

How Ukraine Crisis Has Impacted The World?

—By Wing Commander Dinesh Mathur, VSM (Retd.)

While a discussion can be conducted between two individuals, a group discussion involves more number of people. The basic purpose of a group discussion is usually to reach a solution on an issue of concern by exchange of ideas, and its main advantage is that during the process of a group discussion, many new ideas are generated to resolve issues. Though a group discussion remains an important activity in almost all social, official or corporate interactions, 'selection group discussions' are conducted to screen as well as select candidates for entry-level jobs and admissions to top institutes in India. Group discussion is a method used by the companies and organisations to check whether the candidates have the requisite personality and skills that are considered a must for members of the organisation. Moreover, certain personality traits which may not be clearly visible to assessors during written tests and personal interviews, can be easily assessed during a group discussion. Some qualities, which are easily observed during a group discussion are: Communication Skills, Listening Skills, Team Work, Assertiveness, Leadership, Awareness and Understanding of the Subject, etc.

Ten candidates were called for a group discussion during the process of selection to select managers in a Multi-National Corporate. Candidates arrived formally dressed and on arrival, they were allotted Identification Numbers. These Identification Numbers were displayed on their shirts to make sure these Numbers were visible from a distance. Candidates were told to call each other by these Numbers and NOT names. Thereafter, they were made to sit in a semi-circle, so that the three assessors could listen and observe their Body Language closely. Subsequently, they were given a detailed briefing with regard to dos and don'ts during the conduct of the group discussion. They were also informed that they were at liberty to speak as much as they wished, but they should make sure that all candidates got a chance to express their ideas on the topic of discussion. Further, it was also



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expected that they will speak in an orderly fashion, which meant that only one person would speak at a time. Candidates were then given three topics, and they were asked to select one for discussion by mutual consent of all candidates. The above topic was chosen by these candidates for a group discussion. Finally, candidates were informed that the discussion should be concluded in 20-25 minutes.

Thereafter, the group discussion proceeded in the following manner:

Candidate Number 10 : Good morning friends. Hope all of you are doing fine this morning. I am sure all of you are keen to speak on this topic, which is being enthusiastically discussed all over the world. We all know that Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. While Russia has defended her drastic action by arguing that this was necessary in the interest of her own security, which was threatened if Ukraine had joined North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), most other countries of the world, led by the US and some Western nations, bitterly criticised Russia. While the issue was repeatedly discussed and debated in the

United Nations, the US and other countries imposed sanctions on Russia. I am sure you would agree that all these developments have impacted the whole world in so many ways. It has brought to focus some major shifts in geopolitical scenario of the world and significant changes in the ways most important global institutions operate. It has also highlighted the big power politics and how it affects the entire world, both politically and economically. Friends, we are needed to discuss all these aspects during this group discussion.

Candidate No. 3 : I think Number 10 has introduced the topic quite well. Yes, we are witnessing quite a few serious repercussions of this unfortunate development. Let's start.

Candidate No. 1 : Before we talk about the impact of Ukraine crisis, let me highlight some interesting facts pertaining to this issue. The Ukraine crisis has changed some international relations and rules. It is argued that the US was also instrumental in pushing Ukraine into this war, but now the US is not in a position to protect it from the Russian onslaught. And certainly, Russia's plans to punish Ukraine in a particular manner have also not worked out. At the same time, Ukraine feels betrayed by her friends and somehow wants to end this war. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has even said recently, that Ukraine would not join NATO. Many now feel that, had he said this earlier, may be this war could have been avoided altogether. The Ukraine crisis has changed basic framework of relations between a number of countries including India. In particular, India's relations with the West and the US have found some new grounds for strategic and trade cooperation.

