



SIPG



Policy Brief on the Russia-Ukraine War

This policy brief is an outcome of a series of seminars and webinars on “Russia-Ukraine War” organised by the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) of South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2022



Context

The Russia-Ukraine war began on 24 February 2022. Russia calls it a special military operation while Ukraine calls it an illegal invasion on its territory and sovereignty. The world is divided with this crisis and taking sides either with Ukraine or Russia. The consequences of this war are felt all over the globe as it triggered a cascade of other global crises such as the economic and energy crisis, high inflation, supply chain disruption, food insecurity, famine etc. There is even a looming threat of nuclear war and the Third World War. The world is on the verge of more colossal damage if the war lingers. The Western countries have put on tough sanctions on Russia to cripple its economy and war funding. But there is still no end in sight to the war in Ukraine. The diplomatic solutions have not yet come fully. Some diplomatic attempts to prevent the war are widely considered a failure for many foreign policy experts around the world. The number of neutral states suitable for mediation is limited. Many experts are still hopeful that this war might end through negotiations and diplomacy. Against this backdrop, this policy brief highlights the expert opinions from the series of seminars and webinars that indicates the important role of diplomacy and negotiation to end the Russia-Ukraine War.

1st CPS Seminar: 'Russia-Ukraine War: Who gains, Who loses?'

The 1st CPS seminar on 'Russia-Ukraine War: who gains, who loses?' was organized by the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) on 8 March 2022 at NSU Syndicate Hall.

The distinguished panelists were Ambassador Shahidul Haque, Professorial Fellow at SIPG, NSU, ICCR Bangabandhu Chair at Delhi University, India and Former Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh, Mr. Raheed Ejaz, Diplomatic Correspondent, Prothom Alo, Professor Helal Mohiuddin, Professor Mohammed Nuruzzaman, and Assistant Professor Dr. Ishrat Zakia Sultana from the Department of Political Science and Sociology, NSU.

Professor Mohammed Nuruzzaman characterized Russia's invasion of Ukraine as the conclusion of a long-running problem of Russian relations with the EU and NATO. He also stated that Ukraine has merely become a pawn on the global chessboard.

Ambassador Shahidul Haque spoke about the war's impact on Bangladesh, South Asia and the role of the UN. He said that the Global Military-Industrial Complex is going to benefit from this war and humanity will lose. The UN charter and International Humanitarian Laws are not being followed here. Most South Asian countries are sitting on the fence as they took a neutral stance on the war.

Professor Helal Mohiuddin addressed the legal, ethical and moral perspective of this war. He said that people should not be killed in the name of collateral damage in this war. He also focused on the racism that the non-white refugees are facing in EU countries and that must be stopped.

Brig. Gen (Retd.) Dr. Sakhawat Hussain, Senior Fellow at SIPG, NSU said that the regime change in Kyiv is the main aim of Putin. He also opined that Putin will not stop this war unless Ukraine announces that it will never join NATO and EU.

Dr. Ishrat Zakia Sultana spoke about Europe's current refugee crisis and the humanitarian aspect of the conflict, focusing on women and children. She stated that, as with all previous crises, women and children will bear the brunt of this war, and voiced concern that there is no comprehensive strategy in place to protect women and children from the harmful implications of any crisis.

Mr. Raheed Ejaz highlighted the discrepancies and biases in the Western media's reporting on the war news and he further emphasized that it is too early to decide which party has won the information war. He also underlined that instead of relying solely on traditional media for fact-checking, people should seek information from alternate sources such as social media.



2nd CPS International Webinar: “Nobel Laureates speak on Russia-Ukraine War: Is War Inevitable? Can We Change the Paradigm?”

On 1 April 2022, two Nobel laureates Jody Williams (Peace) and Richard J. Roberts (Medicine) spoke on an international webinar about the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War. The webinar titled, “Is War Inevitable? Can We Change the Paradigm?”, was jointly organized by the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) and the Daily Prothom Alo.



Nobel laureate Jody Williams was the keynote speaker in the webinar. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her work toward the banning and clearing of anti-personnel mines through the International Campaign against Landmines.

Jody Williams elaborated on the humanitarian aspects of the ongoing war in Ukraine. She added that if we allow human rights violations, the whole world will be in jeopardy in the near future. She also opined that people should not accept mutual destruction through use of nuclear weapons.

