



Term Paper

The Ukraine Crisis and Bangladesh's Response

Submitted To

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ID: 2020-1-60-036

Section: 02

Department: Computer Science and Engineering

Course Code: GEN210

Course Title: International Relations

Date of Submission: Friday, 22th April, 2022

Introduction

In this time the major international riot that took place in between Ukraine and Russia has become a serious issue all over the world. Every single country in this world has been affected by this war. People of all over the world are facing crisis of different needs. Also, it is affecting our economic structure. Risk of a world war is continuously raising. We the people are being affected by all of these problems nowadays.

Dependency

Russia depends on revenue from Europe, the latter depends on supply of energy from Russia. Overall, Russia was supplying about one-third of European natural gas consumption, used for heating in the winter as well as electricity generation and industrial production. The EU also depends on Russia for more than one-quarter of its crude oil imports. Russia had, thus, turned out as the largest single energy source for this bloc of Nations.

Start of the conflict

The starting of this conflict was before a few years ago. Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 after the country's Moscow-friendly president Viktor Yanukovich was driven from power by mass protests. Weeks later, Russia threw its weight behind two separatist insurgency movements in Ukraine's east, which eventually saw the pro-Russian rebels in Donetsk and Luhansk declare the DPR and LPR independent states, although they went entirely unacknowledged by the international community. More than 14,000 people have died in the fighting that has been ongoing throughout the intervening years, which has devastated Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland: the Donbas.

A 2015 peace accord – the Minsk II agreement – was brokered by France and Germany to help end the large-scale battles. The 13-point agreement obliged Ukraine to offer autonomy to separatist regions and amnesty for the rebels while Ukraine would regain full control of its border with Russia in the rebel-held territories. The agreement is highly complex, however,

because Moscow continues to insist it has not been a party in the conflict and is therefore not bound by its terms.

In point 10 of the agreement, there is a call for the withdrawal of all foreign armed formations and military equipment from the disputed DPR and LPR. Ukraine says this refers to forces from Russia but Moscow has previously denied it has any of its own troops in those states. In 2020, a spike in ceasefire violations in the east and a Russian troop concentration near Ukraine fueled fears in April. Both Ukraine and the West have accused Russia of sending troops and weapons to back the rebels but Moscow has denied the allegations, stating that Russians who joined the separatists did so voluntarily. The Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had taken on Ukraine's air defenses and its Air Force with a series of precision attacks, after airports and runways across the country were rocked by explosions. The Russian armed forces launched the much media-speculated offensive against Ukraine on Thursday morning on the orders of President Vladimir Putin, who said the goal of the operation was to de militares and "de-Nazify" Ukraine.

The Russian leader claimed that military action was necessary to stop Ukrainian attacks on the two breakaway regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, which Moscow recognized as sovereign states. On last Monday, President Vladimir Putin had claimed that Russia could come under attack by Ukrainian far right government, unless their influence in the country is diminished. He accused Western Nations of arming Kyiv against Russia.

The Begin of Main Conflict

In a lengthy essay penned in July 2021, Putin referred to Russians and Ukrainians as "one people," and suggested the West had corrupted Ukraine and yanked it out of Russia's orbit through a "forced change of identity. But Ukrainians, who in the last three decades have sought to align more closely with Western institutions like the European Union and NATO, have pushed back against the notion that they are little more than the West's "puppet". In December, Putin presented the US and NATO with a list of security demands. Chief among them was a guarantee that Ukraine will never enter NATO and that the alliance rolls back its military footprint in Eastern and Central Europe -- proposals that the US and its allies have repeatedly said are non-starters. Putin indicated he was not interested in lengthy negotiations on the topic. "It is you who

must give us guarantees, and you must do it immediately, right now," he said at his annual news conference late last year. "Are we deploying missiles near the US border? No, we are not. It is the United States that has come to our home with its missiles and is already standing at our doorstep."

High-level talks between the West and Russia wrapped in January without any breakthroughs. The standoff left Europe's leaders to engage in a frenzy of shuttle diplomacy, exploring whether a negotiating channel established between France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine to resolve the conflict in Ukraine's east -- known as the Normandy Format talks -- could provide an avenue for calming the current crisis.

