IIC Policy Papers

Foreign Relations

Policy Group:
Foreign Relations

Convenor:
K. P. Fabian

Title:
Understanding Ukraine

Author:
Gitesh Sarma

Policy Group: Foreign Relations

IIC

Policy Papers

Understanding Ukraine

by

Gitesh Sarma

Convenor: K. P. Fabian

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 1 25-07-2025 00:13:47

©2025 India International Centre. This monograph is copyright and may not be reproduced without permission

The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author and not of the India International Centre

The Policy Papers series is published for the India International Centre by Kanwal Wali, Secretary, IIC

Typeset at Glyph Graphics Private Limited, Delhi 110 096, glyphgraphics2013@gmail.com

Printed at MKR Enterprises, New Delhi 110003, mkrenterprises1703@gmail.com

IICPP_Agriculture.indd 2 04-04-2025 13:57:10

Preface

The Sectoral Policy Group on Foreign Relations (SPGFR) has been engaged in examining geopolitical developments in India's immediate neighbourhood and the rest of the world, adhering to Chatham House rules. The rules facilitate a platonic symposium where the interlocutors can speak freely. The primary objective is to foster informed and nuanced discourse on international relations (IR) and their implications for India's strategic interests. To this end, the SPGFR has structured its discussions along two key thematic dimensions.

1. Understanding geopolitical developments from an IR perspective with a focus on their historical context and broader strategic significance, considering the intentions and capabilities of the actors.
2. Assessing the impact of these developments on India's interests and identifying policy responses that would best serve India's interests and concerns.

This dual approach ensures that discussions are both analytical and relevant to policy, facilitating a balanced exploration of geopolitical shifts at both global and regional levels.

It has been observed that there is often a tendency to view geopolitical issues exclusively through the lens of their likely impact on India, overlooking the eternally valid dictum of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The SPGFR has endeavoured to correct this trend, though not always with success.

GEOPOLITICAL FOCUS AREAS

The SPGFR has structured its discussions into two primary categories based on geographical relevance and strategic impact.

Category I: India's Neighbourhood

India's geographical positioning means that developments in its immediate neighbourhood significantly impact its security, economic interests and diplomatic options. The SPGFR has focussed on the following countries in this context:

- Sri Lanka: Examining political stability, the economic crisis, and their implications for India's maritime security and trade, keeping in mind the moves and motivations of China.
- Bangladesh: Focussing on post-Sheikh Hasina events, intervention by other powers including Pakistan, China and the US, India's security concerns, safety and security of minorities, and other related issues.
- Pakistan: Addressing the political instability, economic woes, China's involvement, insurgencies, border tensions and export of terrorism.
- China: Investigating border disputes, strategic competition, search for geopolitical leadership and economic dependencies.
- Maldives: Analysing political alignments, military cooperation, and India's role in the Indian Ocean Region.

Category II: Global Geopolitical Issues

India's influence across the globe has been increasing, and it follows that global developments can impact India—both positively and negatively.

- Ukraine Conflict: Examining its implications

for global security, energy markets, India's diplomatic positioning between Russia and the West, and the search for an end to the war.

- Israel–Palestine Conflict: Considering the humanitarian, political and security dimensions, as well as India's historical ties to Palestine and Israel and evolving policy stance.
- Syria Crisis: Assessing the long-term effects of prolonged instability in West Asia and India's interests in the region.
- Lebanon–Israel Conflict: Analysing the geopolitical and security ramifications of recurring hostilities, their impact on regional stability and the broader implications for India's policy in West Asia.

KEY APPROACHES TO DISCUSSION

The SPGFR employs a structured and inclusive approach to discussions, ensuring that various perspectives are considered. The discussions are guided by the following methodological principles:

- International Relations (IR) Perspective: This principle emphasises historical and theoretical frameworks to enhance the understanding of geopolitical developments. It involves analysing power structures, alliance formations, conflict dynamics and institutional responses to global challenges.
- India-Centric Analysis: This approach assesses how geopolitical events impact India's security, trade, economy, diplomatic relations and overall strategic positioning. The focus is on developing pragmatic policy responses that safeguard India's interests.

This two-pronged approach ensures that discussions are both comprehensive and policy-oriented, effectively

bridging the gap between academic analysis and real-world policymaking.

PUBLICATIONS

- The Group encourages those who make comprehensive presentations to write papers. The first paper published is by John Cherian, titled *The Ongoing Genocide in Gaza,* based on a presentation he made to the Group.

K. P. FABIAN

Understanding Ukraine*

GITESH SARMA

India's Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi visited Ukraine on the eve of the 33rd anniversary of its independence on 24 August 2024, soon after he visited Moscow from 8 to 9 July 2024. There were suggestions in the media that this was India's effort to balance the Russia visit with a trip to Ukraine. The Indian government, on the other hand, portrayed it as a bilateral visit to Kyiv with no connection to the Russia–Ukraine conflict.

The war in Ukraine has been raging for over three years since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, which President Vladimir Putin described as a 'special military operation' to ensure Ukraine's 'demilitarisation and denazification'.[1] The military action is taking place on land, sea and in the air, bringing with it immense death and destruction. Putin referred to the military action in Ukraine as 'war' for the first time in December 2022 (Gigova and Mogul, 2022).

A conflict between these two Slavic states, with strong connections within the Soviet Union and historically, would have been unthinkable a few

* This paper is based on Gitesh Sarma's presentation to the IIC's Sectoral Policy Group 'Foreign Relations' and a subsequent talk on 21 January 2025, open to the public. The author has taken into account the audience's input on both occasions. The monograph was updated on 5 June 2025.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 1 25-07-2025 00:13:47

decades ago, and raises several questions: What led to the conflict? Was it preventable, and how will it end?

On the eve of the conflict on 21 February 2022, President Putin declared that Ukraine's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) posed a direct threat to Russia's security.[2] An overview of the disintegration process of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), focussing primarily on Ukraine, may provide an additional context for the war and guide India's actions.

UNEXPECTED INDEPENDENCE

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 was an event of global proportions. At one stroke, 15 independent countries emerged out of the Soviet federation. For this reason, their distinct respective historical experiences did not get as much attention as they deserved. The speed with which Ukraine achieved independence was unexpected. Understanding Ukraine's road to independence may shed additional light on the prospects for peace with Russia. Ukraine has been a founding member of the United Nations since 1945, although it was not a full-fledged state at the time. At the Yalta Conference in 1945, the Allies—the US, UK and Soviet Union—agreed to allow two of the 16 Soviet Socialist Republics, Ukraine and Belarus, to join as members. This arrangement was to reassure the Soviet Union, which feared Western dominance over this new organisation.

