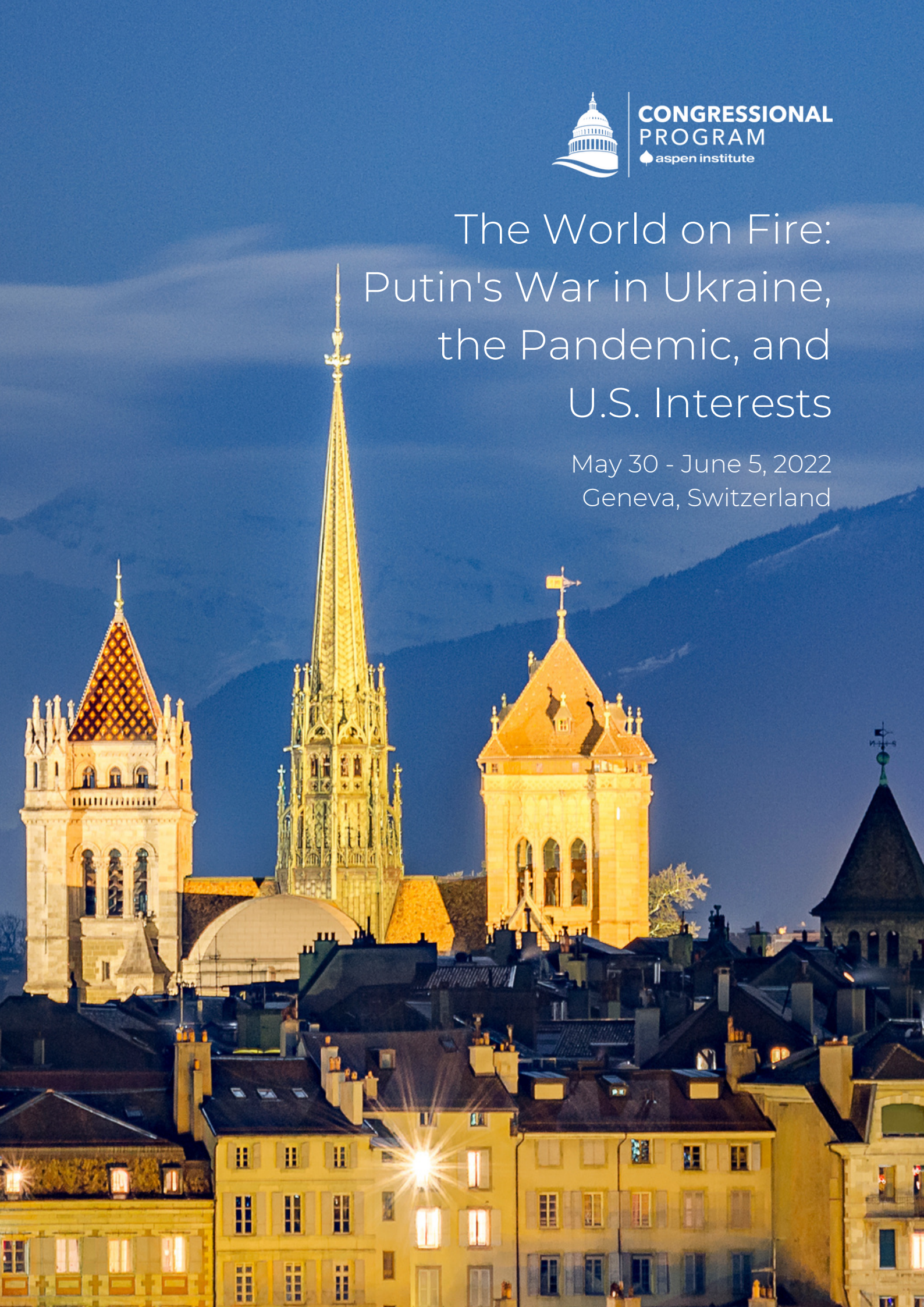




**CONGRESSIONAL  
PROGRAM**  
aspen institute

# The World on Fire: Putin's War in Ukraine, the Pandemic, and U.S. Interests

May 30 - June 5, 2022  
Geneva, Switzerland



# THE WORLD ON FIRE: PUTIN'S WAR IN UKRAINE, THE PANDEMIC, & U.S. INTERESTS

The Aspen Institute Congressional Program  
May 30-June 5, 2022  
Geneva, Switzerland

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# **THE WORLD ON FIRE: PUTIN'S WAR IN UKRAINE, THE PANDEMIC, & U.S. INTERESTS**

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May 30-June 5, 2022  
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## **CONFERENCE AGENDA**

### **MONDAY, MAY 30**

Members of Congress depart the U.S.

### **TUESDAY, MAY 31**

Arrive in Geneva

#### **7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

*Working Dinner*

Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Discussion will focus on the war in Ukraine, the pandemic and U.S. interests.

### **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1**

#### **7:00 AM – 8:55 AM**

Breakfast

#### **9:00 AM – 9:15 AM**

*Introduction*

#### **INTRODUCTION AND FRAMEWORK OF THE CONFERENCE**

This conference is organized into roundtable conversations, a luncheon and pre-dinner remarks. This segment will highlight how the conference will be conducted, how those with questions will be recognized, and how responses will be timed to allow for as much engagement as possible.

***Charlie Dent, Executive Director,  
Aspen Institute Congressional Program***

**9:15 AM – 10:30 AM**

*Roundtable Discussion*

**THE U.S. ROLE IN A NEW WORLD ORDER**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, on the heels of two years of the global pandemic, poses the greatest test for American statecraft since the end of the Cold War. The U.S. and its European allies and partners have demonstrated unity in opposition to Russia's aggression, yet multilateral institutions have failed to prevent this catastrophic conflict, and Russia's illegal use of force may presage a more violent global future. At the same time, the ongoing pandemic reminds that multilateral approaches are essential to confront threats that cannot be contained within territorial boundaries. What is the role of U.S. diplomatic leadership—including the traps and delusions the United States must avoid—in the context of current crises?

- What are positive and negative lessons we can draw on from similar transformational moments in history?
- How can the U.S. sort out unilateral versus multilateral interests in Europe?
- What are the dividing lines between conflict and cooperation on major policy objectives between the U.S., Russia, China, and Europe?
- What is the connection between U.S. global leadership and our domestic priorities?
- Are the State Department and foreign service adequately resourced for these challenges?

***Baroness Catherine Ashton***, former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs; Distinguished Fellow, Woodrow Wilson Center

**10:30-10:45 AM**

Break

**10:45 AM – Noon**

*Roundtable Discussion*

*Roundtable Discussion Continues*

**Noon – 2:00 PM**

*Luncheon Discussion*

**COPING WITH THE NEXT PANDEMIC**

With new variants of the COVID-19 virus emerging, continuing strains on public health infrastructure and economies underscore the need for prevention as well as resilience. The Director-General of the world's premier intergovernmental health organization will offer his vision of the steps that countries and the international community can take today to move from responding to the current crisis to preparing for the next one.

***Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus**, Director-General,  
World Health Organization*

**2:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

*Individual Discussions*

Members of Congress and scholars meet individually to discuss policy topics raised during the conference. Scholars available to meet individually with members of Congress for in-depth discussion of ideas raised in the discussion sessions including Catherine Ashton, Andrew Michta, Oksana Antonenko, Vasyl Filipchuk, Thomas Greminger, Sabine Fischer, Ekaterina Schulmann, Alexander Gabuev, Kadri Liik, Olga Oliker, Pavel Podvig, Matt Rojansky, and Max Trudolubov.

**6:00 PM – 7:00 PM**

*Pre-dinner Remarks*

**THE ROLE OF VACCINES IN GLOBAL HEALTH**

Gavi, founded in 2000, now vaccinates almost half of the world's children. Through COVAX, it has delivered 1.4 billion doses of covid vaccinations in 92 lower income countries. This volume allowed it to negotiate affordable prices and to remove the commercial risks that previously kept manufacturers from serving these poorer countries. The cost of fully immunizing a child with all 11 WHO-recommended childhood vaccines now costs about \$28 in Gavi-supported countries, compared to approximately \$1,200 in the U.S. The leader of this unique multilateral institution will explain its role and function in achieving global immunization goals.

***Dr. Seth Berkley**, CEO, Gavi,  
The Vaccine Alliance, Geneva*

**7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

*Working Dinner*

Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Discussion will focus on the war in Ukraine and steps necessary to prevent the next pandemic.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 2:**

**7:00 AM – 8:55 AM** Breakfast

**9:00 AM – 11:00 AM** **EUROPE’S ROLE IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

*Roundtable Discussion*

Cooperation between Washington and U.S. allies and partners in Europe has in some respects never been closer, from unity in opposition to Russia’s war in Ukraine and a reinvigoration of the NATO alliance, to the U.S. role in lessening Europe’s dependence on Russian energy sources and coordinated support for the massive influx of Ukrainian refugees. All this unfolds while the transatlantic community continues to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Both U.S. and European leaders have called for renewed attention and creative thinking about transatlantic relations in view of the rise of new threats, new technologies and new global power players.

- What is the state of transatlantic relations today? Have the rifts on display over recent years been mended?
- Are the institutions built to manage U.S.-European ties over half a century ago adequate to address current challenges?
- How have the U.S. and Europe coped with shared political challenges like rising populism and inequality?

***Oksana Antonenko**, Director, Control Risks, London*

***Thomas Greminger**, former Secretary General, OSCE;  
Director, Geneva Center for Security Policy*

**11:00 AM-11:15 AM** Break

**11:15 AM – 1:00 PM** **EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY CHALLENGES**

*Roundtable Discussion*

In the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and with rising concerns about escalation, including the risk of WMD use by Russia, NATO appears to have a clear mission and more unity than ever. Yet the war in Ukraine might easily be the beginning of an era of more, not less, use of force in Europe, while the demise of key Cold War era security treaties such as the INF and Open Skies agreements signal a clear decline in the broader landscape of strategic stability. The Euro-Atlantic region faces growing threats from private and state-sponsored cyber criminals and from

homegrown terrorists and spillover from conflict regions around the world. While some regional states view China as a vital partner for economic development and strategic balancing, others see Beijing as a major looming threat.

- What are the principal threats to security in the Euro-Atlantic region today?
- What should be the roles of non-European powers, including the United States and China, in European security?
- Is there a place to include Russia in Euro-Atlantic cooperative security, or is the future inevitably more about collective defense against threats from Moscow?

**Vasyl Filipchuk**, *Senior Advisor,  
International Center for Policy Studies, Kyiv*

**Andrew Michta**, *Dean, George Marshall European  
Center for Security Studies, Garmisch*

**1:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

*Working Lunch*

Discussion continues between members of Congress and scholars on the challenges for U.S. policy in the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine

**2:30 PM – 5:30 PM**

*Educational Site Visit*

**SITE VISIT TO WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION HEADQUARTERS**

The World Health Organization, founded in 1948 and headquartered in Geneva, is coordinating the international efforts against COVID-19. Approximately 15 million people—including nearly one million Americans—have died from COVID-19 and globally over 10,000 a day are still dying from it. There remain vast disparities in vaccination rates between the developed and undeveloped world. The U.S. provides 15% of WHO’s budget. The previous administration proposed that the U.S. withdraw from the WHO, a plan that was reversed by the current administration. The U.S. spent \$3.5 billion for distribution of vaccines in the undeveloped world, yet it remains a challenge to get the vaccine from airports into arms. Senior WHO scientists will explain the status of efforts to end the global pandemic, how to best be



prepared for future outbreaks, what lessons have been learned, and when, if ever, will the virus be vanquished.

**Hanan Balkhy**, *Assistant General,  
Antimicrobial Resistance, WHO*

**Sylvie Briand**, *Director, Epidemic and Pandemic  
Preparedness and Prevention, WHO*

**Meg Doherty**, *Director, Department of Global HIV,  
Hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections, WHO*

**Ibrahima Socé Fall**, *Assistant Director General for  
Emergency Response, WHO*

**Maria Van Kerkhove**, *Technical Lead,  
COVID-19 Response, WHO*

**Rosamund Lewis**, *Technical Lead,  
Monkeypox and Smallpox, WHO*

**Alaf Musani**, *Director, Emergency  
Health Interventions, WHO*

**Soumya Swaminathan**, *Chief Scientist, WHO*

**Stewart Simonson**, *Assistant Director-General, WHO*

**7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

*Working Dinner*

Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Discussion will focus on the war in Ukraine and steps necessary to prevent the next pandemic.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 3:**

**7:00 AM – 8:55 AM**

Breakfast

**9:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

*Roundtable Discussion*

**THE WORLD AS SEEN FROM MOSCOW**

In the years before his 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin tightened his grip on power in Russia, and could easily remain in control through 2036 and perhaps even beyond. Yet as Putin cracks down on internal and external challenges to his power, he has stretched his economy and military to an extreme degree, and relies increasingly on elements within the Russian state that view

the world in zero sum terms. Moscow now finds itself subject to unrelenting Western sanctions pressure and risks increasing dependency on China and other authoritarian partners as a result. The Kremlin therefore faces enormous external challenges plus those of its own making, while continuing to rely on a resource extraction economic model and international relationships that may not stand the test of time.

- What are the economic realities facing the Kremlin and can Russia grow its way out of the overlapping challenges of COVID-19, conflict with the West, and over-dependency on energy exports?
- Is Russia committed to seeking strategic alignment with China for the long term?
- Have Moscow's atrocities in Ukraine irreversibly split it from the West?
- What does Russia's future portend?
- How is Putin likely to approach preserving his own power and the system he has built in Russia?