Candidate No. 7 : Friends, I think, at the outset, we must talk about the humanitarian issues caused by this crisis. It has been reported that after the Second World War, largest number of refugees have been displaced due to this war in Europe. While about 5.6 million refugees have left Ukraine, some 7.7 million were forced to leave their homes

to take refuge in other parts of the country. In fact, about 30% of Ukrainian population has been displaced. As per the UN estimates, by the end of this year, about 8.3 million Ukrainians would fall in the category of refugees. A number of neighbouring and other countries of Ukraine, especially Poland, have given shelter to these refugees. Thus, Ukrainian war has caused major humanitarian crisis.

Candidate No. 9 : Yes, I quite agree with No. 7. But, I am sure there are many other consequences of this war, including economic impacts, which are really serious.

Candidate No. 10 : I think the next major consequence of this crisis is the increase in the prices of commodities, essential goods and other items all over the world. Unfortunately, this price rise has hurt the poor of all countries really hard. In this regard, energy and food items are of primary concern, as higher prices of these items have pushed up the global inflation further. Disrupted trade and supply chains are causing problems in availability of goods all over the world. Russia and Ukraine are major producers of oil, wheat and natural gas. Food costs have increased substantially, as Russia and Ukraine make up for about 30% of global wheat exports. This may lead to unrest in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and even Central Asia, and food insecurity in parts of Middle East and Africa. In fact, in long term, this war may impact the world economic order.

Candidate No. 1 : I would like to highlight that many nations have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia. We are aware that Russia is a major source of natural gas imports for many countries. This war would impair financial trade and other dealings, which would ultimately lead to recession in Europe and other parts of the world and cause lowering of living standards of population in a number of countries. Eastern Europe is witnessing a refugee surge and high financial costs, as it has absorbed a good number of 3 million people who have fled Ukraine in the recent past. European banks have also dealings with Russia, which are getting adversely impacted.

Candidate No. 5 : You have covered the impact of this crisis in European countries. But, what about Asia and Middle East?

Candidate No. 7 : Yes, quite right, it is having consequences in Asian and other countries of the Middle East and North Africa as well. Russia's recession and sanctions have impacted nations beyond Europe because of the resultant slower global economy and disruptions

in trade and payment systems. It has also had extremely adverse consequence on tourism industry of some nations. For instance, Egypt imports about 80% of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia and is also a popular tourist destination for both. Further, it is also feared that rising prices may increase social tensions in certain countries, which have few job opportunities and not-so popular governments. It will have a heavy toll on major exporters. Higher energy prices have raised India's inflation and which is already at a much higher level than expected.

Candidate No. 10 : Yes, very correct. In view of these repercussions of this war, recently IMF Managing Director has appealed to all nations to deal with this situation collectively to absorb the ensuing shocks. This development has made containing inflation and economic recovery from the pandemic much more difficult for a large number of countries.

Candidate No. 8 : I think No. 7 and No. 10 have described the situation quite well.

Candidate No. 1 : I would like to add that as per current estimates, on an average, food prices might rise by about 45% in 2022 and this price increase could push millions of people into poverty in a number of lower and middle-income group countries. Unfortunately, these nations will additionally be affected by other impacts of war including a slowdown in global trade, currency depreciation and their increasing debt loads.

Candidate No. 9 : I feel we have dealt with economic impacts of this crisis fairly in detail. Let us now discuss other aspects of this situation.

Candidate No. 3 : I think the next issue to be talked about should be the shift in energy policy of a number of nations.

Candidate No. 7 : Yes, this war has made European nations have an urgent relook at their dependence on Russian energy sources. In fact, for some time now, Europe has come to depend heavily on Russia for energy sources like coal, crude oil, fuel oil, and particularly, natural gas. Last year, European nations imported approximately 36% of the gas it used from Russia, and also 30% of its coal and 10% of its crude oil. Germany and Italy imported about 65% and 43% of its gas respectively from Russia. Now, as a consequence of this war, Europe is working to get gas supplies from nations other than Russia, by importing more liquefied natural gas and generating more bio-fuel among other options. Despite these measures, as of now, it appears

that Europe may still need some Russian energy to meet its large demand.

Candidate No. 2 : Can some friend talk about some other repercussions of Ukraine crisis?

