underground warehouse containing missiles and aviation ammunition," the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Russian forces also destroyed an aircraft repair plant in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, using six Kh-55 cruise missiles fired from the Black Sea.

ABSENCE OF AIRPOWER

The calibrated Russian attacks on Ukrainian targets have devastated much of Ukrainian military infrastructure. This is even more remarkable when you consider that the Kremlin has held back its air force and premier army regiments. Had the Russian Air Force entered the war, Ukraine would have fallen in days.

The absence of the Russian Air Force from the war has baffled military experts. David Deptula, a retired US Air Force three-star general who once commanded the no-fly zone over northern Iraq, said he was surprised that Russia did not work harder to establish air dominance from the start. "The Russians are discovering that coordinating multi-domain operations is not easy," Deptula told Reuters. "And that they are not as good as they presumed they were."

Western experts commenting on Russian military strategy are expected to suffer from bias. Russian military tactics have since the Soviet era called for close integration of the air and land forces in the battlespace. In the Afghanistan War, the Russians deployed strategic bombers such as the Tupolev Tu-95M against the Afghan Mujahideen. In one notable reprisal attack against an Afghan village, where a Russian army soldier was found skinned alive, they bombed the entire village in hours, killing 3,000 Afghans.

The Russian reluctance to use the vast air force of 1,400 aircraft could be owing to the fact that the job of eliminating Ukrainian military targets is better left to saturation attacks by cruise missiles and non-nuclear ballistic missiles, thereby minimizing the risk to fighter pilots. "They're not necessarily willing to take high risks with their own aircraft and their own pilots," a senior US defence official told Reuters.

The Russians had employed similar tactics in Syria where they used the potent Klub anti-ship and land-attack cruise missile – having a stupendous 2,500 km range – to take out Islamic State targets. Only after they had killed hundreds of terrorists did they use the air force.

LESSONS FOR INDIA

The Russian military action offers India's war planners a strategy to pursue war with minimal loss of life. The use of cyber warfare and precision missile strikes to soften up the enemy's armed forces and take out his military headquarters has proved to be highly effective



India's BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles should be used within the opening moments of war to take out air defence radars and command and communication centres in order to blind the enemy.

strategies. India's BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles should be used within the opening moments of war to take out air defence radars and command and communication centres in order to blind the enemy.

This should be followed by snapping further chains of command to deny enemy forces the ability to communicate with each other. The Brahmos has a range of over 300 km, with the latest versions capable of hitting targets 450 km away. Newer versions of the missile are set to have an 800 km range. This means no target in Pakistan will be safe from a saturation attack from India unless the Pakistan forces hide in the ravines of Balochistan.

The next time India needs to conduct a Balakot-style strike deep inside Pakistan, it should use the Brahmos. Longer range subsonic missiles like the Nirbhay can be deployed against Chinese armed forces in Tibet.

Napoleon described artillery as the god of war because nothing ensures battlefield dominance better than having vast firepower. Unfortunately, despite the shift in India's warfighting doctrine from offensive defence to offensive, India has just three artillery divisions – 40th Artillery Division based in Ambala (Western Command), 41st Artillery Division, Pune (Southern Command) and 42nd Artillery Division based in Jaipur (South Western Command).

However, in order to acquire the ability to decide the outcome of a war in India's favour before a bullet is fired, the Army needs

to raise more artillery divisions. Since the civilian bureaucracy is likely to oppose further expansion, the least the Army can do is use the current sanctioned number of divisions more effectively. The harsh reality is that the generals always want the latest weapons but armies ultimately have to fight with the weapons available.

Secondly, as the Russians have shown in Ukraine, artillery should be treated as a combat arm rather than a support arm. The aim should be to concentrate artillery fire not only on forwarding areas but in the enemy's rear as well, leading to a greater scale and magni-

The Russians have shown in Ukraine, artillery should be treated as a combat arm rather than a support arm. The aim should be to concentrate artillery fire not only on forwarding areas but in the enemy's rear as well, leading to a greater scale and magnitude of destruction.

SOURCE: PIB

THE MILITARY BALANCE



ACTIVE COMBATANTS

Russia 900,000 | Ukraine 200,000



RESERVE PERSONNEL

Russia 2,000,000 | Ukraine 900,000



ATTACK AIRCRAFT

Russia 1,328 | Ukraine 146



HELICOPTERS

Russia 478 | Ukraine 42



TANKS

Russia 31,000 | Ukraine 5,000



ARTILLERY

Russia 7,571 | Ukraine 2,040

ARMOURED VEHICLES

Russia 30,122 | Ukraine 12,303



SURFACE WARSHIPS

Russia 535 | Ukraine 38



SUBMARINES

Russia 70 | Ukraine 0



MILITARY BUDGET

Russia \$62 billion | Ukraine \$6 billion

tude of destruction. India should not only hit the enemy’s frontline troops and armour but also destroy his supplies, ammunition and urban infrastructure in the hinterland.

Heavy and continuous suppressive fire keeps the opponent in a defensive posture – hunkered in his foxhole instead of taking aimed shots. This tactic limits the enemy’s overall firepower. Suppressive fire also prevents the enemy from properly assessing the attack and organising a coherent and coordinated defence or counterattack. This is what the Russians have done in every city they have attacked.

Another objective of heavy and sustained artillery fire is to place your mechanised regiments and infantry in an advantageous position. That is, your troop formations are concentrated without committing them to the ground. This is known as Manoeuvre by Fire in which your troop formations may not necessarily advance under cover of the artillery offensive; rather they may advance to support the artillery offensive. This completely transforms the nature of war-fighting and can potentially disorient the enemy and unhinge his decision-making process.

Also, such a strategy is the way to execute the Cold Start doctrine (the colloquial term for the Proactive Military Strategy which aims at a blitzkrieg style strike into Pakistan) where long-range artillery will have to kick in the door and clear paths for the army’s eight Integrated Battle Groups to pour into Pakistan in the shortest time possible.

The bottom line is that firepower saves lives. Because India has a volunteer army, every life is precious and therefore the Indian Army should have the capacity to unleash saturation artillery barrages so Indian soldiers do not get into harm’s way.

And finally, the Russian decision to hold back its air force offers a key lesson for India’s war planners – avoid a scenario where Indian fighter pilots get shot down over Pakistan. In the opening days of a conflict, the Indian Air Force should be used primarily for combat air patrol over Indian airspace, allowing Indian anti-aircraft units to

operate with impunity. With the induction of the S-400 air defence system, India has acquired the capability to take out the adversary’s aircraft within its airspace. Air raids or overflights into the enemy’s airspace should be conducted only after his aerial assets and air defence radars have been neutralized and his airspace sanitized.

In 2019, it was Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman’s personal decision to enter Pakistan that led to the dogfight with an F-16 after which he was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft artillery. Whether he shot down the F-16 is not important; the fact that he became a POW is the issue. In a real war – as opposed to a border skirmish – India cannot extradite each pilot. Loss of aircraft and pilots can impact the morale of the entire nation, if not the armed forces. As Russia has shown, standoff weapons (which can be launched from a distance sufficient to allow attacking personnel to evade defensive fire from the target area) are the best insurance against loss of life.

ENDGAME

The world is never constant. There will be war again – and most likely it will be thrust upon India as on countless previous occasions. In view of this existential threat, India must not be caught napping as happened during Kargil 1999 where our commanders initially fought in the manner of World War I generals who threw underequipped soldiers at enemy trenches.

War is too expensive to be a learning ground. It is better to learn from the experiences of other countries than relive them over and over again. This is the defining takeaway for India from the Ukraine War. ■

Rakesh Krishnan Simha is a globally cited defence analyst. His work has been published by leading think tanks and quoted extensively in books on diplomacy, counter-terrorism, warfare and economic development.

FIREPOWER: 6 WEAPONS FROM THE UKRAINE WAR THAT SHOULD INTEREST INDIA

Here are some of the weapons systems the Russians have effectively deployed against Ukraine and which India's war planners should look at.

by **RAKESH KRISHNAN SIMHA**

Iskander-M short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) were fired en masse in a war for the first time by the Russians.



PHOTO: Vitaly V. Kuzmin / commons.wikimedia.org

The Russian military action in Ukraine is the largest conflict in Europe since World War II, with Moscow conducting a multi-pronged offensive across the country. Using an array of weapons, the Russian military has pummeled wide areas in Ukraine with airstrikes and has conducted devastating rocket and artillery bombardments. Here is a look at some of the weapons being used in the conflict.

MISSILE BOATS

Admiral Sergei Gorshkov was arguably the greatest naval strategist of the 20th century. In his book, 'The Sea Power of the State,' the man who transformed the Russian Navy into a global force, wrote: "Naval warfare aimed directly against land targets will play an ever greater part in any future major conflict."

As the invasion commenced, Russian missile boats with a displacement of a mere 1,000 tons and based in the Black Sea started raining down cruise missiles on Ukraine. Flying at treetop level over a distance of hundreds of kilometers, and avoiding populated areas, the missiles slammed into military targets without warning. The precision strikes left the Ukrainians and their Western allies shocked, rattled and helpless. Many observers couldn't begin to fathom how these tiny ships could be so devastating.

Missile boats and frigates are small and unglamorous components of the navy but often they are the first elements of the strike force to see action. And unlike the massive aircraft carriers, they don't have to be protected with a cordon of ships, submarines and aircraft.

Missile boats are not new to Indians, as in the 1971 War the Indian Navy used them brilliantly to raid Pakistani naval assets twice in the space of less than four days. Karachi, the chief Pakistani port, burned for a week. In its quest to become a blue water fleet, the Indian Navy has been splashing cash on large capital ships. However, it must not neglect the humble – but highly nimble and effective – missile boat.

CRUISE MISSILES

The Russian military has used Kalibr cruise missiles to hit facilities throughout Ukraine. The Kalibr is a precision weapon that has been unleashed against military facilities and government buildings. From 2015 onwards, the Russians used this 2,500 km range, partly supersonic missile with devastating effect against the Islamic State as well as US-backed terror groups in Syria.

The interesting fact about the Kalibr's flight is that for the majority of its trajectory it travels at a high subsonic speed. Initially the missile flies at an altitude of 30-45 feet above the sea surface. Approximately 60 km from the designated target, the Kalibr descends to 15 feet and makes a supersonic sprint towards its target during the last few kilometres. It is also capable of performing very high angled defensive and speedy maneuvers. This is unlike the linear – and predictable – flight path of other anti-ship cruise missiles, making interception a waste of effort and bullets.

The Indian Navy currently has the Kalibr's stripped down export version known as the Klub. Although it has a restricted range of less than 300 km, it is more than enough to strike at coastal targets from well within international waters. These missiles are expected to cause mayhem in Pakistani waters and on shored based targets in the opening hours of a conflict.

With India and Russia no longer bound by the restrictions of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), it is time for the Indian Navy to make a pitch for the 2,500 range Kalibr. Mounted on missile boats, frigates and destroyers, they will allow India to launch crippling attacks on the enemy forces from safe standoff distances.