***Sabine Fischer**, German Institute for  
International and Security Affairs, Berlin*

***Ekaterina Schulmann**, Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow,  
The Bosch Academy, Berlin*

***Max Trudolubov**, Editor at Large, Meduza, Vilnius*

**11:00 AM -11:15 AM** Break

**11:15 AM – 1:00 PM**  
*Roundtable Discussion*

**RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: SPOILER, GREAT POWER, OR  
SOMETHING ELSE?**

Vladimir Putin talks about "multipolarity," and rejects what he describes as Washington's attempts to "impose its will" on other powers. At the same time, the Kremlin insists that other states, especially in its former Soviet "near abroad" must take its interests and preferences into account, often deploying political, economic and even military leverage to secure outcomes. Ukraine is just the most recent example of this. Russia has also sought to project power from the Middle East to Latin America, giving rise to the perception of Moscow as a "spoiler" in regions and on issues of importance to the United States. In recent years, Russia's direct interference in U.S. and other Western democratic politics has

provoked even more acute enmity, even recalling the Cold War era conflict between two rival political and economic systems.

- What goals and interests drive Russian foreign policy in former Soviet regions and in the wider international context?
- Should Moscow and Beijing be seen as de facto allies?
- Does the Cold War offer lessons for managing today's competition in regional security, information, and cyberspace?
- Can Washington and Moscow cooperate in managing regional hotspots such as Syria, Libya, Iran and North Korea?
- Do Russia and the West have common interests on cross-cutting global issues, for example, in countering the pandemic and terrorism?

**Alexander Gabuev**, *Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*

**Kadri Liik**, *Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations, Berlin*

**Pavel Podvig**, *Senior Researcher, WMD Program UN Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva*

**1:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

*Working Lunch*

Discussion continues between members of Congress and scholars on the challenges for U.S. policy in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine

**2:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

*Individual Discussions*

Members of Congress and scholars meet individually to discuss policy topics raised during the conference. Scholars available to meet individually with members of Congress for in-depth discussion of ideas raised in the discussion sessions including Catherine Ashton, Andrew Michta, Oksana Antonenko, Vasyl Filipchuk, Thomas Greminger, Sabine Fischer, Ekaterina Schulmann, Alexander Gabuev, Kadri Liik, Olga Oliker, Pavel Podvig, Matt Rojansky, and Max Trudolubov.

**6:00 PM – 7:00 PM**

*Pre-dinner Remarks*

**UKRAINE'S PERSPECTIVE**

Ukraine has experienced immeasurable suffering and damage from Putin's unprovoked and illegal invasion. This aggression has unified

Europe and the U.S. to confront Russia and led to the imposition of crippling economic sanctions against Russia, substantial military assistance to Ukraine, millions of Ukrainian refugees fleeing its borders, and great uncertainty about the country's future. Ukraine's ambassador to Switzerland will provide a Ukrainian perspective on the current strife.

***Oleksandr Chalyi***, former Deputy Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Kyiv

**7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**

*Working Dinner*

Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Discussion will focus on the war in Ukraine and steps necessary to prevent the next pandemic.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 4:**

**7:00 AM – 8:55 AM**

Breakfast, concurrent with COVID-19 testing required for return flights to the U.S.

**9:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

*Roundtable Discussion*

**U.S. POLICY IN AN UNPREDICTABLE WORLD**

Putin's war in Ukraine has thrown Europe into the most tense security crisis for decades with the world's two nuclear superpowers edging closer toward uncertain territory ahead. The destruction, devastation, and immense human suffering and will pose substantial reconstruction challenges ahead. Europe faces huge challenges to cope with assisting the influx of millions of Ukrainian refugees. The return of a polarized world and the questionable role of China either as a facilitator or arbiter of an off-ramp remains to be seen. The economic pressures inside Russia are substantial, and Europe is challenged to stop financing Russia's war by weaning itself from Russia's energy. The U.S. is seen as the key global player, but how it can best help remedy the situation is uncertain.

- Is the Ukraine crisis creating a new world order of democracies versus autocracies?
- Are economic sanctions an effective tool to achieve foreign policy goals?
- Are multilateral institutions such as NATO and the UN adequately equipped to address these challenges?
- To what degree is this a pivot point in U.S.-Russia relations?

- How real is the threat of nuclear war and what steps can be taken to avert it?
- Is globalization still a workable concept? Can and should the U.S. continue to trade with political adversaries?
- What are the implications for U.S.-China relations?
- Will energy security take on a greater role in foreign policy?

***Matt Rojansky, CEO, U.S.-Russia Foundation***

**11:00 AM -11:15 AM** Break

**11:15 AM – 1:00 PM** **POLICY REFLECTIONS**

*Roundtable Discussion*

This time is set aside for Members of Congress to reflect on what they have learned during the conference and discuss their views on implications for U.S. policy.

**1:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

*Working Lunch*

Discussion continues between Members of Congress and scholars on the challenges for U.S. policy in an unpredictable world.

**2:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

*Individual Discussions*

Members of Congress and scholars meet individually to discuss policy topics raised during the conference. Scholars available to meet individually with members of Congress for in-depth discussion of ideas raised in the discussion sessions including Catherine Ashton, Andrew Michta, Oksana Antonenko, Vasyl Filipchuk, Thomas Greminger, Sabine Fischer, Ekaterina Schulmann, Alexander Gabuev, Kadri Liik, Olga Oliker, Pavel Podvig, Matt Rojansky, and Max Trudolubov.

**6:00 PM – 8:30 PM**

*Working Dinner*

Seating is arranged to expose participants to a diverse range of views and provide the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Scholars and lawmakers are rotated daily. Discussion will focus on the war in Ukraine and steps necessary to prevent the next pandemic.

**SUNDAY, JUNE 5:**

Members of Congress depart from Geneva, arrive back in the U.S.

# CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

## MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

**Rep. Ami Bera  
and Janine Bera**

**Rep. Earl Blumenauer  
and Margaret Kirkpatrick**

**Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester**

**Rep. Jim Cooper  
and Mary Falls**

**Rep. Rick Larsen  
and Tiia Karlén**

**Senator Cynthia Lummis**

**Rep. Mike Quigley  
and Barbara Quigley**

**Rep. Kathleen Rice  
and Paul Rice**

**Rep. Jan Schakowsky  
and Bob Creamer**

**Rep. Dina Titus  
and Thomas Wright**

**Rep. Fred Upton  
and Amey Upton**

**Senator Roger Wicker  
and Gayle Wicker**

## SCHOLARS

<b>Oksana Antonenko</b>	Director for Global Risk Analysis, Control Risks Group
<b>Catherine Ashton</b>	Former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Union
<b>Seth Berkley</b>	CEO, GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance
<b>Oleksandr Chalyi</b>	Former Ukrainian First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
<b>Vasyl Filipchuk</b>	Senior Adviser, International Center for Policy Studies
<b>Sabine Fischer</b>	Senior Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs
<b>Alexander Gabuev</b>	Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
<b>Tedros Ghebreyesus</b>	Director-General, World Health Organization
<b>Thomas Greminger</b>	Director, Geneva Centre for Security Policy

**Kadri Liik** Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations

**Andrew Michta** Dean, College of International and Security Studies, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

**Olga Oliker** Program Director, Europe and Central Asia, International Crisis Group

**Pavel Podvig** Senior Researcher, the UN Institute for Disarmament Research

**Michael Rouland** Director of Research and Senior Strategic Advisor at the Russia Strategic Initiative, U.S. European Command

**Ekaterina Schulmann** Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow, The Bosch Academy

**Max Trudolubov** Editor-at-Large, Meduza

**RAPPORTEUR**

**Matt Rojansky** CEO, The U.S.-Russia Foundation

**OBSERVERS**

**Walter Kemp** Strategic Policy Adviser, Geneva Centre for Security Policy

**Alexandria Matas** Senior Advisor, Geneva Centre for Security Policy

**Stewart Simonson** Assistant Director-General, World Health Organization

**FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVES**

**Deana Arsenian** Vice President, International Program and Program Director, Higher Education in Eurasia, Carnegie Corporation of New York

**Eileen O'Connor** Senior Vice President for Communications, Policy, and Advocacy, The Rockefeller Foundation

**William Moore** Executive Director, The Eleanor Crook Foundation

**Ari Bernstein** Founder, Jewish Friends of Emirates

**ASPEN INSTITUTE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRAM**

<b>Charlie Dent</b>	Executive Director
<b>and Pamela Dent</b>	
<b>Lauren Kennedy</b>	Senior Manager of Congressional Engagement
<b>Bill Nell</b>	Deputy Director
<b>Carrie Rowell</b>	Conference Director





# **RAPPORTEUR'S SUMMARY**

**Aspen Institute Congressional Program**

**Geneva, May 31-June 4, 2022**

**by Matt Rojansky**

**CEO, U.S. Russia Foundation**

## **Setting the Scene**

Members of Congress met in Geneva, Switzerland from May 31 to June 4, 2022 for briefings and discussions on the U.S. and global response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in-depth discussions with experts on Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. role in European security, including the response to Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The city of Geneva, situated at the western tip of Switzerland, surrounded by tall, jagged mountain peaks and steeped in millennia of history stretching back to pre-Roman times, provided an ideal backdrop for these wide-ranging and at times highly sensitive discussions. Through its entire long history, Geneva has been a crossroads, a place where cultures, nations, religions, trade routes and even the first major international organizations all came together.

Geneva is the home of the International Committee of the Red Cross, founded in 1863 amidst Europe's imperial bloodletting and the American Civil War; of the short-lived League of Nations, founded in the wake of World War I; and of course, of the United Nations family of organizations, whose expansive, modernist headquarters buildings are a hive of activity in the hills above the city. These include everything from the UN's main European headquarters with diplomatic missions from nearly 200 member states, to the International Telecommunications Union, the World Meteorological Organization, and the World Trade Organization. Of critical importance in the fight against COVID-19 and other dangerous pathogens are the World Health Organization (WHO) and GAVI, the vaccine alliance, both headquartered in Geneva.

Geneva was also a fitting backdrop for briefings and discussions about Russia, Ukraine and European security. President Ronald Reagan first met his Soviet counterpart Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva in 1985. In the 2010s the city hosted the Iran nuclear negotiations, U.S.-Russia arms control talks, and the critical first summit meeting between President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, in June 2021. Indeed, the vision behind that most recent meeting, to establish a foundation for more stable and predictable relations between Russia and

the West, was quickly overtaken by Putin's attack on Ukraine in February of this year. By meeting in Geneva at this time, members of Congress and scholars devoted time and energy to understanding the origins and the current dynamics of these ongoing crises, and to identifying possible steps forward for the United States.

### **Global Health: Coping with COVID-19 and the Next Pandemic**

Briefings and discussions began with an update on the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic from the WHO and GAVI. The WHO, established by 51 UN member states in 1948, has cooperated closely with the United States in the past, including in eradicating smallpox, battling Malaria and tuberculosis, eliminating polio in Africa, and supporting campaigns against HIV, sickle cell disease and many others. WHO's annual budget of around \$3 billion, of which the US provides about 15%, is comparable in size to the City of Baltimore, though the organization has a truly global presence, with 194 member states, a World Health Assembly, and multiple institutes and divisions administratively connected or under its oversight. Among the recent additions to WHO are a dedicated science division, a division of data analytics, and a new initiative on anti-microbial resistance. New technologies like genomics and artificial intelligence may be especially important to tracking global health risks and protecting populations, but they carry ethical risks of which the WHO is keenly aware. Of most critical importance is the job of scientists to communicate truthful information to the public in an accessible way.

Experts explained that the greatest risk for spread of the pandemic virus comes from new "animal reservoirs"—animal populations in which the virus can incubate, mutate and spread. Rodents have been found to carry COVID-19, while the white tail deer is a new animal reservoir in the United States. As people travel more, the virus also spreads more with human hosts, and continued urbanization and the growth of mega-cities all but assures that the virus will find opportunities for explosive spread to large populations. A major challenge now is vaccine skepticism, due to disinformation and misinformation. Ironically, vaccine skepticism is often highest in wealthy countries, which have not seen the devastating impact of epidemics and thus the need for vaccines in the recent past.

GAVI, a Geneva-based organization, is dedicated to promoting access to vaccines worldwide, and manages the COVAX global COVID vaccine initiative. The advantage of this

approach is that it enables larger volume orders, lowering the manufacturers per-dose cost, and enabling COVAX to pass along the savings to vaccine recipients, in addition to subsidizing costs for the poorest countries. Yet all GAVI participants are required to pay something, with the poorest countries graduating from subsidies once they can afford to pay market prices. The U.S. has provided over 1 billion doses of the Pfizer vaccine to COVAX, which has administered over 200 million doses in 2021 alone. Although COVAX has 193 member countries and 11 other vaccines in its portfolio, Russia is not a member, and has not provided the data needed to certify and distribute Russian-manufactured vaccines.

The United States, the WHO and GAVI have supported waivers of intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines, which if agreed internationally, could enable production hubs for cutting-edge mRNA-based vaccines to speed access to the COVID-19 vaccine in Africa. This is especially important because the average vaccination rate in Africa is now only 17%, as against a current global average rate of 60%, a goal of 70% for overall vaccination, and a goal of 100% for at-risk groups. GAVI reports that over 1.3 billion vaccine doses have been delivered to the poorest countries, where 75% of health workers and 63% of the elderly are now vaccinated, however 18 countries still have less than 10% vaccinated, some of which are the most fragile states, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and Yemen.