With the benefit of hindsight, Russia's actions may have been the most influential compared to other constituent republics in pushing the process towards the disintegration of the USSR. The Declaration of State Sovereignty of Russia, adopted on 12 June 1990, established the primacy of Russian legislation over that of the USSR.[3] Several other Soviet Republics followed with similar declarations of state sovereignty. Ukraine responded with its own

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 2 25-07-2025 00:13:47

Declaration of State Sovereignty on 16 July 1990,[4] but this did not imply that the Kyiv leadership had decided in favour of independence. It is important to note that such actions by individual republics weakened the central authority of the USSR.

Most likely, and on balance, Ukraine's then President, Leonid Kravchuk, was leaning towards signing a new and negotiated Union Treaty proposed by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, which would give a new lease of life to the Soviet Union. Kravchuk, however, seemed to fear nationalists concentrated in western Ukraine, who were trying to set an independence agenda for the Republic. The Rukh party organised the nationalists around the platform of independence.[5] Both Russian-dominated eastern and southern Ukraine, Odesa included, were apprehensive of such secessionist moves while wanting to protect their way of life. With a distinct identity, western Ukrainians had resisted the Russian language and cultural domination, even under the Soviet Union. Ethnic Ukrainians comprised about 70 per cent of Ukraine's population, and about 20 per cent were ethnic Russians. If one were looking for fault lines,[6] the latter could look towards Russia for help when needed.

On 17 March 1991, people in several parts of the USSR, including Ukraine, participated in a referendum on the future of the Soviet Union. The referendum aimed to secure a mandate for a new Union Treaty in place of the one in 1922. However, the leadership of Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova decided to boycott the referendum. Further, the republics of Kazakhstan, Ukraine and the Kyrgyz Republic made their own modifications to the referendum's text. Almost 80 per cent of the people voted in favour of a new Union Treaty to create a renewed federation.[7] Following the referendum, leaders of nine republics, including Russia's Boris Yeltsin and Ukraine's Kravchuk, discussed a new Union Treaty.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 3 25-07-2025 00:13:47

However, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) stayed away from the discussions.

Interestingly, US President George Bush's visit to the Soviet Union in July 1991 suggested that the breakup was not expected even at this stage (Plokhy, 2014). Gorbachev and Yeltsin expressed their views to the visiting American dignitary that the Slavic Republics had to be at the heart of a renewed Soviet Union. Gorbachev was concerned that the US might try to influence Ukraine not to sign the new Union Treaty, whereas Yeltsin told Bush that 'Ukraine must not leave the Soviet Union'. President Bush understood Ukraine's standing as a country with immense economic potential and 52 million people, 'roughly equivalent to France and Britain in terms of population'.

Gennady Yanayev, Vice President of the Soviet Union during Gorbachev's presidency, as head of the State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP), led the coup on 19 August 1991 which detained Gorbachev. Russia's President, Boris Yeltsin, took the lead in resisting the coup and issued a decree bringing all military, Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) or Committee for State Security, and other forces on Russian territory under his control.[8] The coup collapsed two days later. After his release, Gorbachev resigned as leader of the Communist Party and, on 24 August 1991, banned it from all state organisations while suggesting that it dissolve itself.[9]

Television pictures of Yeltsin standing on a tank in Moscow and foiling the coup and his Russia-first approach made the Ukrainian leader's position vulnerable.[10] Yeltsin's victory was Russia's victory, leaving no room for the other republics to plan a future for themselves within the federation. Under these circumstances, the Ukrainian parliament

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 4 25-07-2025 00:13:47

declared independence on 24 August 1991.[11] In political terms, Kravchuk survived by stealing the independence agenda of Ukrainian nationalists and making it his own.

In a 2005 speech, President Vladimir Putin called the Soviet Union's fall the 'greatest geopolitical catastrophe' of the 20th century.[12] However, Russia's own actions contributed considerably towards the rapid disintegration of the USSR, and this aspect may need more attention. Some accounts suggest that Yeltsin was agreeable to giving independence to the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—but letting Ukraine go was a problem for him (Plokhy, 2014). Further, Ukraine's Declaration of State Sovereignty in July 1990 only mirrored Russia's Declaration a month earlier, and such actions by the republics diminished the USSR's central authority.

LEGACY MATTERS

Initially, the breakup of the USSR appeared an orderly affair compared with experiences elsewhere in the world. On 8 December 1991, the heads of state of the three Slavic Republics—Belarus, Russia and Ukraine—met in Belavezha Pushcha, a hunting lodge in Belarus, and declared that the USSR had ceased to exist as a subject of 'international law and as a geopolitical reality' (Rutland, 2016). This group also created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In a follow-up action, on 21 December 2021, eight other republics joined in signing the Almaty Protocol towards setting up the CIS.[13]

Ukraine was better positioned to handle the challenges of unexpected independence than most of the other newly independent republics. It had inherited an impressive economic potential built around its well-developed military-industrial complex and robust agriculture. The country produced almost 21 million metric tons of wheat in 1991, making it one of the top

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 5 25-07-2025 00:13:47

producers globally.[14] In 2023, Ukraine exceeded 16 million metric tons in wheat exports, ranking sixth globally.[15] The country also produces sunflower seeds, soybean and rapeseed. It possesses 18 seaports on the Black Sea, Azov Sea and the Danube River, connecting it with key markets, in contrast to landlocked Central Asia. India–USSR cargoes essentially moved through Ukrainian ports, and India opened a consulate in Odesa as early as 1962.

By December 1991, the republics had negotiated the division of the USSR's liabilities and foreign assets and completed two agreements: Agreement on Legal Succession in respect of the Foreign Debt and Assets of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and Agreement on the Property of the Former USSR Abroad (Uvarov, 2022). Based on this understanding, the Russian Federation's share of the assets and liabilities was 61.34 per cent, while that of Ukraine was 16.37 per cent.