SHORT RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILES

To hit key targets, the Russian military has used its only short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) in active service, the Iskander-M with a range of 500-km. During the initial hours of the invasion, these precision missiles were fired en masse in a war for the first time. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), it has a circular error probable (CEP) of 5-7 metres, meaning half of the projectiles fired will land in a circle with a radius of that size.

First used in combat in 2008 in Georgia, the Iskander is designed to confound missile defences by flying on a low trajectory and manoeuvring in flight to strike targets. The missile carries a much more powerful warhead that can destroy big buildings and some fortified facilities. Some Iskander missiles were reportedly fired

The Indian analogue is the Prithvi SRBM, which is deployed near the western border and at sea and is intended to be used against Pakistani cities and static military targets. The problem with the Prithvi is that its army and air force versions run on liquid fuel and the naval version is partly liquid fueled. Since liquid propellants are corrosive, they are fueled just before launch, which makes them a rather cumbersome weapon.

from the territory of Russian ally Belarus, which has served as a staging ground for the Russian invasion.

According to US estimates, the first Russian onslaught included more than 100 missiles launched from land and sea. Since then more of them have been fired, making Ukrainian landscape look like Swiss cheese.

The Indian analogue is the Prithvi SRBM, which is deployed near the western border and at sea and is intended to be used against Pakistani cities and static military targets. The problem with the Prithvi is that its army and air force versions run on liquid fuel and the naval version is partly liquid fueled. Since liquid propellants are corrosive, they are fueled just before launch, which makes them a rather cumbersome weapon. As the Russians have demonstrated in Ukraine, the use of SRBMs has allowed them to attack Ukrainian targets with pinpoint accuracy and without risking pilot lives in manned aircraft.



Kinzhal hypersonic missile when ropped from a MiG-31 warplane from standoff distance can travel at more than five times the speed of sound.

HYPERSONIC MISSILES

The Russians have reportedly raised the stakes by using the futuristic Kinzhal hypersonic missile. Dropped from a MiG-31 warplane from standoff distances, the Kinzhal can travel at more than five times the speed of sound, or Mach 5. The Kinzhal has been used to hit two types of targets – hardened command and communication centres and military bases where foreign mercenaries have congregated in significant numbers. The reason for this is that both these targets in Ukraine are crawling with Western mercenaries, military officers and advisors. Russia has made it clear that it will treat foreign mercenaries as war criminals.

Hypersonic missiles are still a work in progress in India, but Rus-

sia, China and the US have gained a lead by testing these weapons, with the Russians clearly in the lead with the deployment of the Kinzhal. For the Indian armed forces, hypersonic missiles would be the logical progression after having inducted the supersonic Brahmos. An advanced version of the Brahmos is on the drawing board, and when it comes it should be produced in large numbers.

MULTIPLE LAUNCH ROCKET SYSTEMS

The BM-21 is one of the multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) used by the Russian army. One battalion of 18 launchers can deliver 720 rockets in a single volley. The rockets are unguided and have lower precision than typical artillery; they cannot be used in situations that call for pinpoint accuracy. To destroy a target, it relies on a large number of rockets spread across an area.

India needs to have a good mix of howitzers and multiple rocket launcher systems (MRLS) that can shower an area with deadly pinpointed fire. MRLS can deliver sustained fire – up to forty rockets in ten seconds – to destroy a targeted area grid by grid. In contrast a howitzer type system can fire at most three rounds a minute.

The best argument for sustained fire is cost. These rockets cost much more than standard artillery rounds, so in a long massive war cost becomes an important factor. The rule of thumb is: in a short intense Cold Start type of war (which is likely against Pakistan) MRLS offers more value for money or better bang for the buck. At

For the Indian armed forces, hypersonic missiles would be the logical progression after having inducted the supersonic Brahmos. An advanced version of the Brahmos is on the drawing board, and when it comes it should be produced in large numbers.

PHOTO: kremlin.ru / commons.wikimedia.org



BM-21 is one of the multiple launch rocket systems used by the Russian army. One battalion of 18 launchers can deliver 720 rockets in a single volley.

the same time, we also need to factor in a longer war in which case more howitzers will be required.

In terms of ease of use, wheeled MLRS can move quickly and evade the enemy’s fire finder radars, which heavy non self-propelled howitzers cannot do. In the plains it would be better to have sustained volleys of rockets softening up the enemy before launching armoured thrusts.

Also, with MRLS you can keep extending the range with bigger and more powerful truck-mounted rockets. If you can hit the enemy from a range of 70-80 km, he has to stay away at least that distance. It’s as simple as that. The Russians have demonstrated the success of this tactic in several wars. Currently, the DRDO manufactures the indigenous Pinaka which is being produced at the rate of 5,000 missiles per year. There are three variants with ranges of 30 km, 65 km and 120 km. The longest-range Pinaka can destroy targets west of Lahore and Sialkot. With India achieving considerable success in rocket propulsion, the country has the technology to leverage this powerful weapons system.

The range can be increased incrementally, as seen in Russian and American MRLS systems. These two countries have MRLS systems with ranges of nearly 200 km. The bottomline is that in the rush to buy howitzers we must not overlook a technology that is easily available at home. As Brahmos and Prithvi Air Defence systems have demonstrated, India has acquired the tag of a world class missile maker.

ARMY ATTACK HELICOPTERS

On the morning of February 24, a formation of 34 Russian helicopters flew south across the Ukraine-Belarus border, skimming at low altitude. They were led by Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopters with distinctive double-rotors, side-mounted 30-millimeter cannons, and a dozen anti-tank guided missiles on stub wings. The Alligators were the escort for the real strike force: Mi-8 ‘Hip’ assault transports carrying up to 300 elite Russian airborne soldiers from the 11th Guards Air Assault Brigade.

Russia has not demonstrated its full air and missile capabilities and will most likely increase its waves of strikes in the coming days to degrade Ukraine’s surviving defences, the US-based Institute for the Study of War said in a report. “The Russian failure to comprehensively strike key Ukrainian assets is a surprising break from expected Russian operations and has likely enabled stiffer Ukrainian defence,” the report said.

Some of Russia’s hesitancy could be due to a lack of real-time reconnaissance and targeting data, but given the number of static targets, a more likely explanation is a desire to minimize casualties among Ukrainians, said Dmitry Stefanovich, a weapons researcher at Moscow’s Institute of World Economy and International Relations.

This should hold a key lesson for India where the Army Aviation Corp’s capacity for conducting air operations is limited. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, although the Corps was created with the main objective of contributing to battlefield

PHOTO: commons.wikimedia.org



Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopters have distinctive double-rotors, side-mounted 30-millimeter cannons, and a dozen anti-tank guided missiles on stub wings.

success by providing guidance to field commanders in applying decisive combat powers, it is plagued with 32 per cent deficiency vis-a-vis its authorized fleet strength.

The US Army has under its operational command 3,510 helicopters (of which 839 are of the attack variety), 256 fixed wing aircraft and 450 advanced drones. By the time the Cold War ended in 1990, the Russian Army could call into battle as many 2,135 fixed wing attack aircraft and 4,300 helicopters (including 1,420 Mi-24 attack helos). China's PLA has nearly 700 helicopters and even the Pakistan Army, which survives on foreign grants, has 260 choppers.

In this backdrop, the Army Aviation assets are inadequate for the size

Army Aviation should possess a mix of light fixed-wing aircraft and all categories of helicopters, including attack helicopters/gunships for various roles like reconnaissance, surveillance, combat fire support, airborne command posts, combat service support, special operations and logistics.

of the Indian Army and the tasks it is required to perform. Its expansion, therefore, needs to be undertaken on a war footing. Army Aviation should possess a mix of light fixed-wing aircraft and all categories of helicopters, including attack helicopters/gunships for various roles like reconnaissance, surveillance, combat fire support, airborne command posts, combat service support, special operations and logistics.

The Indian Army has a requirement of 394 light utility helicopters. It is also planning to acquire the Light Combat Helicopter, which is under development by HAL to meet its requirements for an attack helicopter which can operate at high altitudes (16,300 feet) to fit into an anti-armour and anti-infantry role.

The Army also requires adequate numbers of tactical battle support helicopters such as the HAL Rudra. The purchase of six US built Apache attack helicopters in a deal worth \$655 million or about Rs 4,170 crore should again escalate into a larger order because dozens of Apaches will be required to destroy enemy tanks and armoured columns. At one point after the Galwan clash, the Apaches, which were meant to target Pakistan, were rushed to the Chinese border, leaving a gap in the western front.

However, six Apaches are not enough. The Corps will also require choppers for Special Operations (for para commandos), helicopter-borne early-warning (for employing electronic warfare) and light fixed-wing aircraft (for surveillance and communication tasks). These projects must be pursued vigorously so that they start delivering reliable aerial assets to the Army at the earliest. ■

TIME TO DISBAND NATO

The once-powerful North Atlantic Treaty Organization has become a clumsy military alliance of 30 countries, most of which are consumers of American security rather than providers. As its inaction over the Russian invasion of Ukraine shows, this bloated military bloc is toothless and ineffective that is past its use-by date.

by **RAKESH KRISHNAN SIMHA**

Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Foreign Ministers session in April 2022



PHOTO: NATO

By thrashing Ukraine, while the US and Europe are frozen in decision making paralysis, Russia has humiliated the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in front of the entire world. The 73-year-old military alliance was often mocked as “No Action, Talk Only”, but the Ukraine War removed all doubts about NATO’s inability to act militarily against the very country it is focused on. By provoking Russia and sparking a war in Europe – yet unable to influence the outcome of the conflict in any meaningful way – the antiquated organization has raised questions on whether it has outlived its useful life. Is NATO a dud military pact now? Can it be rejigged and given a new mission and a new lease on life?

Croatia’s case best illustrates the fundamental problem that has weighed down NATO. In 2009 when the Balkan country joined the alliance as its 27th member, it was likened to someone joining a party at 3.00 AM – when the party is nearly finished, people are hungover and nobody cares if you are coming or leaving. The Croats, who are Catholic, didn’t sign up because they wanted to help the Americans fight Russia; they just wanted to be under NATO’s security umbrella and never have to fight their enemies, the Serbs, who follow the Orthodox Church.

This was amply demonstrated in January 2022 when Croatia declared it would order a withdrawal of its troops from NATO forces in Eastern Europe if there was an escalation of tensions with Russia over Ukraine. “Croatia will not send any troops in case of an escalation. On the contrary, it will recall all troops, to the last Croatian soldier,” said President Zoran Milanovic. And indeed, days before the Russians stormed into Ukraine, a detachment of Croatian Army soldiers that were on deployment in Poland returned home.

AN EMPTY SHELL

NATO was founded in 1949 with 12 members to stop a Soviet invasion of Europe, with the motto of “an attack on one is an attack on all”. The Soviet Union disbanded in 1991 and with that ended NATO’s *raison d’être*, but the organization continued to exist without a mission or an adversary. The descent started as Western leaders abandoned former US President George H. Bush’s commitment to Russia that the US would never allow former Soviet allies to join NATO. Every member nation of the old Soviet-led Warsaw Pact military alliance eventually joined NATO, expanding the Atlantic alliance into an unwieldy group of 30 countries with a little commonality of threats or vision.