After more than two years as “hostages to the virus,” one senior international official conceded, the pandemic is still far from over. Cases are rising in the United States and other countries, and over one billion people in poor and developing countries remain unvaccinated. Official death tolls from COVID are over 6 million worldwide, and 10,000 COVID deaths are officially reported per week, but both numbers are likely significantly undercounting COVID’s real impact on mortality worldwide. “Unless everyone is safe,” scholars and members were reminded, “no one is safe.”

WHO scientists are closely tracking the emergence of the so-called “monkey pox” virus, which is usually found in wild animals, and seems to resemble a 2003 outbreak that moved from Ghanaian rats to prairie dogs in the U.S. Thus far, 26 WHO member states outside the portion of West Africa where the virus is typically endemic have reported infections of monkey pox, including apparent cases of local transmission, not linked to international travel. Health officials currently believe that the virus transfers most readily through extended close contact,

especially sexual contact, and that the immune-suppressed such as HIV-positive individuals are most vulnerable, but that treatments developed for other diseases, such as smallpox, could be effective. For this reason, the U.S. commitment for smallpox vaccines to WHO is important, though given the close contact required for it to spread, monkey pox is not likely to become a new global pandemic.

An unfortunate lesson is that COVID-19 will not be the last pandemic—indeed COVID itself may mutate so much that it will rage again through the world population and could kill people who have already been vaccinated, or who have been infected and recovered from a previous strain. It is “evolutionarily certain,” according to experts, that we will see more pandemics more frequently, as human settlements encroach on wildlife areas, global temperature rises, and human populations are more and more mobile. Global health officials and experts recommended more sustainable support for the institutions that enable global cooperation, and new international agreements to govern a cooperative global response. Resilient health systems with surge capacity should be built in lull periods between epidemics or pandemics, not when governments and health systems are overwhelmed during a crisis.

### **European Security and America’s Role**

Scholars opened the discussion on the U.S. role in European security by acknowledging that the transatlantic relationship has been strained in the recent past. During the Trump administration, Europe worried about U.S. indifference to its concerns, but similar notes were sounded in the wake of President Obama’s announcement of a “pivot to Asia.” Although the Biden administration has prioritized the transatlantic relationship, scholars and members recalled that nearly every U.S. president since Kennedy has expressed some concern about Europe not “carrying its weight” on European security. Scholars and members agreed that what happens in Europe matters to the U.S., and vice versa.

Scholars described European perceptions on security as in flux over the past decades. If, during the Cold War, nearly all Europeans felt vulnerable to the threat of armed conflict between East and West, after 1991, that “unity of threat perception” disappeared. Eastern Europe focused on the Russian threat. France, Spain, Italy and others focused on North Africa and the greater Middle East. Germany was pulled in two directions. Putin, with his sudden and brutal attack on Ukraine, has restored a common threat perception among nearly all European

states, with even historically neutral states such as Finland and Sweden prepared now to join NATO. Germany, for its part, has a major strategic culture change underway. Though that is complicated and will take time, scholars explained that for the first time since World War II, the majority of Germans see Russia as a direct threat, support a robust response, and accept that there will be increased security and energy costs.

Indeed, despite the newfound transatlantic unity over Ukraine in recent months, members of Congress wondered whether such unity would be enduring, or if attention might last only a few months more, or a few years at most. Some cited the example of Turkey, an important NATO member, yet one which seemed to be pursuing its own national interest at the expense of the Alliance by blocking the membership bids of Finland and Sweden. Members also wondered about the meaning of the German Chancellor's recent commitment to increase military spending to 2% of GDP, and to invest 100 billion Euros in modernizing the German armed forces. Europe's defense industry is probably not even capable of absorbing that level of funding at present, scholars noted, which raises the question of whether European investments would continue to support inter-operability with the U.S. Others explained that with the UK out of the EU, France has greater weight in arguing for a more active defense industrial capacity for Europe.

Scholars acknowledged that as a "mega-economic power" Europe should be stronger in terms of its own security. But that in turn might mean a different understanding of security for the European Union than for NATO—for example a focus in the EU on R&D investment and countering cyber or critical infrastructure vulnerability, versus NATO's power projection and deterrence capability. The biggest open question, scholars agreed with members, was Germany, whose new government was feeling its way slowly and carefully through this new reality, but which is and will be the natural center of gravity for Europe.

Scholars called the combined challenges of the ongoing pandemic and the war in Ukraine a "stress test for crisis management in Europe." The lessons of these past two years are that Europe needs much more communication and solidarity, including with non-NATO and non-EU member states, so that Europe as a whole can show leadership and deliver a rapid response to crises on the continent. One impending crisis identified by members and scholars was the likelihood of more mass migration into Europe from the South, driven by climate change, political instability, and food price inflation. With over 5 million Ukrainian refugees in

Europe already, the lesson has been that Europe can quickly step up to provide support, but that the consequences will be felt in elections, as voters may support more populist and nationalist leaders.

### **The International (Dis)Order**

Scholars and members of Congress asked, what is the “international order,” so often cited as one of the pillars of U.S. policy on various security and economic challenges? If we know what it looked like in the past, can it be the same going forward? Who writes the rules of the order, and are new voices, especially the rising young generation, represented in that discourse? After all, members warned, if institutions cannot do something that matters to people, they will not get attention or support. Scholars and members also agreed that the burden of leadership in the global order continued to fall to a large degree on the U.S. Whether the pandemic, climate change, or security and quality of life at home, Americans also have an interest in solving problems collectively through international cooperation. But, they acknowledged, the sets of principles and relationships that make such cooperation possible are under severe strain today.

One challenge is simply the design of international institutions—what one scholar called the “big tankers” of the international ocean, slow-moving but essential to bearing shared values over long distances. While big democracies such as Germany, Japan, India or Brazil might ideally merit inclusion as permanent members of the UN Security Council, scholars and members acknowledged that such thoroughgoing systemic reform was unlikely to succeed. More practical solutions, they concluded, could be found in informal mechanisms and groupings—“light, maneuverable yachts” that could move among the big tankers. Even big democracies could not be expected to move in a straight line, scholars and members cautioned: the most deeply entrenched democracies went through troubles, and required course corrections. The important thing is that when such troubles occur, citizens benefit from a free press, truthful information, and the chance to vote a government out of office before it can dismantle essential checks and balances.