A follow-up 'zero option' settlement became necessary in October 1992 (ibid.). Russia gained the right to the USSR's overseas assets in exchange for taking the responsibility for repaying all debts. One may understand this settlement as consistent with Russia's role as the successor state of the Soviet Union. Ukraine was the only exception to this understanding, insisting on being responsible for its own liabilities and assets. In this situation, differences between Russia and Ukraine erupted on such issues as the border, Crimea, the Black Sea and control of nuclear weapons. Russia may not have been reluctant to resort to pressure tactics to have its way, where possible.

A related issue linked to Russia becoming the successor state to the Soviet Union was Moscow taking control of nuclear weapons in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. For the record, estimates in 1991 showed that Ukraine had almost 1,900

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 6 25-07-2025 00:13:47

strategic warheads and 2,275 tactical warheads on its territory.[16] The United States and Russia jointly engaged with Ukraine, along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, and became parties to the Lisbon Protocol of 23 May 1992, committing them to transfer nuclear weapons on their territory to Russia. This Protocol also required Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as non-nuclear weapon states.

The US, UK and Russia signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in 1994 (Budjeryn, 2014). In exchange for Ukraine relinquishing its claim to Soviet nuclear weapons, the US, UK and Russia provided security assurances to Ukraine. These assurances included respecting Ukraine's independence and sovereignty within its existing borders. By the end of 1996, the transfer of all Soviet nuclear weapons to Russia was completed.

Russia has been accused of violating its security guarantees to Ukraine by annexing Crimea in 2014.[17] Russia's broad response has been that a new state had emerged in Ukraine after the US-supported regime change through Euromaidan action. Moscow's point, therefore, was that the Budapest Memorandum did not bind it.

It is not clear if Ukraine was ever in control of the nuclear weapons remaining on its territory. It was also uncertain whether it had voluntarily given up its claim to the nuclear weapons on its territory or had done this as a result of pressure from the United States and Russia. In response to India's May 1998 nuclear tests, Ukraine's representative at the Disarmament Conference said that his country had voluntarily eliminated the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world and committed itself not to carry out nuclear testing.[18] Ukraine condemned this step taken by India as endangering existing international arrangements for nuclear non-proliferation.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 7 25-07-2025 00:13:47

The other aspect of the nuclear issue is the Chernobyl accident of 26 April 1986 (Gray, 2019). The accident, which occurred during a test, caused a fire and explosion, releasing large quantities of radiation into the atmosphere. As a result, almost 5 million people in the USSR were affected, with 3 million in Ukraine. Scientists estimate it will take 20,000 years for the contaminated Chernobyl area to be habitable again (Blakemore, 2019). There may still be a few concerns about the safety of some Ukrainian agricultural exports, with the possibility of additional checks. Notwithstanding Chernobyl, nuclear energy has a 55 per cent share in the country's energy basket, and Ukraine has not hesitated to plan new reactors. This suggests that public opinion, notwithstanding Chernobyl, was either adequately managed or not strongly opposed to nuclear energy, as in the case of Japan or elsewhere.

From India's perspective, Ukraine operates 15 water–water energetic reactors (VVERs) of the kind that were being set up by Russia at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KNPP) in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, India was interested in Ukraine's experience of operating this type of reactor, particularly in terms of safety. India and Ukraine signed an agreement on Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection in December 2012.[19] Ukrainian specialists continued to be involved for some time in the design and construction of the KNPP, even after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

A reasonably robust military–industrial complex, with the potential to export complete defence systems and platforms, came as a blessing because Ukraine could strike deals almost on a first-come, first-served basis. For India, however, it may have been safer after the breakup of the USSR to source its defence requirements from Russia than deal with each new country that emerged. Pakistan, on the other hand, signed a contract for the supply of 320 T-80UD from

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 8 25-07-2025 00:13:47

1997 to 2002 (Mycio, 1997). More recently, in February 2021, Ukraine announced a US$85.6 million contract to modernise Pakistan's tanks (Malyasov, 2021). From the Indian standpoint, it is difficult not to note the dichotomy in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's disappointment at the 'leader of the world's largest democracy hugs the most bloody criminal' while Ukraine considered itself free to sell weapons to a country widely known to sponsor terror. Further, Ukraine has sought for itself a NATO nuclear umbrella while finding it difficult to adequately appreciate India's security concerns on account of nuclear adversaries (China and Pakistan) in its neighbourhood.

Although likely unintended, Ukraine has contributed to China's blue-water naval capabilities. Varyag was an unfinished third ship of the Slava-class of guided missile cruisers built for the Soviet Navy at Ukraine's Mykolaiv port at the time of the breakup (Bipindra, 2021). Its construction had begun in 1985 and was originally called Riga. China could expedite its aircraft carrier programme after acquiring Varyag in 2002 and towing it to Dalian Port for further works. It commissioned this ship in 2012 as its first aircraft carrier, Liaoning.

There were suspicions that North Korea had obtained missile engines from the Ukrainian state-run aerospace and defence manufacturer Yuzhmash (Miller, 2017). In response to these allegations, several news outlets reported that in 2015, Ukraine announced it had detained and sentenced two North Korean diplomats from Belarus for espionage involving liquid-fuel rocket engines. Coincidentally, Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine's second President, served as the director of Yuzhmash in Dnipropetrovsk from 1986 to 1992. Kuchma then held the office of President from July 1994 to January 2005, and his knowledge of aerospace engineering and space science attracted significant international interest.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 9 25-07-2025 00:13:47

IDENTITY BUILDING

While it identifies closely with Europe, Ukraine's challenge is to forge a national identity distinct from Russia. This is a difficult goal to achieve, and Russia will resist. President Vladimir Putin's essay, 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians', published on 12 July 2021 on the Kremlin website, put forth historical arguments.[20] The critical points were that Russians and Ukrainians were 'one people' and that foreign plots and anti-Russian conspiracies were responsible for difficulties in bilateral ties between the two countries. He questioned the legitimacy of Ukraine's current borders and argued that much of modern-day Ukraine's lands were historically Russian. He said that true sovereignty of Ukraine was possible 'only in partnership with Russia'.

In the same essay, Putin raised other concerns:

- Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians were descendants of Ancient Rus, the largest state in Europe. The name 'Ukraine' was essentially used to refer to various border territories, derived from the old Russian word 'okraina' (periphery), found in written sources from the 12th century.
- 'Ukrainian' originally implied frontier guards who protected the external borders.
- In 1939, the USSR regained the lands earlier seized by Poland. A major portion of these became part of the Soviet Ukraine.
- In 1940, the Ukrainian SSR incorporated part of Bessarabia, which Romania had occupied since 1918, as well as Northern Bukovina.
- In 1948, the Zmeyiniy Island (Snake Island) in the Black Sea became part of Ukraine.
- The transfer of the Crimean Region from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 10 25-07-2025 00:13:47

violated the legal norms that were in force at the time.

