



NIPS-ORSAM JOINT WEBINAR ON

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# **RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR FUTURE OF EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS**



**Report of the NIPS-ORSAM Joint Webinar on  
Russia-Ukraine War - Future of Eurasian Geopolitics**

**With**

**Keynote Addresses**

**By**

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**Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM)**

**And**

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**Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands, South Korea, and Iran**

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## About the Speakers

### Dr Ahmet Uysal



Dr Ahmet Uysal is a political sociologist interested in studying Arab Affairs and Turkish-Arab relations. Dr Uysal graduated from the Middle Technical University's sociology department. He received his master's and a doctoral degree from Southern Illinois University, USA. Previously he taught at the Dumlupinar and Marmara Universities. Currently, he is teaching at Istanbul University's International Relations Department. Dr Uysal lived in Egypt as an AUC research fellow in 2010 and he has recently published a book on Turkey's Image in Egypt before and after the Revolution in Turkish.

Dr Ahmet Uysal has coordinated several Arab-Turkish Congresses of Social Sciences (ATCOSS) since 2010 and wishes to advance academic cooperation between Turkey and the Arab world. He follows the developments in Turkey and the Arab world and works to improve understanding and cooperation at academic and social levels. He is the author of another book named Sociology of Social Movements. Along with his native Turkish, he speaks English, Arabic, and some French. He writes and comments on Turkish and Middle Eastern affairs on national and international platforms including Academia and media outlets such as Aljazeera, BBC, and Al-Arabia.

## **Ambassador Javid Husain (Retd)**

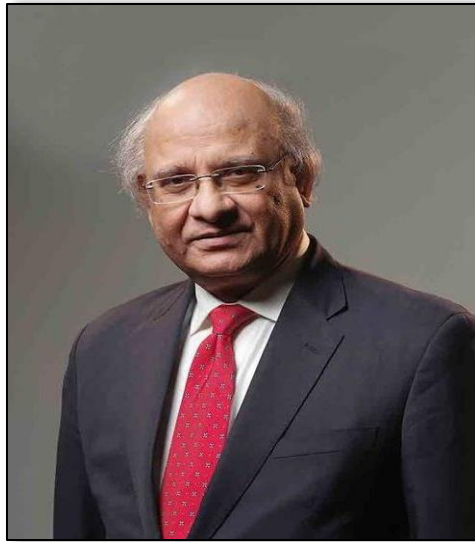


Ambassador Javid Husain has had a distinguished career during which he served as the Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands (1992-1995), the Republic of Korea (1995-1997), and Iran, (1997-2003). During his tenure at Tehran, he was also Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

From January 2003 to March 2004, he was the senior most serving officer of the Foreign Service of Pakistan. His last position within the Foreign Service of Pakistan was as the Head/Director-General of the Foreign Service Academy from 2003 to 2004. During this combined period, he represented Pakistan in numerous conferences/meetings of the United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), as well as bilateral delegations to key countries like the USA & China.

Since his retirement from the Foreign Service of Pakistan, Ambassador Javid Husain has continued to remain engaged with diplomacy, both as a special envoy/representative for Pakistan in various forums, as well as in the role of the President of the Lahore Council for World Affairs.

## **Dr Ashfaque Hasan Khan**



Dr Ashfaque Hasan Khan is currently the Principal of NUST School of Social Sciences and Humanities and Director General NIPS. He has been the Special Secretary Finance/Director General Debt Office and Economic Adviser Ministry of Finance, Islamabad; Spokesperson of the Government of Pakistan on Economic Issues; Director and Vice Chairman of the Saudi-Pak Industrial and Agricultural Investment Company Ltd; and Director of the United Bank Limited and Pak-Libya Holding Company. Dr Khan holds a PhD degree in Economics from the Johns Hopkins University, USA. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the fields of economics and public policy, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan conferred the award of Sitara-i-Imtiaz to Dr Khan in 2005. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) conferred upon him the ECO Excellence Award in 2010.

## Participants

### *Speakers*

- Professor Ahmet Uysal, Director of Middle Eastern Studies Center (ORSAM), Ankara, Turkey.
- Ambassador Javid Husain (Retd), Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands, South Korea, and Iran.
- Dr Ashfaque Hassan Khan, Principal, NUST School of Social Sciences & Humanities (S3H) & Director General, NIPS.

### *Moderator*

- Mr Amir Yaqub, Director, Operations & Collaboration, NIPS.

### *Discussants*

- Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI (M) (Retd), Former Caretaker Defence Minister of Pakistan & Former Defence Secretary of Pakistan.
- Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan, HI (M), SBT, (Retd) President, Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies.
- Mr Owais Ahmed Ghani, Former Governor, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen (Retd), Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Poland and Australia.
- Ambassador Syed Hasan Javed (Retd), Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China & Former Director, NUST China Study Center.
- Major General Faiz Muhammad Khan Bangash HI(M) (Retd), Senior Analyst.
- Dr Ghulam Mujaddid Butt, Associate Professor, Muslim Youth University Islamabad.
- Dr Ismail Sari, Senior Fellow, Center for Middle Eastern Studies – ORSAM, Ankara, Turkey.
- Dr Atia Ali Kazmi, Director, Centre for International Strategic Studies, Islamabad.
- Dr Salma Malik, Assistant Professor, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.
- Mr Ali Shah, Head of Research, NUST Institute of Policy Studies
- Dr Bakare Najimdeen, Assistant Professor, Centre for International Peace & Stability, NUST.
- Dr Humaira Shafi, Assistant Professor, Centre for International Peace & Stability, NUST.
- Dr Muhammad Adil Iqbal, Assistant Professor, NUST Business School.
- NIPS staff members.
- NUST Students.