But this huge expansion did not make NATO stronger. According to author Martin Sieff, “It made the alliance, on the contrary, far weaker in direct military terms. For, all of the former Soviet satellite states and even the three former Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia that eventually joined the alliance did so to receive security, not to give it.”

Without Soviet support and direction, the military establishments of these newly added NATO members were so old and decrepit anyway that they all counted on the US to come to their aid if they were ever threatened by Russia or anyone else.

Sieff adds that the expansion of NATO in the decades following the collapse of communism, therefore, resembled a Ponzi scheme. The US and NATO were increasing their commitments to provide security without increasing the military forces at their disposal that could actually provide it.

The alliance, therefore, drains strength and security from the US, forcing it to defend more than two dozen allies. “Most of the other NATO members are, in military terms, defenceless jokes,” says Sieff.

MILITARY CUTBACKS

The so-called Peace Dividend that followed the years after the collapse of communism led NATO nations to run down their military establishments in both numbers and power-projection capabilities.

NATO’s largest economy, Germany, has adopted a cavalier attitude towards military modernization. This has led to some spectacular embarrassments such as the Bundeswehr (German armed forces) grounding all 53 of its Tiger helicopters due to technical faults. Even more embarrassingly, in 2017, 19 out of 129 helicopter pilots lost their licences because they were unable to meet the required number of flying hours.

German military exercises have been reduced to a laughing stock. In 2014, a battalion on a NATO exercise in Norway was forced to use a painted broomstick to simulate a gun because it didn’t have a real one. Nearly half the soldiers involved in the exercise could not be issued with pistols.

Prodded by NATO, the German Army promised to acquire 44 Leopard 2 tanks and 14 Marder armoured infantry vehicles, yet

The East European countries that joined NATO felt so secure under American protection that they barely spent any money on their militaries. Only 10 of the 30 members spend more than 2 per cent of their GDP on defence.

could only muster nine and three respectively. A leaked document revealed that the Luftwaffe’s Eurofighter and Tornado fighter jets, along with its transport helicopters, are only available for use for an average of four months per year – spending the rest of the time laid up for maintenance and repair.

The UK, which normally follows American commands like an obedient poodle, announced in 2021 that it was reducing the size of its army to 72,500 troops and just seven combat brigades, the smallest the British Army has been in centuries. The number of British tanks under the plan will fall from 227 to 148, the Royal Air Force will lose 24 Typhoon jets, and the Royal Navy will drop from just 19 frigates and destroyers to 17.

The East European countries that joined NATO felt so secure under American protection that they barely spent any money on their militaries. Only 10 of the 30 members spend more than 2 per cent of their GDP on defence. Several American presidents, notably Donald Trump, tried to get these countries to hike their military spending, with little or no luck.

Clearly, the new member states of NATO were consumers of security rather than suppliers of it. “Whenever they sent military forces

Inside NATO

There were 12 founding members of the alliance in 1949: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The alliance has expanded over time, and its membership now numbers 30. The other nations are Greece, Turkey, Germany, Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

NATO's Article 5 spells out its key principle of collective defence: If any member of the alliance is attacked, it shall be considered an attack on all members. And if such an armed attack does occur, each member will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the ally attacked "to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area." What assistance is provided is determined by the individual country, in concert with the other allies. The assistance doesn't necessarily have to be military.

NATO's protection does not extend to members' civil wars or internal coups. During a 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, for

example, NATO did not intervene on either side of the conflict. As a NATO member, Turkey would receive its allies' support in the case of an attack, but not in case of a coup.

NATO is funded by its members. The US contributes roughly three-fourths of the alliance's budget. Only 10 countries have reached the target spending level of 2% of gross domestic product (GDP). The US was forecast to spend 3.52% of its GDP on defence in 2021.

NATO participates in three alliances that expand its influence beyond its 30 member countries. The first is the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, which helps partners become NATO members. It includes 20 non-NATO countries that support its purpose. It began in 1991.

The Mediterranean Dialogue seeks to stabilise the Middle East. Its non-NATO members include Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. It began in 1994.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative works for peace throughout the larger Middle East region. It includes four members of the Gulf Cooperation Council: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. It began in 2004.

to signify their support of the US in Afghanistan and Iraq, the forces were usually non-combatants and were always, with the exception of Britain, sent in such small number as to be negligible in their impact," writes Sieff.

It is unlikely that higher European defence spending would have stopped Russia; Ukraine is an existential matter for Moscow and no amount of NATO firepower would prevent the invasion. Still, it was the perception of NATO's weakness that allowed Russia to act with impunity. A February 2016 RAND Corporation study suggested that Russian forces could overrun NATO's Baltic states in less than three days. "As currently postured, NATO cannot successfully defend the territory of its most exposed members ... Across multiple games using a wide range of expert participants in and out of uniform playing both sides, the longest it has taken Russian forces to reach the outskirts of the Estonian and/or Latvian capitals of Tallinn and Riga, respectively, is 60 hours."

While NATO seems like a lame duck military alliance, it is not feasible to have no military grouping at all. Like nature, geopolitics abhors a vacuum. Without a military alliance anchoring Western Europe, there will be a military imbalance vis-à-vis Russia.

POST-NATO EUROPE

While NATO seems like a lame duck military alliance, it is not feasible to have no military grouping at all. Like nature, geopolitics abhors a vacuum. Without a military alliance anchoring Western Europe, there will be a military imbalance vis-à-vis Russia.

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute writes in 'Europe's Unhealthy Security Dependence' that it is time for Europe to choose an alternative to NATO. "The apparent organizational immortality of NATO demonstrates how, despite a drastically changed world, interventionist American foreign and military policies remain the same. The Cold War has ended, but the United States retains a Cold War-sized military. Defence spending, adjusted for inflation, is roughly what it was in the 1980s and 1975 and almost twice as it was in 1965 - in the midst of the Vietnam War. Force levels exceed those necessary to protect America from any plausible threat."

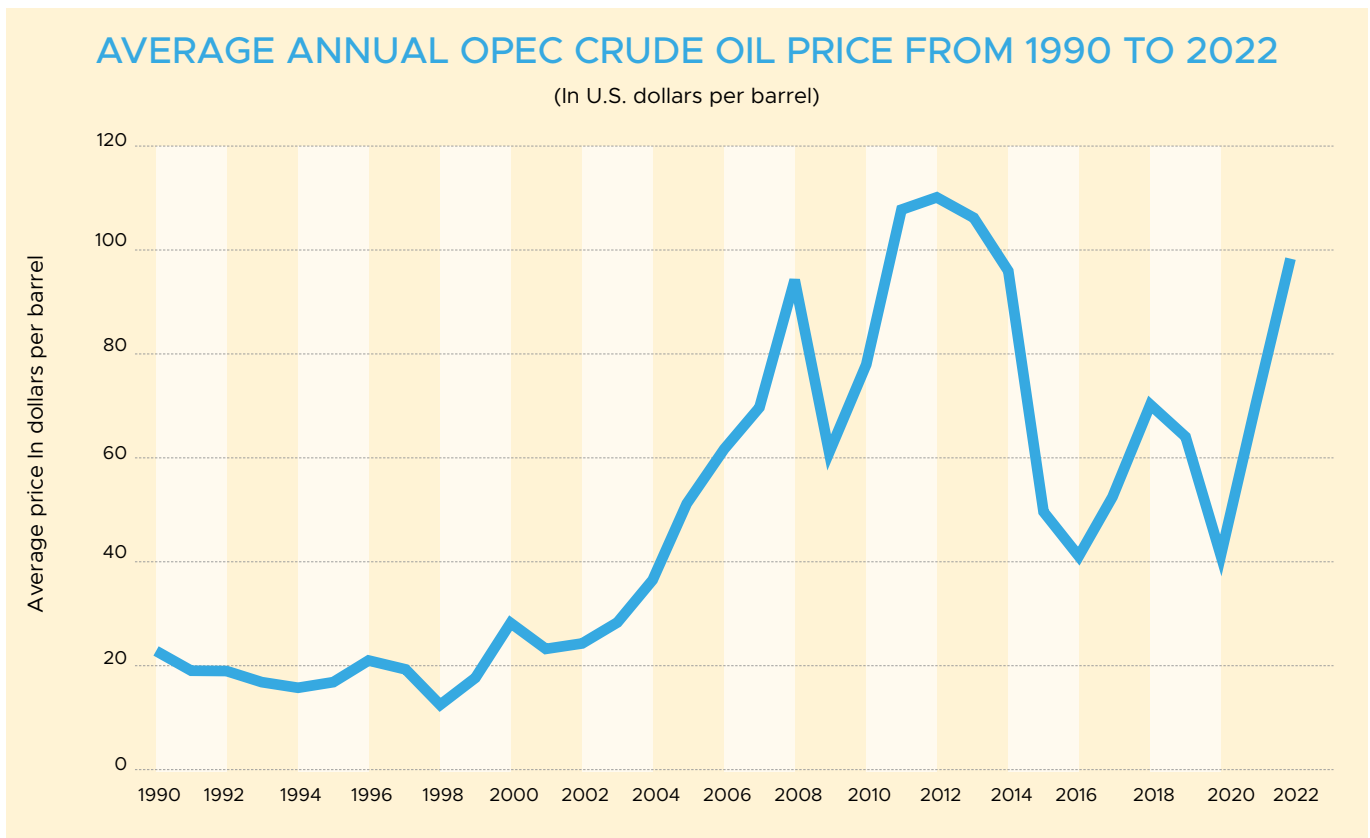
"It is time to move in the other direction. NATO was created for a reason: to shield Western Europe from an expansionist totalitarian superpower. It has fulfilled its objectives, the United States should encourage the Europeans to create new institutions for new purposes. Best would be some form of NATO without the United States, continental security architecture with neither American forces nor American security guarantees."

The idea that the US will always rise to the occasion in meeting the continent's security needs has made Europe complacent. European dependency on the US allowed the Americans to enlarge NATO beyond all reason. This policy has backfired, with the Russian Army now positioned closer to Central Europe in more than a generation. Clearly, NATO is past its use-by date. ■

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS A DOUBLE EDGED WEAPON

Economic Sanctions have become a tool of statecraft along with diplomacy and military from the early 19th century onwards but as the world is entering a new phase of globalisation where global powers are weaponising the tools of global finance to achieve strategic objectives. As the western powers are using sanctions to weaken the Russian economy and threatening other nations to honour their sanction, it is pertinent to evaluate sanctions as a tool of geopolitics.

by **SARATH KUMAR SHARMA**



SOURCE: Multiple sources

The economic trend after the economic crisis of 2008-2009 gave way to multipolar economic relationships between countries. The Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's special military operation against Ukraine saw the world heading towards by-polar economic relations. We may see proxy wars and secondary military confrontation, but the relations between the different key economies will be designed by the ongoing economic warfare and here economic sanctions are being employed as the first weapon of mass destruction. It is destroying the already weathered economic situation of countries.

