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Ukraine and USA

Trump and Ukraine

- Features -

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These are claims that need to be exposed for the basic falsehoods they are which is the purpose of this collection of articles written at different times since February 2022 till today. This is particularly necessary in India where the political spectrum from different shades of the left/far-left to different liberal hues to different shades of the right/far-right, rationalise Russian behaviour towards Ukraine in the name of Indian "national interest", or because of ideological softness on Russia (refusing to see it as a lesser but still imperialist power), or because of the adoption of standard Realist approaches to understanding global order and how geopolitics operates. If sustaining falsehoods and believing in the supposed compulsions of *realpolitik* is one part of this pro-Russia brief, the other is silence or minimisation of the import of uncomfortable realities by such advocates.

So ignore or dismiss as inconsequential Moscow's violation of the 1994 Budapest Agreement where Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal in return for a commitment that its territorial integrity would never be violated. That Russia voiced nuclear warnings to a non-nuclear Ukraine should not be taken as indicative of the Putin government's character. It was just an unfortunate and silly lapse that doesn't detract in any way from the recognising the merits of the Russian case. Similarly, don't situate the Russian assault on Ukraine in some chain of supposedly imperial behaviour by referring to Russia's military and political actions vis-à-vis a host of countries in its "near abroad" and even further afield: the conflict with Ukraine must be seen as *sui generis*. And of course, don't take seriously what are to be regarded only or primarily as rhetorical excesses of Putin that signify little or nothing. Yes, he has even before 2014 questioned the legitimacy of Ukrainian existence as a separate entity (his speech in April 2008 to the Russia-NATO Council at Bucharest). But don't be so childish and politically naïve as to take all this as a serious motivating factor for the invasion though he did first march on Kiev with even the US and the West thinking he would capture it very quickly.

Pushing for a Ceasefire

But let us now turn to the current reality. Trump's foreign policy actions need to be assessed at two levels. On one hand there have been his specific interventions in West Asia and regarding Russia - Ukraine. The other is with respect to what these changes signify more generally for his foreign policy orientations? What is the strategic thinking if there is one---behind these changes especially with respect to the future of the US relationship to much of Europe? What of the US-China face-off? How serious is this new administration about going in for major tariff protection policies for the US economy and what will be the impact of this in the US and abroad? Is he serious about his proposed major overhauls at these political and economic levels? It would seem wisest to wait and see since he has yet to substantially walk his talk. But what we can focus on here is his determination to push through some kind of peace deal between Russia and Ukraine be it only temporary. This kind of talk has really made the headlines only after Trump replaced Biden.

Both Zelensky and Putin have said they are open to a ceasefire deal. Again, the question will be what terms would be acceptable to both and perhaps more importantly what will satisfy the US enough so as to put maximum pressure on Ukraine to accept. To begin with, there was no tripartite meeting but initial discussions held between only the representatives of the US and Russia in Saudi Arabia. Even Trump is not dumb enough to realize that Ukraine will never *legally* accept Russia's territorial claims as distinct from factually recognizing the reality of Russian possessions and then go in for some compromise. Zelensky went to Washington to sign with Trump a deal offering access to its substantial wealth in various minerals, the revenues from which Kyiv could make arms purchases and carry out reconstruction. Whether as an ordinary citizen or as President, Trump has always made expanding his business interests and promoting the US's economic footprint and acquisitions, a priority. [Incidentally, Ukraine's physical resources (a list is provided in one of the articles in the collection given here) is also a reason for why Putin invaded.] But after the public fracas in the White House matters have become trickier not only on this economic front but also regarding the question of whether and what kind of a ceasefire deal will take place.