## Executive Summary

The NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) held an international webinar on the Russia-Ukraine War and its implications for the future of Eurasian geopolitics on Thursday, October 27, 2022, in collaboration with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM), Ankara, Turkey. The webinar, moderated by Director NIPS, Mr Amir Yaqub, was arranged as part of the knowledge exchange events organized by NIPS to understand the shifting dynamics of global and regional geopolitics.

The first keynote speaker, Dr Ahmet Uysal, Director ORSAM, talked about the history of the region as the Middle East connects three continents — Europe, Asia, and Africa. He said that the region has continued to suffer from long-term conflict and has failed to develop unlike Europe or ASEAN, though there have been national and periodic episodes of development. The instability in the Middle East and Afghanistan has weakened the region and Muslim countries must find a way to stabilize these regions.

He remarked that the Russia-Ukraine War involves the transcontinental movement of hydrocarbon energy. There is a perception that the United States is trying to block the Russian fuel supply. The conflict in Ukraine also seems to have revealed the limits of the Russia-China strategic partnership. If Russia wins the war, the implications for the whole Eurasian megaregion will be momentous. Pakistan and Turkey must, therefore, tread cautiously, because the world order is fluid and not settled at the moment.

The second keynote speaker, Ambassador Javid Hussain (Retd), former Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands, Korea, and Iran, gave a historical background of the current conflict. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the assurances given to Russia were not respected and the past 30 years saw the expansion of NATO, though this does not mean at all that the Russian pretext of invading Ukraine is justified. The international community, led by the United States and its allies, has criticized the invasion under the UN charter.

He considered that the war has brought together the United States and Europe and has resulted in the revival and consolidation of NATO. Moreover, the Ukrainian crisis has reinforced the critical importance of the United States in European security. Ukraine, in turn, has formally applied for NATO membership through a fast-track approach.

The keynote addresses were followed by the comments and questions from the participants which added more depth to the session and made it even further intellectually stimulating.

In his closing remarks, Dr Ashfaque Hasan Khan, Principal of NUST School of Social Sciences and Humanities and Director General NIPS, shared his seasoned analysis of the subject. Mentioning his recent book on hybrid war, Dr Khan opined that the historical baggage between Russia and the West pushed Russia into this situation. In his estimation, the war was likely to be long, if only because the US and the major European powers were not directly involved. Also, Russia did not seem to be in the mood to relent. He thought that the coming winter is very important because the energy crisis in Europe would severely test the Europeans.

The following recommendations emerged from the discussion of the experts:

1. Turkey and Pakistan must focus on building and strengthening their economies. Although both countries have let opportunities pass by in the past, more opportunities will arise in the future, which both countries can avail, if they have strong economies, political stability, and mutual understanding.
2. Regional cooperation should be one of the topmost priorities of Middle Eastern countries as dominant geopolitical trends have tended to weaken regional integration.
3. Pakistan should focus on improving its economic outlook and address political polarization so that political stability can reinforce growth and development and enable its foreign policy to be proactive and beneficial.

4. Pakistan should put together a cohesive policy to import Russian oil at discounted prices to ward off soaring inflation.
5. The West should rethink its economic sanctions on Russia, because these sanctions have perhaps not achieved their intended effects, and the global economy has been hit badly.
6. Immediate ceasefire and negotiations should take place between belligerents in the Russia-Ukraine War. Both Russia and NATO need to evolve a modus vivendi to ensure regional and global peace and stability. Middle powers and regional powers of the world should jointly issue a declaration, from the platform of the UN and other important regional organizations, in favor of the immediate cessation of hostilities and zero tolerance for escalation by either side in the Russia-Ukraine War.
7. Pakistan and Turkey should create a bilateral mechanism for sustained coordination in bilateral partnership and work for an effective multilateral mechanism for Intra-OIC coordination and action on key issues of relevance to Muslim countries. Regional conflicts have derailed the development of both countries. These bilateral and multilateral mechanisms should focus on the key flashpoints in the Muslim World as well as issues of central importance to Muslims anywhere in the world.

## **Keynote Address**

**Dr Ahmet Uysal**

**Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies -ORSAM**

### **History of the Region**

Turkey and Pakistan share a long history. Turkey values this extremely important bilateral partnership. In the throes of the struggle of the Ottomans against the European powers, the Muslims of the Indo-Pak Subcontinent played a valuable role and supported the Ottoman state because it was a major connection between the East and the West. The geopolitics of the region has historically tended to connect Europe, Asia, and Africa. Istanbul was at the center of this tri-continental geopolitics in Ottoman times and continues to play an indispensable role in contemporary regional geopolitics.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the shifting of the global center of gravity to the western extreme of the Eurasian landmass, the region came to be known as the Middle East because of its central location between the eastern and the western portions of the Eurasian supercontinent or between Europe and Asia proper. The last days of the Ottoman Empire were fraught with a whole host of challenges and inefficiencies embodied by political, economic, social, cultural, educational, and spiritual crises that attend the decline of political entities that were once powerful. This painful reality was reflected in the disparaging term, "the Sick man of Europe," by which the Ottoman Empire had come to be designated by the latter half of the 19th century. It became increasingly difficult for an overextended bureaucratic administration and a decentralized structure to hold different regions of the empire together in the last days of the empire. The empire was subdued in World War I and the victorious powers planned the future possibilities for the region that suited their goals.

