

# RISKY BETS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND HOPES OF A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

[Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's comment](#), after receiving a written response from Washington to Moscow's security demands, that 'Russia doesn't want wars' raises hopes of a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine crisis. Last week saw a flurry of diplomatic activities aimed at de-escalating the situation. Besides the U.S.'s written response to Russia, which could set the stage for further diplomatic talks in the coming weeks, French President Emmanuel Macron has held talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Mr. Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz are also reportedly trying to revive the stalled Minsk process that sought to find a peaceful solution to Ukraine's internal conflict between Kiev and the Russia-backed separatists in the eastern Donbas region. Mr. Putin has said the U.S. response does not address Russia's core security concerns. Fears of a military conflict are still there. Russia, which has mobilised thousands of troops on its border with Ukraine, in Belarus in Ukraine's north and in Transnistria (a breakaway region from Moldova) in its south-west, has a clear military advantage. But the West's willingness to press ahead with diplomatic options and Russia's reciprocity suggest that neither side is in a hurry for armed conflict.

There is a strong case for de-escalation. Mr. Putin has already achieved many things, without a shot being fired. He has got the Western leadership to talk to him over the contested issue of NATO's expansion, which Russia has long been complaining about. By putting a gun to Ukraine's head, he has effectively drawn a red line in Russia's relations with the West. Also, as the U.S. and its allies are scrambling for economic measures to punish Russia "if it invades Ukraine", the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and Moscow's continued support for separatists inside Ukraine have practically become non-issues. Nobody is threatening to punish Russia for not returning Crimea to Ukraine. The status quo has been redrawn. Besides, the U.S. has said it is open to discuss some of Russia's security concerns, including missile deployments in Eastern Europe and military exercises in sensitive regions. Russia should accept the U.S. proposals, de-escalate the crisis around Ukraine and opt for more dialogue on critical issues, including NATO's eastward expansion. If it still goes ahead with an attack, which U.S. President Joe Biden said could happen, it could well be a mistake. Russia might be in a position to overrun Ukraine militarily, but what comes next in Europe's largest country is as unpredictable as it can get. If the post-9/11 military adventures of the U.S. are any lesson, it is that great powers could clinch swift victories against weaker countries but could fail miserably in sustaining those victories. Mr. Putin should not walk into the same mistake and thereby push Europe back into the darker days of the Cold War.

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U.S. President Biden should not buckle to pressure from irate anti-vaccine campaigners

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