Candidate No. 10 : I feel another big issue is the disruption of global food production system. As a matter of fact, Russia and Ukraine together produce about one third of the world's most essential ingredients, which are needed to produce fertilisers. Additionally, they also supply roughly 30% of global exports of wheat and barley, 65% of sunflower seed oil and 15% of corn. Immediately after the invasion, prices of a number of food items rose by 20% to 50%. Countries which got directly affected are mainly in Central and Western Asia, Middle East, North America, Syria and Yemen, etc.

Candidate No. 4 : I think No. 10 has given good input about issues regarding food production system.

Candidate No. 1 : I want to talk about interruption in global trade and problems in supply of critical material and equipment. Russia and Ukraine export huge amounts of coal, steel and nickel, etc., and their combined share of these markets range between 10% to 50%. These materials are essentially needed by a number of industries like, automobile industry, etc. Materials like aluminium, copper and steel are now available at a much higher price, causing difficulties for manufacturers. Therefore, industries are finding new sources to procure raw materials and also identify new supply channels.

Candidate No. 7 : I wish to highlight a very significant issue which deals with spending of countries on defence preparedness. Consequent to Ukraine invasion, 15 NATO nations and Sweden have already announced increased defence spending. Countries now realise the need to prepare themselves to defend, if need arises, and not depend on other countries for help when they are threatened or invaded. Even in India, especially after Ukraine crisis, there has been talk of modernising and making our armed forces stronger and strengthening our domestic defence industry. Countries are considering to spend more money on the defence R & D projects to become self-sufficient to meet significant defence requirements.

Candidate No. 10 : I think yet another issue that deserves mention is the withdrawal of corporates from Russia immediately after Ukraine crisis. As per reports, out of about 280 Fortune 500 companies, which were operating in Russia, almost 70% have either left or scaled down their operations in that country. To illustrate, after 30 years of

operation, McDonald's, which owns 850 restaurants in Russia, has decided to sell its Russian business. Similarly, Western car maker Renault has agreed to give up its stake in the Russian auto company. Withdrawal of corporates will also lead to humanitarian crisis as these corporates employ thousands of ordinary citizens.

Candidate No. 1 : Friends, I feel the worst outcome of Ukraine war is the fact that it leaves behind a world of distrust. It would now force countries to be on their own as there is growing feeling that they can't depend on others to deal with any crisis. This is, in fact, the antithesis of globalisation. Even countries, like Switzerland which remained neutral during the two World Wars, could not remain neutral in this West vs Rest situation. India was much criticised by the US and other countries, since it took a neutral stand and did not speak against Russia.

Candidate No. 5 : Can somebody talk about the geo-political fall-out of this war also?

Candidate No. 7 : Yes, I would like to add that this war has somewhat lowered the image of the US as a global leader. The US was ineffective to either help Ukraine or end this war. The US President did speak with China in an attempt to end this war, but without much success. Arab allies of the US also did not quite agree with the stand taken by the US. Similarly, Israel did criticise the Russian attack, but did not take side of the West. Turkey took a similar stand as taken by Israel.

Candidate No. 9 : How did India's foreign policy cope with the swift international political developments during this war?

Candidate No. 8 : Yes, I think that is a very important question for us.

Candidate No. 10 : India faced a rather difficult international political situation during this war. India is a member of QUAD and also has close strategic partnership with the US. At the same time, Russia is a very old and trusted friend of India. Even though India had formally announced that it is no more a non-aligned country, yet during this war, India had to take a neutral stand to safeguard its national interests. Therefore, India did not criticise Russia, which displeased the US and other Western nations. But, eventually, the US had to concede that India was an exception among its allies. Similarly, Australia, a QUAD member, said that QUAD nations understood India's stand on Ukraine and subsequently Australia also promised substantial investments in India. Japan, another QUAD member, also signed six strategic agreements and committed to

invest \$42 billion in the next five years. Therefore, I think, India's foreign policy has been able to cope with this complex international situation which developed during the Ukraine crisis quite well.