Trump's shift towards Russia at the expense of Ukraine and its possible implications for the US-Europe relationship that includes but goes beyond the NATO military alliance has clearly shaken the major European powers namely, UK, France and Germany along with most other members of the EU. While Hungary's Orban has welcomed this shift Poland, adjacent geographically to Ukraine, is seriously disturbed. A recent European summit of leaders from France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Turkey, Finland, Sweden, Czechia and Romania, as well as the NATO secretary general and the presidents of the European Commission and European Council has endorsed an effort led by the UK, France and Ukraine to work out and propose its own ceasefire deal. But this initiative is not to be taken as an expression of serious defiance of the US by Europe despite its assurances of greater material and moral support to Zelensky. Europe cannot match the scale of military support that the US can give to Kyiv and it knows that without US support for any such deal, Russia will not accept even as it has declared its willingness to accept European troops as part of a peacekeeping force. In any case there was never going to be any American troops on the ground nor Russian acceptance of any official NATO contingents to playing such a peacekeeping role.

In any future ceasefire deal, key issues will be the nature and extent of demilitarized zones and their monitoring and effective implementation. Since in the Donbas the majority of Russian speakers are ethnic Ukrainians and not ethnic Russians, Kyiv will want some legal forms of protection for all i.e., no replacement of their citizenship status from Ukrainian to Russian. Would Putin agree to this? Ukraine continues to hold some territory in the Donbas region and will want to retain its control there. Will Putin agree to this or does he think that given his slow military advance he can continue to fight and eventually take the whole of the region if he is not awarded these by the deal itself? Will the US be able or willing to persuade Putin to settle for less than the whole of Donbas? Or will there be no deal and the war continues? As part of a final deal Ukraine will accept not being part of NATO. In any case even before the invasion of Ukraine, the latter had no chance of becoming a member any time soon since there were already objections to this by a number of existing NATO members each having veto power. This gives a further lie to the Russian claim that fear of NATO membership was the key reason for the assault. Indian left "Campists" who say as much, have to think that Putin was so stupid that he never realised that his invasion would most likely extend its membership, which it has. This was a price Putin knowingly was more than willing to pay in seeking to destroy Ukraine's existence and take it over completely; or at least take over a substantial part.

Kyiv will also want, after any deal, to move towards acceptance within the European Union. This Russia may not be too bothered about. But the more important issue is what security guarantees and protection to assuage Ukrainian fears of a future Russian assault can Europe on its own give without getting the necessary US backing that alone can be taken seriously by Putin? Otherwise Russia can carry on fighting for more territorial gains. In short, the priority for Europe is not so much supporting Ukraine at all costs or even at high cost to itself, but to somehow patch up the worrying rift that has opened up between itself and the US under Trump.

The likelihood then is that Europe will try and work out a deal with terms that are face-saving enough to not be seen as a complete sell-out and which then gets agreement from a Kyiv with or without Zelensky at the helm. If such is the eventual outcome then, to a lesser or greater degree, Russia will remain in the driver's seat. Or perhaps even better for Moscow would be if Trump now forges a deal bilaterally with Putin and then giving Ukraine and Europe a take-it-or-leave-it option? Or will Ukraine insist on continuing to fight, even with diminished outside support, rather than accept terms considered too deeply unjust? The existing relationship of forces both on the battlefield and in the wider diplomatic arena clearly favours a deeply unfair and humiliating ceasefire. A war-weary Ukrainian public may well feel it has no choice but to accept this, taking comfort that for some uncertain times to come no more lives will be lost and that a slow and painful recuperation of some sort can begin.

We here in India can only wait and see as to what finally emerges. But progressives here always have a certain choice. In our political lives and commitments do we subscribe to the principles of a universal humanism enabling us to be true internationalists willing to identify with the victims of injustice anywhere? Or should we, whether passively or actively, side with the victimizers rationalising their immoralities in the name of realism? What has happened to

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Ukraine is a deep injustice and the principal victimizer here is Putin's Russia. The collection of articles presented here will hopefully help clear the cobwebs, deceits and dishonesties that have led too many on the left to rationalise and otherwise defend Russia. We in RS express our unconditional but always critical support to Ukrainians in their struggle to free themselves of the Russian imperialist yoke imposed upon them.

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Source: [The Radical](#).

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