- Anatoly Sobchak, the first democratically elected mayor of Saint Petersburg, opined that the republics that founded the Union, having denounced the 1922 Union Treaty, must return to the boundaries they had before joining the Soviet Union (Fowler, 2022). Considering the ground's revocation, all other territorial acquisitions were open to discussion and negotiations.

It has become easier now to appreciate Ukraine's enthusiasm for spreading the Ukrainian language throughout its territory because it senses vulnerability in regions where ethnic Russians are in significant numbers. In 1991, the newly independent country declared Ukrainian the sole official language, while Russian and popular culture continued to dominate for some time. With official patronage, the Ukrainian language could blossom. The language has strong linkages with Ukraine's nature and landscape.

Article 10 of the Constitution of Ukraine, adopted on 28 June 1996, states: 'The State language of Ukraine shall be the Ukrainian language'.[21] On 8 August 2012, the government enacted a new law, 'On the Principles of Language Policy', which allowed regions to decide to use any other language as official, provided that 10 per cent or more of the population of that region spoke that language as their mother tongue. The approval of this Law resulted in protests. After the entry into force of the Law, several regional councils recognised Russian as a regional language. The western regions recognised Hungarian, Moldovan and Romanian as regional languages. However, in February 2018, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine ruled that the Law on the principles of the state language policy, passed in 2012, did not conform to

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 11 25-07-2025 00:13:47

the Constitution of Ukraine. Such anecdotes suggest that official encouragement and support have allowed the Ukrainian language to make gains.

On 25 April 2019, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's legislature) adopted a new law enhancing the role of Ukrainian as a state language.[22] This Law made the use of Ukrainian mandatory throughout Ukraine's territory. The Law prohibited actions aiming to introduce multilingualism at the official level. It viewed these attempts as unconstitutional, identical to actions aimed at forcibly overthrowing the constitutional order. This new Law aimed to strengthen the role of the Ukrainian language in state-building, ensuring territorial integrity and promoting national security. It allowed for exceptions to the official languages of the European Union but did not make any concessions to Russian, Belarusian or Yiddish. In July 2021, the Constitutional Court upheld the validity of this Law.[23] While this Law seems draconian, in the Ukrainian context the aim would have been to address language-based separatism.

Russians were not the only ones concerned about Ukraine's language policy. In October 2019, President Zelenskyy had to defend Ukraine's language policy from criticism within the EU, and he asserted that Ukraine complied with relevant European expectations. However, in a robust response on 4 December 2019, Hungary's foreign minister said Budapest would block Ukraine's membership in NATO until Kyiv restored the rights that ethnic Hungarians had before the language law curbed minorities' access to education in their mother tongues.[24]

Religion also became a battleground for Russia and Ukraine. Between 60 and 70 per cent of Ukrainians identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. For centuries, Ukrainian Churches had been under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church. In January 2019, the Orthodox Church of

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 12 25-07-2025 00:13:47

Ukraine (OCU) was formed after separating from the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church. However, one branch, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), had continued with the Moscow Patriarch. In May 2022, this branch also broke away, accusing Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, of supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[25] On 20 August 2024, the Ukrainian Parliament voted to ban the UOC to strengthen Ukraine's 'spiritual independence'.[26]

It was helpful that within the Soviet space, people of Ukrainian origin were among the more outgoing of nationalities. They form the eighth-largest diaspora in Canada, and their migration in the late 19th century is attributed to poor harvests in the Austro–Hungarian Empire and persecution of Orthodox Christianity (Antoine, 2021). The estimated number of people of Ukrainian descent in Canada in 2019 was about 1.2 million and about 89,000 in the US.[27]

In July 2022, UNESCO inscribed Ukrainian borscht, a beet-based soup, on their list of 'intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding'.[28] In making this decision, the argument was that the war threatened the tradition of cooking this dish. Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, said the Russian version of borscht did not need any protection.

INDIA AND THE CONFLICT

From the time of the Euromaidan crisis in November 2013 to the present, India has been careful in its pronouncements related to Ukraine. When Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, India said that Russia had legitimate[29] interests in Ukraine while reiterating[30] India's position on the unity and territorial integrity of countries and hopes for a diplomatic solution. In September 2022, PM Modi told President Putin at a

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 13 25-07-2025 00:13:47

meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, that this was not the era for war (Lau and Saeed, 2022). During his July 2024 visit to Moscow, PM Modi said that peace talks could not succeed with bombs, guns and bullets.[31]

The question is whether India could have directly criticised Russia for its aggression against Ukraine in line with Western expectations. India has been careful in not endorsing the acquisition of territory through aggression, as with Crimea. While Ukraine may have grievances with India, India could counter this with its own list of concerns regarding Ukraine, including arms supplies to Pakistan. The lines of communication between New Delhi and Kyiv have been functioning to deal with expectations and grievances. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba visited India in March 2024, seeking support for his country's peace plans. PM Modi, before his August 2024 visit to Kyiv, had met President Zelenskyy on several occasions, including a bilateral meeting in June 2024 on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy.

THE QUEST FOR PEACE

Putin, in his speech to the Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2007, 15 years before Russia invaded Ukraine, strongly criticised NATO's eastward expansion, arguing that it was a severe provocation undermining mutual trust and security.[32] Putin emphasised that this expansion did not contribute to modernising the Alliance or ensuring European security but reduced the level of mutual trust. He claimed that NATO's actions were a threat to Russia's security and a violation of previous assurances after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in July 1991. Therefore, Putin opposed any move to admit Ukraine into NATO.

One cannot ignore the battle of contrasting narratives parallel to the war. Ukraine's then

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 14 25-07-2025 00:13:47

President, Viktor Yanukovych, had decided against signing an association agreement with the European Union, which resulted in street protests in Kyiv in November 2013. With Western encouragement, the Euromaidan action led to the removal of Yanukovych from the presidency in February 2014. Following this, on 21 March 2014, Ukraine and EU leaders concluded the Association Agreement[33] and, in June 2014, the related economic agreement.[34] The regime change in Kyiv stood as a decisive moment in relations between Ukraine and Russia when things started moving in the direction of eventual war.