Candidate No. 6 : I think No. 10 has explained India's position during this crisis really well.

Candidate No. 3 : Yes, I quite agree with you. India's stand also gave a message to China that India can withstand pressure from big powers. Also, India has gone ahead with purchase of Russian oil despite the US sanctions on Russia.

Candidate No. 1 : I feel, due to this war, the world financial order will also be impacted. While due to the US sanctions, the sale of Russian oil has declined, it would also adversely impact the strength of US dollar. In the recent period, the share of US dollar in the global forex reserves has touched a 25-year low of about 59%.

Candidate No. 7 : This war has made us realise that how vulnerable we are to the danger of cyberattacks. It has been recently reported that Russia has been behind a series of cyberattacks linked with its conflict with Ukraine, which had wide ranging impact across Europe, the EU, UK and the US. A recent attack was on a communication company of Ukraine, which had wider impact across the European continent, disrupting wind farms and Internet users in central Europe.

Candidate No. 5 : Friends, I would like to draw your attention to another very disturbing news that Finland now seeks membership to NATO without any delay, and Sweden is expected to follow suit. In retaliation, Russia has called this move as a direct threat and has warned of retaliation, if needed. As per reports, Russia has suspended electricity exports to Finland. This development could make things worse and create more complications during this Ukraine crisis.

Candidate No. 6 : Yes, this is really a very disturbing news, which may lead to many more repercussions of Ukraine crisis.

Candidate No. 2 : I think, time allotted to us is now getting over, and we must wind up this interesting group discussion now.

Candidate No. 4 : If you all agree, may I request No. 10 to summarise this GD.

Candidate No. 10 : Well friends, we all had a very informative and absorbing discussion on this currently hot topic. The Ukraine crisis has disrupted a lot around us. It has changed old relations, making new ones. Existing power centres have been undermined, while new power blocks are emerging. It has hit the world

economy really hard, leading to high inflation and ever-soaring prices of food items and other commodities all over the world. We are all terribly concerned at the energy and food security implications of this conflict. Poor nations are the worst hit leading to more poverty and hunger there. Moreover, Russia's defence-related imports from technologically advanced countries are dropping rapidly, therefore, Russia's ability to manufacture and supply complex weapon systems to other nations will also reduce. This may affect Russian supply of weapon systems to India as well. It is feared that implications of this war will keep on haunting us for a long time to come. Friends, to sum up I would say we have highlighted quite a few significant impacts of the Ukraine crisis, but I am sure, there are some more, which we could not take up due to paucity of time.

Thank you all. Good luck and have a nice day.

Critical Analysis of Candidates' Performance :

Good: Candidate Nos. 1, 7 and 10

These candidates were the main contributors to this group discussion. They had made efforts to collect adequate information and data on this topic. Other candidates did not dispute the facts put forth by them. Since they had made sufficient preparation before coming for this GD, they could speak with required self-confidence. No. 10 took the initiative of starting as well as concluding the group discussion. Owing to all these reasons, the performance of these candidates has been assessed as 'Good'.

Average : Candidate Nos. 3, 5 and 9

These candidates did take part and even directed the discussion to proceed in a particular direction, which helped the discussion to proceed further. However, their contribution was fairly limited. They barely presented any new facts or data to make the discussion interesting. They did have some idea about the topic, but this was not adequate to give them self-confidence to participate in an effective manner. Had they prepared better, they could have made adequate contribution to this GD. Due to these reasons, their performance has been assessed as 'Average'.

Below Average : Candidate Nos. 2, 4, 6 and 8

These candidates did not take part in the group discussion in the desired manner. The basic fact that they did not prepare the topic became quite obvious. Since they did not have adequate information on this topic, they clearly lacked the self-confidence to speak also. During the entire GD, these candidates were merely appreciating other candidates or asking them to speak. They spoke only 1-2 times to mark their presence without making any contribution. Owing to these reasons, their performance has been assessed as 'Below Average'.

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