Another major source of strain is Russia and China’s vociferous opposition to a U.S.-led system. Moscow and Beijing complain of double standards, and question whether the order is intended to serve everyone in it, or just U.S. allies. In the past, however, both Russia and China

showed a strong interest in joining the United States and Europe in support of this very system. Even recently, all these disparate players worked together to manage the Iranian nuclear problem. Diplomacy, scholars advised, is all about sorting out agreements between those who see the world very differently, finding a sustainable solution that each side can go home and “sell” to its population. In that respect, many agreed that U.S. soft power could help greatly in mobilizing support worldwide. Showcasing much more effective problem solving at home in the United States, as much as investing more in direct foreign assistance, is essential to convincing others they should follow the U.S. lead on global problems.

### **The War in Ukraine**

Members and scholars received expert briefings on the situation in Ukraine, including the humanitarian impacts of the war and public health risks. The WHO plays a coordinating role for health assistance to Ukraine, including delivery and distribution of emergency medical supplies, of which 500 tons, enough to care for 650,000 people, had already been delivered and stockpiled before Putin’s February 24 invasion. However, since that time, attacks on health care workers and health infrastructure, clear violations of international law, have been reported over 250 times.

The result is a massive humanitarian and public health crisis in Ukraine, in addition to the security, political and economic impacts of the war. Routine vaccinations have stopped, and Ukraine’s COVID vaccination level is well below that of other European states. While the country already had a high prevalence of mental health disorders, over 16,000 people now lack access to medicines for mental health treatment. The same difficulties face those with chronic illnesses like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

While nearly 7 million people were documented to have left Ukraine since the war started, over 2 million have returned. Still, at least 8 million are estimated to be internally displaced within the country. As many as one million Ukrainians have been displaced to Russia, including civilians effectively taken as hostages, among whom are thought to be as many as 200,000 children. The Kremlin has simplified citizenship procedures for Ukrainians living on Russian-occupied territory, and is supporting adoption by Russian families of Ukrainian war orphans. Scholars described all this as a deliberate policy to weaken or destroy the Ukrainian nation, which may amount to genocide, and must be addressed by a special tribunal.



Members and scholars agreed that the war has brought a few positive surprises alongside the expected tragedies. Ukraine has defied expectations of a quick capitulation and collapse, instead preventing Russian forces from capturing Kyiv and Kharkiv, and slowing the Russian onslaught in the East and South. As the summer wears on, scholars explained, Ukrainians' will to fight is growing, and they benefit from unprecedented military, economic and intelligence support from the West, including the U.S. Yet Russia has the resources to continue fighting for two years or even more, and to the extent Putin sees this as a fight for the survival of his regime, surrender is not an option. Accordingly, scholars cautioned that unless the Putin regime falls, a real peace is not possible. If by mid to late summer Ukraine has continued to hold Russian forces back and drain their resources, scholars assessed, the best chance may be for a "technical armistice" similar to the cessation of active fighting between North and South Korea in 1953, without a proper peace agreement.

Scholars and members expressed a range of views about U.S. interests in what could be a very long war ahead. Some scholars asserted that Putin has made a historic blunder by attacking Ukraine, and thus challenging the United States and the West years or even decades before China is ready to mount an active challenge of its own. The result is that China will hold back from fully supporting Russia, while the West can focus its resources on backing Ukraine to grind down the Russian military. Yet others cautioned that Putin will find other leverage points against Ukraine and the West, which might include escalation within Ukraine, horizontal escalation to involve other European countries, or exacerbating disorder in the Middle East or Africa to weaponize migration against Europe. Moreover, after this summer comes autumn and winter, when Europe's continued dependency on Russian gas for heating will become a more significant constraint to continuing confrontation with Moscow.

### **Supporting Ukraine**

Members and scholars focused on how the U.S. could support Ukraine. As one scholar lamented, the US missed a chance to take the initiative on a Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution in the wake of the last major fighting in 2014-15, and as a result Ukraine has become a battlefield once more. The good news, said the same scholar, is that today support for Ukraine from the U.S. and Europe exceeds anything Ukrainians expected. The bad news is that the West is still missing opportunities, having forfeited the "strategic initiative" to Vladimir Putin,

who takes actions and forces Ukraine and the West to react. Several members agreed, noting that while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky enjoys huge popularity and name recognition in the U.S., and support for Ukraine has been bipartisan, there are so many issues facing Americans that enthusiasm for continuing to actively support Ukraine might wane approaching the 2022 election and the end of the year. Some also wondered, what message will China take away with respect to Taiwan, depending on how sustained and effective U.S. support for Ukraine turns out to be?

As scholars explained, Ukraine has won at least one major victory in that it remains a sovereign state. Putin attempted to completely destroy the country, and at least so far, he has failed. Europe and the U.S. have stepped up with unprecedented sanctions and assistance, but the challenge now is how to ensure Ukraine's future security, how to attract Ukrainians home, and how to rebuild. Scholars warned that the years ahead may be costly. The West is already facing the specter of inflation combined with recession not seen since the 1970s, and these conditions could last through 2023 into 2024 or even beyond. In Europe, energy prices will climb 30-40% as a result of reducing Russian oil and gas imports—some suggested this is an opportunity for the U.S. to help diversify European energy supplies with liquified natural gas (LNG) exports.

To truly rebuild Ukraine, scholars advised, will take investment on the scale of the post-World War II Marshall Plan—perhaps as much as a trillion dollars or more. This cannot be achieved with loans, since Ukraine is already saddled with an 85% debt-to-GDP ratio. The resources will have to come in the form of foreign assistance and foreign direct investment. Such investment and redevelopment, scholars noted, is also necessary to support a democratic future for Russia, like the "economic miracle" of West Germany from the 1950s to the 1980s, which was a beacon of hope and a model for people living under Communism in East Germany and Eastern Europe. Ukraine will seek EU membership, in part because of the importance of rebuilding its economy and institutions in sync with European standards. Yet Ukraine will need to complete major overhauls of its governing institutions before it can hope to join the EU, and some warned that even if Ukraine succeeds, it is so big that other big EU members might fear losing influence and therefore block EU accession.

## **Sanctions on Russia**

In addition to assistance for Ukraine, members and scholars discussed sanctions, a pillar of the U.S. and European policy response to date. Several noted the hard truth that sanctions did not deter Putin from attacking Ukraine. As one scholar explained, sanctions can serve as punishment for bad acts—but in this case, the sanctions on Russia are hardly sufficient punishment for what Putin has done. Alternatively, sanctions can seek to influence behavior—in this case, even the most stringent Western sanctions are bound to fall short as long as major economies such as India and China continue to trade with Russia, as is the case now.

