

## **Interactive Session with Dr Nandan Unnikrishnan**

GUEST: NANDAN UNNIKRISHNAN, Distinguished Fellow, ORF

THEME: The Unending Ukraine Crisis: Are There Any Winners?

DATE AND TIME: November 9, 2022 – 10 am to 11:30 am

### **About the Event:**

Symbiosis School of International Studies, organised a guest lecture by a distinguished scholar Nandan Unnikrishnan, for the students to have a deep understanding and insight on the Russo- Ukrainian crisis. Nandan Unnikrishnan is a journalist turned international relations expert. He started his career with the Press Trust of India and now works with the Observer Research Foundation as a Distinguished Fellow where he looks after the Eurasian Studies Programme. He, being one of the foremost voices in India on subjects relating to Russia and the neighbouring regions, took us through the complexities of the various elements contributing to the various identities in the region and further that lead up to the ongoing war we see today.

### **The event was divided into two parts -**

- A) The Lecture by the guest speaker
- B) The Question-Answer Round

#### **A) The Lecture by the guest speaker:**

The Russia - Ukraine war is a turning point in today's world history and while we see it unfolding in front of our eyes, this lecture provided in some part the Russian perspective for us to reassess our understanding of the war and the world's reactions to it.

The speaker took us through the historic perspective to this conflict and how the many events in the region, their oscillation between being united and divided has shaped the political understanding of these nation states with respect to each other. Further, issues of identity, economic growth and decline, the role of language, the presence of internal and external unrests and international players were discussed in his speech.

#### **B) The Question-Answer Round:**

The lecture was followed by a Question Answer Round where students tried to apply the ideas learnt in class to the practical example of this conflict through means of this lecture. Here's a list of some very interesting questions by the students that explored perspectives on the relevance of the European Union, NATO, USA, the Franko-German couple, impact on Central, South and East Asia.

Some of the questions raised by students are:

1. Current crisis has its roots in 2014 Euromaidan protests as Ukraine wanted to join EU and it still maintains its bid to do so . Can Three Seas Initiative (TSI) be the middle ground for peace as Ukraine would become one step closer to EU and US because the TSI is funded by EU and US. At the same time TSI does not have any P-5 states as its members, plus none of the member states have such economic and political clout to alter Ukrainian foreign policy, which at the end leads to Ukrainian neutrality . So is TSI a means to peace ?

2. With Germany's rearmament, what do you think is the future of the famous Franco-German Alliance? Will it become stronger or weaker and How will Russia react to this? What does German Rearmament or a stronger EU mean for Russia? How will it unfold for Russia-EU relations?

3. You mentioned that Europeans have practically handed over their security concerns to United States So what's your take on Western unity which already shows the signs of unease with the increasing protests in favour of leaving nato, in Favour of Cfsp.

4. So can we infer that the United States's insecurity about the Russian ability to annihilate them and thus the subsequent expansion of NATO was a provocation to Russia , plus adding on to it The Chinese rise and is that why the Americans have swallowed the lump of India not abiding by the sanctions regime.

5. Central Asia has traditionally been under the Russian sphere of influence, and even recently this year we have seen how the CSTO troops were sent into Kazakhstan for the first time. However, with the beginning of the war, we have witnessed the west coming closer to these states for varied self-serving interests. So will this become another point of contention between the West and Russia? And does this have any immediate effect on the ongoing war?