The region did not see prosperity or stability and suffered from colonialization. After World War II, the Cold War led to the sharp division of the world into the Soviet-led Eastern bloc and the US-led Western camp. Muslim countries, especially the Middle Eastern states, did not benefit either from the world wars or from the ensuing Cold War. The regional countries were forced to choose sides under the pressure of the superpowers. While non-alignment remained an option, alliances won the day in the region during the Cold War. World War II was followed by the bipolar world order, but it was far from being an ideal dispensation.

The fall of the old cold war system in the final decade of the 20th century also did not bring any lasting prosperity and stability to the region. It needs to be mentioned that the collapse of the Soviet Union ended the bipolar world order, and since then, no stable world order has existed. In other words, the years following the Cold War can be characterized as the long period of the emergence of a new world order which seems to be still in the making.

Following the Cold War, the United States wanted to change the region as per its own plan. The opportunity for geopolitical reconfiguration was provided by the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussain. The two invasions of Iraq, first in 1990 under President George H. W. Bush and the second in 2003 under President George W. Bush, opened a veritable Pandora's Box in the Middle East.

### **Missed Opportunities**

Turkey missed the opportunity to become a major power in the 1990s, due to a variety of reasons, including the lack of domestic political stability and security dependence on NATO. A number of factors contributed to domestic political instability, one of which was the challenge to national cohesion by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that was supported by the West. Being part of NATO meant that the western interests were predominant in the region. During the same period, relations with Central Asia, Africa, and other countries in the Middle East were somehow not priorities by the leadership.

Similarly, Pakistan also missed the 1990s and failed to morph into a major power because of domestic problems and instability in Afghanistan. Its problems were compounded when the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001, which set off a chain of circumstances that impacted Pakistan rather seriously. Conflict in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria created massive instability in the region, with Pakistan having had to deal with the fallout of the conflict in Afghanistan and Turkey, having had to deal with the aftermath of the conflict in Iraq and Syria. In other words, both Turkey and Pakistan were affected by the shifts in regional geopolitics of the last 30 years.

Moreover, the Arab Spring served as a major geopolitical rupture leading to a raft of civil wars, coups, sectarian conflicts, and ideological struggles across the region rather than democratization. It created new fault lines instead of bridging and addressing the old ones. It would be instructive to study the precise role played by the regional elites or Islamists in the events that led to the widespread unrest.

### **Implications of the Russia-Ukraine War**

Russia-Ukraine War has added another dimension to regional geopolitics. Depending upon which narrative one subscribes to, a number of plausible reasons for the conflict can be identified. However, the challenge is to be as objective as possible. There is no doubt that there has been a streak of ambition and aggression in the Russian geo-strategy under President Putin, since 2014. President Putin is indeed very ambitious; he wants to build a third Russian empire in his lifetime, but one person's lifespan is too short a period of time to build an empire, especially one as expansive as the one envisaged by the Russian geopolitical imagination. In the pursuit of his geostrategic ambitions, Putin miscalculated considerably in Ukraine. He thought that the West would treat Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine much as it had treated prior Russian actions in Georgia, Crimea, Syria, and Libya.

It also needs to be pointed out that while the West and Russia are on opposite sides, yet their fundamental attitudes toward Muslim countries have not been altogether different,

since these attitudes are more or less rooted in the systemic behavior of great powers toward lesser powers. For instance, in the case of Turkey, they both support PKK and try to thwart Turkey's influence in Iraq and Syria. During the Trump administration, Turkey tried to drive PKK from Syria, but it was found that the PKK, the United States, and Russia were on the same side. Despite the fact that the United States is providing aid to Ukraine against Russia in the Russian-Ukraine War, both the major powers did not change their attitude in Syria and Libya.

The war in Ukraine is going to change a lot of dynamics in Eurasian geopolitics. In a way, the conflict between Russia and NATO seems to be a contemporary expression of the ancient struggle between the Eastern Roman and the Western Roman Empires, or, in theological terms, between Western Christianity (mainly Roman Catholic-Protestant) and Eastern Christianity (mainly Orthodox). Russians admit it rather more openly than NATO.

Russia's current worldview is, therefore, laden with the concomitant influence of three varieties of nationalism, that is, Russian nationalism, Slav nationalism, and Orthodox nationalism. It is almost an open secret that Putin is arguably aiming to unite the Orthodox Christians under Russian leadership.

Some experts believe that the third world war has already started, because all major powers like the United States, NATO, Russia, and China are involved in the conflict in one way or the other. The war has created the conditions for a global energy and food crisis. In this situation, many countries, still undecided about which party to support, will be constrained to take sides to safeguard their own interests.

On the whole, the United States seemed to have gained a lot in the war. It has united Europe unequivocally around the cause of the Ukrainian victory or Russian defeat. The current consensus in NATO is a huge shift from a couple of years ago when French President Macron had proclaimed the end of NATO, while President Trump created a lot of resentment among NATO partners with his administration's demand from NATO

partners to increase their financial contributions to European defense and security rather than leaning on the United States. Money and military supplies are flowing to Ukraine in an extraordinary show of unity and solidarity with the United States contributing the most. The Transatlantic defence industry also seems to be none too displeased with the current situation. The prospects of the American oil and gas business seem to be bright, especially in the wake of the cessation of the sale of Russian gas and oil to Europe. Also, countries like Finland and Sweden which were previously outside NATO have applied for membership. The West, therefore, enjoys a clear overall advantage over Russia in the current phase of the conflict.