Economic sanctions could be used as an instrument to build peace, provided it is not one-sided or with an intent to harm the larger population. It should only be restricted to deter those who have territorial aspirations. Sanctions have executed great financial and economic pain in the past, it has been by and largely ineffective in accomplishing their geo-political missions. The key element of sanctions' accomplishment is how the sanctions target (in this case Russia) set against the cost of shifting its behaviour (withdrawal from Ukraine) compared to the forced economic cost (that is interruption from worldwide monetary markets).

ECONOMIC SANCTIONS A FAILING DETERRENCE

Sanctions on Iran were effective in bringing the country back to the negotiating table – and certainly to reach an agreement on the Iran nuclear accord – when the Obama government explained the sanctions' goals. It stated that the intent is not to change the regime.

The idea behind the sanctions was to convince Iran to refrain from building a nuclear weapon. However, Iran was able to reduce the impact of sanctions primarily through the oil and gas export. To beat the sanctions, Iran, primarily, used a barter system instead of petrodollars.

In past, there were occasions, when sanctions were successful in changing the target country's actions. A case in point is when the League of Nations threatened sanctions against Yugoslavia under (Article 16) in 1921 to refrain it from capturing Albanian territory. (Jonathan Hackenbroich, 2022). There are other instances, especially when sanctions goals were not overly ambitious. But a prominent one might be the end of South Africa's Apartheid regime, where sanctions had an important role in achieving success.

The world is witnessing a new trend where global trade is following a power-based system rather than a rule-based system. This is a significant drift from the past. A country like Russia will have to deal with the problems that come with discontinuation from large parts of the worldwide financial system and broad decoupling of business. The IMF warned that the Russia-Ukraine war and the consequent sanctions forced upon Kremlin will have a "severe impact" on the international economy. The magnitude of the Russian economy at the moment is modest, but current sanctions could have an enormous impact on the Russia and world economy in the coming years.

Today, 14 governments are sanctioned for supporting rogue nations, violating nuclear non-proliferation, and supporting terrorism. Each government is managed by a sanction committee chaired by a non-permanent member of the Security Council. There are 10 monitoring committees, teams and boards that

support the work of 11 of the 14 sanctions committees. The sanction placed by the western world (US and EU) is different from United Nations.

GLOBAL IMPACT OF SANCTION

Economic sanction is like a double-edged sword that affects everyone involved. Sanctions have a bad status for failing to accomplish the results when imposed unilaterally. It triggers suffering in the helpless civilian population by denying access to essential commodities and infrastructure development. However, despite this, extensively held negative view, sanctions are increasingly being used as a deterrence.

The growing use of sanctions can be viewed as the outcome of a widespread belief that, well defined and applied sanctions, can be an effective tool to restrain a rogue nation. If a country is pushed beyond boundaries, it may resort to illegal trade such as drug trafficking for economic gains. Two of the sanctioned nations Venezuela and North Korea, allegedly, have indulged in the illegal drug trade, human trafficking, arms trafficking and haven for transnational criminals. The perception that the negative impacts of sanctions are not well measured is due to the poor implementation record, especially the sanctions that were imposed post-1990s.

The sanctions on Russia have increased the global prices of energy, food, commodity and rare minerals prices and supply chains have been disrupted, adding to the inflationary pressures that policymakers were already struggling to tackle. According to JPMorgan, economists have cut their viewpoint for global growth this year by about 1 to 5 per cent and raised their inflation estimation by a similar amount. This trend will not only affect Russia but also those countries that have imposed sanctions.

"Price shockwaves will have an effect worldwide, particularly on poor and middle-class households for whom fuel and food are a major proportion of expenses," the IMF said. "Should the conflict intensify, the economic damage would be all the more overwhelming. The sanctions on Kremlin will also have a considerable impact

“Price shockwaves will have an effect worldwide, particularly on poor and middle-class households for whom fuel and food are a major proportion of expenses. Should the conflict intensify, the economic damage would be all the more overwhelming. The sanctions on Kremlin will also have a considerable impact on the worldwide economy and monetary markets, with momentous spillovers to other countries,” –IMF

Progressive economies will be comprehensibly reluctant to place restrictions on their newly revealed powers. But they should identify that a controlled global economy would hurt everyone. Furthermore, holding talks on “economic arms control” could be a first step toward fixing the broken global order (Rajan, 2022). Peaceful coexistence is always better than war, no matter how it is waged.

on the worldwide economy and monetary markets, with momentous spillovers to other countries.”

For instance, wheat and corn prices have gone up after the Russia-Ukraine war. These two countries are major global wheat producers which accommodate 30-35 per cent of the world supply (Service, 2022). Several nations from Africa, West Asia and South Asia are dependent on Russia and Ukraine for their wheat supplies and are facing serious challenges in importing wheat and other supplies. There is worldwide food inflation.

Though higher wheat and corn prices are good for farmers, on the hand the rise in input cost of fuel, fertilisers and seeds have reduced their profit margin for them. The extra money that farmers are earning is now paying for the increased price of fertilisers and fuel. It is becoming a burden for the farmer which can be seen in the graph (as depicted on the earlier page).

OIL PRICE

India is highly dependent on the import of fertilisers and oil, as a result, the inflation in the country is also increasing. Household monthly expenditure has increased. Economic growth is slower than projected before the commencement of the war.

Economic weapons have several related concerns for developing economies. For instance, the superficially non-violent nature of economic sanctions, and the absence of standards overriding them, could result in their misuse. This is not merely speculation. The US still upholds unforgiving sanctions against Cuba even though there are far worse regimes in the world. Following the Western trend, China lately introduced trade sanctions on Australian exports, seemingly in retaliation to Australia’s demand for a full inquiry into the origins of Covid-19.

Likewise worrisome is the growing public pressure on businesses to refrain from conducting trade with certain countries. These demands can lead to sanctions being broadened beyond what policymakers planned. “It is not impossible to visualise a country being subjected to economic warfare because of its government’s position on, say, abortion or climate change. (Rajan, 2022). China has held back pledged amounts for infrastructure development in some of

the African countries since some of the African countries chose to establish economic and business relations with the deemed hostile countries to China.

ALTERNATIVE FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

More countries have started exploring collective alternatives to the Society of Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) financial messaging network, possibly leading to a division of the global payments system. And private companies might become even more cautious of arbitrary investment or trade between countries that do not share political and social values.

New systems like the Russian System of Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS) and Chinese Cross Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) which are alternatives to SWIFT are in motion to some extent. Alternate currencies to the petrodollar are arising and some of them are backed by commodities or by Central banks or industries in different parts of the world.

There are nine Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) available in the world. Most Caribbean countries and Nigeria have already implemented CBDC. There are 14 countries in the testing phase and a total of 35 countries are planning to launch CBDC. These types of CBDC might have less transparency since being controlled by governments around the world. Governments in certain cases might be forced to impose a ban on the procurement of foreign CBDC by deemed adversaries due to a clash of ideology and geo-political interest. This is the beginning of Bretton wood 3.0 where the trade is in respective currencies instead of dollars.

There could also be more zero-sum strategic behaviour, with countries developing new countermeasures to economic sanctions. For example, a country might invite overseas banks into its market with the ulterior motive of holding their assets and capital hostage if the situation so demands. On the other hand, countries may be forced where their banks can function, to reduce their vulnerability to such threats. Certainly, economic relations between countries will shrink. Countries must have an equal amount of business interests in each other countries so that the conflict itself becomes damaging to the interest of these countries, and as a result, will be forced to maintain peace.

Similarly, there should be a degree of leverage to use the economic weapon. Move to freeze the assets of the invading country and its business leaders should be impactful and should require minimum encumbrances. Progressive economies should not turn blind eye to the proceeds of tax evasion, corruption, and theft from elsewhere that are parked in their dominions. On the other hand, because moves to degrade an invader’s currency or undermine its financial system can turn middle-class liberals and reformers into angry nationalists, they should be taken with more deliberation and greater consensus.

Progressive economies will be comprehensibly reluctant to place restrictions on their newly revealed powers. But they should identify that a controlled global economy would hurt everyone. Furthermore, holding talks on “economic arms control” could be a first step toward fixing the broken global order (Rajan, 2022). Peaceful coexistence is always better than war, no matter how it is waged. ■

Author is a Postgraduate in Finance and Investment, is an upcoming Financial Analyst and finance blogger.

TRANSITION OF LIBYAN WAR FROM DOCTRINE OF “RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT” TO REGIME CHANGE A DISASTER

The crisis in Ukraine has once again pointed questions towards how smaller countries suffer at the hands of the global powers. Ukraine is the latest victim of the geopolitical chess. In the last two decades, the world has witnessed the destruction of Iraq, Syria and Libya. Here we make an effort to analyse what happened with one of the wealthiest nations of Africa.

by **BRIG NARENDER KUMAR (RETD)**

A poster of Gaddafi in Ghadames in northwestern Libya.



PHOTO: Felix O / commons.wikimedia.org

Libya gained independence from Italy in December 1951. It was the first country to gain independence under the United Nations trusteeship. Considering the unstable security scenario at that time, the US, Great Britain and France were permitted to maintain military bases in Libya following independence.¹ Subsequently, Libya signed a military agreement with Great Britain for maintaining a military presence for 20 years. The US too signed a military agreement with Libya to maintain military bases in a newly independent state. However, the presence of a foreign military in Libya did not help the cause of the people and political instability continued.

In September 1969 in a bloodless coup, King Mohammed Idris al-Senussi (King Idris I) was removed and a Revolutionary Command Council was constituted. Colonel Muammar Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi was chosen as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and became head of the state. Gaddafi sold a vision of greater Arab and the Maghreb, a dream of self-reliance free from Western influence. He wanted to become the voice of Arab to create a system outside Western imperialism. His revolutionary language made him a hero in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He was emerging as an audacious leader and many an oppressed Arab world started looking to him for economic and social empowerment. People thought that he offered deeply satisfying answers to the growing Arab sense of failure.²

The hope of Arab and Libya was dented when people saw the emergence of a tyrannical ruler in Gaddafi. Though no one can deny the fact that he developed Libya into a modern state with negligible tax but in return, he took away freedom and the right to dissent from the people. The rage against Col Gaddafi grew as fast as his popularity in the Arab world. Libya, a relatively affluent and well-educated state by Arab standards, considered him a monster who had made the people of Libya his prisoners. Even neighbouring states became suspicious of his intentions and were wary of his forays in building an alliance. Gaddafi's problem started when he destroyed political, financial and judicial institutions and he ruled a resource-rich state through a very small military elite.