She added, the whole global community should strive to stop wars, especially the future nuclear wars. In her concluding remarks, Jody re-emphasized that we cannot allow a handful of people, no matter how powerful, to decide the fate of the world and urged that let the ongoing wars be the last wars in this world.

The banner features a blue header with the logo of 'প্রথম আলো' (First Light) on the left and 'CPS SIPG' on the right. Below the header, the text reads 'International Webinar' followed by the main title 'Is War Inevitable? Can We Change the Paradigm?'. The central theme is 'Nobel Laureates Speak'. Two circular portraits are shown: Jody Williams on the left and Richard J. Roberts on the right. The date and time are listed as 'Friday, April 01, 2022 at 19:00 (GMT: +6:00)'. Below each portrait is the name and title of the laureate: 'Jody Williams Nobel Laureate(Peace)' and 'Richard J. Roberts Nobel Laureate(Medicine)'.

Richard J. Roberts, Nobel Laureate (Medicine), the special guest of the program, was awarded the 1993 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. He has been involved in organizing a number of Nobel initiatives to correct scientific misunderstandings and promote humanitarian causes. He has recently organized a Nobel Laureates appeal for bringing peace in Ukraine.

Roberts said that the ineffectiveness of the United Nations is alarming as it cannot bring nations together to stop the aggression by Russia. He also hailed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his brave role in this war and said that we need more brave leaders like him.

Professor Atiqul Islam, Vice Chancellor of NSU stated that there is genuine concern in some countries that large countries may get away with invading their small neighbouring countries.

3rd CPS International Webinar: “Russia’s Invasion in the Ukraine: The Potential for Diplomacy in Times of War”

On 12 May 2022, the 3rd CPS international webinar about the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War, titled, “Russia’s Invasion in the Ukraine: The Potential for Diplomacy in times of War” was held. It was jointly organized by the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) and the Leibniz Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), Germany.

The distinguished panelists from Germany were Prof. Dr. Christopher Daase, Co-Director of PRIF, and Dr. Caroline FehI, Project Leader & Senior Researcher of PRIF; and from Bangladesh were Ambassador Shahidul Haque, Professorial Fellow at SIPG, NSU, and Former Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh, and Brig. Gen (Retd.) Dr. M. Sakhawat Hussain, Senior Fellow at SIPG, NSU and Former Election Commissioner of Bangladesh. The moderator of the webinar was Dr. Stefan Kroll, Head of Communications & Senior Researcher, PRIF, Germany.

Dr. Caroline FehI said that the war has shifted positions in foreign and security policy in the United States, which is related to the administrative transition from Trump to Biden. She also stated that sanctions have been a key tool used by western states to increase pressure on Russia since the war began, and that the revival of transnational solidarity will not last after the war.



Prof. Dr. Christopher Daase stated that the European response to the war has been strong and unified, but a permanent refocus on the security aspects of Europe and the surrounding region is expected to increase due to this war. He also opined that this war will not bring victory to any warring sides; rather, he wished that this war should end through negotiations and the Ukrainians' voices must be heard.

Dr. M. Sakhawat Hussain said that the support of western states will lead to further escalation of this war. He also said that most of the South Asian countries abstained from voting in the UNGA due to historical and military ties with Russia. And now Russia is alluring these countries with cheap energy supplies. Moreover, Europe needs to restructure their security strategy rather than depending only on NATO.

Ambassador Shahidul Haque opined that this war has accelerated the transformation of a new world order. It has opened multiple frontiers in Asia leading to a volatile, complex, and ambiguous political and business environment. Bangladesh is already witnessing the consequences of war, with market volatility and rising commodity prices, particularly in the energy sector.

4th CPS International Seminar: “Importance of Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution: The Current War between Russia and Ukraine”

On 7 June 2022, CPS organized the 4th International Seminar on “Importance of Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution: The Current War between Russia and Ukraine” at North South University (NSU).

The distinguished panelists were: His Excellency Alexander Vikentyevich Mantytskiy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the People's Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mustafa Osman Turan, Ambassador of Turkey to Bangladesh, Ambassador Shahidul Haque, Professorial Fellow, SIPG, NSU & Former Foreign Secretary, Government of Bangladesh, Prof. Nicole Deitelhoff, Director, Leibniz Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), Germany., and Professor Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Professor in Security Studies, The Arctic University of Norway (UiT). Professor M. Ismail Hossain, Pro Vice-Chancellor of NSU chaired the session.

