Russia-Ukraine Conflict

What is the issue?

- The recent stand-off between Russia and Ukraine has again captured headlines in the international news media.
- The current geopolitical situation appears to be complex due to the indirect involvement of multiple stakeholders, including the US, Turkey and the NATO.

What is the current tensions on?

- Increased tensions between Ukraine and Russia can be viewed as a continuation of the unresolved conflict of 2014.
- Since then, the 'illegal annexation of Crimea' has been an issue.
- Russia has been criticised for its involvement in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine.
- There, Russian-backed separatists have been fighting with Ukrainian troops.
- Recently, Moscow has allegedly deployed thousands of troops as well as tanks and artillery near Ukraine's eastern border.
- It has also mobilised troops in the annexed Black Sea region of Crimea.
- This has sent shock waves in Ukraine, forcing it to appeal to the U.S. and NATO for an intervention, if needed.

What is the level of support for Ukraine?

- **NATO** - Dealing with Russia, a powerful and unpredictable neighbour, forces Ukraine to rely on NATO/U.S. military support.
- NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed dissatisfaction at Russia's present considerable military build-up.
- He underlined that NATO would continue to provide significant political and practical support to Ukraine.
- The question though is how far the NATO alliance can go in its support, given that Ukraine has not yet obtained membership.
- In June 2020, NATO recognised Ukraine as an Enhanced Opportunities Partner, along with Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, and Sweden.
- The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has also used the current

tension as an opportunity to push for NATO membership.

- **U.S.** - The U.S., under Biden administration, has taken a more resolute stance towards this conflict.
- Unlike his predecessors, U.S. President Joe Biden seems to be less apprehensive about provoking Russia.
- He is ready to support militarily for the 'independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine', if need arises.
- **Turkey** - Notably, Turkey also seems to stand by Ukraine amidst the current tensions with Russia.
- Notably, Turkey has not acted in synchrony with Russia during several conflicts, e.g., in Syria, Libya, and, most recently, in Nagorno-Karabakh.

What is a key concern in the conflict?

- The cornerstone of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is insufficient communication.
- This applies especially on the part of Vladimir Putin's Russia.
- Russia's tactical decisions towards Ukraine comes with many unanswered questions.
- This creates room for misinterpretations and exaggerations on the part of Ukraine and its western supporters.

What is Russia's possible rationale?

- From the Russian perspective, the current 'military build-up' can be viewed as another round of display of a powerful and capable Russia.
- Russian President Vladmir Putin possesses enough diplomatic (and pragmatic) skills not to indulge in yet another geopolitical endeavour.
- As, this might entail serious repercussions from the international community.

What is the way forward?

- Both countries do need support from the global community, but not in a military form.
- All the stakeholders in the ongoing crisis should focus on establishing a constructive dialogue among themselves.
- The only way forward is to seek a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- There is thus a need for a platform (similarly to the Minsk Agreements).
- This should facilitate negotiation, mutual consensus and possible compromises, as well as engagement with mediators.

Source: The Hindu

