

# EDITORIAL ANALYSIS → 13 JANUARY 2023 → THE HINDU:

## ENTERING A YEAR OF UNCERTAINTY:

- **Context:**
- Soothsayers routinely make bad predictions about the future, especially when it comes to geopolitics. The predictions of numerous prophets that ambiguity and transience will dictate the course of world events in 2022, however, were only partially accurate. Over the course of the year, geopolitical threats and issues grew, but few people foresaw that 2022 would be a year that would put the entire globe to the test.
- **Conflict between Ukraine and Russia:**
- The status quo has been severely upset by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which began in February 2022. It led to one of the largest demographic upheavals in recent memory. However, in retrospect, some of this may have been anticipated. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States were asked to provide Russia with a number of additional security guarantees in December 2021, including a promise not to extend the alliance eastward. Russia had begun a massive buildup around Ukraine by the middle of 2021.
- It may not have been anticipated that Ukrainian nationalism would present itself in such a striking way and that the West, particularly NATO and the US, would act so quickly to assist Ukraine and extend military and other forms of cooperation. Only a select group of experts can accurately predict what the future holds or what all of this portends.
- **The conflict's aftereffects:**
- It would be interesting to compare the current situation to that of World War I, particularly in 1916. At the moment, the risk of escalation—horizontally and vertically—was minimised. It might be a good

idea to think about such occurrences. The use of nuclear weapons would be necessary if the situation vertically escalated.

- New fronts would open up with any horizontal escalation. Like in 1916, there are a lot of "unknowns" nowadays. Unexpected events might have negative outcomes. A full-scale conflict can be seen looming in the distant.
- There could be a number of additional effects. The economy is already being significantly impacted by the "proxy war" between Russia and NATO, Europe, and the United States. The continued sanctions against Russia imposed by the West and its allies, the removal of Russian banks from SWIFT, and the freezing of Russian assets abroad have resulted in an energy crisis.
- In addition, oil is being used as a weapon by Russia, and prices for it are increasing. Despite the fact that the full scope of this is still not fully understood, it does suggest the possibility of a more serious conflagration.
- Recent events in Europe have obvious effects. Outside of Europe, this is partially taking place. One example is the relationship between China and Russia. China has made the decision to now deepen its strategic ties with Russia. Both countries claim that the state of its relations is at its "best point in history." In addition, other alliances are forming across Asia as a response of the West's growing worries about Taiwan.
- **Defense spending is increasing:**
- As 2023 approaches and the arc of instability spreads, despite the economic difficulties all countries are experiencing, a significant increase in defence spending by virtually all governments is becoming obvious. In 2022, it is projected that global defence spending exceeded \$2 trillion, and in 2023, it is expected to increase significantly.
- The stability of defence alliances and, thus, the idea of strategic autonomy, are threatened by increased defence spending. New strategic alignments could upend the global order by eliminating old ideas like non-alignment and the advantages of not joining any one bloc.
- Consequently, a lot of past ideas regarding economic, technological, and financial autonomy might be modified or rejected this year. History will advance more quickly in 2023, and the situation in Ukraine will be a major factor.
- A good example of this is maybe India's dependence on Russian military hardware, which has long been New Delhi's primary anchor. Now that contemporary Western weaponry are outperforming Russian technology in the Ukraine conflict, this may change, and India may begin looking elsewhere for its upcoming defence purchases.

- It's possible that India's current shift from a declared non-alignment strategy to multi-alignment could help it widen the scope of its defence alliances. Organizations like the Quad (the United States, Australia, Japan, and India) may one day be given more prominence in India's defence architecture in light of the escalating tensions between India and China. It appears that India and France will have stronger defence connections in 2023, particularly in the area of cutting-edge defence technologies.
- As a result, many additional changes are probably required. The conflict in Ukraine has shown Europe and other countries that without the United States and NATO, neither Ukraine nor any other country in Europe could have stopped the Russian advance, making ideas like strategic autonomy useless. When dealing with strong "bullies" like China, Asian nations' decisions are likely to be influenced by the same conclusion.
  
- **The area around India:**
  
- Aside from Europe, it is projected that China, India, and parts of Asia may face serious difficulties in the future. Managing COVID-19 and the repercussions of its economic crisis would be China's top worries. It is unlikely that China will start a fight or behave provocatively toward its neighbours this year as a result of this. However, China's top concerns will still be Taiwan and any breach of the First Island Chain.
- The altered structure of the international system offers little comfort to India. India's long-standing strategic partnership with Russia is hurt by the China-Russia entente, which might have far-reaching effects.
- India will still be harmed by the absence of fixed borders with both China and Pakistan in the interim. Many parts of the China-India border will still have active communities, and incidents like the one that happened recently in Yangtse could happen again, but a major conflict appears unlikely.
- Pakistan's internal problems and economic difficulties make it unlikely that it would pose a serious danger in 2023. However, it is anticipated that Pakistan will continue its provocations and use of terror techniques, which will lead to sporadic attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Additionally, in 2023, other problems that have emerged in South Asia will surround India. There may be issues with Nepal's new government because it appears to have a Chinese leaning. Problematic as Afghanistan remains under the control of the Taliban, it is made worse by the rise in terrorist activity there, which is being spearheaded by groups like the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIS-K).
- To maintain India's delicately balanced relations with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, diplomatic competence will be required. India's relations with the majority of West Asian countries, however,

might not undergo any substantial changes this year. It could be used to assess the effectiveness of India's long-term preference for a non-interfering strategic culture on its neighbours.

- **Conclusion:**

- All indications are that terrorism will remain a persistent worry this year, but major terror attacks might not occur. The engagement and activities of the Islamic State in Afghanistan are just the top of the iceberg, according to certain indications, and the ISIS-K in particular appears to be reviving. As a result, everyone might need to use caution in 2023.



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