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Propose prospective foreign policy options in the wake of Russian invasion of Ukraine on ²⁴ February 2022.

INTRODUCTION

The world was caught unaware when the Russian Federation launched an offensive operation on the Ukraine's bordering region on 24th, February 2022. Pakistan's top leadership also visited the Russian capital on the same day. The country's top bosses were blindsided by the Russians. Today, the country is walking/balancing itself on a tight rope. It is using its position of neutrality to steer clear of the prospect of picking a side in this conflict. The country has therefore reiterated a peaceful settlement to the conflict; one achieved through diplomacy and not violence.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR-

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

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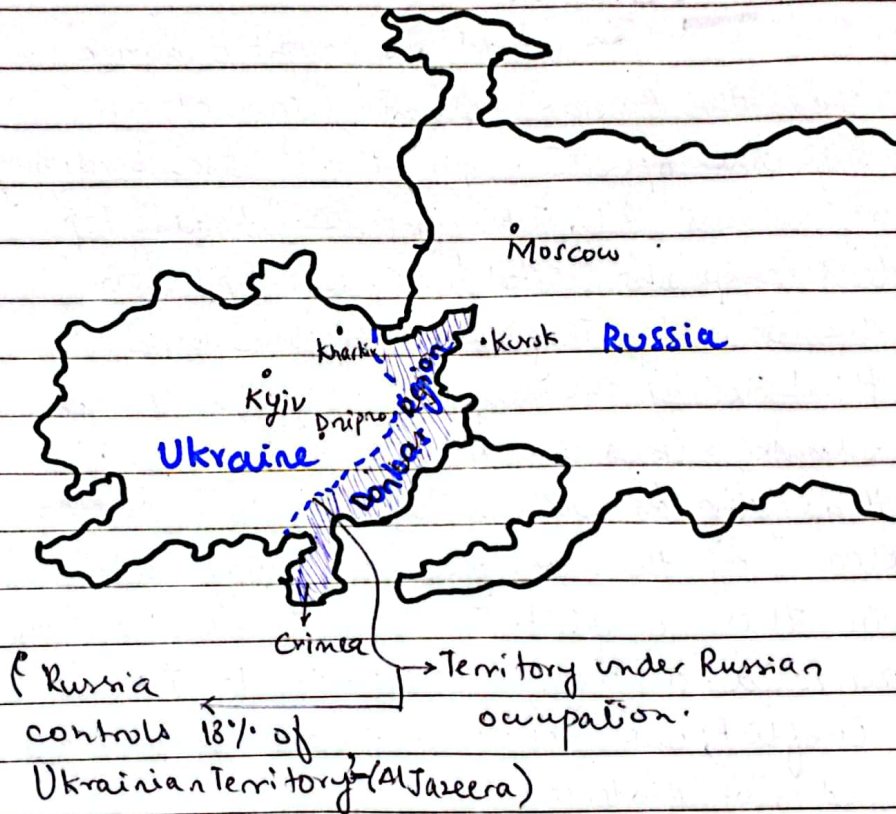
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and political: The Russian's lack of strategic depth on the western side of their country adds to the conundrum



Russia-Ukraine war
Map till May 2024

As per Aljazeera,

'The Russian control 18% of the territory of Ukraine which include towns of Donetsk, Mariupol, Kherson, Bakhmut and so on.'

PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THIS CONFLICT

Maintain Neutrality in this Conflict

Pakistan walks on a tightrope, at this moment, as it cannot and should not pick. The best course of action is to maintain neutrality. If the country were to align with Ukraine, it may disrupt its relations with Russia, and its biggest ally China. However, by aligning with the west Russians, the country might anger the west.

Voice Concern for a Longlasting Ceasefire

Article 40 of the Constitution states that the

"The state shall foster goodwill and friendly relations among all nations and promote international peace and security."

In line with the directives and the path laid down by the constitution of the country, the country should advocate for an end to hostilities and a long lasting solutions

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achieved through diplomatic means and not through violence.

Suggest the Country's Good Offices for mediation:

The country has previously used its good offices to help establish diplomatic relations between various countries. The Yahya Channel, Doha Talks (I to III) are all instrumental in cementing the country's standing as one which prefers diplomacy and mediation. Pakistan can offer its good offices for mediation between the two countries. In the words of Zhou Enlai on the Yahya Channel

'One should burn bridges that have been useful.'

(Zhou Enlai)

Leverage Areas Where National Interest can be Secured

Foreign policy is game of securing national interests along with maintaining a position that does not benefit/align with a particular camp. In this case, Pakistan can secure vital energy deals from the Russians. Due to the sanctions, their oil is under the market price by \$10-15. This per barrel reduction

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can help to save the country billions annually. Similarly, grain imports can be secured under market value from the Ukrainians.

Support Ukraine ^{& Russia} by sending Humanitarian Aid

Pakistan, in keeping with its advocacy for a peaceful settlement, should send humanitarian aid to the affected parties whether Ukrainians or Russians. The country has already sent two consignments of humanitarian supplies to Ukraine. These supplies include tents, blankets and other necessities of life. By doing so, it will ensure the country remains neutral in this conflict and also help us do our part in alleviating human suffering.

Voice Concern in UN and other Regional Forums

The so

The country should use multi-lateral forums to voice its concerns for a peaceful solution and diplomatic one. It must also voice the concerns of the innocent civilians who are caught in the cross-line of ^{both} the sides. Multi-lateral forums like UN, BRICS, ^{SCO} ELO and the OIC can

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be used to amplify the message of peace.

Diversification of Trade Partners

Though the cumulative volume of trade between Pakistan and the two warring parties is really less. Ukraine, has however, helped the country in bolstering its defence capabilities. The purchase of the Mi-24 Hind helicopters and the Il-78 air-to-air refuellers from Ukraine indicate a lack of diversity in arms purchase. The country must look elsewhere and diversify its arms imports.

(Ukraine and Pakistan have completed arms deals worth \$1.6 Billion from 1991-2020. - (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

Strengthen and modernize Own Strategic Capability

The country should take a lesson from the Russia-Ukraine war and work to strengthen and modernize the strategic capabilities. The conflict between Russia-Ukraine can be used to draw potential inferences about a conflict between India and Pakistan.

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In this regard, modernization of the country's armed forces is of the highest imperative.

Leverage Strategic Location of the Country

Central Asian countries are landlocked and depended on Russian ports for access to the world. However, due to the conflict Russia's ports are under more threat than ever. Pakistan can leverage its position and offer its geostrategic position as a transit hub for the ^{central Asian} countries. The country can secure vital foreign exchange and new alliances. It will also strengthen the economic cooperation and interdependence among one other leading to stable and prosperous region.

Monitoring and Adapting to the Situation

Conflicts are dynamic situations. A static foreign policy may never achieve the interests of the country. A dynamic and vibrant approach is needed that is in sync with the situation on the ground. So, the best course of action for Pakistan should be to monitor the situation on the ground.

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and adapt itself accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The Russia-Ukraine war has brought death and misery to the region. Pakistan like other wishes for a peaceful settlement of this conflict and advocates the use of diplomacy rather the use of force. The country's neutral stance allows it to offer itself as a bridge for mediation. All in all, neutrality will benefit the country the most.