H.E. Alexander Vikentyevich Mantytskiy, Ambassador of Russia to Bangladesh, said that, "at the moment there is no place for true diplomacy, as Western countries keep pumping Ukraine with razor-edge weapons, their diplomats vehemently demand Russian defeat in the battlefield calling upon Ukraine to fight till the last Ukrainian". He added, "as far as the contacts with the Ukrainian are concerned, we have never refused to talk, as evidenced from the meetings in Belarus and Turkiye. However, for these meetings to be fruitful, it requires a constructive position from Kiev which presently is nowhere in sight. Moreover, the Ukrainian patrons in Europe and the US seem to bar Kiev from having any substantive interaction with Moscow, which makes all the efforts futile". He also said that, for Moscow, diplomacy has always been the first choice. Their doors remain open for all faithful efforts, but it needs more than one party to negotiate. It also requires an ability to conduct a respectful dialogue, to be open minded and responsive towards aspirations and sensitivity of the other side. but these prerequisites are absent.

H.E. Mustafa Osman Turan, Ambassador of Turkiye to Bangladesh, said that Turkiye supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and considers Russian aggression to be unlawful and a blatant violation of international law according to the Charter of the United Nations. Both warring parties are currently focused on military gains, but the end of the war and restoration of peace can only take place at the negotiation table. He also stated that we cannot give up on a diplomatic solution and emphasized the importance of multilateral efforts and a negotiated settlement in ending the war. He also stated that Turkiye does not seek any kind of peace, but rather a "fair peace" that will result in the complete restoration of Ukraine's territories. He also claimed that Turkiye's strategic cooperation with Ukraine and working connections with Russia put it in a unique position to mediate, and that both relationships should be maintained.

Prof. Dr. Nicole Deitelhoff stated that both parties need to make concessions to negotiate and end this conflict. The rationale for sanctions against Russia is to increase the cost of war and regulate the future behaviour and resist such unlawful aggression. This war also affected the food security around the globe and wheat prices are

skyrocketing and triggered a refugee crisis. She also opined that it is not a special military operation rather a full-fledged war that is against international law and order.

