



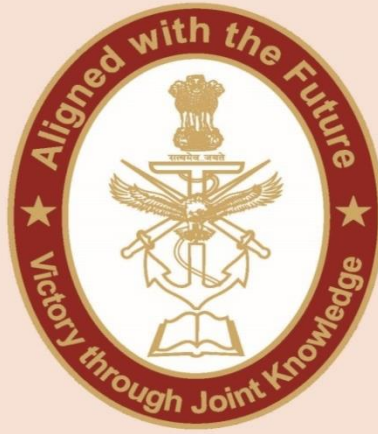
WEB ARTICLE

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NORD STREAM PIPELINE SABOTAGE: THE LESSON IT REPEATS

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Introduction

The use of nuclear weapon during WWII started the discourse on the concepts of nuclear proliferation, disarmament and deterrence, as possessing nuclear weapons was regarded to be extraordinary. However, as conflicts in Iraq, the Gulf States, and even South Sudan made headlines, and now Ukraine and Russia, the debate over wars has changed the discourse from nuclear to energy security. Commonality of all these conflicts has originated from the quest for territorial ambitions. The ability to manage and disrupt energy resources has come to define a powerful nation.

On September 26, 2022, the Danish and Swedish authorities announced the damage to the Nord Stream Pipeline 1 (NS1) and Nord Stream Pipeline 2 (NS2) as a result of explosions in the Baltic Sea. The construction of NS1 and NS2 began in 2011 and 2018, respectively. The gas leaks were stopped within a week in both the pipelines, but the attack on them has been reported as a potential 'sabotage' and the identity of the so-called saboteurs has remained a mystery. This has changed the narrative on the conflict that started on 24th February 2022, between Russia and Ukraine. This damage to the pipeline has highlighted the

problem of energy security, especially in light of the upcoming winters in Europe and has re-flagged the consequences of leveraging energy security as a means of hybrid warfare followed by the ecological implications of this damage.

In his renowned book "*On War*", Carl Von Clausewitz had claimed that any Commander can pick "the kind of war they want to embark upon" and that war is an instrument of politics. In the end, war is just a simple blending of tactics and strategy, which is why hybrid warfare has an advantage in terms of cost-effectiveness.¹ This connects the imminent threat to Europe's energy security with Russian President Putin's orders to attack Ukraine's sovereignty.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is now being fought with both conventional and unconventional weapons, with energy security serving as the unconventional one. At the strategic level, on 21st September, 2022, President Putin ordered a partial mobilisation of nuclear weapons and increased funding of weapons production.² The ties between Russia and the European Union have been historically tumultuous and yet Europe's reliance on Russia for energy needs had been drastically increasing even before the conflict. A country or region's energy security can be simply defined as the uninterrupted flow of resources and securing 'affordable' energy supplies. The Russian foot on the soil of a sovereign territory, i.e. Ukraine, is changing the lenses of both warfare and sustainability of energy requirements.

While President Joe Biden's administration moved quickly to impose sanctions on Russian oil exports, the impending winter and Russia's control over the most important gas supply line, the widely discussed Nord Stream Pipeline, were both underestimated by the West and its European

¹ Jarrod, B. (2020), "Clausewitz, The Trinity, And The Utility of Hybrid War", [Online: Web] Accessed 12 October 2022. URL: <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2020/9/15/clausewitz-the-trinity-and-the-utility-of-hybrid-war>

² Manpreet, S. (2022), "What if? Prospects And Consequences of Nuclear Use by President Putin", [Online: Web] Accessed 6 October 2022. URL: <https://capsindia.org/what-if-prospects-and-consequences-of-nuclear-use-by-president-putin/>

allies. This article explores Europe's energy crisis and how it has become a tool of warfare in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Nord Stream Pipeline(s): Europe's Elixir

