Green Energy for World Peace

What is the issue?

The territorial control over resource rich regions has been a driving force for the episodes of war, disruption and inflation.

What is the role of fossil fuels in causing wars?

- Large quantities of fossil fuels are concentrated in tiny geographical pockets.
- The urge to control these regions rich in reserves of coal, oil, and natural gas forms the sum and substance of foreign policy worldwide.
- Conflicts also suddenly start when there is a temporary change in the balance of power, breaking the earlier equations of peace.

Historical overview

- **Occupation of the Ruhr (1923-1925)** - French and Belgian troops occupied the minerally and industrially rich Ruhr region, as Germany had stopped sending coal to France.
- This led to the crash of the German currency and the economy, which eventually led to the start of World War II.
- **Invasion of Kuwait** - Ownership of petroleum became the focus of another global conflict when Saddam Hussein invaded neighbouring Kuwait.
- **Annexation of Crimea (2014)** - The Russian invasion of Crimea was related to control over oil and natural gas reserves in the Black Sea region.
- **Russia-Ukraine War** - The Donbas region has rich coal reserves.
- The Dnieper-Donetsk region and the Black Sea of Azov are a rich source of natural gas, an important input for manufacturing fertilisers.

What are the impacts?

- **Energy prices** - Russia and Ukraine claiming rights over these territories have led to highly volatile energy prices, hurting the world economy.
- **Stagflation** - The Yom-Kippur war of 1973 and the subsequent Saudi embargo, leading to worldwide stagflation.
- **Inflation** - During 1974, the inflation in U.S. skyrocketed as there was a second oil crisis in 1979 with the start of the Iran-Iraq war.
- **Appreciation of dollar** - Many countries including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, UK and Argentina are suffering because of an appreciating dollar, an outcome of a hawkish monetary policy.

How do renewables contribute to world peace?

- Unlike fossil fuels, which are characterised by the uneven geographical distribution of natural reserves, renewable energy is abundant across regions.
- By decentralising the energy structure, the energy autonomy of countries can be improved thereby reducing the current conflicts and preventing the new ones.
- A transition to renewable energy can support better institutions and governance structures through energy democracy.
- Energy democracy goes beyond national security of energy supply to bringing energy resources and infrastructure under public or community ownership or control.
- The renewable energy transition will benefit the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which in turn will contribute to the maintenance of peace.

What lies ahead?

> *According to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century.*

- A five-point plan has been proposed by UN Secretary-General to boost renewable energy around the world.
    1. Renewable energy technology must be made a **global public good** by removing intellectual property barriers to technology transfer.
    2. Global **access to supply chains** for renewable energy technologies components and raw materials must be improved.
    3. The **red tape** that holds up solar and wind projects must be cut off and **fast-track approvals** and more effort to modernize electricity grids are needed.
    4. The world must **shift energy subsidies** from fossil fuels to protect vulnerable people from energy shocks and invest in a just transition to sustainable future.
    5. **Investments in renewables** must be tripled.

References

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