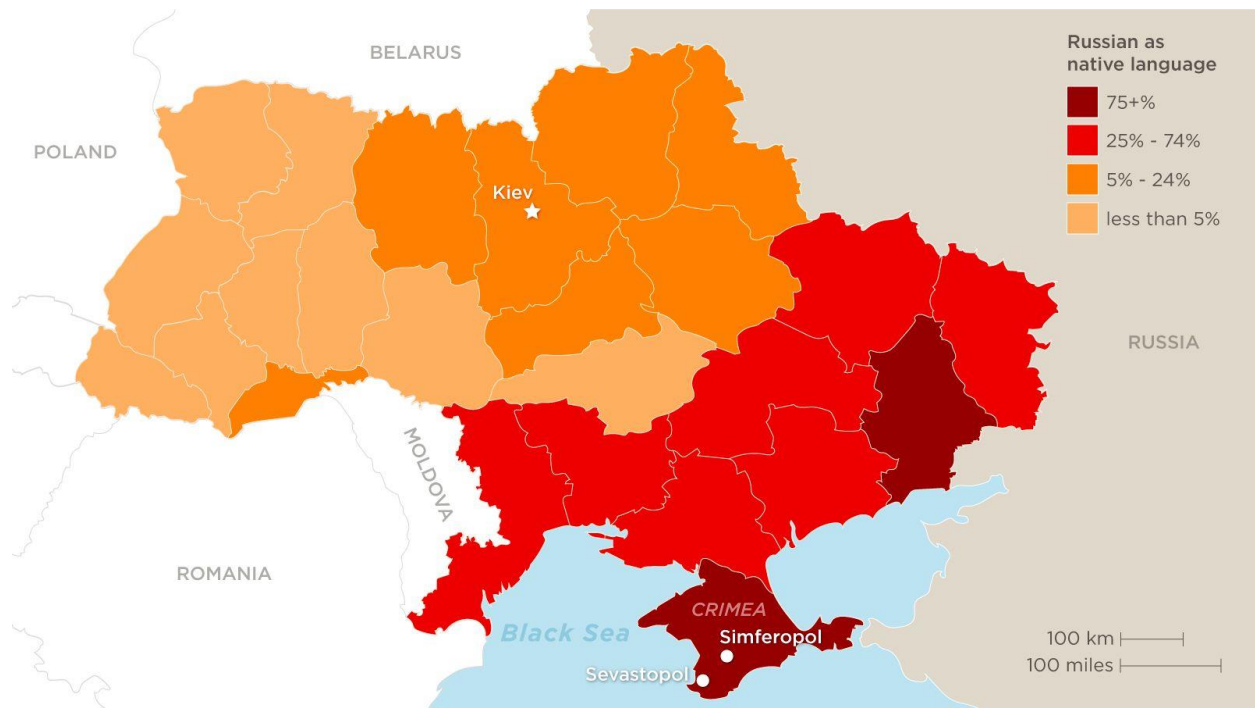


# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## What's the Fuss about Russia Attacking Ukraine? by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



A geopolitical crisis is looming large over the eastern border of Russia. Anticipation is that Russia may invade and occupy the Eastern part of Ukraine. There has been a massive military build-up by Russia close to Ukraine. Russia is also amassing troops and armament in Belarus which borders the northern part of Ukraine.

Ukraine is a polarized country inasmuch as 17% of the Ukrainians are Russians. Ninety-six percent of Russians in Ukraine consider the Russian language to be native to them. Some of them state their opposition to Ukrainian independence and openly advocate for the restoration of the Russian

Empire. As a reminder to our readers, the Crimean Peninsula, a geostrategic region in southern Ukraine, with the port of Sevastopol, was annexed by Russia on 18 March 2014. By the way, 66% of the Crimean population is Russian and only 15% are Ukrainians.

The histories of the two nations are linked until 1991 as both were parts of the USSR. Since independence in 1991, Ukraine had a pro-Russian leader, Viktor Yanukovich, whose ambitions were aligned with Russian interests. The situation changed with the 'Maidan revolution', where a series of protests erupted across the nation during

2013-14, following Yanukovich's refusal to join the political association and a free trade agreement with the European Union. The elected government was ousted, and power shifted towards the current pro-West Volodymyr Zelensky. Russia blames the U.S. for plotting this regime change.

The situation got worse with Ukraine's growing proximity to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). If Ukraine slips out of Russian influence, NATO will get a foothold in the Volga region and can threaten Russia's control over its hydrocarbon-rich areas. Also, Putin doesn't want Ukraine joining NATO as he doesn't want to be surrounded by the NATO forces, and rightly so. Putin wants a guarantee of that sort from the United States. The U.S. has denied complying with the Russian request.

Internally, a war between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces has been waging in Eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, collectively called the Donbas region, since 2014. It is already proved to the world that the separatists are supported by Russia. Between 13,100 and 13,300 lives have already been lost in this futile civil war since 2014.

The USA is fearing a Russian annexation of the region in a similar fashion as the Crimean Peninsula. These geopolitical instabilities point towards a common issue – the dependency of the world on hydrocarbons. More than 40 percent of these exports from Ukraine go to EU countries. Russia doesn't like that. This adds another dimension to the Ukraine crisis.

As you can see from the above facts, the USA is equally to be blamed for the present Ukrainian crisis. United States' options are very limited in case of the Russian incursion into Ukraine. Russia has an abundant energy source and America's allies in Europe depend on Russian energy. Germany is already non-committal about opposing the Russian move. Though the EU and US uphold and defend democratic governments across the globe, the energy dependency and trade surpluses against Russia make them incapable of taking any meaningful steps to resolve the issue. Mr. Biden's energy policies have already made the USA dependent on foreign oil once more thus the U.S. cannot help the Europeans as far as energy is concerned.

If the USA fumbles there (as Mr. Biden has done it over and over again), China will be encouraged to invade Taiwan and the U.S. influence in the world will suffer. Thus the U.S. has more to lose than Russia. Putin has said that he could live with the U.S. economic sanctions. He knows that the Europeans will ultimately lean towards Russia for their energy dependence and economic survival.