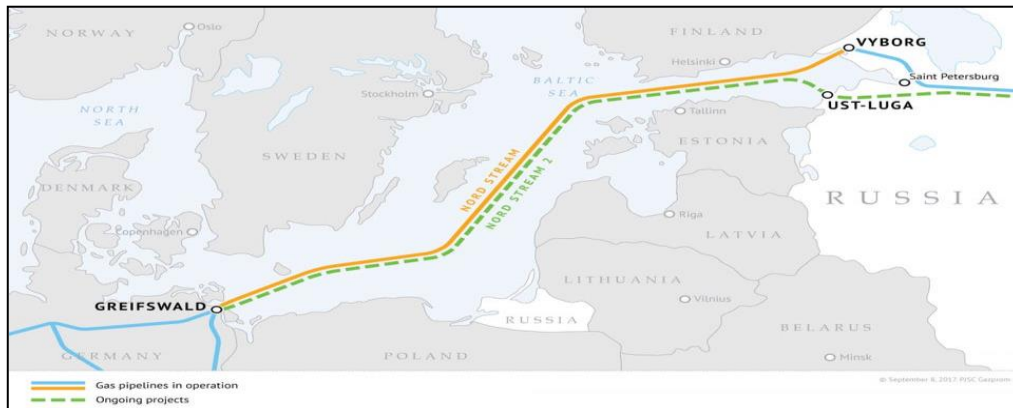
The global trends of politics and business enmesh each other when discussing energy. Europe's most diverse and resourceful pipeline(s); NS1 and NS2 had been stirring debates when the conflict between Russia and Ukraine started. The sanctions and disruption of gas flow from NS1 had compelled the EU to implement alternative projects and proposals to pursue its energy requirements. Gas flow from Russia to Europe via NS1 stands at a total consumption rate of 40%³ with Germany consuming 55%⁴ of it. The Nord Stream Pipeline(s) is at the centre of business and politics in the European Union's energy sector.

- (a) **NS1**. This pipeline connects Vyborg in Russia to Lubmin in Germany and runs under the Baltic Sea. The pipeline runs in close proximity to the EEZs of Germany, Finland and Sweden, although constructed in international waters. The NS1 is at the centre of business and politics in the European Union's energy sector with a potential of supplying 170m cubic meters of gas per day. The Pipeline was first constructed in the 2000s as a means of ensuring Europe's energy security and was then known as the 'North European Gas Pipeline.' In 2001, a consortium was formed, with Russia's Gazprom, receiving the majority of the project's shares. The corporation still controls and decides what happens to the pipelines and Europe's energy supply today.⁵

³ Raghav, A. (2022), "What is Nord Stream 1 Pipeline, And Why It Is Critical For Europe?", [Online: Web] Accessed 12 October 2022. URL: https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/what-is-nord-stream-1-pipeline-and-why-is-it-critical-for-europe-122083100563_1.html#:~:text=Nord%20Stream%20is%20the%20biggest%20pipeline%20transporting%20natural%20gas,is%20majorly%20owned%20by%20Gazprom.

⁴ Phillip, O. (2022), "How Reliant Is Germany- And Rest Of Europe-On Russian Gas?", [Online: Web] Accessed 4 October 2022. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/21/how-reliant-is-germany-and-europe-russian-gas-nord-stream>

⁵ Wikipedia, s.v "Nord Stream 1", last modified 11 October 2022, 13:51, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nord_Stream_1



Source: Forbes

- (b) **NS2.** The plan for its construction had started long back in 2011 as an alternative to NS1. The NS2 runs parallelly to NS1 from Russia to Germany. The construction project, although opposed by the US was given huge support by Germany, who had given due certification of the project. However, when Russian President Putin declared Donetsk and Luhansk as part of the Russian federation, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz forfeited the certification and operation of NS2.
- (c) **The Proposed Southern Gas Corridor:** Surprisingly, there was a moment in recent history when Europe proposed the "Southern Gas Corridor," also known as the Nabucco Pipeline, as a way to lessen its reliance on energy supplies from Russia.⁶ In 2002, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey came to a political agreement on a project that would cross the Caspian Sea and end at the southernmost point of Austria. The US gave the project strong assistance, and Iraq was listed as one of the project's primary suppliers. To counter the Southern Gas Corridor, Russia launched its South Stream Pipeline project that would carry gas from Russia through the Black Sea to Austria. Both projects failed and US's ambition to create a counter for Nord Stream was thus never pursued.