However, the right-wing parties in Europe are sympathetic to Russia. The far-right leadership in Italy is supporting the war because of the pressure from the media. There is no strong voice to stop the war. Americans and Europeans are content because they are not dying in the war, it is the Ukrainians. Some experts contest that some militias or kind of paid soldiers are fighting for them in Ukraine. Putin does not care either. Russia is putting Muslims in the war zone: Tatars, Dagestanis, and Chechens. As long as the death does not reach big numbers, both sides will continue the war.

Russia, on the other hand, is facing a demographic crunch with a shrinking population. Morale is generally low amongst its forces and reservists. The continuation of conflict may accelerate desertion among Russian troops or non-willingness to join the fight among the general population. Immigration may be an extreme reaction to the conflict. Russia's female population already outnumbers its male population. The gap between males and females in Russia was estimated to be in excess of 10.5 million in 2020.

From Russia's viewpoint, its strategic partner may not have come up to its expectations in terms of assistance for the war effort in Ukraine. China has continued to stress the importance of the peaceful resolution of the conflict all along. Especially, China has not provided any military support that could change the situation on the ground in favor of Russia. China's support could change things in favor of Russia, but this support would not materialize, considering that China would not like to antagonize the United States



and NATO over Ukraine. China and the United States are both interested in stabilizing their competition rather than intensifying it.

### **The Way Forward**

Pakistan-Turkey cooperation may be critical for several challenges faced by both of them. The security of Iraq and Afghanistan is important for Turkey and Pakistan because Iraq is part of the land bridge between Pakistan and Turkey. Unsurprisingly, the Afghanistan issue seems to have been forgotten because of the conflict in Ukraine.

If Ukraine wins the war, there may be a resurgence in American hegemony, and if Russia wins, it will have negative implications for Turkey and for others like the Caucasian republics. Even the spillovers into Afghanistan of the victory of either side may not be ruled out completely. The Central Asian Republics will also feel the pressure. A Russian victory may lead to the reordering of the geopolitics of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea for that matter. Even the continuation of the conflict may reshape the overland and maritime connectivity and trade routes. Secure overland and maritime supply chains must be maintained.

Both Turkey and Pakistan must be strong to address their respective as well as mutual challenges. The critical point, therefore, is to ensure synchronization between Turkey and Pakistan. Both countries must encourage all kinds of bilateral relations — political, defense, business, and cultural. Mere dialogue is not enough. Pakistan and Turkey are key regional powers with a significant positive impact on regional and global peace and stability. Turkey is helping resolve the world food problem. Pakistan is an anchor of peace and security in South Asia. Even more important is the fact that the whole region demands peace. Muslim countries want it more than ever, but they seem to be too disoriented to assert themselves in securing it. The strategy should be to work on in-house issues like economic development and patiently wait for opportunities for regional cooperation to arise while continuing to promote bilateral collaboration. It is not difficult

to see that the new world order is taking shape and whatever Turkey and Pakistan do, they will have a big role to play in fostering peace, progress, and stability.

## **Keynote Address**

### **Ambassador Javid Husain (Retd)**

#### **Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands, South Korea, and Iran**

The Russia-Ukraine war, which started on February 24, 2022, with the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian forces is a development of seismic proportions with far-reaching consequences for global and, in particular, Eurasian geopolitics. Shorn of diplomatic niceties, it is in essence a tussle for power and influence between Russia and the US-led West in the former's neighborhood.

#### **The Genesis of the Russia-Ukraine War**

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the US took advantage of the Russian weakness to expand NATO eastward contrary to the understanding given to Moscow at the time of German reunification although there was no formal deal to that effect. Months after the Malta Summit of December 2-3, 1989, between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev following the fall of the Berlin wall on November 9, 1989, James Baker, America's Secretary of State, gave an assurance to Gorbachev in Moscow, "If we maintain a presence in a Germany that is a part of NATO...there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction...one inch to the east." Later, even as the Soviet Union crumbled in 1991, John Major, Britain's Prime Minister reiterated the assurance, "We are not talking about strengthening of NATO".

Despite these assurances, the subsequent 30 years saw the relentless eastward expansion of NATO. The alliance has expanded more than 1,000 kilometers eastwards from the front line dividing Germany during the Cold War. Consequently, NATO now includes seven of the eight former members of the Warsaw Pact in violation of the commitment given earlier to Moscow. At a summit in Bucharest in 2008, the US persuaded the rest of NATO to declare that Ukraine and Georgia will become members, a promise that was reiterated in December 2021.

On December 17, 2021, Russia sought legal guarantees for its security in the form of draft treaties with America and NATO. The proposed pact with NATO would have required it to rule out its further expansion and to forgo military expansion of any kind with Ukraine and other non-members in the former Soviet Union. NATO would also not be allowed to deploy troops or weapons on the soil of its own members in Eastern Europe, thus requiring the dismantling of the NATO forces stationed in Poland and the Baltic states after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014. The proposed agreement with America would have entailed the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from Europe, without any constraint on Russia's arsenal of comparable tactical nuclear weapons. These demands were not acceptable to the US and other NATO members who considered them non-starters.