GENESIS OF CONFLICT

Gaddafi was able to develop Libya into a self-sufficient and affluent state. Education and medical treatment were free; having a home was considered a human right; Libyans participated in an original system of local democracy.³ Gaddafi developed one of the best road, rail and oil infrastructures in the African and Arab countries. The country boasted the world's largest irrigation system, the Great Man-made River project, which brought water from the desert to the cities and coastal areas; and Gaddafi was embarking on a program to spread this model throughout Africa.⁴

"Gaddafi's government-held 143 tons of gold, and a similar amount in silver. This gold was accumulated before the current rebellion and was intended to be used to establish a Pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar. This plan was designed to provide the Francophone African Countries with an alternative to the French franc (CFA)."⁵ This meant that African countries in alliance with Libya will no more be a slave to the western financial institutions. This move of Gaddafi was directly threatening petrodollars and floating his currency and financial system that will be outside the western dominance. Gaddafi's attempt to establish an

independent African currency was not taken lightly by the Western countries. In 2011, Sarkozy reportedly called the Libyan leader a threat to the financial security of the world. How could this tiny country of six million people pose such a threat?⁶

Gaddafi wanted to liberate African countries from the monetary trap of the west. He had realised that Libya can become a model of development for the entire African continent. He was confident that Libya can achieve financial autonomy. His greatest infrastructure project, the Great Man-made River, was turning arid regions into a breadbasket for Libya; and the \$33 billion projects were being funded interest-free without foreign debt, through Libya's state-owned bank.⁷

The most surprising part of (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) NATO intervention was to destroy the irrigation system that use to support 70% population. In fact, in a planned bombing even the factory that used to supply the pipes for the repair of the irrigation system was also destroyed to ensure that Libya does not become self-sufficient in food grains as well. Canadian Professor Maximilian Forte had written in his book *Slouching Towards Sirte: NATO's War on Libya and Africa*, "Crippling a civilian irrigation system serving up to 70% of the population hardly looks like humanitarian intervention."⁸ It was later revealed that "The goal of US military intervention

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was to disrupt an emerging pattern of independence and a network of collaboration within Africa that would facilitate increased African self-reliance."⁹ Rise of an African-Arab leader was threatening the US-led western alliance that controlled oil and natural resources from Africa and Arab. This was a threat to Western financial and corporate control of African economies and combined with the rise of Chinese investment, was considered a strategic obstacle to Western domination that had to be removed.¹⁰ The US, France and the UK considered that Gaddafi will slowly pull their allies that they had cultivated in Africa out of the Western orbit. They considered that China, Libya and some Arab nations may replace western powers in the African continent and that will dry up the continuous flow of resources to the Western countries.

The US was keen to establish strategic partnerships with African nations so that their armies could act as proxies to ensure western control over African resources in the name of democracy and economic empowerment. Gaddafi proved to be most uncooperative since he had seen the larger design of the US and its allies. Gaddafi was objecting to the permanent presence of the US and French forces in African countries.

With Gaddafi still, a respected voice within the African Unity, hav-



Destroyed tanks in a scrap yard outside Misrata in northwestern Libya.

ing served as its elected Chairman in 2009, wielded significant influence, and used this to spearhead opposition to what he considered the neo-colonial aims of the US African Command.¹¹ It was during this period when Chinese investment in Africa was growing rapidly and displaced the US as the largest trading partner with the African countries. The US was trying to reach out to Gaddafi to convince him not to create any disruption in the already established western

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PHOTO: joepyrrek / commons.wikimedia.org

system of trade and security. But Africa was not playing ball – and Gaddafi was (rightly) seen as leading the charge.¹²

It was slowly emerging that the security cover of the US, France and UK was not required and the Libyan-led Community of Sahel and Saharan state and the North African Standby Force will be able to handle security challenges in North Africa. This would have made the US-led security arrangement redundant and thus a situation had to be created where the need for NATO-led forces is considered mandatory to maintain peace and stability. Gaddafi had to go and a situation of insecurity had to be created so that US and NATO forces can cement their position in the African continent. Thus the stage was set for conflict in Libya.

China had invested big time in Libya. Approximately 75 Chinese companies were operating in Libya in infrastructure development. As per some rough estimates, 36,000 Chinese workforce were working in Libya across 50 projects. Most of these projects were related to surface communication infrastructure development (rail and road), telecommunication, housing and hydropower projects. In the bargain, China had struck gold by earning huge profits from its operations in Libya. Most notably, in the year leading up to Libya's revolution, Libya was providing 3 per cent of China's crude oil supply constituting roughly 150,000 barrels per day, or one-tenth of Libya's crude exports.¹³ Such a deep engagement by China with

Libya was not palatable to the US and its allies. They considered it an encroachment on their sphere of influence. The eruption of revolt resulted in the exodus of the Chinese workforce from Libya and the sinking of Chinese investment in Libya.

BEGINNING OF WAR IN LIBYA

The US developed deeper ties with Libya after having discovered oil in 1963. The US companies gained great concession in oil exploration and oil export. As a result, the US enhanced its military presence in Libya to protect its energy security interests. However, the post-coup era saw a decline in relations with the US and the new regime was not keen to allow the US military presence in Libya any longer. Aided by huge oil wealth, Gaddafi sponsored multiple terrorist groups from 1979, causing the US to retaliate by cutting diplomatic relations and imposing sanctions for two decades.¹⁴ In 2003 Gaddafi embarked on major domestic reforms and endeavoured to mend relations with the US and Western countries. But Libya refused to play to the tune of the US, as a result, the relationship continued to deteriorate between the US and Libya. The US saw an opportunity to remove Gaddafi during the popular uprising that swept Libya. The US ended its rapprochement with Gaddafi, assisting the rebels in the destruction of his regime.¹⁵

Gaddafi's regime reacted violently against the popular revolt and used force to quell the revolt by the people. The US and its allies saw in the regime's reaction a danger that must be countered to protect civilians. Later that year, the US and its NATO allies intervened in Libya, annihilating Gaddafi's forces and toppling his regime.¹⁶ The US and NATO defined intervention as a "Humanitarian War". The first time the doctrine of "responsibility to protect" was invoked. The purpose of Operation Unified Protector quickly morphed from the protection of civilians to direct, military assistance to the rebellion, including training of armed opposition fighters on the ground.¹⁷

Despite the Veto power exercised by Russia and China, the UN passed the resolution imposing an arms embargo asking member states to prevent the sale of weapons and warlike stores to Libya. After initial strikes and the establishment of a no-fly zone, the NATO, Qatar and the US air operations led to the destruction of Gaddafi's forces and military infrastructure on the ground. However, none of the countries were willing to commit troops on the ground and preferred rebel leaders to take initiative under the air cover of NATO and the US. This strategy worked well initially and emboldened rebels were able to weaken Gaddafi's forces to a great extent.

After having brutally eliminated Gaddafi, the National Transitional Council (NTC) of Libya was granted recognition by many countries to legitimise the uprising against the Gaddafi regime. Operation Unified Protector was marketed as a humanitarian intervention. The death toll due to intervention was neither discussed nor highlighted by the western media. Lives lost were attributed to the brutal regime of Gaddafi and his loyal forces. Intervention cemented the authority of the NTC, flooded Libya with arms and — it seems clear — exacerbated the violence as well. The other long-term consequences of the Unified Protector surfaced later when Libya was divided among the warring factions. The regime neither brought peace nor stability to Libya. The wealth was looted and warlords fought over the rich resources of this country.

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Rather than standing as a model for political transition, Libya has become a toxic mixture of inherited structural weaknesses, post-conflict challenges and the fallout of regime change, all made worse by a series of unwise political decisions. Stumbling through this new era, the country seems poised on the edge of lawlessness, violence, political atomization and even renewed authoritarianism.¹⁸

Gaub, Florence

Libya's transitional government ceded authority to the newly elected General National Congress (GNC) in July 2012.¹⁹ There were attempts to find a political resolution to the conflict thus UN-facilitated series of talks between Tobruk based House of representative and Tripoli-based GNC. The talks led to the creation of the Government of National Accord (GNA). However, GNA has not been able to bring all tribal and political parties to agree to find a political solution to the conflict. Unfortunately, both factions led by GNA and the Libyan National Army (LNA) headed by Haftar are competing to control the oil and have created their central banks. Libya saw global powers competing for strategic space to make a presence in a war-torn fractured nation.

CLASH OF INTERESTS

Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, is recognized by the United Nations and backed by a host of militias.²⁰ Al-Sarraj's administration is backed by the U.N. and Western powers including the U.S., but mainly relies on Turkey, Qatar and Italy. HoR and LNA headed by Haftar enjoy the support of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Russia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and France.²¹ It is reported that Russia based Wagner Group had fought alongside LNA to expand their area of control. Russia is believed to have supplied arms and ammunition including a dozen fighter aircraft to support Haftar and his allies.

Italy, the former colonial power wants to stabilise Libya so that it can prevent the flow of migrants into Italy. The influx of refugees and migrants is posing a national security risk to the Italian government. Tripoli-based al-Sarraj government is considered by Italy as the best bet to secure its interests, including access to oil reserves. The French government officially denies supporting Haftar but views the warlord as the best option to clamp down on extremism. France



Libyan children at a refugee camp, April 2011.

also has oil interests in Libya.²²

LNA under Haftar has been hard on Muslim Brotherhood and has undertaken major operations against Islamic State and its affiliates. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt are an ally of LNA against the spread

Libya was one of the first experimental social media wars. The conflict displayed that truth is the first casualty in war by use of disinformation campaigns. Libya has been struggling with political instability and security challenges ever since long-term dictator Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in 2011. With the entry of global players information war has intensified.

PHOTO: Magharebia / commons.wikimedia.org

of political Islam and in particular, the Muslim Brotherhood, which they list as a terrorist organization. The primary reason for division among the Arab nations (except Qatar) and Turkey are supporting of Muslim Brotherhood GNA. The GNA includes a Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated faction. Turkey and Qatar, on the other hand, are backers of the Muslim Brotherhood.²³

Turkey has taken advantage of the instability and in the bargain to support GNA it has signed an agreement with the al-Sarraj government on a contentious maritime boundary to take control of large maritime areas in the Mediterranean Sea. Russia, meanwhile, has taken advantage to expand its influence in the region in the absence of unified Western engagement.²⁴

PERISCOPE VIEW

Social Media War. Libya was one of the first experimental social media wars. The conflict displayed that truth is the first casualty in war by use of disinformation campaigns. Libya has been struggling with political instability and security challenges ever since long-term dictator Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in 2011.²⁵ With the entry of global players information war has intensified.

Walid al-Saqaf, a senior lecturer at Södertörn University, called the disinformation campaigns on social networks strategic weapons.

“They can aim at putting the ‘enemy’ in bad light or to lift the mor-

als of the own group often with false or exaggerated 'news.'²⁶ The information warriors are using sophisticated tools and tweeter army to fight the virtual battle. The information warriors are also active in shaping the opinion of the Arab and African diaspora and spreading misinformation campaigns against rival groups and their allies.