In a news conference with the new German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on February 16, Putin repeated unsubstantiated claims that Ukraine is carrying out a "genocide" against Russian speakers in the Donbas region and called for the conflict to be resolved through the Minsk peace progress -- echoing similar rhetoric that was used as a pretext for annexing Crimea.

The agreements, known as Minsk 1 and Minsk 2 -- which were hammered out in the Belarusian capital in a bid to end a bloody war in eastern Ukraine -- have never been fully implemented, with key issues remaining unresolved.

Moscow and Kyiv have long been at odds over key elements of the peace deal, the second of which was inked in 2015 and lays out a plan for reintegrating the two breakaway republics into Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky recently stated that he did not like a single point of the Minsk accords, which require dialogue on local elections in the Russian-backed separatist regions and -- although unclear in what sequence -- would also restore the Ukrainian government's control over its eastern borders. Critics say the agreement could give Moscow undue sway over Ukrainian politics.

Putin previously responded in blunt terms by saying that regardless of whether Zelensky likes the plan, it must be implemented. "Like it or don't like it, it's your duty, my beauty," Putin said in a news conference alongside French President Emmanuel Macron. Zelensky, a former comedian and TV star, won a 2019 election in a landslide on promises to end the war in Donbas, but little has changed. Responding to a question about Putin's stark, undiplomatic language, Zelensky responded in Russian, saying bluntly: "We are not his."

Abstaining from Vote from Asian Countries Perspective

Four countries of South Asia abstained from voting. They are -- Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Another four South Asian countries voted in favor of the proposal. They are -- Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Afghanistan. Bangladesh's abstaining from voting in the UNGA special session has been discussed by many people.

Within two days' of Russia's invasion in Ukraine, Bangladesh's foreign ministry on 26 February voiced its concerns over the Ukraine situation and called for all types of violence and "stopping military operations in Ukrainian areas". The ministry's release said, Bangladesh believes, everyone must follow without any exception the UN charter that delineates compulsion to the ban on use of force, respect to sovereignty and geographical unity and peaceful reconciliation of international disputes. Deputy Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Monwar Hossain, presented another version of this statement at the UN General Assembly. Though foreign minister AK Abdul Momen was in New York at the time, he did not take part in any debate at the UN. Already two ministers have explained why Bangladesh abstained from voting on the proposal. In an interview with a New York-based Bangla TV channel, the foreign minister said, "We are against all types of war. We want a peaceful resolution to this crisis at the initiative of the UN Secretary-General." The foreign minister said that all types of war and international crises are against the interests of Bangladesh as a small state. The foreign minister further said, "Bangladesh abstained from voting at the UN General Assembly as it seeks peace." Planning minister MA Mannan said, "We did not vote on Russia-Ukraine issue thinking about the interests of the country." He also said, "Bangladesh is a member state of the UN, not an employee. We will consider the country's interests before casting our vote. We are not alone, several countries abstained from voting." The next day, the foreign minister said, "If you read the draft, you will see that that is not to stop the war. Rather this is to blame someone. We don't want war anywhere". What the ministers are not mentioning is that this position of Bangladesh is not consistent with its past position in the UN regarding geographical unity and sovereignty of smaller countries and votes it cast in the UN Security Council and General Assembly. An analysis of Bangladesh's positions in the UN Security Council and General Assembly will reveal this. This is not something someone could have predicted just two years ago when the world shut

down into the abyss of the Covid-19 pandemic. But yet here we are, at a fresh hell. For Bangladesh, its foreign policy is telling from its abstention in the first UN General Assembly vote for Ukrainian resolution to its voting in favour at the second UNGA resolution. And whether Bangladesh will consider seeking alternative payment methods to sustain its trade with Russia remains a pressing issue.

First, its abstention at the UNGA signals Dhaka's act of delicate balancing to conform with its desire "to remain neutral and avoid "choosing sides" amid the increased geopolitical polarization that Moscow's action is likely to provoke in the days ahead. As South Asia emerges as one of the central theaters of the new Cold War, Dhaka's balancing act is now relevant more than ever. Bangladesh relies on U.S. and European markets for its thriving export industries, especially ready-made garments, while Bangladesh shares border, blood, and historical ties with India, the West's "empowered" partner. However, Dhaka also forges a strategic partnership with China – the "pivotal" threat driving U.S.-led minilateral alliances in the region, namely the Quad and AUKUS. By abstaining from voting, Bangladesh, therefore, avoided burning bridges to either Western markets or China – which has a "no-limit" friendship with Russia – and kept space open for dialogues to pacify the flames of fire between the East and West. Dhaka's ultimate goal is to keep its economic and social transformations on track by utilizing all resources it can get access to, no matter which side the offers come from. From this pragmatic point of view, Bangladesh can hardly afford to invest its diplomatic capital in great powers' geopolitical gambit.