The intensity of differences behind the conflict in Ukraine can be gauged from some of the remarks made by President Putin in a speech on February 21, 2022. In the speech, Putin rejected the very idea of Ukraine as a nation-state, describing it instead as an "inalienable part of our history, culture, and spiritual space" separated from Russia by Bolsheviks at the time of the revolution and then bolstered with territory seized from Hungary, Poland and Romania under Stalin. Putin asserted a Russian claim not just to Donbas, but to a gamut of "historic Russian lands" which would include the Black Sea coast all the way to Odesa.

In a nutshell, the Ukraine crisis has been caused by the clash between the relentless eastward expansion of NATO and the threat to the Russian security that Moscow perceived in this expansion leading to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is, however, not to justify the Russian invasion of a sovereign and independent country, which is a member state of the UN, in violation of international law and the UN Charter.

### **The Aftermath of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has predictably been condemned by a vast majority of the international community led by the US and other Western countries. These countries

see the invasion as an unacceptable violation of international law and the provisions of the UN Charter. However, a sizable number of countries in recognition of Russia's understandable security concerns have avoided an outright condemnation of its invasion of Ukraine and adopted the middle ground in voting on the issue at the UN and its subsidiary multilateral institutions.

In the UN General Assembly, 141 countries voted on March 2, 2022, to deplore Russia's invasion of Ukraine while 40 (35 plus 5) countries accounting for most of the world population abstained or backed Russia. Twelve countries were absent. Notably, China, India, and Pakistan abstained during the vote while Turkey voted for the resolution. On March 7, 2022, China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, told the journalists at the annual session of the parliament that China and Russia's "rock solid" friendship is a strategic partnership against American attempts to suppress China, and strengthens peace and stability in the world.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the US and its European allies have imposed severe economic sanctions on the former to cripple its war effort. Moscow has responded by drastically cutting down its gas supplies to Europe which is heavily dependent on them for meeting its energy requirements. European countries are now trying to change their energy policies to diversify their sources of fossil fuel supplies and lessen their dependence on Russia. This development has led to a sudden jump in LNG prices in the international market and reconsideration by the European countries of their policies concerning coal-fired and nuclear power plants. The invasion also led to an accelerated process for the admission of Sweden and Finland into NATO to enjoy its security umbrella.

From Russia's point of view, the war in Ukraine has not gone as well as President Putin and his military planners may have initially hoped. Ukrainian forces bolstered by weapon and logistical assistance and intelligence provided by the US and its Western European allies as well as economic assistance amounting to \$23 billion in the form of budgetary support were able to stall the advance of the Russian forces limiting them to

eastern and southern regions of the country. In some cases, Ukrainian forces were even able to reverse the tide and push back the Russian forces.

Nevertheless, on September 30, President Putin announced the annexation of four Ukrainian regions including Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson after holding referendums there from September 23-27. Russia now occupies almost 15% of the Ukrainian territory. It has also mobilized additional 300,000 soldiers to strengthen its war effort in Ukraine. Russian authorities may be hoping to achieve victory through sheer mass, exploiting Russia's three-to-one advantage over Ukraine in fighting-age men. The situation on the ground, thus, remains fluid and the coming months may be critical in determining the future course of the war in Ukraine.

### **Geopolitical Repercussions**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine inevitably is bringing about a radical transformation of the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard:

1. At the highest level, increased tensions between the West and Russia because of the Ukraine crisis have brought Moscow and Beijing strategically closer to each other. The simultaneous pressure by the US-led West on China on such issues as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang has reinforced this trend. The meeting between Presidents Putin and Xi Jinping in Samarkand on September 15 on the sidelines of the SCO summit helped strengthen their strategic partnership further. Russia has greatly increased its natural gas exports to meet China's rapidly growing needs to compensate for the shortfall in its gas exports to Europe. Both countries are cooperating strategically within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. At the SCO summit in Samarkand, President Xi Jinping called for abandoning bloc politics and the development of a more just and rational international order. President Putin hailed the increasing influence of countries outside the West and slammed "instruments of protectionism, illegal sanctions, and economic selfishness".

2. Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to the unintended consequence of enhancing the US security cooperation with and presence in Europe because of the European countries' heightened threat perception emanating from Russia. It has also caused the strengthening of NATO as reflected by greater unity within the alliance and its likely expansion with the prospect of accelerated admission of Sweden and Finland. In a way, the invasion has revived and strengthened NATO's *raison d'être* in the strategic thinking of NATO member states.
3. The growing Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation may have the effect of blocking or at least reducing the US strategic influence and presence in Central Asian Republics where China is making deep inroads through its Belt and Road Initiative. Central Asian Republics are richly endowed with oil and gas reserves that can be transported to meet China's rapidly growing energy requirements. On the other hand, Central Asian Republics can act as transit routes for Chinese trade with West Asia and Europe besides being attractive markets for Chinese exports.
4. India has so far played a well-calculated role in handling the Ukraine crisis. Despite its historically close relationship with Russia, it has avoided supporting it in its invasion of Ukraine, perhaps in recognition of India's growing strategic partnership with the US aimed at countering the expansion of China's power and influence. New Delhi, therefore, abstained while voting on the resolution on the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the UN General Assembly.
5. The Ukraine crisis has reinforced the US presence and influence in Europe corresponding to the increased anxieties of the European countries about possible Russian aggressive moves in the future. The feeling of increased need for the American security umbrella may also have the effect of enhancing trans-Atlantic security, and economic and commercial cooperation in marked contrast with the situation a few years ago under President Trump when there were signs of the weakening of this trans-Atlantic cooperation.
6. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also highlighted the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the Russian armed forces besides bringing out in international politics the

limitations of military power alone in achieving strategic goals and objectives. What is required instead is a grand strategy encompassing political, economic, military, and diplomatic dimensions of national power for the realization of national goals. The ultimate victory in any contest between nations would go to the state(s) enjoying superiority in the power balance as a whole and not just in military terms. From this point of view, Russia obviously suffers from several disadvantages compared with the West, which will work to its detriment in the ultimate outcome of its invasion of Ukraine.