PRIVATE ARMIES

Libyan conflict is considered the first privatised war where conventional armies are not fighting the war on the ground but private armies supporting rival groups. Russia is known to have pushed Wagner Group and Italy has trained, equipped and financed former smugglers who have been converted into police officers to act as coast guards to prevent the migration of Libyan displaced people towards Italy and Europe. Militias such as the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigades (TRB), led by warlord Haithan Tajouri, or the Special Deterrence Forces (RADA), led by Abdel Rauf Kara, not only share and compete with smaller ones in the business of security and smuggling both arms, people or fuel; but also influence politics through the Ministries of Defence and Interior, which they have infiltrated.²⁷

The UAE allegedly has direct and regular contact with Sudanese mercenary groups, which it equips and pays to fight in Libya. For its part, Turkey has transported as many as 18,000 Syrians to fight for the Tripoli-based forces in Libya, reportedly offering a salary of \$2,000 a month (later changed to \$600) and the promise of Turkish citizenship, though the country has a strict citizen policy.²⁸

The private military security companies from the Balkans, the US, the United Kingdom, France, Qatar, Italy and Turkey are positioned to secure their respective interests. These militias are firmly entrenched in their areas of influence and are now controlling huge resources on behalf of their masters who have hired them. The human cost of fighting this war through private armies is beyond imagination. These private armies are neither accountable to the International Institutions of global governance under the United Nations nor the people of Libya. There is gross human rights violation and now the "doctrine of responsibility to protect" through which the US had intervened has become the reason for the biggest human rights violation. What matters to these private armies is the brutal pursuance of the agenda of their masters.

FORCED MIGRATION

More than 200,000 people are internally displaced and 1.3 million require humanitarian assistance, according to the UN. Casualty numbers are highly politicised and hard to verify, with estimates ranging from 2,500 to 25,000 during the 2011 uprising alone.²⁹ The asylum seekers are being denied entry to European Ports and the Libyan Coast Guard working on behalf of Italy and other European countries are pushing these men, woman and children back to Libya where they are detained in camps with appalling conditions. The Clingendael Institute says it is now more profitable to detain and further exploit migrants than get them to Europe.

They are subject to forced labour and forced prostitution, many are enslaved and sold, often from detention centres.³⁰ According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's new report, between 2010 and 2019 conflict in the region caused 2.9 million new displacements a year on average. Internally Displaced People (IDP) now account for nearly three per cent of the region's population, the equivalent of the population of the cities of Amman, Beirut, Damas-

The intervention was initially motivated by the desire to protect civilians but the US later expanded their objective to include regime change. The intervention and use of excessive force defeated the very basic purpose of protection of civilians by causing huge collateral damage to the people and infrastructure.

cus, Dubai and Tunis combined.³¹ Such an exodus from the homeland to greener pastures in Europe and regional countries is causing demographic imbalance leading to serious law and order problem in among the host countries.

In addition, the future of children coming out of these refugee and IDP camps is bleak and a breeding ground for the recruitment of unskilled youth into transnational criminal syndicates and terror groups. There are health and food scarcity issues, and as a result, it has led to the human disaster of unproportionate nature.

FLAWED PERCEPTION

The intervention was initially motivated by the desire to protect civilians but the US later expanded their objective to include regime change. The intervention and use of excessive force defeated the very basic purpose of protection of civilians by causing huge collateral damage to the people and infrastructure. The US had no explanation for why the biggest man-made irrigation project that benefited close to 70% population was destroyed in the bombing. Since the countries intervening to protect the civilian did not commit boots on the ground, as a result of that, huge arms and ammunition were leaked to the rebels and Islamic State terrorists. NATO's intervention on behalf of Libya's rebels also encouraged Syria's formerly peaceful protesters to switch to violence in mid-2011, in hopes of attracting a similar intervention. The resulting escalation in Syria magnified that country's killing rate tenfold.³² One can say that NATO's intervention did not aim mainly to protect civilians, but rather to overthrow Qaddafi's regime, even at the expense of increasing the harm to Libyans.³³

REGIME CHANGE

Regime change does not bring stability or democratisation in a country without people ready to accept such a change. It requires resilient institutions for democracy to stabilise. The US wanted to bring democracy in Libya that is favourably disposed towards them, but since there were no institutions or political parties and leaders with acceptability among all tribes and sects, the experiment has gone horribly wrong. Therefore, the attempt to usher in democracy was a non-starter from the beginning. Today Libya is divided and fractured on sectarian and tribal lines. The doctrine of "responsibility to protect" has led to one of the greatest human rights disasters. Political instability often impacts economic and diplomatic

Today Libya is divided between East and West with no visible end to civil war. The main players in the Libyan crisis are now Russia, the UAE, France and Egypt on one side and Turkey and Italy on the other. The biggest threat is the fact that these countries are not concerned with the territorial integrity of Libya.

relations and no nation can survive without a stable economy and cooperative foreign relations.

Instability in West Asia and the Mediterranean will make Europe unstable. Instability around four seas will impact economic, social and political balance in Europe and Asia. It will disrupt energy security and destabilised sea lines of communication passing through the Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea into the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean will have a direct impact on trade and commerce in Europe and Asia. Though the US triggered the civil war in Libya, Syria and Iraq the cost is being paid by its European and Asian Allies. Such a war would destabilise Libya's neighbours, directly threatening European security interests and global energy markets.³⁴

CONCLUSION

Today Libya is divided between East and West with no visible end

to civil war. The main players in the Libyan crisis are now Russia, the UAE, France and Egypt on one side and Turkey and Italy on the other. The biggest threat is the fact that these countries are not concerned with the territorial integrity of Libya. Economic and strategic interests are what brought them to Libya.³⁵ The role of the United States in maintaining balance will be necessary and useful. The world will have to trust the UN and support its diplomatic efforts. And the EU will finally have to play a more active role in its neighbourhood in the Mediterranean and Libya.³⁶

There is a sense of worry among the analysts and people of Libya that the dark scenario may not end unless international players stop competing among themselves for their selfish objectives. Before bringing all factions to the negotiation table, NATO, Arab countries and regional neighbours have to cast away their differences. The need of the hour is to initiate a democratic process or the formation of a government of consensus. Till the time an agreement is thrashed out, the country should be ruled with the help of neutral observers nominated by the UN and the governing council representing all tribes and sects. This will allow peace guarantors to iron out differences among the rival groups.

The international community will be required to help build already depleted organs of the state so that law and order are handled efficiently. Once the UN is satisfied with the progress on peacebuilding, the people of Libya should be given a choice to elect their government. Competing stakeholders must slowly withdraw from the scenes and let Libyan take control of their fate and territory. ■

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PAKISTAN – WARRING ITS CITIZENS

In name of TTP, Pakistan army has restarted its atrocities on innocent people of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa regions. This time it has crossed the Pak-Afghan border to hit them with PAF. This incident is going to destabilise the region further.

by **BRIG NARENDER KUMAR (RETD)**

On May 15, the Afghanistan Independence Peace watchdog stated that Pakistan Air Force (PAF) carried out airstrikes in different parts of the Khost and Kunar provinces of Afghanistan.

Reportedly, approximately 40 civilians including women and children were killed in this airstrike. This retaliation was deemed against an ambush on the Pakistan Army in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa’s North Waziristan district. The irony is that the airstrikes hit a migrant camp killing hapless displaced people. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed that the victims had fled border areas due to the Pakistan Army’s brutal repression of the people of North Waziristan. The tragedy is that the air strike has been carried out by the Pakistan Air Force during the holy month of Ramadan.

According to a 2019 report of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 47,000 Baloch and around 35,000 Pashtuns were ‘missing’. Some observers feel that the numbers are even higher than the agency claims. The genocide by Pakistan backed terror organisations in Jammu & Kashmir is not included in this report and there is no mention of human rights violations against the people of Jammu & Kashmir by terrorists backed by the Pakistan Army.

The disappearance of citizens of remote areas of Baluchistan and Waziristan is neither recorded nor any FIR registered by the administration. Extra-judicial killing is one aspect and another aspect is torture, force abduction and rape of a woman that is neither reported nor any compliant entertained. Facts suggest that Pakistan is emerging as a ‘neo-fascist’ regime. It’s government is acting like a terror organisation and an authoritarian regime opposed to liberal individualism. It is a fact that Pakistan’s deep state is more brutal and militaristic in its actions, especially against those who do not accept the dictates of Rawalpindi.

The use of disproportionate force is a fascist mindset of the state and no nation in its wisdom can use the Air Force on its people without even identifying the legitimate targets. Moreover, this airstrike is

a violation of international boundaries without a declaration of war. Pakistan in its exuberance of striking against TTP or terror groups has crossed the redline of use of just force. It was certainly not a ‘just cause’ to strike a migrant camp even if the terrorists had attacked their convoy in the same area.

Pakistan has displayed Islamist extremism by the state against its people. Today Shia, Ahmadiyya Muslims, minority Christians and Hindus are persecuted by state-sponsored Islamist extremism. That has seen unprecedented violence and forced conversion of minority communities under coercion and economic strangulation. The fascist Pakistani regime supported by the state administration and the military are replicating holocaust like conditions for the persecuted com-

Today Pakistan is economically and socially so brittle that it has the potential to fragment if there are severe economic sanctions against the fascist regime.

munities of Pakistan. The irony is that the international community is conspicuous with its silence on the brutal repression of the people of Baluchistan, Waziristan and minority communities by the state.

If a state is unable to deliver governance it has two options, either appease its citizens or wage war against them. Since Pakistan is economically bankrupt hence has nothing to give to people to appease them. Therefore, the deep state of Pakistan has chosen to wage war against its citizens. Today Pakistan is economically and socially so brittle that it has the potential to fragment if there are severe economic sanctions against the fascist regime. Will the International community and human rights organisations take note of such brutality and war by the state against its people? ■



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson in New Delhi in April 2022

UK OFFERS DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY TO INDIA

PRIME MINISTER OF BRITAIN Boris Johnson was on a two day official visit to India. During the visit the UK offered a range of critical technologies to India. “Our new and expanded Defence and Security Partnership will enable India to strengthen its own domestic defence industry as well as protecting vital shared interests in the Indo-Pacific,” the visiting leader said.

On the energy sector, the UK offered collaboration in offshore wind, the new UK-India Hydrogen Science and Innovation Hub and our joint work on solar power to reduce dependence on imported hydrocarbons.

“And our Global Innovation Partnership will help transfer climate and energy-smart innovations to developing countries across the wider Indo-Pacific,” he added.

Through the Global Innovation Partnership, India and UK have agreed to co-finance up to £ 75 million to support the transfer and scale up of climate smart sustainable innovations to third countries. The novel GIP Fund created under this Partnership will also aim to raise additional £ 100 million from the market to support Indian innovations.

The two sides “noted cooperation in key areas of strategic collab-

oration including Modern Fighter Aircraft and Jet Engine Advanced Core Technology. Both sides agreed to work bilaterally and with key partner countries to facilitate highest level access to technology to Indian industry. Prime Minister Modi welcomed the UK announcement of an ‘open general export license’ to facilitate technology engagement with India, and the open opportunity for India to participate in the UK’s aviation and naval shipbuilding programmes,” the joint statement released after the summit talks said.

The two sides discussed the establishment of a Joint Working Group on India-UK Electric Propulsion Capability Partnership with the goal of fostering military and industrial collaboration in maritime Electric Propulsion systems.

This would allow the Indian naval ships of the future to share the propulsion system with UK ships.