Perspective from Bangladesh for Abstaining

Hence, Bangladesh's response to the Ukraine crisis was a diplomatic continuation of its long-term policy – primarily driven by its non-alignment pedigree – to stay at an arm's length from great power competitions and reaffirm the constitutional vindication of its foreign policy of "friendship to all, malice to none." Bangladesh is watching key allies in its neighborhood remain neutral and non-committal regarding the Ukraine crisis. China, as well as four South Asian countries – India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh – all "avoided picking sides" in the UNGA resolution condemning Russia's aggression toward Ukraine. With China expressing sympathy, if not open support, for the Russian action (Beijing has carefully avoided the term "invasion"), and India rewinding its historic romanticism to sit atop of the fence while navigating great power relations, Bangladesh perhaps feels more comfortable, at least for now, to go with

the “neighborhood syndrome.” Like its South Asian neighbors, Bangladesh does not have any significant interests in Eastern Europe. Therefore, Dhaka might have perceived the Ukraine crisis as remote and not directly relevant to its interests, except for the potential global economic effects. Henceforth, this particular decision is a product of the geopolitical circumstances, where Bangladesh wants to avoid angering the U.S. and the EU, China and Russia, and its neighbors (India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka).

Thus, threading together all of these factors, Bangladesh manifests a reflexive desire to remain neutral and non-committal – to avoid choosing sides – in this age of great power rivalries to keep space open for its strategic autonomy to meet its strategic needs. Dhaka has acted upon the most cited dictum of international politics – there are no permanent friends or enemies; there are only permanent interests – by choosing its own “side” to promote its national interests amid cyclical bursts of Cold War antagonism between and among great powers.

Relation with Russia

The second factor shaping Dhaka’s stance is the reality that Bangladesh shares “historical ties” with Russia, the largest nuclear arsenal state with outsized influence due to its permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. The former Soviet Union twice vetoed U.S.-backed resolutions to intervene in Bangladesh’s war of independence against Pakistan in 1971.

Dhaka-Moscow bilateral ties have strengthened in recent years, with the two nations inking several important deals. To balance Bangladesh’s military dependency on China, Moscow and Dhaka had signed a \$1 billion arms deal – the largest military deal for Bangladesh – to purchase Russian military hardware in 2013. In addition, Moscow is assisting Dhaka to build a 2400 MW nuclear power plant in Rooppur – the first of its kind in Bangladesh and a much-hyped mega-project to boost Bangladesh’s power and energy sectors. The project’s total cost is estimated at \$12.85 billion, 90 percent of which Moscow will provide. Russia is Bangladesh’s fourth largest source of development funding, partnering in sectors like readymade garments, agriculture, fertilizer, military hardware, etc. Both nations also enjoy healthy trade ties. Official estimates suggest that Dhaka-Moscow economic ties kept growing even during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the fiscal year 2020-21, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$665.31 million to Russia and

imported goods worth \$466.70 million. Given the strength of its ties with Moscow, it was never going to be easy for Dhaka to oppose and condemn Russia at the U.N. openly.

Conclusion

So, as a peace-loving country, Bangladesh will never support the war and they will never want to break the good relationship with other countries. We know that Bangladesh is a developing country and it needs various supports from other countries. So, it has many restrictions, terms and condition to maintain good relation with every country. For that reason, we have to neutral in every decision. Sometimes it doesn't look good but we have a barrier to think ours. For this decision, we can maintain our peaceful relationship with other countries. It also maintains good vibes around the world. The time that are being spent by the Ukraine and Russia is very disappointing at this stage of globalizing. But in this Ukraine crisis, we are not supporting the Russian's way of solvent because it is making a worst movement through out the world. Though Bangladesh is being neutral in this situation but our diplomates and peoples are already talking about this crisis and try to convince and every single country of the world trying to get back the peace of the world again as before.

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