

Why Ukraine will end up in ruins



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BEFORE Ukraine was invaded, it received strong assurances from the US and the UK that they would stand beside the country if it's attacked. Europe in its entirety, too, had vowed to stand with Ukraine.

Ukraine has been invaded. Last week, Russia launched a land assault from three different fronts, as well as an air strike and missile attacks. Europe and the US are now busy imposing sanctions on Russia. The more they threaten sanctions, the more aggressive Putin's attacks become. US and Nato have confirmed they won't send troops to Ukraine. European superpowers Germany and France, on the other hand, have started sending weapons to Ukraine as a show of companionship.

But there's no comparison between Ukraine's military prowess and Russia's might. Ukraine, a former Soviet Union colony, was once the world's third largest nuclear power, but thanks to the US, the UK, Russia and Europe, it is now a denuclearised country. It was forced to hand over some of its nuclear weapons to Russia after failing to pay off its debt for gas. Some it had to destroy. Now, Ukraine is helpless as Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression lays waste to the country.

Russia has already claimed to have destroyed Ukraine's anti-aircraft defence system and a number of military establishments. Its tanks are waiting on the outskirts of the capital city of Kyiv and the second major city of Kharkiv. US President Joe Biden proposed to rescue Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but declining the offer, Zelenskyy asked for firearms instead, which the US and Europe are supplying.

But will Ukraine be able to continue resisting the Russian advance with these weapons? How would doling out these weapons to the general population



▲ An unexploded Grad rocket is seen at a kindergarten playground in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on February 26, 2022.

SCREENGRAB: REUTERS TV

help its cause? Within a couple of days of the invasion, Ukraine realised that their 200,000-strong military force wouldn't be able to withstand Russia's aggression. What chances does a regular citizen, sans any training, have against the Russian military, then? A guerrilla warfare by enlisted civilians could cause Russia some trouble—but to what extent?

Before supplying these weapons, the so-called compatriots kept on bellowing that Russia would have to pay a heavy price for invading Ukraine, threatening to slap the country with the toughest economic sanctions ever. Let's assume that all these sanctions would put Russia in a troublesome situation, which it wouldn't be able to recover from even with full support from China, an economic superpower. In that case, Russia will face economic devastation and the Western powers stand to benefit from Russia getting weaker. But what does Ukraine stand to gain in that scenario?

Two regions of Ukraine have declared independence. Russia's bombs and gunfire will not only demolish Ukraine's

physical infrastructure—they will also destroy its economy. A large part of the population will be displaced to Poland and other European countries as refugees. It is difficult to predict whether the death toll amounts to thousands or hundreds of thousands.

What was the point of the promise to "stand with" Ukraine, then?

The US and Europe aren't trying to bring Ukraine into Nato's fold out of the goodness of their hearts; they have their own interests. It is impossible to station US or Nato troops near Russian territory, and the US knows that—so does Ukraine—because Russia has always been vocal about its displeasure in this regard. But the US' empty promises misled Ukraine. Despite knowing that Putin would go aggressive, the US led Ukraine to take the risky route of trying to join Nato.

Will Putin emerge as the winner from the conflict with Ukraine? History tells us otherwise. The ever powerful Soviet Union had to bow out of Afghanistan after suffering a humiliating defeat. The same happened with the US and its allies

decades later. No big power has been able to claim victory by invading a smaller country. But then what happens to those smaller countries? The Taliban took over Afghanistan, and Assad managed to retain his throne in Syria, but did they win? It's not about winning or losing here. Those nations were destroyed in the conflicts between big powers.

Putin may install a government of his choice in Ukraine, or the huge economic sanctions may seal the fate of this modern-day dictator. The current rulers of Ukraine are likely to get killed or seek political asylum in other European nations. But what about the Ukrainian people?

If the war continues for an extended period, Ukraine will collapse. Even if Russia retreats from Ukraine within a short period of time, the internal wars in Ukraine will not cease to exist. Everyone for or against Russia will stay armed. Now the anti-Russian groups are getting weapons from the West. Russia will give more weapons to the pro-Russian population. The armed conflict within Ukraine may intensify and culminate into a civil war. There's also the possibility of Russia further breaking the country down into smaller, independent nations.