On 10 November 2021 US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba signed in Washington the Charter on Strategic Partnership in which the US committed itself to supporting Ukraine against Russian 'armed aggression' and Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO.[35] The US underlined its intention to support Ukraine's efforts 'to counter armed aggression, economic and energy disruptions, and malicious cyber activity by Russia, including by maintaining sanctions against or related to Russia and applying other relevant measures until restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders'. Could this have been the trigger for Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022?

It is a reasonable argument that this war could have been prevented if the West had found a way to address Russia's security concerns. On 17 December 2021, Russia proposed two draft agreements: one with the US and the other with NATO. The draft with the US suggested that the two countries would 'not implement security measures that could undermine core security interests of the other Party'. The draft agreement proposed with NATO demanded no further enlargement of the alliance, including membership for Ukraine. Another demand was no deployment of

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 15 25-07-2025 00:13:47

troops, weapons or equipment to members who had joined NATO after May 1997. The Biden administration rejected the Russian demands, arguing that 'all countries have the right to decide their own future from outside interference' (Dixon and Sonne, 2021).

Russia has explored other methods to weaken Ukraine. On 17 May 2024, Putin questioned the legitimacy of Zelenskyy's presidency after his term ended.[36] Ukrainian presidential elections were scheduled for March 2024; however, the country's ongoing war and martial law allowed Zelenskyy to remain in office. Putin stated that this issue was important to Russia because if it signed any agreement with Ukraine in the future regarding the war, it wanted to be sure it was dealing with the right person. Putin may have been attempting to draw attention to his own victory in the March 2024 presidential election by comparing it to the situation in Ukraine. Later that month, there was speculation about Putin meeting with Ukraine's ousted pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych in Belarus during his visit to the country (Sebastian, 2024).

Regarding Afghanistan, in July 2019, during his presidential campaign, Biden pledged to conclude American involvement in perpetual conflicts. However, during his presidency, the Russia–Ukraine conflict appeared to be another perpetual war, involving the US and Europe. A diplomatic and face-saving resolution to the Ukraine war may have been advantageous for Biden in the lead-up to the 2024 US presidential elections, but achieving such a solution appeared challenging. In this situation, the US and the West chose to demonstrate unwavering support to Ukraine, essentially through military assistance. This stance would instil confidence in Zelenskyy's commitment to his military policies and pursuit of a peace agreement that primarily aligned with Ukrainian interests.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 16 25-07-2025 00:13:47

Some related Western actions included:

- On 20 April 2024, the US House of Representatives approved a US$95 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other partner countries (Edmondson, 2024). Ukraine's share was US$61 billion. The Senate approved this package on 23 April 2024.
- At the end of May 2024, President Biden relaxed a ban on Ukraine using US weapons inside Russian territory to help it defend its northeastern Kharkiv region from attack.[37] Blinken confirmed this and said that Biden's approval came after Kyiv sought authorisation from Washington.
- On 6 June 2024, Biden said that Ukraine could use American weapons in 'proximity to the border when they were being used on the other side of the border to attack specific targets in Ukraine'. However, he clarified that US weapons should not be used to attack Moscow (Farrow, 2024).
- Biden met President Zelenskyy in Paris on 7 June 2024, where he apologised for Congress' delay in approving US military assistance to Ukraine (Megerian et al., 2024). Biden announced additional assistance of US$225 billion, including munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, mortar systems and an array of artillery rounds.
- G7 countries meeting in Italy agreed on 13 June 2024 to extend US$50 billion in loan to Ukraine using the interest from frozen Russian assets estimated at US$300 billion (Wang, 2024). Russia described the Western move as 'criminal' and promised a response.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 17 25-07-2025 00:13:47

- On 27 June 2024, the EU concluded a security agreement with Ukraine based on which the bloc pledged to provide 'predictable, long-term and sustainable support for Ukraine's security and defence' to continue training Ukrainian security and military forces to boost cooperation between Ukrainian and European defence industries, and to strengthen cooperation to counter hybrid and cyber threats as well as foreign information manipulation and interference (Pedrazzoli, 2024). The EU promised to expedite the military supplies.
- At this stage, the Western countries that have concluded bilateral security agreements with Ukraine include the UK, France, Germany, Denmark, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Latvia, Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, the US, Japan, Estonia, Lithuania, the EU, Poland, Luxembourg, Romania, Czech Republic and Slovenia. There could be more in the pipeline.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUMMIT

The International Peace Summit on Ukraine, held on 15 and 16 June 2024 in Switzerland, concluded with participation from nearly 100 countries (Feld, 2024). The organisers did not invite Russia, while China chose not to participate under the circumstances. India, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand and the UAE were among the countries that did not associate themselves with the final Joint Communique. Brazil, as an 'observer', did not sign the document. The aim of the conference may have been an effort by Ukraine and its backers to present not only a united front but also an agreed framework for a peace deal, leaving Russia with little negotiating margin. Apart from mentioning 'the ongoing war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine,' the Joint Communique highlighted the

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 18 25-07-2025 00:13:47

need to ensure Ukraine's territorial integrity, besides drawing on other elements from President Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan. Critical agendas of the 10-point plan included the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and Ukraine's internationally recognised state borders.[38] At the end of the Summit, Zelenskyy said, 'Russia can start the negotiations tomorrow, if they pull out of our territories' (Greenall, 2024).

During this period, leaders of Russia and Ukraine appeared to communicate their expectations for a peace settlement, essentially through the media. On 28 June 2024, Zelenskyy said that he was preparing a 'comprehensive plan' for how Kyiv believes the war should end.[39]

In a sign that Russia was closely watching this Summit, Putin proposed on 14 June 2024 a ceasefire if Ukraine withdrew its forces from the four regions Russia had annexed in 2022 and renounced its plans to join NATO (Litvinova, 2024). Other elements of Putin's list included Ukraine's recognition of Crimea as part of Russia, keeping the country's non-nuclear status, restricting the size of its military force and protecting the interests of the Russian-speaking population. 'Fundamental international agreements' should incorporate these aspects, and all Western sanctions against Russia should be lifted.

