

Sansad TV Perspective: Russia Ukraine Conflict: The Nuclear Angle

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme 'Perspective' on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the [IAS exam](#), especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: Russia Ukraine Conflict: The Nuclear Angle

Video link: <https://youtu.be/E6MGd - mB8>

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Participants:

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Context: The Russia – Ukraine conflict has conveyed the vivid alarm of fear and tension across the globe and is accompanied by geopolitical and socio-economic implications. As a major outcome of the ongoing crisis, it is alleged that Russia may employ a nuclear threat if there is any military intervention by NATO or the US. This has led to the emergence of several questions surrounding the conflict, giving it a nuclear angle.

An Overview:

- There have been efforts put forth by the negotiators in Belarus to resolve the tension existing between Russia and Ukraine through dialogue.
- In such a time, Russia raised the nuclear fear that creates a possibility of usage of nuclear weapons which will result in a detrimental consequence damaging lives, ecosystem along with a huge economic loss.
- The situation turned more alarming, especially for Europe's security network when Russian President Vladimir Putin put the nuclear force of Russia on a special regime alert at the very onset of Ukraine's invasion.
- Nuclear-armed Russian submarines and mobile missile units were deployed by Putin. This has been perceived by many as a nuclear threat, at the same time, it is not so clear whether a prominent nuclear attack from the Russian side can be expected or not.

Protecting Europe:

- The [Russia – Ukraine](#) crisis has imposed a significant threat on Europe's security architecture.
- It is evident that without recognising America's role as a nuclear umbrella, the European countries cannot avert a nuclear attack with military means.
- The "umbrella" is based on the assumption that the adversaries of [NATO](#) will refrain from using nuclear weapons because of the fear of a counterattack.
- There lies a distinct psychology of deterrence with NATO's nuclear powers.

- For instance, France and Britain rely on the concept of minimum deterrence in which exchange of nuclear strikes for many days is not followed. Instead, they believe that preventing the opponent with a final warning shot would be sufficient.
- The US believes in deterrence that involves nuclear weapons with reduced explosive power.
- Germany has contributed to Europe's nuclear deterrence through the German Air Force Tornado fighter jets that are stationed in Buchel airbase in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. During an emergency, the jets with German crews would fly nuclear weapons from the US to the target.
- The Netherlands, Belgium and Italy have also participated in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements.
- Many nuclear gravity bombs certified for Tornado aircraft are currently stored in Europe.

Decision making authorities for the use of Nuclear Weapons:

- The US President is the first to decide on the use of the US nuclear weapons stored in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.
- Before the deployment of the bombs, the NATO allies would presumably consult the North Atlantic Council (NAC) which is the principal political decision making body of NATO.
- On the other hand, the French nuclear force is solely decided by the French President and the Prime Minister of Britain makes decisions for the UK on nuclear weapon usage.
- These authorities for nuclear weapons are regarded as the element of deterrence as they make it difficult for an opponent to estimate NATO's reaction in the event of an attack.

Nuclear Weapons in Ukraine War:

- It is alleged that tactical nuclear weapons were used over the Black Sea after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, the western military observers have no evidence that the Russian military is planning to use tactical or sub-strategic nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Weapons and the Challenges posed:

- In the light of legality, the use of any nuclear weapon, considering the massive impact it has on civilians, infringes international humanitarian law.
- Already there is a mass migration of people from Ukraine to Poland and some are seeking shelter in Hungary, Romania, Moldova and Slovakia. A prominent nuclear threat would add to the humanitarian crisis.
- The entire idea of nuclear weapons usage has been considered inconceivable by the [United Nations](#).
- Nuclear weapons impose intimidatory tactics on the sovereignty of a country.
- It is also said that nuclear weapons carry the relic of the [Cold War](#) and must be prevented from employment as it can cause havoc to humanity, economy and ecology tarnishing the larger interests of the dynamic realm of geopolitics.
- In a world confronted with plenty of challenges raising severe concerns like climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, global warming, wherein the international communities are building bridges across the globe to collaborate and work towards net zero emissions, low carbon future, energy-efficient future, ecologically balanced future, this new issue of the nuclear threat is a deviation and increases the complexities of challenges for the world to deal with.

A major challenge for India:

- Keeping the prominence of the ongoing crisis intact, there is an emerging trend of Russia losing grounds of empathy and friendship from the international communities.
- This message was precise during the voting that took place after the Ukrainian invasion and Russia's military action.
- As a result, it creates a massive dilemma for Russia's old friends like India to retain its neutrality when the majority of the world is unidirectional (against Russia) at this moment.
- India's age-old friendship with Russia and the security concerns of India served as a strong ground to abstain from voting against Russia in the [UNSC](#).
- India has been firm and upfront about its advocacy of diplomatic resolutions to be the way forward to resolve the ongoing crisis.

Shaping the upcoming days: Experts' take

- It has been highlighted that one-third of the arsenal of Russia is always on alert on the grounds of its nuclear first-use policy to put the country's nuclear deterrence force into a special mode of combat service. It is normal in accordance with Russia's nuclear doctrine and there is nothing much to worry about.
- This leads to the emergence of two sets of interpretations of either considering the utterance of nuclear deterrence by Russia just as a mere strategy or a part of the nuclear doctrine. This area needs to be addressed and analysed.
- The strategic analysts need to acknowledge the importance of Belarus and Ukraine and their historic shared roots with Russia.
- Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there has been a series of sanctions imposed by the US and its allies on Russia, to which Russia's retaliation to spread the nuclear threat, has been considered absurd giving rise to perplexities.
- According to the experts, nuclear deterrence as a response to sanctions could have been avoided.
- The entire fear surrounding the nuclear angle nurtured by Russia will only come to an end, according to the expert, if it is convinced that Ukraine doesn't pose a military threat backed by NATO to Russian interests.
- The alarm that arises from the nuclear angle of the Russia-Ukraine conflict will have far-reaching consequences affecting security, safety, stability and economy disrupting the global supply chain.
- Therefore, the entire world is at the confluence of confusion and complexities and an anticipation of the severity of the nuclear threat from Russia and where it lands up into the dynamic topography of international relations will consume time and will require diplomatic engagements for a peaceful settlement.

Read more on the [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#) in the link.