

## **Ukraine war: Who're the real combatants?**



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Wars recorded in history had only one objective: Peace. But ironically no war has achieved the objective completely.

“If peace presupposes deployment of our full strength and force, we will not hesitate to exhibit it,” says Vladimir Putin, President of Russia. But President of Ukraine Zelensky says, “If the West give us all help we seek, we will vanquish Russia and establish peace.”

### **Russia's moral failure**

The international political observers say that if the West continues to supply arms to Ukraine, the war will get prolonged and will not cease at all. If Russia, which has seamlessly been meeting with failure after failure, does not wake up from the intoxication of its ancient glory, it will get entangled in the dark. Putin will ultimately earn a bad name for having ruined Russia, say western political observers.

On Feb. 24, 2022 Putin launched a special military operation against Ukraine that he had thought was just too small a region to survive the Russian onslaughts. About two lakh Russian soldiers penetrated into Ukraine and in the beginning, wrested control of certain regions. But catching Russia off balance, Ukraine got its act

together in March and began resisting the Russian offensive successfully in north and south. Ukraine retrieved the regions it had lost to Russia and brought to light all war crimes committed by Russia.

### **Ukrainian nationalism getting strong**

The Ukrainians have long faced Russia's cultural onslaughts. Yet they had not considered Russia as a foreign country.

Very much part and parcel of the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1991, Ukraine became an independent and neutral country after the Union disintegrated. However, it could not completely break itself from the Russian influences and establish its own identity. Now, Putin has powerfully driven home to the Ukrainians the need for creating and preserving their own identity.

The war, in fact, has knit together the fabric of Ukraine as never before. Most of the people in Donbas, eastern region of Ukraine, who had all along been supporters of Russia, have turned Ukrainian nationalists. Russia, though strong in terms of nuclear arms, could not win the war mainly thanks to the emerging nationalism among the Ukrainians.

### **Russia- target of hate**

According to the UN data, at least 7,200 people including 200 children have been killed up till Feb.13, 2023. As there are no authoritative datasets on the casualties in the war, it can be easily guessed that thousands of soldiers were killed and lakhs of people displaced. The Ukrainians love their country as much as they hate Russia.

### **Dented image**

Even as Zelensky's image and stock have been rising, Putin's image lies in a shambles. Putin has not only not won any territory but also lost the existing regions. The chances of halt to the war

seems slim unless Putin has a ray of hope that drives him to win the dicey game.

Zelensky has understood the fact that as only a complete victory in a war is a victory worth its salt, the Russian soldiers occupying in all regions including Crimea must be evicted totally. Otherwise, Ukraine cannot be called an independent nation. Zelensky is fully aware of the possibility of Ukraine biting the dust if the Russian army re-launches their invasion with multiplied force. Hence, every day he is vociferously seeking the West's help.

Meanwhile, US President Joe Biden met Zelensky in Ukraine during his European tour. The US has warned that China, which has been morally supporting Russia, will henceforth supply arms too to the country.

### **Extended cold war**

The West, in general, and the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), in particular, has complicated the Ukraine war. Putin views the NATO's eastward expansion as an alarm bell to Russia. He says that NATO aims to set up its military base in Ukraine, making the most of the current situation and if this is allowed, it will in the long run be a threat to Russia. This explains why Russia has frowned upon Ukraine's attempt to join NATO.

On the contrary, NATO refutes the charge, saying that it has an intention to neither make Ukraine a member of NATO nor pitch a military camp in Ukraine. The western powers including the U.S. have openly said that it is their aim to stall the Russian invasion and to preserve freedom and sovereignty of Ukraine. But it is no one would believe that their united stand would have such a simple purpose.

### **Who continues the war?**

In fact, the Ukraine war is not a war for Ukraine. It is an extended cold war. That is why the U.S., Britain, Japan, Australia and the European Union have all been heavily pumping in funds running to billions and billions for Ukraine which is quite aware of this massive aid. As all are conscious of this basic truth, they know pretty well that the long-drawn-out war will not easily come to an end soon.

As all wars did, the Ukraine war too has been impacting not only the stake-holders but also the whole world directly or indirectly. The European Union is preparing to impose new curbs on Russia apart from the already existing restrictions.

As the export and import chains of food, fuel and other essentials have snapped at several places, there is a scarcity prevailing in several countries including the U.S. and Europe. Hence, all have been pushed into a situation where cessation of war is gaining an utmost importance.

The people in Ukraine and Russia have the same wish: to stop the war. But the leaders concerned have been continuing the war for geo-political reasons.

The real war goes on between the people and their rulers.

**Feb.24 marks the first anniversary of the Ukraine war launch.**

**Translated by V. Mariappan**