The US rejection of the Putin proposal was not a surprise. US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that Putin had illegally occupied sovereign Ukrainian territory and was 'not in any position to dictate to Ukraine what they must do to bring about peace' (Glenn, 2024). NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that this was not a peace proposal but one of 'more aggression, more occupation'.[40]

LOOKING AHEAD

What stands out in this war is that Ukraine has shown commendable resilience in militarily standing up to

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 19 25-07-2025 00:13:47

Russia over a long period. Ukraine's surprise success in counteroffensive action in August 2024, capturing Russian territory in the Kursk region, was remarkable considering the overall military situation. Although Russia's counteroffensive succeeded in regaining control of this territory by March 2025, the significance of Ukraine's military thrust in Kursk needs to be fully understood in the context of the overall war, including whether it was worth it.

Zelenskyy, emboldened by fresh commitments of Western military aid and aware of the politics surrounding the presidential elections and their impact in the US, continued to pursue a settlement with Russia, provided it ensured his country's territorial integrity. On 15 July 2024, Zelenskyy said Russia 'should' be present at the second peace summit on the Ukraine conflict.[41] The Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, reacted guardedly[42] to Zelenskyy's apparent invitation to a future peace summit, saying that Russia first needed to understand what Kyiv had in mind before deciding on attending the talks. Such peace initiatives were not promising because they hardly took into account the reasons that made Russia initiate the war.

Following Donald Trump's inauguration as the President of the United States in January 2025, there has been a glimmer of hope for peace, albeit with a challenging path ahead. In February 2025, Trump initiated a telephone conversation with Putin, signalling the resumption of direct communication between the two presidents. Trump has also demonstrated a willingness to acknowledge the changed realities by suggesting that Crimea, for instance, could remain with Russia (Altman et al., 2025). However, Trump has occasionally expressed frustration with the lack of constructive responses from both Zelenskyy and Putin. In such instances,

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 20 25-07-2025 00:13:47

Trump has threatened to impose substantial sanctions against Russia if it fails to agree to ceasefire proposals and cease providing aid to Ukraine, unless it demonstrates a genuine commitment to peace efforts (Welker and Lebowitz, 2025; Harding and Roth, 2025). A complicating factor has been the growing apprehension in Europe regarding America's unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, security and future.

A significant outcome of President Trump's efforts to engage in direct talks between Russia and Ukraine was the resumption of direct negotiations. Two rounds of talks were held in May 2025, followed by another round in June 2025. However, despite these efforts, there has been limited tangible progress, particularly in terms of a ceasefire, as the fundamental positions of the two countries remain at odds. On the contrary, the recent escalation in military actions by both countries suggests that each may be attempting to bolster its negotiating positions through battlefield successes.

Subsequently, each party involved must successfully market the eventual peace agreement to its domestic constituency, which may entail risks and necessitate substantial persuasion. India's present standing as a prominent power with direct connections to both Moscow and Kyiv may potentially contribute to the implementation of a peace settlement once it has been secured.

Notes

1. Full Text of Vladimir Putin's Speech Announcing 'Special Military Operation' in Ukraine', *The Print,* 24 February 2022, https://theprint.in/world/full-text-of-vladimir-putins-speech-announcing-special-military-operation-in-ukraine/845714/ (accessed 5 June 2025).

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 21 25-07-2025 00:13:47

2. 'Address by the President of the Russian Federation', http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828 (accessed 5 June 2025).
3. 'Declaration of State Sovereignty of the RSFSR Adopted—Day of Russia', https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619308 (accessed 5 June 2025).
4. 'Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine', https://static.rada.gov.ua/site/postanova_eng/Declaration_of_State_Sovereignty_of_Ukraine_rev1.htm (accessed 5 June 2025).
5. 'Popular Movement of Ukraine', https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CP%5CO%5CPopularMovementofUkraine.htm (accessed 5 June 2025).
6. 'A Divided Ukraine', https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2014/02/world/ukraine-divided/.
7. 'Soviet Collapse Violated the People's Will, Gorbachev Says', *The Moscow Times*, 17 March 2021, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/03/17/soviet-collapse-violated-the-peoples-will-gorbachev-says-a73267 (accessed 5 June 2025).
8. '1991 Soviet Coup Attempt', https://www.britannica.com/topic/1991-Soviet-coup-attempt (accessed 5 June 2025).
9. 'The Gorbachev Era and the Collapse of the Soviet Union', *Reuters*, 31 August 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/gorbachev-era-collapse-soviet-union-2022-08-30/ (accessed 5 June 2025).
10. 'As Tanks Rolled in 1991, AP Photographer Sprang into Action', https://apimagesblog.com/blog/2021/8/18/as-tanks-rolled-in-1991-ap-photographer-sprang-into-action (accessed 5 June 2025).
11. 'Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Resolution', https://static.rada.gov.ua/site/postanova_eng/Rres_Declaration_Independence_rev12.htm (accessed 5 June 2025).
12. 'Putin: Soviet Collapse a "Genuine Tragedy"', *NBC News*, 26 April 2005, https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna7632057 (accessed 5 June 2025).
13. 'Almaty Declaration', https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=4744 (accessed 5 June 2025).
14. 'Ukraine Wheat Production by Year', https://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=ua&commodity=wheat&graph=production (accessed 5 June 2025).
15. 'Top Wheat Exporter in the World in 2023', https://www.tradeimex.in/blogs/top-10-wheat-exporters-in-2023 (accessed 5 June 2025).

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 22 25-07-2025 00:13:47

16. 'The Lisbon Protocol at a Glance', Arms Control Association, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/lisbon-protocol-glance#:~:text=May%2023%2C%201992%3A%20Russia%2C,in%20the%20shortest%20possible%20time.%E2%80%9D (accessed 5 June 2025).
17. 'Ukraine War: What is the Budapest Memorandum and Why has Russia's Invasion Torn it up?', *The Conversation*, 2 March 2022, https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-what-is-the-budapest-memorandum-and-why-has-russias-invasion-torn-it-up-178184 (accessed 5 June 2025).
18. 'Disarmament Conference Members Condemn Indian Nuclear Tests', https://press.un.org/en/1998/19980515.dcf332.html (accessed 5 June 2025).
19. 'India Inks Pact with Ukraine on Nuclear Safety', *The Economic Times*, 10 December 2012, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-inks-pact-with-ukraine-on-nuclear-safety/articleshow/17557403.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppsthttps://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-inks-pact-with-ukraine-on-nuclear-safety/articleshow/17557403.cms?from=mdr (accessed 5 June 2025).
20. 'Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"', http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181 (accessed 5 June 2025).
21. 'Constitution of Ukraine', https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/prgm/cph/experts/ukraine/ukr.constitution.e.pdf (accessed 5 June 2025).
22. 'Ukraine: Legislature Adopts Language Law', Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2019-05-13/ukraine-legislature-adopts-language-law/ (accessed 5 June 2025).
23. 'The Constitutional Court of Ukraine, "Threat to the Ukrainian Language is Equal to Threat to the National Security of Ukraine"', https://ccu.gov.ua/en/novina/constitutional-court-ukraine-threat-ukrainian-language-equal-threat-national-security-ukraine (accessed 5 June 2025).
24. Hungary to Block Ukraine's NATO Membership over Language Law', *Reuters*, 4 December 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/world/hungary-to-block-ukraines-nato-membership-over-language-law-idUSKBN1Y823M/ (accessed 5 June 2025).
25. 'Moscow-Led Ukrainian Orthodox Church Breaks Ties with