Some members expressed surprise that Western companies were so quick and so united in their withdrawal from the Russian market after Putin's invasion. Yet, they wondered, when will the costs of those lost investments be felt by Western economies, and who in Russia will benefit from the abandonment of valuable assets, technology, and income? Is there a risk of actually enriching the very Russian elites around Putin whom sanctions were meant to punish? As one scholar put it, sanctions simply do not affect the calculus of those closest to Putin, because they are "mission driven," focused on legacy and history, and they have plenty of money. Russia still has around \$300 billion in reserves, of which \$170 billion is in accessible liquid assets. Moreover, the Russian state budget depends most of all on oil revenues, and balances at a price of around \$60 per barrel. With prices close to double that today, Russia can afford to sell oil at a discount to willing buyers, cover the costs of the ongoing war and sanctions, and still replenish its rainy day funds.

The long term picture for sanctions' impact on Russia and the global economy is therefore mixed. On the one hand, scholars explained, the private sector recognizes that a new norm has been created, and companies are already thinking through how they might respond to a similar crisis moment in relations with China or another authoritarian state. However, Russia's economic "isolation" might be more accurately described as isolation from the West, since Russia will still sell its commodity exports and purchase goods and services on the global market—it will just do so outside the dollar- and euro-denominated economy. This may, in turn, cause a new global trading and finance zone to grow outside the reach of Washington, Brussels, Berlin and London. If the Chinese government embraces this vision, Chinese business will follow, and with it a big part of the global economy.

## **Prospects for Diplomacy**

Although scholars agreed that Russia and Ukraine were likely to continue their contest for control over the Donbas region militarily, members of Congress asked whether hopeful signs for diplomacy at earlier stages in the conflict might be renewed, and how the door could be kept open to talks with Russia, without undermining Ukraine's position. Scholars said a key question was whether Putin sees the West's support for Ukraine as an existential threat. If he does, he will not accept a ceasefire of any kind. Ukraine, in turn, cannot accept a ceasefire that leaves it vulnerable to future Russian attack. Thus, the focus of discussions turned to what kind of security guarantees for Ukraine might be feasible for the West but acceptable to Russia as well.

As one scholar explained, the success of Ukraine's army on the battlefield in March forced Russia to take diplomacy more seriously. In fact, by March 29, the sides had agreed on a framework for ending the conflict, announced following in-person talks in Istanbul. The so-called "Istanbul Communique" acknowledged Ukraine as a neutral state, which would not host troops, exercises, or military infrastructure of any other country. In addition, the permanent members of the UN Security Council, which includes both Russia and the United States, as well as Britain, France and China, plus others such as Turkey, Germany, Italy and Israel, would offer a guarantee of Ukraine's security. The language of the proposed security guarantee closely tracked that of NATO's Article 5: "The guarantor states will have a right and obligation to help Ukraine [including] with their armed forces." In other words, if Ukraine is attacked, the guarantors promise to fight to defend it.

The Istanbul talks yielded a number of other significant draft agreements. The Russian side agreed to support Ukraine's bid for EU membership, breaking with the Kremlin's position from 2013, on an issue that was at the heart of the outbreak of Russia-Ukraine fighting at that time. Moreover, the sides agreed that the proposed security guarantees would apply only to territory controlled by the Ukrainian government prior to February 24, and that therefore talks could be deferred on the final status of separatist-controlled regions of Donbas and on the status of Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

When asked why negotiations failed to end the conflict, scholars explained that after evidence of shocking war crimes was uncovered in the Kyiv suburbs of Bucha and Irpin in April, the U.S., the UK and Germany signaled to Kyiv that they would not participate in any

multilateral negotiations with Russia. As a result, Ukraine has adopted a dual-track negotiation format, speaking separately with Western partners about security guarantees, and with Russia about technical conflict management and a potential ceasefire. On this last point, there is strong resistance in Ukraine to accepting any ceasefire that leaves Russia in control of territory it took by force after February 23. This issue, scholars agreed, could only be resolved by a direct agreement between Zelensky and Putin, and it might be based on the principle that Ukraine does not legally recognize Russian occupation of its territory, but agrees to a ceasefire to save lives and to rebuild its economy.

Whatever deal may be negotiated, scholars advised, it has to be good enough for both sides that it can last for 50 or 100 years. Any deal that either side sees as a defeat probably cannot meet that standard. Moreover, a sustainable deal will require an ongoing process that keeps Russians and Ukrainians engaged in managing problems as they arise. As one scholar warned, such a process will take time—perhaps ten years to get from where we are today to a long-term sustainable peace.

### **Putin's Worldview and Russian Realities**

Under current circumstances, it can be difficult to discern Russian public opinion. Poll numbers are bleak: Over 70% support the war and have a negative view of the U.S., while only 15-17% say that they oppose the war. That opposition seems to come mostly from working age and younger people, while older people support the war in higher numbers. Likewise, opposition to the war is concentrated in elite enclaves such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, while people in rural areas and Russia's far-flung regions are more supportive. Even still, scholars noted, these numbers reflect pro-Kremlin opinion that is less universal than the so-called "Crimea consensus" of 2014. Moreover, in some surveys, as many as 9 out of 10 people who were reached refused to express an opinion at all. That is hardly surprising given that denouncing Putin's war can land a person in prison, and it undercuts the authority of survey data across the board.

Indeed, following his February 24 invasion of Ukraine, Putin tightened domestic control in Russia even further, from what had already been a "hard autocracy" to what can now be called full dictatorship. Scholars explained that Putin himself sits atop a power vertical, with no meaningful checks and balances nor any rival interest groups. He has imposed military

ensorship on public discourse, destroyed Russia's independent media, and inundated the information space with state propaganda. Scholars believe that Putin's worldview hardened significantly as a result of constitutional changes in 2020 that enabled him to stay in power through 2036, his extreme isolation during the pandemic, and the shock of watching a million or more Belarusians protest against the dictator Alexander Lukashenko in neighboring Belarus in summer and autumn 2020.

Rather than undertaking internal structural reforms to revitalize the Russian economy and society, Putin and his retainers look to geopolitics for their legitimacy. The key question for Putin, and for Russia's foreign policy and security elite, scholars explained, is, "do you respect me?" It reflects a deeply emotional insecurity about great power status, essentially whether Russia can hold onto a seat at the table of the global "board of directors," composed of states that are strong enough to be not only globally relevant, but strategically independent. At the same time, Putin and his immediate circle are convinced that the U.S. and the West are in decline, and they therefore imagine a mirror image of their own insecurities, which they believe leads the U.S. to obsessively seek to expand its own sphere of influence. NATO's operation against Libya in 2011, which resulted in the toppling of dictator Moammar Gadhafi, appeared to prove this to them.

Indeed, Putin and his inner circle have a very particular worldview in part because they are almost all of the same generation—Putin himself is nearing 70, and the median age of the permanent members of his security council is 68. These men—and they are all men—were born in the 1950's, lived through the Brezhnev-era stagnation of the 1970's, and were present for the "burial" of the Soviet system in the 1980's and 1990's. But unlike those who grew up later and tried to build businesses or ran in free elections in the 1990's, the "Putin generation" came to focus more on loyalty and respect than on effectiveness and achievement. And very much like the Brezhnev generation in the Soviet 1970's, the Putin generation has held onto power for too long, suppressing the generation below them. As one scholar observed, if people in their 30's and 40's were now in power in Russia, there would be no war with Ukraine.

