

# Russia-Ukraine Crisis: Can Multipolar BRICS-11 Ensure Global Peace and Stability?

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*At the United Nations General Assembly high-level meetings held in New York, a number of global leaders including those from Africa vehemently called for global peace and sustainable development. Russia and South Africa, both members of BRICS association attended the September meetings, and as it was during previous summits and conferences have renewed their commitment for ensuring peace within the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.*

"As we gather here, much of humanity is confronted by war and conflict. Solidarity and trust between states is being eroded. At the moment when every human effort should be directed towards the realisation of Agenda 2030, our attention and our energies have once again been diverted by the scourge of war," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said during his speech delivered there in New York.

Ramaphosa added that South Africa has consistently advocated for dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy to prevent and end conflict and achieve lasting peace. From the experience of his country's own journey from apartheid to democracy, South Africa highly values the importance of engaging all parties to conflicts to achieve peaceful, just and enduring resolutions.

It is these principles that inform South Africa's participation in the African Peace Initiative, which seeks a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. In this conflict, as in all conflicts, and that the UN Charter's principle of respect for the territorial integrity of every country should be upheld.

South Africa supports the urgent call by the UN Secretary-General in the New Agenda for Peace for Member States to provide more sustainable and predictable financing to peacebuilding efforts. It is South Africa's desire to see an end to the suffering of those most directly affected by the conflict in Ukraine.

Ahead of the Johannesburg summit that was August 20, Ramaphosa in a speech to the nation indicated that South Africa participated in the African initiative to seek peace in the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

Through this African Peace Initiative, he said emphatically:

“We firmly believe that dialogue, mediation and diplomacy is the only viable path to end the current conflict and achieve a durable peace. We support the principle of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states and peoples.”

South Africa’s foreign policy has been based on what forebears inscribed in the Freedom Charter in 1955 that “South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and the sovereignty of all nations; South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation – not war.”

Brazilian Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s return to the presidency in January 2023 has paved the way for a revival of an ambitious and assertive foreign policy set out by the leader during his first term in office between 2003 and 2010. He has been voicing for global peace as well as practical development with geopolitical partners, especially in the Global South.

China insisted on dialogue for conflict resolution. It has also presented its Ukrainian peace plan which Russia keeps on hold. Despite criticisms that it has lured Africa into debts, China is tremendously contributing to Africa’s infrastructure development. China appreciably brings “new opportunities” for diverse cooperation, and has unveiled five new development plans for Africa at the last BRICS summit in Johannesburg.

Even at the end of the 15th BRICS summit, the document adopted encapsulates significant viewpoints on matters of global significance including peace and development. In this document, the BRICS leaders expressed their highest and sentimental concern “to enhance its strategic partnership for the benefit of its people through the promotion of peace.”

It further states...

“We reiterate the need for all countries to cooperate in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms under the principles of equality and mutual respect. We agree to continue to treat all human rights.”

“We agree to strengthen cooperation on issues of common interests both within BRICS and in multilateral fora including the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council. We call for the respect of democracy and human rights,” the BRICS declaration (*slightly shortened for space*) says.

For BRICS-11 (Brazil, India, China and South Africa+ new members) to remain unconcerned and show continuous blatant indifference could be interpreted, first and foremost, as an integral failure on its commitments. Arguably it is a turning and critical point to show to the world its primary effectiveness on conflict resolution sealed in its summit documents.

Records show that Kenya is not a member of BRICS. But in a similar direction together with a few African leaders at UNGA, Kenyan President William Ruto also made reference to the proactive commitment to peace, which is not limited to the continent; African Union was inspired to dispatch the African Peace Delegation, consisting of six African heads of states to

Moscow and Kiev with a ten-point peace plan, beginning with efforts to initiate a mediation process to resolve the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Although the delegation encountered significant challenges in their mission, Kenya and for the matter the entire Africa remain very proud that the peace delegation showed up. The African Peace Initiative group headed by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, made serious efforts for recognition as peace brokers.

The delegation included the current Chairperson of the African Union and Comoros president, Azali Assoumani; President of Senegal, Macky Sall; President of Zambia, Hakainde Hichilema and Prime Minister of Egypt, Mostafa Madbouly. In addition, the delegation included representatives of Uganda and Congo.

The group put forward a 10-point proposal was presented in Kyiv and St. Petersburg. The key aim of the African peace mission primarily to propose “confidence-building measures” in order to facilitate peace between the two countries. It was to seek a peaceful settlement of the conflict which began late February 2022.

At the United Nations, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov afresh offered the signal that

“Russia can’t give up goals of special military operation in Ukraine.” From several official documents, Russia underlined the reason as – “to de-militarize and de-nazify” Ukraine.

Quoting President Vladimir Putin, Lavrov said the West was “truly an empire of lies” which even during the battle against Nazism in World War Two, had plotted an offensive against their Soviet allies.

Soviet and then Russian leaders “were given concrete political assurances regarding the non-expansion of the NATO military alliance to the east”, which turned out to be pure deception.