⁶ Boyeka Stefanova, "European Strategies for Energy Security in the Natural Gas Market," *Journal of Strategic Security* Vol. 5, No. 3 (2012): 51-68, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26463950>

Thereby, Russia and its state-owned multinational gas cooperation, Gazprom, were left with a monopoly market with USA's biggest allies in the region.

Energy crisis in Europe has been eminent in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.⁷ The US and its European allies had imposed few sanctions and the diversification of energy supply channels had come to the fore. It is only after the attack carried by Russia on Ukraine on 24th February, 2022, that the problems of Europe's energy crisis amplified.

Further, when NS1 was operating with full force, Gazprom already had enormous leverage to dominate the European energy market and even before the conflict started on a full scale, Gazprom had been reducing energy imports to Europe. This dependence was not at all anticipated by the United States for mainly two reasons:

- Gazprom's hold on providing energy security to Europe was estimated to be more than \$100 billion and this meant that despite a good military alliance Europe was not ready to buy from the US.
- The never-ending contentions between the US and Russia had always put weight in the discourse of energy alternatives for Europe.

Weaponizing Nord Stream

Post 24th February 2022, the US and EU imposed sanctions on Russia. Thereafter, as a response, Gazprom had reduced gas supply to Europe by 40% in June and further by 20% in July 2022⁸. Recently, the gas giant had

⁷ Ankita, D. (2022), "Assessing Europe's Spiralling Energy Crisis", [Online: Web] Accessed 6 October 2022. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/assessing-europes-spiralling-energy-crisis/#:~:text=The%20energy%20crisis%20deepened%20with,of%20natural%20gas%20in%20Europe.>

⁸ Alexander, P. (2022), "Could Russia Move First To Halt Oil Exports?", [Online: Web] Accessed 10 October 2022. URL: [https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/87209#:~:text=Russia%20is%20the%20biggest%20exporter,International%20Energy%20Agency%20\(IEA\).](https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/87209#:~:text=Russia%20is%20the%20biggest%20exporter,International%20Energy%20Agency%20(IEA).)

issued a maintenance notice for halting operations temporarily, but it never opened supplies at full scale. A reverse effect to the sanctions was tried by Russia when it had asked the EU to make payments for gas in Roubles, but no resolution came about. Later, Russia started controlling the supplies being pumped into Europe via NS1. This escalated a sense of fear in the European Union because if one were to merely look at the consumption rate of Germany, one would see that the allocation of gas to the nations of the European Union is grossly unequal. The unfit demand of energy in the EU was the rationale behind why not all member states agreed for sanctions on Russian oil and gas. Oil importing countries like Slovakia, Hungary and Czech Republic are more hit due to the ban of Russian oil imports, but the other EU countries are less dependent on Russia for oil.⁹ Since the gas leaks have been extensively monitored, it is possible to conclude that this incident heralds the development of a new layer of hybrid warfare. Commentators from all around the world have claimed that Russia is sabotaging the situation, similar to what it did during the Cold War when it deployed underwater military submarines.¹⁰

It is imperative to take into account the prospect of remote submarine drone assault, self-propelled mines, or even unmanned underwater vehicles. The notion that Russia could harm its pipelines, though, doesn't seem very likely. But the disclosures may be part of a plot known as a 'false flag' operation because from a military perspective, the explosions might also be considered a move to initiate maritime strategies in international waters.¹¹ Dmitry Peskov, the spokeswoman for the Kremlin, dismissed all accusations against Russia as "absurd" and demanded an investigation. If one were to consider this possibility, Russia could be deploying a 'wedging strategy' not only to break Ukraine but also the rest of the European Union, by carrying out similar acts of sabotage on other pipelines.¹²

⁹ Ibid.,

¹⁰ Meredith Primrose Jones and Sascha-Dominik (Dov) Bachmann (2022), "Hybrid Warfare: Nord Stream Attack Show How War is Evolving", [Online: Web] Accessed 7 October 2022. URL:<https://theconversation.com/hybrid-warfare-nord-stream-attacks-show-how-war-is-evolving-191764>

¹¹ Ibid.,

¹² The Economist (2022), "Putin At Bay", [Online: Web] Accessed 11 October 2022. URL:<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:49e60cf3-f44e-3b00-8d81-e58bf5e1ae1d>

Russia, on the other hand, has accused the US of causing breaks in the Nord Stream Pipeline and has alleged that this gives the US an opportunity to persuade European nations to purchase energy from the US. Oil production in Texas has increased dramatically, with local labour firms encouraged to continue drilling for oil. Could this sabotage be carried out by the US? Possible, primarily due to its desire to join the European market and descend suddenly. But leading NATO strategists and maritime specialists have asserted that it was doubtful that the US or any ally nation would carry out such an attack.