7. In a rebuff to President Putin, President Zelensky formally applied for membership of NATO on September 30, 2022. It may be now just a question of time before Ukraine becomes a full member of NATO through a fast-track process. Thus, the Russian invasion of Ukraine instead of preventing its membership in NATO may ironically lead to its quicker membership than would have been the case otherwise. In such a situation, Moscow will just have the satisfaction of annexing some of Ukraine's eastern and southern regions as part of Russia. This development may also solidify the positions of the two opposing sides thereby plunging Europe into a prolonged period of tensions and localized conflicts. However, the possibility cannot be ruled out that better sense may prevail leading to some compromise settlement ensuring Ukraine's neutrality and preventing its admission into NATO.



## **Discussion Session**

**Dr Ahmet Uysal**

**Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies - ORSAM**

While responding to a question on the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the politics of the Mediterranean, the speaker stated that the treaty in question was the death of the Ottoman Empire and, in a way, that of Muslim unity. Although the formal treaty aimed to end the caliphate, the secret aim was to destroy Islamic unity. There was a reset button in the treaty, that is, Article 16, which said that the future of the former Ottoman territories taken away from Turkey was to be decided by the concerned parties, but that did not happen. The Kemalist leaders after the Second World War did not make any attempt to invoke this article when Turkey became an independent nation-state. Be that as it may, the treaty is merely symbolic.

Moreover, in the eastern Mediterranean, the West is ceaselessly provoking Greece and Israel against Turkey. They tried to exclude Turkey from the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. Internationally, they provoked Greece, but at the same time, they did not want the Aegean Sea to become a Greek lake. In addition, the US policies and moves in the region do not seem to be too positive in terms of Turkish security. One wonders what moves characterized as attempts to counter Russian aggression really amount to. The US does not seem to be sincerely committed to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East.

Commenting on the impact of the impending winter in Europe on the war, the speaker stated that this winter will be very difficult for Europeans. It shall shatter their economy, however, if they survive, the war will take a different course. The energy dimension of the war will thus be very critical and European countries are looking for alternatives before the Russian squeeze becomes too cold for them to bear and makes them succumb.

Responding to a question on the similarity between Russia and Ukraine, the speaker stated that historically, the Ukrainians and Russians are cousins. For centuries, they used

to fight external threats as one, but the West managed to make them enemies in the post-Soviet times. A different kind of Ukrainian nationalism was shaped into being to stand against Russia. It is an ominous example of what successful social engineering can do to people, societies, and countries.

In a response to the question on the deployment of Muslim ethnicities in the war in Ukraine, the speaker stated that the likelihood of a conflict like the Chechen war is low because this generation has already paid a huge price for that. If the war goes bad for Russia, there will be some backlash and criticism of the heavy recruitment of Muslim populations in the Caucasus. It may so happen that Russia may undergo massive internal changes, which could be political or territorial or both if it loses the ongoing war. It is well known that wars seldom go as planned.

Commenting on the major developments in the Middle East, the speaker stated that Turkey faced many threats, and attempts were made to weaken the Turkish Lira, but Turkey managed to survive. Also, Saudi Arabia is now asserting itself in the region. Turkey does not appreciate high oil prices, which are inevitable in the case of Saudi geopolitical autonomy, but still, such Saudi actions will be better than its dependence on the US. Turkey wishes all Muslim countries well, wants to see them prosper, and cooperates actively with them for the overall progress of the region.

In response to a question on the use of a nuclear weapon, the speaker stated that for a country to use a nuclear bomb means that it is desperate. Ukraine is on the defensive and is getting all kinds of aid from the West. As a result, the Ukrainians are putting up a serious fight. Russia, on the other hand, seems far from that threshold of desperation that drives a country to make such a decision. Therefore, the use of nuclear weapons is least likely. Also, Russia has other means at its disposal to weaken its enemies. It wants to see how the winter treats the Europeans which it feels may create cracks in the resolve of its rivals. If a cold-battered Germany stops supporting Ukraine, the Ukrainian defense will suffer a big blow.

While responding to another question on the possible end of the war, the speaker stated that Putin had a choice to start the war or otherwise. He started the war, but now the end is not in his hand. The war has become a test of will between NATO and Russia. The Western powers hate losing as much as the Russians, so it is not easy for any party to back down at this point at least, while their economies and militaries are intact. The western arms lobby is equally happy that the arms are being sold. NATO is okay with the fact that its forces are not dying or directly being harmed. It appears that the West can sustain such wars for a prolonged period of time. On the other hand, Russia's resources and forces will be drained. The longer it drags on, the greater will be human and economic costs for Russia. If the Russian export of oil and gas is cut down, or global oil prices plummet, it would be a big blow to Russia. However, countries like India and China are buying Russian oil, and still, the big customers are Europeans. If they stop buying Russian gas, it would be a big blow to them, because Europe needs time to make alternative energy arrangements.