On the Ukraine crisis, there was a discussion held on the issue. Britain did not put any pressure on India to change its stand, India foreign secretary said during the press briefing. During the talks India expressed its objective to bring back those economic fugitives who are wanted in India from the UK to face justice here. ■

6TH SCORPENE SUB ‘ VAGSHEER ’ LAUNCHED AT MDL

YARD 11880, THE SIXTH and last submarine of the Indian Navy’s Kalvari class submarines of Project 75 has been launched today at the Kanhoji Angre Wet Basin of Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL), Mumbai. Dr Ajay Kumar, Defence Secretary was the Chief Guest at the ceremony and the submarine named ‘Vagsheer’ was launched by Mrs Veena Ajay Kumar, in keeping with Naval traditions of launch/ naming by a lady. The ceremony was attended by senior naval officers including Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Naval Command Vice Admiral AB Singh, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral SN Ghormade and dignitaries both from Integrated Headquarters Ministry of Defence (Navy), Headquarters Western Naval Command and officials from Director General De L Armament, France and Naval Group, France.

Vagsheer is the last of the six P75 Scorpene® submarine entirely built by the Indian shipyard Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) based on years of successful technology transfer and partnership with Naval Group.

The first of the Project - 75 submarines was commissioned into the Navy in December 2017 and presently four submarines of this Project are in commission in the Indian Navy. The fifth submarine is progressing with the Sea Trials and is likely to be delivered this year. The sixth submarine will now commence setting to work of various equipment and their harbour trials. The crew will thereafter sail the submarine for the rigorous Sea Acceptance Trials after which the submarine would be delivered to the Indian Navy by late next year.

MDL teams will now have to complete the integration and setting to work of the equipment and machinery onboard before beginning the sea trials, including weapon and sensor trials.

The launching of Vagsheer highlights the success of the indigenous submarine construction program of the Government of India. These submarines have been completely built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) through a transfer of technology from

Naval Group, in line with Indian Government’s “Make in India” policy. The series of six submarines is fitted with a number of equipment built in India by qualified and highly trained industrial Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs). MDL and Naval Group have developed a rich industrial ecosystem of more than 50 Indian companies and their future projects are not limited to submarines, thus contributing to industrial and technological sovereignty. These dedicated efforts resonate the success of “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” vision of Prime Minister Modi.

Alain Guillou, EVP International Development at Naval Group said: “We are proud of this successful cooperation with MDL and we stand by their side and are ready to assist for future projects. We celebrate the success of “Make in India” while moving towards a true sense of “Atmanirbhar” naval defence industry. The success of this program is collective and solely aimed at strengthening the Indian Navy. We value our long-term relation and collaboration with India and its navy and our teams are committed to keep on meeting their expectations.”

The Scorpene® is a 2000-tons conventional submarine designed by Naval Group for all types of missions, such as anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, long-range strikes, special operations or intelligence gathering. Extremely stealthy and fast, it has a level of operating automation that allows a limited number of crew, which reduces its operating costs significantly.

Its combat edge is highlighted by the fact that it has 6 weapon launching tubes, 18 weapons (torpedoes, missiles).

With 14 submarines sold around the world, the Scorpene® is a key reference of conventional attack submarines (SSK) for navies around the world. It can be easily adapted to specific requirements of customers and the continuous improvement of the Scorpene ensures the seamless integration of the latest technology onboard. ■



VISIT OF PM NEPAL TO INDIA



PRIME MINISTER OF NEPAL Sher Bahadur Deuba was on an official visit to India from 1-3 April. This was his first bilateral visit after taking charge as the Prime Minister in July. During the summit meeting between Indian and Nepalese prime minister, two sides reviewed the progress in implementation of Indian projects in Nepal, including the cross-border rail-link projects connecting (a) Jayanagar-Kurtha-Bijalpur-Bardibas (b) Jogbani-Biratnagar (c) Raxaul-Kathmandu. In a historic milestone, the first broad-gauge passenger railway service connecting India and Nepal in the Jayanagar-Kurtha section was flagged off by the two Prime Ministers during the visit. The Jayanagar-Kurtha rail link has been built with grant assistance from India. During this year, 75 development projects will be inaugurated in Nepal.

The use of Indian RuPay card in Nepal was jointly launched by the two Prime Ministers. This would open new vistas for cooperation in financial connectivity, and is expected to facilitate bilateral tourist flows as well as further strengthen people-to-people linkages between India and Nepal. ■

5TH BIMSTEC SUMMIT

THE 5TH BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Summit hosted in virtual mode by Sri Lanka, the current chair of BIMSTEC. The Summit's theme "Towards a Resilient Region, Prosperous Economies, Healthy People" captures the main current priorities of member states, and the efforts by BIMSTEC to develop cooperation activities that support member state's programmes to deal with the economic and development consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The main outcome of the Summit was the adoption and signing of the BIMSTEC Charter, which formalizes the grouping into an organization made up of member states that are littoral to, and dependent upon, the Bay of Bengal.

The Summit also saw considerable progress being achieved in the BIMSTEC connectivity agenda with the adoption of the 'Master Plan for Transport Connectivity' by Leaders which lays out a guidance framework for connectivity related activities in the region in the future.

In his intervention, the Indian Prime Minister underscored the importance of enhanced BIMSTEC regional connectivity, cooperation and security, and made several suggestions in this regard. ■



INAUGURAL DELIVERY OF COVID VACCINES UNDER THE QUAD'S VACCINE PARTNERSHIP

THE INAUGURAL DELIVERY OF Covid vaccines under the Quad's flagship Vaccine Partnership was made in Cambodia on April 12. Ambassador of India to Cambodia, Ms. Devyani Khobragade, along with representatives from the Embassies of Australia, Japan and USA to Cambodia, jointly handed over a consignment of 325,000 doses of Made in India Covishield vaccines to the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Sen, at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh. The vaccines have been gifted by India as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to donate 500,000 doses of Covid vaccines to the Indo-Pacific under the Quad vaccine initiative.

Quad countries have collectively so far provided Cambodia with close to five million Covid vaccine doses bilaterally and through COVAX. Quad countries have also provided last mile delivery assistance to ensure that vaccines are translated into vaccinations. Australia and Japan have provided cold storage equipment, freezers and temperature monitors along with equipment for safety of health care workers. The US has provided assistance with surveillance and contact tracing, case investigation, training health care workers and data management. ■

L&T & INDIA NAVY SIGNS CONTRACT FOR MULTI-PURPOSE VESSELS



Indian Ministry of Defence has signed a contract on March 25 with M/s Larsen & Toubro Ltd. for acquisition of Two Multi-Purpose Vessels (MPVs) for Indian Navy at an overall cost of Rs.887 Crore under “Buy-Indian” Category. The contract was signed in the presence of VAdm SN Ghormade, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff and Pankaj Agarwal, Additional Secretary & Director General Acquisition. Delivery of vessels is scheduled to commence from May 2025.

MPVs will be the first of its kind platform, constructed to provide a cost-effective solution to meet a variety of requirements of Indian Navy. These vessels, to be built by M/s L&T shipyard at Kattupally (Chennai), will perform multi-role support functions such as maritime surveillance & patrol, launching/ recovery of torpedoes and operation of various types of aerial, surface and underwater targets for Gunnery/ ASW firing exercises. These vessels would also be capable of towing ships and rendering Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) support with limited hospital ship capability. They will also act as trial platform for naval weapons and sensors under development, support platform for ISV & salvage operations, and to provide logistics support for our island territories.

This contract will further boost and encourage active participation of Indian Shipbuilding Industry in consonance with the “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” initiatives of the Government of India. With majority of the equipment and system sourced from indigenous manufacturers, these vessels will be a proud flag bearer of “Make in India, Make for the World” initiatives of Ministry of Defence. ■

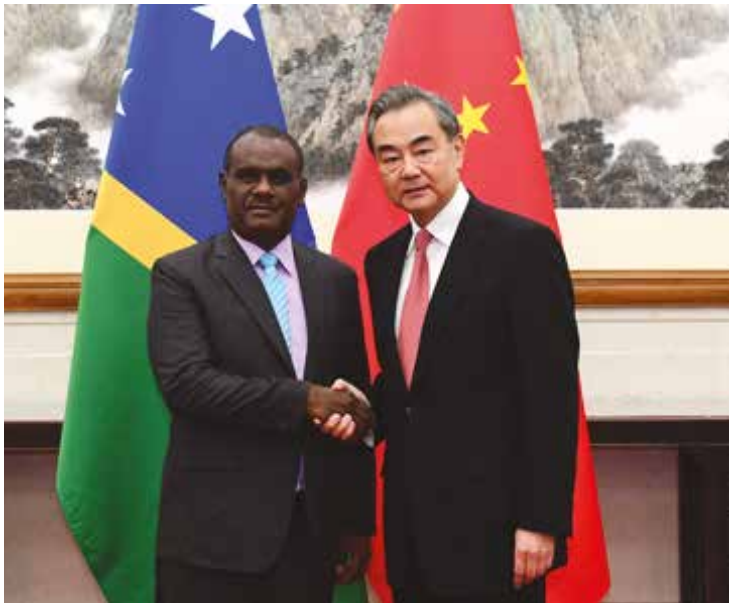
RAFAEL SUCCESSFULLY TESTS OF LASER ANTI UAV ‘IRON BEAM’

RAFAEL, ALONGSIDE THE Ministry of Defence, Israel, Directorate of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D) have successfully completed a series of ground-breaking tests with a high-power laser interception system against steep-track threats. The demonstrator successfully intercepted UAVs, mortars, rockets, and anti-tank missiles in various scenarios.

RAFAEL’s Iron Beam provides Israel with a capability unlike one seen elsewhere in the world by successfully developing a high-power laser technology at an operational standard with operational interception capabilities. The tests are the first phase of a multi-year program led by the DDR&D and defense industries. The program aims to develop a high-power ground and aerial laser system equipped to deal with long-range, high-intensity threats. The laser will complement the “Iron Dome” system and will be an effective and economically efficient addition to Israel’s multi-tiered air defense array. The system’s development plan is led by the Research and Development Division in the Ministry of Defense’s DDR&D. ■



CHINA-SOLOMAN ISLAND SIGNS SECURITY PACT



“THE SECURITY COOPERATION between Solomon Islands and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) was signed recently by the Solomon Islands Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele and his PRC counterpart, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi,” Solomon Island government said in a statement.

“The SI-PRC Security Cooperation is based on mutual respect for sovereignty and in compliance with domestic and international law,” the statement added.

Calling the pact “open, transparent and inclusive,” Chinese Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, “It proceeds in parallel with and complements Solomon Islands’ existing bilateral and multilateral security cooperation mechanisms.”

