

ESWATINI POSITION PAPER.

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IS THERE A COMMON INTEREST THAT CAN ALLOW FOR UKRAINE AND RUSSIA TO END THE CONFLICT THROUGH AN AGREEMENT?

It is close to 100 days ago when Ukrainian citizens were wakened up to air raid sirens in their motherland, followed by bombs indiscriminately hitting buildings including civilian homes. The Russian President Vladimir Putin declared a ‘Special Military Operation’, which he mandated to rid Ukraine of Neo-Nazis and those who were oppressing the ethnic Russians in the Donbas Region. In the Russian elite sentiment, the 1990 agreement with the West was premised on a Non-Eastwards advancement which they claimed has been violated close to 14 times in three decades. However, on the ground the world has witnessed that the war was not confined to the Donbas Region but the whole nation of Ukraine. The theory of two truths is at play where the parties to the conflict continue casting aspersion and acoustic diatribes in a blame game format against each other.

It is imperative to understand that the Russo-Ukraine conflict started in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea by Russia. As a considered superpower, Russia accused Ukraine for trying to join a US dominated NATO bloc which Russia regard as a direct military and strategic threat to the Russian Federation on one strand and the over expansion of the Western influence in countries surrounding Russia as another. In this regard Russia is following the American response to the Cuban Missile threat historically from 1952. From the above, Russia has legitimate security concerns that needs to be addressed from previous agreement which brought the dissolution of the USSR. Similarly, the Sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Ukrainian nation should never be understated.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is important for us to know that, violence and aggression with impunity can only begets violence and death whereas peace lead to coexistence and prosperity, Directly as a result of this conflict, a multiplicity of people are losing their loved ones. Standing here in front of you, there is possibility that someone is losing a breadwinner, and more painfully a certain family is left childless or a child has become an orphan. What of young soldiers losing limbs fighting for their survival on behalf of the elite protagonists.

It is against this backdrop that the global majority are asking, *'Is there common interest that can allow for Ukraine and Russia to end the conflict through agreement?'*

Agreements used before to solve similar conflicts;-

- Political Agreement for peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, February 2019 UN SC (S/2019/145)
- The Burundi peace Negotiations: An African Experience of Peace Making, Review of African Political Economy, 34(113)), Daley P 2007

Whenever war erupts, there is a dare devil conclusion that diplomacy has failed. I dare say, there no measure that supersedes diplomacy, Aggression is rather archaic and part of yesteryear systems of conquest. With the question posed above there is definitely a common interest between the two parties. Whether you are winning or losing nothing beats peaceful resolution as they save nations their economic, social and geopolitical bases that are founding cardinal essential for statecraft and statehood. The common interest herein is Peace in general and world peace in particular. The common interest should be the urge to defeat hunger rather than fuelling the same, the common interest should be an ability to listen to both sides with a view to solve rather than blackmailing and escalation.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is our firm belief that, now everyone is supposed to come on board to help the warring parties reach an agreement. This is not the time to test probabilities but rather to act in the interests of the majority who are unarmed let alone the globe that is meant to pay a fortune at the pump with a skyrocketing general basic commodity price. The most essential variable to be considered by the two warring parties is the **'best alternative to a negotiated agreement' or BATNA**. This refers to the outcome in the event that two parties do not reach an agreement where one has to choose either to walk away or do something. Another variable to be used in the interest of solving the impasse will be to apply the zone of possible agreement which at present seemed to be at its lowest ebb.

Understanding a worst deal the Russians are willing to taken is imperative, as read with the Ukrainian President's commitment to make the country a neutral republic, it is clear that common interest would be sought through making Ukraine a non-aligned nation that serves as a buffer between the West and the East. This would be done under UN protocols of punishing nations that violate neutrality.

As Eswatini, we would like to highlight that the country has opted not to take part in the voting process. The country noted the regrettable escalation of the conflict and encouraged a process of rapprochement through honest dialogue and negotiation in engagements between Russia and Ukraine. The decision by Eswatini to abstain and vote against the condemnation of Russia's actions are built upon pillars of non-alignment paying attention to the ethos of the United Nations which since 1945 carries the mandated of avoiding a scourge of war amongst self-governing sovereigns.

In logging of this paper, we would like to assure you all that diplomats can fail but diplomacy will never fail and it is times like this when we should make the UN relevant in order to build bridges of peace and security through mediation and persuasion.