Responding to the importance of Ukraine for Turkey, the speaker stated that Ukraine is vital for every country in the region and Turkey feels that Ukraine is a buffer between Russia and Turkey. Turkey has had eleven wars with Russia in modern history. It was Russia that was the prime rival of the Ottoman Empire in the 17th and 18th centuries. The British and the French in World War I only finished the task that was begun by Russia that is the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. If Russia controls Ukraine, it will control most of the Black Sea and Turkey cannot be comfortable with that. In addition, Turkey supports Azerbaijan, and Russia supports Armenia. Security-wise it is very critical for Turkey that the Black Sea remains free for navigation and trade. Turkey insists that Ukraine remains independent, and, at the same time, does not become a western satellite. Turkey would prefer an independent and friendly Ukraine.

The speaker stated that the war in Ukraine will have serious implications for the world. In addition, Turkey has elections coming up and it must show unity and overcome divisive politics to face regional challenges. Similarly, Pakistan also faces a difficult

regional situation. There are many forces in the world that will not like to see Turkey and Pakistan as strong, stable, and prosperous states. Both countries must cooperate in the converging environment and continue to do so in the future.

**Ambassador Javid Husain (Retd)**

**Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands, South Korea, and Iran**

In response to a question on the impacts of the war in Ukraine on Pakistan, the speaker stated that Pakistan will be affected by the economic repercussions of the war. Pakistan badly needs LNG and wheat supplies. The longer this war continues, the more pronounced those effects will be on Pakistan's economy. Pakistan must improve its economy so that it can withstand these adverse repercussions. Pakistan is suffering from slow GDP growth rates for the last two decades. Whenever the GDP growth increases the country runs into a high level of current account deficit because the national savings rate stays low.

Commenting on the scale of the conflict, the speaker stated that it is a great power conflict and Ukraine has become their battlefield. The war will drag on for a long time. Ukraine will not accept the annexation of its territories. For the first time since the Second World War, a hot war as part of the great power conflict, instead of being fought in Vietnam or Afghanistan or other regions of the world, has returned to Europe. While Russia may have local military superiority to some extent over Ukrainian forces, the West has an enormous advantage over Russia in terms of economic power, political cohesion, military strength, strategic stability, and enduring alliances.

Responding to a question on the use of nuclear weapons, the speaker stated that Ukraine would not resort to the use of a nuclear bomb. The West would not allow it as there is a threat of escalation. The Ambassador thought that Russia will also not go that path as well, unless, he considered, NATO decides to massively increase the weapons supplies and logistical assistance for Ukraine or chooses to become involved in some other major way in the war that Russia finds unacceptable in existential terms.

While responding to the question on the possible ending of the war and stoppage of Russian energy supply to Europe, the speaker stated that the conflict will last for some time. Neither the US nor Europe is in the mood to push Russia against the wall. The West would prefer to let Russia bleed and will continue to maintain pressure. As far as the energy issue is concerned, there will be some discomfort and inconvenience. Some European companies are making alternative arrangements. In some cases, they are reviving coal and nuclear power plants, stocking LNG supplies, cutting down their domestic electricity consumption, and trying to meet the requirements for the winter through other administrative measures. There will certainly be inconveniences, but they will not bring NATO to its knees. Europe will survive not only this winter but also the winters that follow. For this and many other reasons, the West is not in a hurry to end the conflict. They have once again put Russia in a situation that corresponds to the situation the Soviet Union was in Afghanistan or the West itself was in Afghanistan until very recently or in Vietnam almost half a century ago.

In addition, the speaker stated that at this stage, it is not in Putin's hands to stop the war. Potentially, annexing the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine, Putin may have achieved the required minimum objectives of the war. The long-term solution perhaps would be if Ukraine did not join NATO and remained neutral like Austria declared neutrality of its own accord in 1955 during the Cold War. If that kind of agreement can be reached that is one possible way to solve the issue.

In his concluding remarks, the speaker stated that, in international politics, the guiding force is not morality but the pursuit of power mostly in zero-sum terms. The conflict started when Russia's red lines were crossed, and the West did not stop pushing Russia. It would have been avoided if the NATO membership of Ukraine was not hastened. As far as Pakistan and Turkey and other countries are concerned, they need to build their national power. National power is not just military power; it is also economic clout, technological power, political stability, and proactive diplomacy. In the modern world,

any long-term contest between two opposing nations is determined by the power balance as determined in the final analysis by their technological and economic strength.

**Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi HI (M) (Retd)**

**Former Caretaker Defence Minister of Pakistan & Former Defence Secretary of Pakistan**

Commenting on the Russia-Ukraine war, Lieutenant General Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd) stated that, by the Russian definition, any campaign that ends in a net politico-economic loss is a failure. On the physical side, Russia has succeeded in making a physical buffer in the north and west between Ukraine and Russia, they have also to an extent saved their Black Sea fleet which is in the south by the annexation of territories beyond Crimea.

On the political front, Europe has gone closer to the US. In a way, NATO has a political advantage. China and Russia have also come closer. However, countries like Pakistan seem to be at a loss, because they are ambivalent about the situation.

On the economic front, the war has exposed the vulnerabilities of the EU and the end of the global financial hegemony of the US dollar. Countries are now talking about trading in other currencies. The status of the US dollar as the world's reserve currency might get weaker with time. Efforts should be made that the conflict does not spill over in the region, as it is not in the interest of any party.