The manoeuvring of the pipelines by Russia have resulted in a recession on the EU and also the world, even before the incident of sabotage was reported. Being the largest consumer of gas from NS1, Germany is choking with inflated prices of international manufactured goods.¹³ The inflation in gas prices have almost soared upto 30% and the cost of living doubled in Europe, pushing it towards recession. The inflation is an outcome of the energy prices that kept increasing after the sanctions on Russian oil and gas. France, Spain and Italy, the largest economies after Germany have had modest growth but continue to remain in a tight spot.¹⁴ The United Kingdom does not import any Russian gas but remains affected largely due to the inflated prices in the international market and with no agreement being reached on capping gas prices. As the winter approaches, the EU has decided that each member state reduce its gas usage by 1.5%. The dependency on Russian gas is bearing a cost on the environment as countries like Germany have started reusing coal to keep the power stations running.¹⁵

For Europe, this is indeed crisis time with a severe winter approaching ahead. There are several alternatives to Nord Stream, mainly the Yamal-

¹³ Ibid.,

¹⁴ Jonathan, C. (2022), "Europe Heading For Recession As Cost Of Living Crisis Deepens", [Online: Web] Accessed 10 October 2022. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/europe-heading-recession-cost-living-crisis-deepens-2022-09-05/>

¹⁵ BBC, (2022), "Nord Stream 1: How Russia Is Cutting Gas Supplies To Europe", [Online: Web] Accessed 10 October 2022. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60131520>

Europe Pipeline, but the sustainability of supply is questionable given that Russia has already put sanctions on the Poland side of the Yamal pipeline. Apart from that Europe could meet its energy requirements from the Trans Adriatic Pipeline or may even import from Norway, Denmark, Netherlands or even the US.

Amidst all the fiasco, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) have reduced its growth forecast from 3.1% to 2.7% for 2022 and 2.5% for 2023¹⁶. The organization is said to have evaluated this based on the prevailing uncertainty that has arisen as a result of inflation across global economies.

Takeaways

While the perpetrator of this alleged sabotage is yet to be established, the major takeaway is that energy security can be used as a tool of hybrid warfare and serves as a reminder to understand how international institutions, conventional war methods and regional alliances have failed to provide resolutions to the present crisis. Some observations are listed:

- After the end of World War II and the failure of 'League of Nations', countries reinstated their faith in the institutionalisation of a multipolar organization called the United Nations Organizations. The mandate of the UN Charter was fabricated to ensure no future disputes arise at a war level, and if there are disputes all member-states must engage to devise solutions multilaterally. But what appears is that the UN and multilateralism, are both under challenge.
- The war being fought in Ukraine is leaving an impact on economies across the globe because of the energy crisis it has triggered. The disruption of gas exports in Europe will have a global economic downgrading rate of 6%¹⁷ as estimated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The World Bank recently projected that growth rates for

¹⁶ Alex, L. (2022), "OPEC Cuts 2022, 2023 Oil Demand Growth View As Economy Slows", [Online: Web] Accessed 13 October 2022. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/opec-cuts-2022-2023-oil-demand-growth-view-economy-slows-2022-10-12/>

¹⁷ Ibid.,

all nations are likely to be impacted. For example, India is going to come down to 6.5% from the earlier 7.5%¹⁸, though the FDI figures for India for 2023 is promising to be a whopping 6.1%.

