RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT EXPLAINED IN 10 POINTS

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Russia-Ukraine conflict: Russia's massive troop deployment for over a month now near Ukraine border has raised the geopolitical temperature with the United States warning of "severe consequences" if Moscow carries out any military action in Ukraine.

Besides the US, big powers like Germany and France have been trying to cool down the temperature by making efforts to convince Russian President Vladimir Putin to pull his army back from the borders of Ukraine, a former Soviet republic.

Why Russia began military build-up near Ukraine, what it wants from West

- At the heart of the current crisis between Russia and Ukraine is NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) – a group of 30 countries including the US, UK, France, and Germany.

- Ukraine wants to join this group of which the United States, the arch-rival of Russia, is a part. The NATO, too, is open to make Ukraine its member, which has irked the Moscow big time.

- Russia doesn't want NATO to allow Ukraine to become its member as it will expand the grouping's footprint to its border. The other big reason is that a member country of NATO will be eligible for collective support by all members in case of any external attack.

- Kyiv fears attack by Russia as the latter has already annexed Crimea from Ukraine. Brookings, a US-based think tank, writes that "Moscow's seizure of Crimea" was "the biggest land-grab in Europe since World War II".

- As per the principle of collective defence, NATO considers an attack against one or several of its members as an attack against all. This is the principle of collective defence, which is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

- This is why Russia opposes NATO membership to Ukraine. It thinks that if Ukraine becomes member of NATO, it might try to take back Crimea by military action.

- President Putin recently hinted at such situation if Ukraine becomes part of NATO. "Let's imagine Ukraine is a NATO member and starts these military operations. Are we supposed to go to war with the NATO Bloc? Has anyone given that any thought? Apparently not," he said.

- Russia therefore is demanding the West to pull NATO forces out of eastern Europe and never expand into Ukraine. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has said that for Russia, it's absolutely mandatory to ensure Ukraine never, ever becomes a member of NATO.

- Russia recently shared draft documents on legal security guarantees from the US and NATO. Article 4 of the agreement states that the Russian Federation and all the parties that were member States of NATO as of 27 May 1997, respectively, shall not deploy military forces and weaponry on the territory of any of the other states in Europe in addition to the forces stationed on that territory as of 27 May 1997.

- Article 6 of the document says all member states of the NATO commit themselves to refrain from any further enlargement of NATO, including the accession of Ukraine as well as other

States.

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