**Ambassador Syed Hassan Javed (Retd)**

**Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China & Former Director, NUST China Study Center**

While commenting on the context of the war, Ambassador Syed Hasan Javed (Retd) stated that the conflict in Ukraine has a context to it. It revolves around the US losing its global influence and the functioning of the military-industrial complex. There is a view that whatever is happening in Ukraine is about the new global order. With the expansion of NATO, the remaining trust between Russia and the West has eroded. If Ukraine had

not given up its nuclear arsenal, the situation would have been different. Ukraine has very close cultural relations with the Russians, but these cultural affinities have not prevented the two countries from fighting with each other. Other countries should derive a valuable lesson from this situation and focus on increasing their comprehensive national power.

**Ambassador Fauzia Nasreen (Retd)**

**Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Poland and Australia**

Adding to the discussion, the Ambassador stated that Russia, owing to its particular geography has suffered from a historical concern about containment, encirclement, external aggression, and access to seas and oceans of the world. The Russian geo-strategy has consistently revolved around these concerns. Russia tried to overcome these concerns in post-Soviet times by overtures to the West, which came to naught due to the historic strategic mistrust between them.

The characterization of Russia as a strategic competitor by the Trump Administration and the continuation of traditional American policy toward Russia has also contributed to the aggravation of the Russian security concerns

Russia would want uninhibited freedom of navigation which is not allowed by the domination of the world's major waterways by the United States and its allies. For quite some time now, Russia has been active in the North. With the melting of the Arctic, Russian presence is becoming more pronounced in the region, raising concerns among the United States and other countries in that region due to the strategic importance of the Arctic waterways and the Arctic resources.

**Dr Atia Ali Kazmi**

**Director, Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad**

While commenting on the nature of the war, Dr Atia Ali Kazmi stated that it must not be forgotten that war is and has always been a profitable business. Quoting Clausewitz, she said that it has always been the continuation of politics by other means. She said it does not seem possible that this constant of history will change anytime soon. Some countries consider that it is the best option if war is being waged by somebody else on someone else's land.

In terms of lessons for countries like Pakistan and Turkey, Dr Kazmi pointed out that both countries have their own issues and problems to look after. They should therefore focus on their domestic development without yielding to those external demands and expectations that run contrary to their national visions of progress. The best lessons are delivered by history and both Pakistan and Turkey have rich histories.



## **Recommendations**

1. Turkey and Pakistan must focus on building and strengthening their economies. Although both countries have let opportunities pass by in the past, more opportunities will arise in the future, which both countries can avail, if they have strong economies, political stability, and mutual understanding.
2. Regional cooperation should be one of the topmost priorities of the Middle Eastern countries as dominant geopolitical trends have tended to weaken regional integration.
3. Pakistan should focus on improving its economic outlook and address political polarization so that political stability can reinforce growth and development, and enable its foreign policy to be proactive and beneficial. Pakistan should also put together a cohesive policy to import Russian oil at discounted prices to ward off soaring inflation.
4. The West should rethink its economic sanctions on Russia, because these sanctions have perhaps not achieved their intended effects, and the global economy has been hit badly in the process.
5. Immediate ceasefire and negotiations should take place between belligerents in the Russia-Ukraine War. Both Russia and NATO need to evolve a modus vivendi to ensure regional and global peace and stability. Middle powers and regional powers of the world should jointly issue a declaration, from the platform of the UN and other important regional organizations, in favor of the immediate cessation of hostilities and zero tolerance for escalation by either side in the Russia-Ukraine War.
6. Pakistan and Turkey should create a bilateral mechanism for sustained coordination in bilateral partnership and work for an effective multilateral mechanism for Intra-OIC coordination and action on key issues of relevance to Muslim countries. Regional conflicts have derailed the development of both countries. These bilateral and multilateral mechanisms should focus on the key flashpoints in the Muslim World as well as issues of central importance to Muslims anywhere in the world.

## Concluding Thoughts

**Dr Ashfaque Hassan Khan**

**Principal, NUST School of Social Sciences & Humanities (S3H) & DG, NIPS**

Dr Khan shared with the audience that he had finished writing his latest book, *Dawn of a New World Order*, which focuses on the Russia-Ukraine War. He said that his analysis also reflected some of the thoughts enunciated in the session. He also mentioned his recently published book, *Living Under Hybrid War* (2022), which critically analyzes Pakistan as a country impacted by hybrid warfare. He pointed out that the later book identifies religious, sectarian, informational, narrative, and economic fault lines, which can be exploited by the enemies of Pakistan. The soon-to-be-published book on the Russia-Ukraine War talks about the forgotten history behind the conflict.

He further said that Ukraine joining NATO is an existential threat to Russia and the latter will never allow it. The West wants to weaken Russia maximally through the war in Ukraine. Dr Khan stated that it is becoming clear that the use of economic sanctions might not work against a highly resource-rich country like Russia, as it continues to sell its oil in the international market. The relative failure of economic sanctions to subdue Russia has undermined the anti-Russian strategy. It may speed up the process of de-dollarization of trade.

Dr Khan pointed out that there are currently five IMF Special Drawing Right (SDR) currencies, the British pound sterling, the US dollar, the Euro, the Japanese yen, and the Chinese renminbi. He said that in parallel, the “five Rs” are emerging as an alternative global basket of global currencies. These are the Brazilian Real, the Russian (Ruble), the Indian rupee, the Chinese renminbi, and the South African rand. He also said that he can foresee the expansion of BRICS as a major alternative to the global grouping of the future, as Iran has already applied for BRICS membership, while Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have also expressed their interest in joining and will be applying soon for membership.

# Gallery





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