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 23 25-07-2025 00:13:47

Russia', *Reuters*, 28 May 2022, https://www.reuters.com/article/world/moscow-led-ukrainian-orthodox-church-breaks-ties-with-russia-idUSKBN2NE06T/ (accessed 5 June 2025).
26. 'Ukraine Adopts "Historic" Law to Ban Moscow-Linked Orthodox Church', *Al Jazeera*, 21 August 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/21/ukraine-adopts-historic-law-to-ban-moscow-linked-orthodox-church (accessed 5 June 2025).
27. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, https://mfa.gov.ua/en/about-ukraine/ukrainians-worldwide (accessed 5 June 2025).
28. 'The Beet Goes On: UNESCO Designation Sets off New Sparring in "Borscht War"', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 1 July 2022, https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-borscht-war-unesco-cultural-heritage/31924814.html (accessed 5 June 2025).
29. 'Russian Interests in Crimea "Legitimate": India', *The Times of India*, 7 March 2014, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/russian-interests-in-crimea-legitimate-india/articleshow/31557852.cms (accessed 5 June 2025).
30. 'Putin Calls up Manmohan to Explain Crimea Claim', *Business Standard*, 19 March 2014, https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/putin-calls-up-manmohan-to-explain-crimea-claim-114031900027_1.html (accessed 5 June 2025).
31. 'PM Narendra Modi to Putin: "Peace Talks don't Succeed amid Bombs, Guns", *Hindustan Times*, 9 July 2024, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pm-modi-lauds-india-russia-fuel-partnership-tells-putin-india-in-favour-of-peace-101720524681743.html (accessed 5 June 2025).
32. 'Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy', http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034 (accessed 5 June 2025).
33. 'Ukraine–EU Association Agreement', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, https://mfa.gov.ua/en/about-ukraine/european-integration/eu-ukraine-association-agreement (accessed 5 June 2025).
34. 'EU–Ukraine Association Agreement', https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/071215_eu-ukraine_association_agreement.pdf (accessed 5 June 2025).
35. 'U.S.–Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership', U. S. Department of State, https://2021-2025.state.gov/u-s-ukraine-charter-on-strategic-partnership/ (accessed 5 June 2025).

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 24 25-07-2025 00:13:47

36. 'Putin Queries Political Legitimacy of Ukrainian President Zelenskiy in Absence of Elections', *Reuters*, 17 May 2024, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-queries-political-legitimacy-ukrainian-president-zelenskiy-absence-2024-05-17/ (accessed 5 June 2025).
37. 'Biden Allows Ukraine to Hit some Targets in Russia with US Weapons', *BBC*, 31 May 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy770l9llnzo (accessed 5 June 2025).
38. 'What is Zelenskyy's 10-Point Peace Plan?', https://war.ukraine.ua/faq/zelenskyys-10-point-peace-plan/ (accessed 5 June 2025).
39. 'Ukraine's Zelenskyy Charting 'Comprehensive Plan' to End War with Russia', *Al Jazeera*, 28 June 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/28/ukraines-zelenskyy-charting-comprehensive-plan-to-end-war-with-russia (accessed 5 June 2025).
40. 'Stoltenberg Reacts to Conditions Set Out by Putin for Peace Talks with Ukraine', *ARMENPRESS*, 14 June 2024, https://armenpress.am/en/article/1193696 (accessed 5 June 2025).
41. 'Ukraine War Briefing: Russia Should Attend Second Peace Summit, Zelenskiy Says', *The Guardian*, 16 July 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/16/ukraine-war-briefing-russia-should-attend-second-peace-summit-zelenskiy-says (accessed 5 June 2025).
42. 'Russia Gives Cautious Reaction to Zelensky's Summit Offer', *The Hindu*, 16 July 2024, https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/russia-gives-cautious-reaction-to-zelenskyys-summit-offer/article68410654.ece (accessed 5 June 2025).

References

Altman, Alex, Massimo Calabresi, Sam Jacobs, Nik Popli, Leslie Dickstein and Simmone Shah. 2025. 'Exclusive: Inside Trump's First 100 Days', *Time*, 25 April, https://time.com/7280106/trump-interview-100-days-2025/.

Antoine, Écrit par. 2021. 'Ukrainian Diaspora in Canada', 17 March, https://usctoronto.ca/en/ukrainian/ukrainian-diaspora-in-canada.

Bipindra, N. C. 2021. 'How Deceit was Built into China's First Aircraft Carrier', *The Economic Times*, 6 July, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/how-deceit-was-built-into-chinas-first-aircraft-carrier/articleshow/84111960.cms?from=mdr.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 25 25-07-2025 00:13:47

Blakemore, Erin. 2019. 'The Chernobyl Disaster: What Happened, and the Long-Term Impacts', *National Geographic*, 18 May, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/chernobyl-disaster#:~:text=More%20than%2030%20years%20on%2C%20scientists%20estimate,be%20habitable%20for%20up%20to%2020%2C000%20years.&text=International%20researchers%20have%20predicted%20that%20ultimately%2C%20around,of%20radiation%20may%20suffer%20the%20same%20fate.

Budjeryn, Mariana. 2014. 'The Breach: Ukraine's Territorial Integrity and the Budapest Memorandum', https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Issue%20Brief%20No%203--The%20Breach--Final4.pdf.

Dixon, Robyn and Paul Sonne. 2021. 'Russia Broadens Security Demands from West, Seeking to Curb U.S. and NATO Influence on Borders', *The Washington Post*, 27 December, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/17/ukraine-russia-military/.