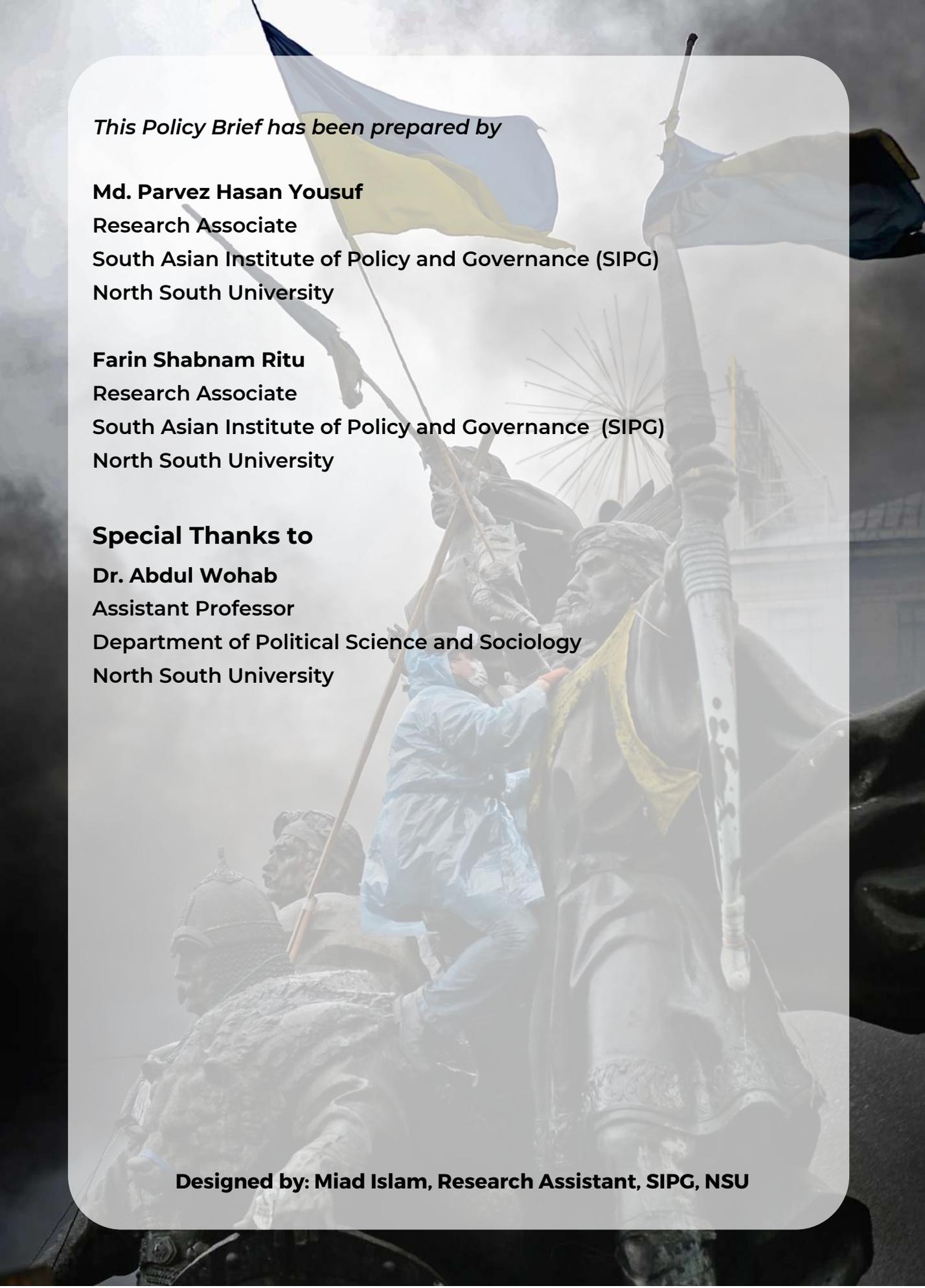
Professor Gunhild Hoogensen Gjorv stated that Russia invaded illegally but Ukraine is defending itself and diplomacy is difficult in such an unpredictable situation. She went on to say that prior to the war, diplomacy started on this issue, and Ukraine had been dealing with the conflict for the last eight years. She also stated that neither side is willing to compromise, so it will be interesting to see what diplomacy can accomplish and whether International Organizations can play a significant role.



According to Ambassador Shahidul Haque, Russia views the war as one between Russia and the West - which could be a major cause of diplomacy failing in the context of this war. He went on to say that diplomacy has become a hostage in this battle, and that diplomacy has no place as long as the parties are just concerned with security matters. Diplomacy is the last hope because a peaceful settlement will not be achieved on the battlefield. According to him, the military industrial complex is winning as they are experimenting and selling new weapon systems to all the parties.

Conclusion

The Russia-Ukraine war needs to stop immediately as it has triggered a global economic downturn, supply chain disruption and food insecurity. Therefore, the experts suggested that diplomacy and negotiations must continue to put an end to this war. Both the parties at least can agree to a ceasefire and resume the supply chain of food grains and energy across the world. The recent deal with Russia mediated by Turkiye that allows Ukraine to resume exports of grain through the Black Sea is noteworthy. The West demands that Russia must end its invasion of Ukraine first. And Ukraine wants to get back its lost territory including Crimea and the eastern Donbass region. However, Russia wants Ukraine to be neutral. They also want to keep the territory that has been captured as they urge Ukraine to recognise Crimea as part of Russia and accept the sovereignty of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbass region. They also demand that the West must stop supplying weapons to Ukraine and NATO must stop its expansion into eastern Europe. The West and Russia are also in a war of media propaganda. Russia justifies its war as they have security threats due to expansion of NATO and claims that the western narrative is biased and untrue. In this context the experts opined that both Ukraine and Russia need to talk and stop the war through diplomatic efforts and negotiations. For this, the West should appease Russia with the security concerns and lift the sanctions to accelerate the end of the war. And Russia must stop the invasion of Ukraine.



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A stylized map of Europe. Russia is colored in a dark brownish-tan, and Ukraine is colored in a dark red. The rest of the map is in shades of grey and blue. The labels 'Russia' and 'Ukraine' are placed over their respective countries in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Russia

Ukraine

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