“Let me once again reiterate that Solomon Islands Security Cooperation with China is guided by the country’s Foreign Policy of “Friends to all and Enemies to none”. Solomon Islands do not have any external adversaries nor is the framework directed at any countries or external alliances rather at our own internal security situation from within the state. It complements our (2017) Security Agreement with Australia,” Sogavare said in Parliament. ■

CHINA TESTS YJ-21 HYPERSONIC MISSILE

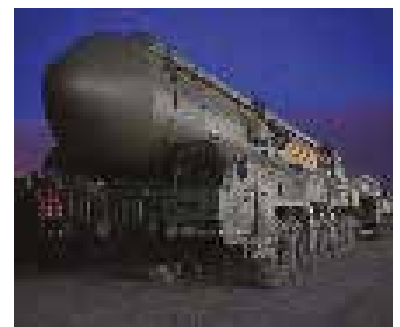


A VIDEO RELEASED BY Chinese Navy (PLAN) shows Type-055 destroyer vertically cold launching a missile with heavy booster. Analyst identified the missile as YJ-21 hypersonic anti-ship ballistic missile. This missile is based on short range CM-401 ballistic missile developed by China Precision Machinery Import-Export Corporation (CPMIEC). The CM-401 flies on a near space trajectory and full range hypersonic maneuvering to evade detection and interception. In 2018 Zhuhai Air Show, China displayed the mixed launch box with various other missiles. ■

RUSSIA TEST-LAUNCHES SARMAT ICBM

RUSSIA, ON APRIL 20, successfully test-launched Sarmat Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). The test was conducted at Plesetsk cosmodrome in the Arkhangelsk Region. “The launch’s tasks were achieved in full. The designated characteristics were confirmed at all the stages of its flight. The practice warheads arrived at the designated area at the Kura proving ground on the Kamchatka Peninsula,” Russia said.

The 200 tons RS-28 Sarmat, with range of around 18000 km and armed with multiple independent re-entry vehicle, can deliver 10-15 nuclear warheads to any part of globe through polar route. It is under development since 2009 and is expected to replace R-36M (SS-18 Satan). The road mobile based missile has been designed to beat US missile defence system by flying over the South Pole. ■



INDIA-AUSTRALIA SIGNS TRADE AGREEMENT



THE INDIA-AUSTRALIA Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (“IndAus ECTA”) was signed by Piyush Goyal, Indian minister for Commerce and Industry and Australian Minister for Trade Dan Tehan in a virtual ceremony, in the presence of prime ministers of both countries on April 2.

Underlining the potential between the two economies, Indian PM said that signing of IndAus ECTA in such a short span of time reflects the depth of the mutual confidence between the two countries. “On the basis of this agreement, together, we will be able to increase the resilience of supply chains, and also contribute to the stability of the Indo-Pacific region,” he added.

Apart from increased trade and economic cooperation, said Prime Minister Morrison, IndAus ECTA will further deepen the warm and close ties between the people of the two countries by expanding work, study and travel opportunities. ■

FIRST INDIA-FRANCE CONSULTATIONS ON WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA (WANA)

THE FIRST EVER Consultations between India and France on West Asia and North Africa Region were held on April 12 in virtual mode. They were co-chaired by Ambassador Ms. Anne Gueguen, Director of Middle East and North Africa Directorate, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France and Dr. Pradeep Singh Rajpurohit, Joint Secretary (WANA), MEA, Government of India.

The two sides had wide ranging discussions on respective priorities, areas of mutual interest and exchanged views on major issues including the political, security, economic, and trade dimensions of the West Asia and North Africa region. Both sides agreed to further strengthen their cooperation in the region and to continue the discussions periodically. ■

JAPAN-NEW ZEALAND TO STRENGTHEN DEFENCE COOPERATION

ON APRIL 21, KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, held a Summit meeting with Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand. The two sides decided to further strengthen the ‘Strategic Cooperative Partnership’ to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific. Two leaders iterated that the very foundation of the entire international order faces jeopardy caused by such factors as Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

The two leaders concurred to strengthen their bilateral security

and defence cooperation amid the increasingly challenging strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region. In this regard, they agreed to launch formal negotiations for a Japan-New Zealand information security agreement to enhance information sharing between the two countries.

The two leaders agreed to strengthen coordination between the Japan Self-Defence Forces and the New Zealand Defence Force in the Pacific Islands region. ■

DON'T CHOOSE THE WRONG BUS

Whether India sides with the west or not, a multi-polar world is going to be a reality. Whether India wants to be a strong pole or a weak pole will be decided by the choices India makes now.

by **ROHIT SRIVASTAVA**

The Ukraine-Russia war has exposed the sinister mechanisms and motives of the powers that control the world. Although not entirely unknown, was well hidden behind the sophistry of diplomatic niceties. As the war completes its second month, it has complicated bilateral and multi-lateral relations between the nations across the globe.

There is a clear understanding in the west that India needs self-sufficiency in defence and they are ready to replace Russia as India's main defence partner. All the major western power, the UK, USA, France and even the EU has offered India joint development projects. All this is being offered to move India away from Russia. But Why should India move to the west? Why is this so important for the West?

India is still not a technology power. Most of the western countries and their Asian allies like Japan and South Korea are way ahead of India in all aspects of science, technology and industrial production. They also control world affairs in all aspects. Why does India matter so much?

The answer to this question lies in what will happen if India does not go to the western camp. A carrot and stick policy is being followed. If India comes to the west, it will get much-needed technology and if not it can be sanctioned on charges of human rights, S-400 purchase and so on. India needs to realise that the West has shaped the world in which we live. They have the institutional ability to foresee the future better than other nations and the ability to manipulate national opinion and justify their actions.

West is aware that the next set of technologies that are going to dominate the future is not under their control. In most areas, China has surpassed them, and the Chinese companies will be the first ones to come up with products based on them. This will change the global power dynamics. The biggest strength of the west, besides the use of organised force, is their control over the inter-connected chain of science, technology, product development and market creation. Japan also mastered and surpassed most of the western countries in the science-technology-product paradigm. But the pacifist constitution imposed on them by the USA ensured they never

become a geopolitical power.

This is exactly the plan of the west for India. Case in point, under the US pressure India reduced its oil import from Iran and this allowed China to fill the void. One needs to understand, that West Asia is not a very welcoming place for the West, and if India follows the west's dictates on its bilateral relationship it will have to compromise its relations with the major powers of the Afro-Asia region. West will never take India in its inner circle. It will always be an outsider. The US has made a distinction in Quad with Australia taking precedence through the AUKUS arrangement.

Now, if India follows its policy of developing sensitive technologies and industries without western collaborations then India would be an independent force and will naturally favour multi-polar world order. Whether India sides with the west or not, a multi-polar world is going to be a reality. Whether India wants to be a strong pole or a weak pole will be decided by the choices India makes now.

India needs to have a fresh look at its position on the globe. India by its geo-location and size is a distinct pole in the world. But in the past, it was poor. This is going to change. India can't sabotage its future for some conveniences of today.

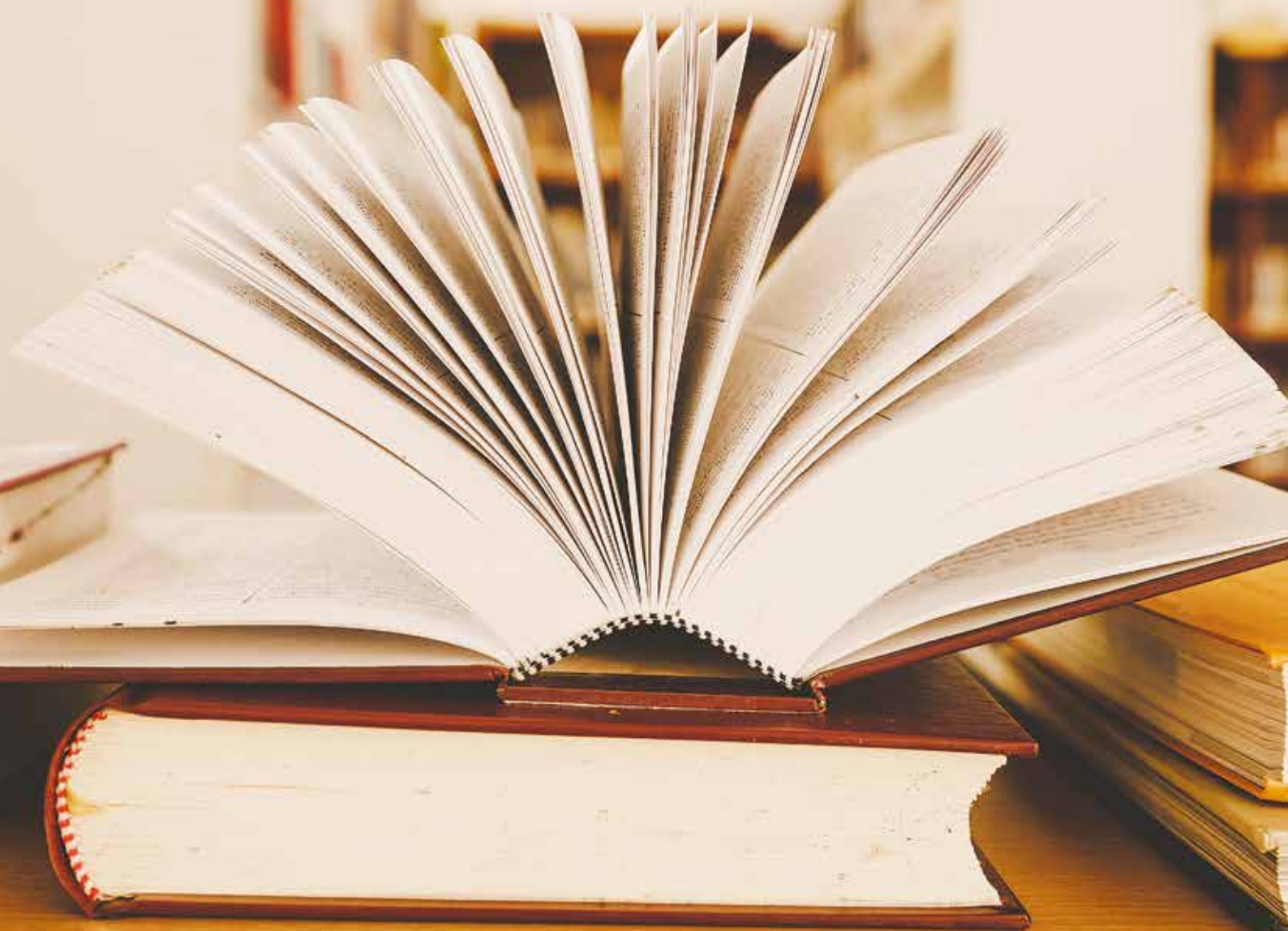
The central point of the realignment is defence technology which is not shared with everyone. India's defence market would never create co-dependence with the West. India would be dependent on the west but they won't be on India. The guiding principle for India is 'not putting all eggs in one basket.' When it comes to defence this is a wrong policy. This is the best strategy for energy and food security. In defence, it is better to be with countries with whom it is possible to develop mutual dependence. In space, equal size stars develop the binary system. They revolve around each other.

Besides all this, global trade is moving east. The market in the west is going to shrink in future. Given the demographic challenges, Europe's industrial and scientific productivity will witness a sharp decline. India needs serious long-term assessment before deciding which way to go. ■



PUBLISHING GETS A NEW NAME

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