Washington and Brussels have ceaselessly sought to expand their interests and alliances to subordinate the Global South and East, rejecting Russia’s desire for mutual security guarantees, he stated, and closed his case with an appeal for compromise, saying “humanity is at a crossroads...It is in our shared interest to prevent a downward spiral into large scale war.”

He invoked the Secretary-General’s call for world leaders to meet and negotiate in the spirit of compromise at this year’s UN General Assembly, “when designing our common future for our common good” and concluded that it was an excellent response to those who divide the world up into democracies and autocracies and dictate their neocolonial rules to others.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the Security Council session spoke assertively in reference to children who have gone missing, been abducted, are being concealed and starved. Lavrov called them allegations, issues without substantiation.

Lavrov, later at the media conference, attributed the conflict in his country’s backyard to the West’s years-long efforts to transform Ukraine into anti-Russia, while stressing Russia’s policy in a multipolar architecture and, in principle, that strictly seeks adherence for global peace and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.

## **Putin Decrees ‘Special Military Operation’ in Ukraine**

On 24 February 2022, Russian President declared the ‘Special Military Operation’ in Ukraine. In his nation-wide address, Putin emphasized that over the past 30 years have been patiently trying to come to an agreement with the leading NATO countries regarding the principles of equal and indivisible security in Europe.

In the middle of the long speech that February 24, Putin indicated that one could say, with good reason and confidence, that the whole so-called Western bloc formed by the United States in its own image and likeness, in its entirety, the very same “empire of lies.”

“Despite all that, in December 2021, we made yet another attempt to reach agreement with the United States and its allies on the principles of European security and NATO’s non-expansion. The United States has not changed its position. It does not believe it necessary to agree with Russia on a matter that is critical for us. The United States is pursuing its own objectives, while neglecting our interests,” Putin stressed.

He further pointed:

“As for military affairs, even after the dissolution of the USSR and losing a considerable part of its capabilities, today’s Russia remains one of the most powerful nuclear states. Moreover, it has a certain advantage in several cutting-edge weapons. In this context, there should be no doubt for anyone that any potential aggressor will face defeat and ominous consequences should it directly attack on Russia.”

For the United States and its allies, it is a policy of containing Russia, with obvious geopolitical dividends. For Russia, it is a matter of life and death, a matter of historical future as a nation. This is not an exaggeration; this is a fact. It is not only a very real threat to Russia’s interests but to the very existence of the state and to its sovereignty. It is the red line. They have crossed it.

In this context, in accordance with Article 51 (Chapter VII) of the UN Charter, with permission of Russia’s Federation Council, and in execution of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic, ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 22, I made a decision to carry out a special military operation, Putin declared ‘Special Military Operation’ on Ukraine.

The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. To this end, Russia would seek to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation. The officers of Russia’s Armed Forces would perform their duty with professionalism and courage. It is not Russia’s plan to occupy the Ukrainian territory.

## **Cost of Russia’s ‘Special Military Operation’ in Ukraine**

Forbes media has reported that Russia already spent over US\$167 billion on war against Ukraine.

“In a year and a half since the start of its full-scale invasion, Russia spent about US\$167.3 billion on the war against Ukraine, of which US\$34 billion worth of equipment were destroyed by Ukraine’s Armed Forces alone,” it reported.

Source: Forbes calculations based on data from the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Details: According to Forbes, Russia spends about US\$300 million a day on its war against Ukraine.

Direct military spending and the cost of Russia's lost equipment over 18 months of the war (from 24 February 2022 to 24 August 2023) is about US\$167.3 billion. This estimate does not include constant defence spending not related to military operations, as well as economic losses of the aggressor country.

The largest items of expenditure: ensuring military operations (US\$51.3 billion), salaries of the servicemen (US\$35.1 billion), compensation to the families of the dead (US\$25.6 billion) and wounded (US\$21 billion) and the cost of destroyed equipment (US\$34 billion).

After the rapid fall of the ruble, the "cost" of the Russian soldier for the budget of the Russian Federation decreased significantly. If for 2022 the total payments per one serviceman were about US\$200 per day, now it is about US\$120 per day.

The level of Russian losses in recent months has remained at a significantly higher level than last year, according to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Accordingly, Russia is forced to spend more on compensation to the families. The cost of compensation to the family of the deceased in the Russian Federation was about US\$110,000, now it is only about US\$65,000. The amount of compensation to the wounded, respectively, decreased from US\$45,000 to US\$27,000.

The main item of expenditure of the Russian Federation on the war in Ukraine is ammunition and military support of the army. The total cost of this is US\$51.34 billion. At the same time, the Russians spent over US\$9 billion on providing for Russian artillery in a year and a half of the great war. The total cost of missiles fired on the territory of Ukraine has already reached a hefty sum of more than US\$21.1 billion.

In September 2022, the State Duma (lower house of Russia's parliament) and the Federation Council (upper house) approved legislation on ratifying treaties, as well as federal constitutional laws on the accession of the four regions to Russia.

On February 24, Russian President Putin said in a televised address that in response to a request by the heads of the Donbass republics he had decided to carry out a special military operation to protect people "who have been suffering from abuse and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years" and Putin explained - "demilitarization and denazification" in Ukraine, approved by the State Duma and Federation Council of the Russian Federation.

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