Edmondson, Catie. 2024. 'House Approves $95 Billion Aid Bill for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan', *The New York Times*, 20 April, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/20/us/politics/house-foreign-aid-bill.html#.

Farrow, Fritz. 2024. 'Exclusive: Biden tells Muir US Weapons will not be used to Strike Moscow, Kremlin', *ABC News*, 6 June, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/exclusive-biden-muir-us-weapons-wont-be-used-strike-moscow-kremlin/story?id=110865528.

Feld, Simone De La. 2024. 'Peace Summit in Switzerland, 80 countries sign for territorial integrity of Ukraine. Von der Leyen: "From Putin Outrageous Conditions"', *Eunews*, 29 May, https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/06/17/peace-summit-switzerland-ukraine/.

Fowler, Mayhill. 2022. 'Soviet Ukraine in a Nutshell', *Origins*, https://origins.osu.edu/read/soviet-ukraine-nutshell.

Gigova, Radina and Rhea Mogul. 2022. 'For First Known Time in Public, Putin Calls Fighting in Ukraine a "War"', *CNN*, 23 December, https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/22/europe/putin-uses-word-war-fighting-ukraine-russia-intl-hnk/index.html.

Glenn, Mike. 2024. 'Defense Secretary Austin Dismisses Putin's Offer of Ukraine Cease-fire', *The Washington Times*, 14 June,

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 26 25-07-2025 00:13:48

https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2024/jun/14/defense-secretary-austin-dismisses-putins-offer-uk/.

Gray, Richard. 2019. 'The True Toll of the Chernobyl Disaster', *BBC*, 26 July, https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190725-will-we-ever-know-chernobyls-true-death-toll.

Greenall, Robert. 2024. 'Peace Talks Tomorrow if Russia Leaves Ukraine – Zelenskyy', *BBC*, 17 June, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cxrr1kyp04eo.

Harding, Luke and Andrew Roth. 2025. 'Trump Threatens to Abandon Ukraine Peace Efforts Unless Deal Reached "Very Shortly"', *The Guardian*, 18 April, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/18/us-ready-to-abandon-ukraine-peace-deal-if-there-is-no-progress-says-marco-rubio.

Lau, Stuart and Saim Saeed. 2022. 'India's Modi tells Putin: This is "Not the Era for War"', *Politico*, 16 September, https://www.politico.eu/article/narendra-modi-tells-vladimir-putin-war-has-no-place-in-todays-era/.

Litvinova, Dasha. 2024. 'Putin Offers Truce if Ukraine Exits Russian-Claimed Areas and Drops NATO Bid. Kyiv Rejects it', *AP News*, 14 June, https://apnews.com/article/putin-russia-ukraine-war-4f58423548b3d2e8594c9d9eb8e9d36e.

Malyasov, Dylan. 2021. 'UkrOboronProm gets $86M Support Contract for Pakistani T-80 Tanks', *Defence Blog*, 22 February, https://defence-blog.com/ukroboronprom-gets-86m-support-contract-for-pakistani-t-80-tanks/.

Megerian Chris, Sylvie Corbet and Zeke Miller. 2024. 'Biden Apologizes to Zelenskyy for Monthslong Congressional holdup to Weapons that let Russia Advance', *AP News*, 8 June, https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-biden-zelenskyy-a77546e23fa571eb7f6509d4e14b89b3.

Miller, Christopher. 2017. 'Ukraine Denies Supplying North Korea with Missile Technology, Alleges Russia to Blame', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 15 August, https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-denies-supply-north-korea-missile-technology/28675992.html.

Mycio, Mary. 1997. 'Delivery of Tanks to Pakistan Sets off Sales War with Russia', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 May, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-05-02-mn-54717-story.html.

Pedrazzoli, Matteo. 2024. 'EU Signs Agreement with Ukraine on Financial and Military Cooperation and Support', *Eunews*, 27 June, https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/06/27/eu-signs-

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 27 25-07-2025 00:13:48

agreement-with-ukraine-on-financial-and-military-cooperation-and-support/.

Plokhy, Serhii. 2014. *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union*. New York: Basic Books.

Rutland, Peter. 2016. 'History in the Making: The Agreement That Ended the Soviet Union', *The Moscow Times*, 7 December, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/12/07/history-in-the-making-the-agreement-that-ended-the-soviet-union-a56456.

Sebastian, Sarah. 2024. 'As Putin Signals Ceasefire, Former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's Plane Lands in Belarus', *The Week*, 26 May, https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2024/05/26/as-putin-signals-ceasefire-former-ukrainian-president-viktor-yanukovichs-plane-lands-in-belarus.html.

Uvarov, Alexey. 2022. 'The Heavy Legacy of the Soviet Regime', *Riddle*, 29 November, https://ridl.io/the-heavy-legacy-of-the-soviet-regime/.

Wang, Selina. 2024. 'G7 Leaders Agree to Lend Ukraine $50 billion Using Frozen Russian Assets', *ABC News*, 13 June, https://abcnews.go.com/International/g7-leaders-agree-lend-ukraine-50-billionfrozen/story?id=111090880.

Welker, Kristen and Megan Lebowitz. 2025. 'Trump Says He's "Very Angry" and "Pissed Off" at Putin During an NBC News Interview', *NBC News*, 30 March, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-angry-putin-zelenskyy-iran-sanctions-rcna198729.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 28 25-07-2025 00:13:48

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gitesh Sarma is a retired Indian Foreign Service officer with a long diplomatic career during which he was also appointed as secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs. He worked on areas concerning Eastern Europe, Central Asia and multilateral diplomacy. He contributed to India's nuclear diplomacy during his appointment as joint secretary (external relations) at the Department of Atomic Energy.

During the period of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, he served at the Embassy of India in Moscow and as consul general in Odessa (Ukraine) when Ukraine gained independence in 1991. Later, he was posted in Belarus for a foreign assignment and then in Uzbekistan as ambassador. Fluent in Russian, his experience in the region has made him an expert in the geopolitical climate of the former Soviet Union, including Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia. He was also high commissioner to Australia, Fiji and the Pacific Islands.

IICPP_Foreign Relations.indd 29 25-07-2025 00:13:48

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
40, Max Mueller Marg, Lodhi Gardens, Lodhi Estate,
New Delhi, Delhi 110003