Basically, the devious US strategy is responsible for the proliferation of arms among Ukrainian civilians. The US and European media are widely publishing heavily glorified tales of recently married couples, lawmakers and former presidents of the nation taking up arms to defend their homeland. On the other hand, Russia is slowly but surely capturing Ukraine. As history tells us, the worst fate awaits the common people of Ukraine. Already, more than 100,000 people have sought refuge in Poland. The West will make them political scapegoats, instead of repatriating them. The armed Ukrainian factions will fight each other. The US will keep on supplying more weapons to the groups they favour. Their opponents will get supplies from Russia. War—or to be more precise, civil war—will be a permanent feature of life in Ukraine. It doesn't matter whether Putin will win, lose or get toppled—Ukraine, a country rich with mineral resources, will fall into ruin.

Race with the machine



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THE other day, a technician came over to fix my internet connection. He was a computer science graduate. But this is a job that any vocationally-trained person could do well—it doesn't require a four-year university degree. Then, a piece of news caught my attention: Robots are preparing and delivering food at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, requiring far fewer human employees than before. What do these two scenarios indicate about the future of jobs?

Speakers in career forums often offer definitive guidelines to jobseekers. They suggest that jobseekers learn the latest programming tools, get a degree in data science, enrol in a business programme, and so on. But many university graduates with such skills end up going for jobs that don't even use their qualifications. And soon, many jobs won't require humans at all if the Beijing Olympics is anything to go by.

The scenario in developed countries reflects this. Approximately 41 percent of recent American college graduates can't find jobs that match their qualifications and end up being underemployed. In Great Britain, 45 percent of recent university graduates are working in jobs that do not require their degrees. The supply of tertiary graduates is increasing in most European countries, but the growth of graduate jobs is slower. If today's graduate skills are already unsuitable for market needs, what might be the case for future graduates?

The ongoing Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the associated rapid automation processes will upend the way we view jobs. During the previous industrial revolutions, agricultural workers could move to cities and find jobs in the factories. Gradually, industrial workers moved to service sectors. Currently, in the US, only one percent of the working population is in the farming sector, 20 percent in manufacturing, and a whopping 79 percent in the service and knowledge sectors, as World Bank data shows. Those in the service and knowledge sectors are designing websites, interpreting medical images, diagnosing diseases, writing newspaper articles, or searching through various legal files. They use their skills, experience, and knowledge to carry out a particular task. These are what we call white-collar workers who have so far been

enjoying secure and stable incomes. Now, the 4IR is here to disrupt all that.

These days, automation software can write newspaper articles and weather reports. Law clerks don't have to search for legal information as a software will do it much faster and more efficiently. Doctors won't need to train their eyes on computer images looking for abnormalities, as a mere piece of software will pick them up in an instant. Even computer programming is getting automated as several no-code development platforms (NCDPs) are already available in the market. College graduates will have to compete against such machines in an ever-shrinking job market.

"Humans Need Not Apply" is the title of a book that Stanford University academic Jerry Kaplan wrote in 2015. Kaplan has warned that automation is blind to the "colour of your collar". Automation can gobble up every job regardless of its level of sophistication. But some jobs are more at risk of automation than others.

Futurist and author Martin Ford, in his bestseller "Rise of the Robots," tackles the question of which jobs are the safest in the face of the tech onslaught. His answer is: "Any job that is not routine or predictable." The jobs that offer new challenges every day and ones that require constant learning or innovation to be carried out will remain in demand. For such a job, technology will assist the process, but is unlikely to replace it. If the job is to produce the same reports, data, or presentation every time, it is likely that an automation process will soon devour it. So, the jobs that will still be around will involve collaborating with machines. According to MIT professors Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, workers should learn to "race with the machines," rather than against them. But today's machines run on technology that is a different beast altogether.

On April 23, 2013, the official Twitter account of the Associated Press (AP) tweeted, "Breaking: Two Explosions in the White House and Barack Obama is injured." A group of pro-regime hackers from Syria had faked the system. Only a minute later, Dow Jones nose-dived. AP fixed the problem three minutes after the initial attack. Within those precious three minutes, the equity market lost USD 136 billion in value. And in the next three minutes, the market recovered. All this happened with no human intervention, except the hacking.

The previous industrial revolutions gave workers time to learn new skills and find new jobs. The 4IR may not allow us the same. Today's job seekers must learn to live with automation in every sector and find their places within it—racing with, and not against, the machine.

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Sl. No.	Package No.	Tender ID No.	Description of goods	Tender documents last selling (date & time)	Tender closing date & Time	Tender opening date & time
01	G-2105	668848	Procurement of Wheel Chair	16/03/2022 11:00am	16/03/2022 11:30am	16/03/2022 11:30am

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