

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

# **RUSSIA: Putin's War on Europe: Where lies South Asia?**

## **Putin's War on Europe: Where lies South Asia?**

HRWF (03.05.2022) – On April 22, 2022, South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF) held a webinar entitled “**Putin's War on Europe – Where Lies South Asia?**”. The event was moderated by **Paulo Casaca**, Director of SADF, with two invited guests, namely **Dr. Siegfried O. Wolf**, Director of Research at SADF, Affiliated

Senior Researcher at South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University in Germany, and **Dr. Zsuzsa Anna Ferenczy**, Assistant Professor at National Dong Hwa University in Hualien, Taiwan, Expert Consultant on China, Taiwan, India and the Korean Peninsula at HRWF, and former Political Advisor in the European Parliament.

Speaking on Pakistan, Dr. Wolf first presented the recent developments in domestic politics in the country, in light of the demise of Prime Minister Imran Khan. In power since 2018, Khan has had to face many challenges, enjoying the support of the army, until now. According to observers, relations with the United States were a factor leading to his fall, although not the most important one.

Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Khan travelled to Moscow on an official visit, seeking to expand bilateral cooperation in the energy sector and to reinforce trade relations more broadly. Khan also refused to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine, suggesting this was proof of the country's independent foreign policy. In contrast, prior to Khan's fall, General Bajwa of Pakistan condemned Russia's aggression, making a parallel between Ukraine, as a country threatened by a large aggressive neighbor, and Pakistan. He also stressed that Pakistan's army does not support Moscow's war.

In her remarks on India's stance on the war in Ukraine, Dr. Ferenczy first stressed that the war against Ukraine, as well as Beijing's political support for Moscow are pushing the EU to re-evaluate its relations with both Russia and China, as well as its own self-perception as a geopolitical power in the Indo-Pacific.

Since the war started, Ukraine, while under attack, has been strengthening its democracy, while Russia has grown increasingly isolated, and NATO and the EU more united than ever. The EU's ties with China and a focus on the Indo-Pacific are the central pillars of the EU's efforts to redefine its role, the Indo-Pacific being a region that has become the key driving force of trade-led growth, but also a region where China's coercion has been the most acute. In the past years, Australia, Korea, Japan, Taiwan have all been victims of China's economic coercion.

While the idea of an Indo-Pacific region is not new, the EU has only recently embraced the concept with its own Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, in a response to the changing balance of power in Asia. The Strategy is based on the understanding of the fact that although the region may seem far away from Europe, a conflict in the Indo-Pacific will have an impact on European prosperity and security. Europe has an interest in maintaining a rules-based order in the region, Dr. Ferenczy stressed, and relies on partnerships with like-minded partners. India, as well as Taiwan, are important partners in this regard.

Concerning India's stance on the war against Ukraine, Delhi has been seeking to balance its position. It has for years maintained its longstanding friendship with Russia, while growing closer to the EU and US. But the geopolitical reality is that India sits in a tense security environment and essentially seeks to look out for its own strategic interests. India is also dependent on Russia in terms of its defence, and given that its biggest concern in the region is China, defence remains crucial for Delhi.

India's ambivalent posture on the war should therefore be understood in this context. Seen from this perspective, for India to seek a diplomatic balance on Ukraine it is an uncomfortable necessity. It is important for the EU to consider and understand this reality, given India's relevance in the Indo-Pacific to the EU's geopolitical ambitions.

Europe sees India as crucial for maintaining the balance of power in the region, Ferenczy stressed, but it is also in India's interest to stay close to the EU and support European countries as they face Russia's aggression. Such support is something Europe expects, as it expects the same from China. Yet, relations with China are at present in a very different stage, as the EU-China bilateral summit in April suggested. Beijing's political support to Moscow, and their rhetorical alignment are not helping EU-China ties get back to 'business as usual', which is certainly what Beijing might want to see. This is not what Brussels would welcome, given the imbalance in bilateral ties at the expense of European interests.

Going forward, the China factor will remain central to how India relates to Russia's war against Ukraine. It will be important however that the EU and India find a way to strengthen their cooperation. The EU should elevate India in its own approach to the Indo-Pacific, and India should equally proactively support ongoing cooperation with the EU, in areas such as maritime security, AI, digital transition, climate change.

The EU and India should also cooperate more and better in multilateral initiatives. As such, there is value in exploring

cooperation within the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, that India, Australia and Japan have put forward in order to build sustainable, diverse and secure post-pandemic global supply chains that take the focus away from Chinese manufacturing. This could also create more space for Taiwan's participation and contribution, Dr. Ferenczy concluded.

*Photo credits: BBC*

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1266

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1266

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268