- Nuclear sabre rattling has been used by Russia against Ukraine that has no nuclear weapons. The actual use of nuclear weapons can bring consequences that might be of economic, ecological, humanitarian and socio-political magnitude. Therefore, steps should be taken in favour of deterrence and this episode is a lesson to ensure that the presence of nuclear weapons should be constrained and ideas of non-proliferation, deterrence and disarmament be emboldened.
- Climate change and the ecological implications of war cannot remain ignored. Satellite images of the leaks have revealed that the intensity of methane release from the leaks have formed swirls of bubbles and the consequences are certainly far reaching.¹⁹ Though gas was blocked in the Nord Stream Pipeline almost a month ago, but at the time of explosion the pipes carried an amount of gas completely unknown to any party. The Danish Energy Agency has calculated that the amount of methane released is equivalent to 32% of Denmark's annual methane emission.

¹⁸ DHNS, (2022), "India's Economic Picture is Darkening", [Online: Web] Accessed 11 October 2022. URL: <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/first-edit/indias-economic-picture-is-darkening-1152453.html>

¹⁹ ESA (2022), The European Space Agency (Paris), "Satellites detect methane plume in Nord Stream leak", 6 October 2022, URL: https://www.esa.int/Applications/Observing_the_Earth/Satellites_detect_methane_plume_in_Nord_Stream_leak



Gas Leak Methane Enhancement detected by GHGSat, Source: European Space Agency

Conclusion

The spate of conflicts spanning countries like South Sudan-Nigeria, Syria-ISIS, and now Ukraine-Russia have highlighted that these wars are all attributable to the dimension of energy security and serves as a reminder that these conflicts are a tool of hybrid warfare. However, the roots of the conflicts have arisen due to land sovereignty.

The impact of the damages to the Nord Stream Pipelines have amplified that energy security is linked to the facets of economy, environment and highlights the absence of a strong consensus amongst the stakeholders. The narrative on how the conflict was previously understood and viewed has been completely transformed by the pipeline, which crosses international land and maritime borders. The fact that these ruptures were state-centric, however, means any state can launch and weaponize unconventional warfare instruments in the future.

India needs to face the challenges resulting from the crisis. Firstly, the socio-political situation in Europe presents an opportunity for India, particularly with an approaching Presidency for G20, SCO and the UNSC. Secondly, at the diplomatic level, India can reflag these issues at the multilateral level which appears to be under threat as of now. India, since the start of war has remained neutral and this gives more credibility for India to raise these issues under its Presidency in these organizations and solve the crisis with dialogue and diplomacy. Thirdly, another major takeaway is the attention to how the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been folding when it comes to the use of nuclear weapons and that such

weapons may not be at all useful for any nation seeking to advance its political and military objectives. The world is accurately noticing a shift in employing and deploying conventional warfare methods. Here, India must learn that such tactics could be employed being a nuclear armed country and sharing its borders with two other nuclear neighbours.

The war in Ukraine has compelled Europe to fast track diversification of energy supply channels from a long-term perspective. In March 2022, the European Commission had launched the 'RePowerEU'²⁰ initiative to implement three objectives, namely, producing clean energy, saving energy and diversifying supply channels. The initiative's progress will depend on multiple factors, mostly on switching instantly from fossil fuel sources to clean energy sources and Europe's geographical location puts it under a tough spot to harness clean energy sources. Governments across the EU have started to reverse decisions on 'revival of nuclear plants' to harness nuclear energy as a source of clean energy. The aftermath of Russia's actions in Ukraine have revealed that the world is becoming 'receptive to nuclear'.²¹

Alternate sources of energy cannot be discussed without not considering the climate factor. The leaks have already raised concerns about the level of methane gas being exposed to the atmosphere and the seabed. However, it is not impossible to find alternate sources albeit short term solutions remain challenging. The Nord Stream pipeline leaks have once again the use of energy security as a tool of hybrid warfare.

CERTIFICATE

The paper is author's individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article is original in content, unpublished and it has not

²⁰ EC (2022), European Commission (Brussels), "REPowerEU: Affordable, Secure and Sustainable Energy For Europe", 18 May 2022, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_en

²¹ Zerohedge, (2022), "Japan Plans To Restart Seven Nuclear Reactors By Summer 2023", [Online: Web] Accessed 13 October 2022. URL: <https://oilprice.com/Alternative-Energy/Nuclear-Power/Japan-Plans-To-Restart-Seven-Nuclear-Reactors-By-Summer-2023.html>

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