Russia's current leadership looks East, not West. And indeed, in China's Xi Jinping, Putin has found a compatible authoritarian partner. Russia's natural resources complement China's financial might, technological and manufacturing prowess, and ample human resources. Yet there is an asymmetry: China is rising, while Russia is increasingly stagnant. Russia's GDP is

now smaller than that of a single Chinese province, Guangdong. As a consequence, Russia has no choice but to depend on China, whereas China has options.

Members asked where else Putin might seek to expand his power in the former Soviet space or beyond. While Putin has talked about a “Slavic union” with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, he has also tried to control and influence other former Soviet republics, from the Caucasus to Central Asia. While he may see the Baltic States as a thorn in his side, scholars said, he views them as thoroughly in the Western camp, and therefore his conflict with them is about deterrence, not conquest. The most vulnerable former Soviet state after Ukraine, scholars warned, is probably neighboring Moldova. All agreed that Putin has a special obsession with Ukraine, and that the other former Soviet republics have no interest in his agenda of conquest. Other regional powers, however, might seek to exploit the chaos, for example Turkey’s backing of Azerbaijan in conflict with Russian-backed Armenia.

Even if Russia ultimately loses the war with Ukraine, scholars explained, it is likely to remain in conflict with the West for the longer term. Even without Ukraine under its thumb, Russia might become a “giant Iran,” committed to making trouble for its neighbors and the West, and armed with thousands of nuclear weapons. Even if Russia is just a “regional power” as President Obama put it, that region runs from Central Europe to East Asia, and from the Arctic to the Middle East. Simply put: Russia will remain a force to be reckoned with.

### **Escalation Risks**

Scholars and members recalled the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in which the United States, Russia, and other nuclear powers gave Ukraine non-binding “assurances” of its security in exchange for Kyiv’s surrender of what was then the third-largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world. Some argued that if Ukraine had nuclear weapons today, it might have deterred a Russian attack, or conversely, speculated whether Russia’s own nuclear arsenal emboldened it to attack Ukraine. Yet others replied that even if Ukraine had nuclear weapons, using them in the current conflict would only bring further destruction upon itself.

The more relevant, and much harder question is whether Russia might use a nuclear weapon in Ukraine if it is losing the war or to break a stalemate. As members and scholars acknowledged, Russian officials have been rattling the nuclear saber for weeks, and Russia has already used highly destructive conventional weapons, resulting in devastation of Ukrainian

cities. In some ways, Ukraine's battlefield successes might even increase the risk of a Russian nuclear attack. If Putin cannot have Odessa, a member asked, would he destroy it? Putin would not hesitate, a scholar responded. Another scholar was more reassuring, suggesting that Putin has no reason to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, at least for now.

The long-term solution to the risk of nuclear use, scholars advised, is to reduce the deployment of nuclear weapons in the first place. Whereas the late Soviet leadership actually pursued disarmament, Putin has done the opposite, cheating on the now defunct Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement to develop and deploy new weapons that can threaten neighbors in Europe and Asia. Yet the U.S. should not replay the Euro-missile crisis of the 1980's, scholars warned, deploying more U.S. missiles to Europe to "remind Russia why it signed the INF treaty in the first place." The only result of this would be more Russian missiles, in a dangerous escalatory cycle.

Nuclear use is not the only unknown swirling around the current conflict. China has watched Russia's war in Ukraine carefully, and has drawn the lessons that Russia overestimated its military power, its financial reserves, and its ability to substitute for western imports and technologies. In case of a crisis over Taiwan, experts warned, China will be much more prepared in all these areas. Europeans and Ukrainians also expressed concerns about the 2024 U.S. elections: might U.S. policy do an about-face, and abandon them to Russian aggression? No matter what happens in 2024, scholars concluded, Russia will exploit the fissures already evident in U.S. politics, and it will seek to exacerbate other crises around the world. Scholars concluded emphatically that Putin seeks to break the Western-led international system.

### **Change in Russia?**

Despite what scholars described as Russia's "deep and dark oppression," this moment may offer a real chance for political change in Russia. Scholars described several possible pathways for such change: A sudden change at the top, such as a palace coup, would absorb the new Russian leadership in internal turmoil, including the possibility of separatism in the North Caucasus, which would in turn force Moscow to reduce its pressure on Ukraine; a negotiated succession within the siloviki (men of power), which would entail no substantial policy changes; or, and much less likely, mass protests followed by defection of elites and a



democratic transition, which could bring about a real end to the war in Ukraine, and much greater openness to the West.

In Russia's highly formalistic system, even the sudden death of Putin could be managed: The Prime Minister would become acting President, and a (carefully managed) election would be held after 90 days. While the siloviki might fight each other for influence, they could also coalesce around a collective leadership system as the Soviet elite did following Stalin's death in 1953. One scholar sounded an optimistic note, recalling that even during the Soviet Union's chaotic collapse, the authorities managed to keep nuclear facilities largely secure.

Members and scholars debated whether economic pressure would be sufficient to destabilize the Putin regime. Russia, scholars explained, endured extreme hardships in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and most Russian people still live in extreme poverty relative even to Ukrainians. Sanctions have mostly impacted Russia's very small urban middle class, at most 12-15% of the population, whereas soldiers in Putin's army are intentionally recruited from poor, rural regions in the country's far East and South, and are often not ethnic Russians. The regime itself has held firm, with not a single senior official defecting. On the contrary, the nationalist extreme wing has consolidated its influence, and is now demanding Putin embrace more ambitious goals in Ukraine.

In contrast with the higher levels of power, mid-level officials in Russia are often highly competent, and even youthful. The median age of Russian civil servants is only 39. The Kremlin routinely delegated authority during the COVID-19 pandemic to these officials at regional and local levels, and they have been broadly successful in managing the pandemic's impacts on Russian society and the economy. Support for state companies has prevented mass unemployment, and direct payments has kept the most vulnerable citizens from starvation. Scholars therefore explained that the Kremlin has viable options for managing continued pressure from the war and Western sanctions.

Some scholars were less certain that power would transition smoothly and predictably. Lacking an ideology, the Kremlin would have to improvise the narrative around any transition, and without generational change, the current leadership is increasingly vulnerable simply due to frail health. Whatever happens, scholars argued, it will start with a "black box" process that is opaque to those outside the Kremlin, and it could be very messy.

Members and scholars speculated about what role the West might play in a future Russian transition. Some asked whether Russian oligarchs might be tempted to “switch sides.” The example of one Ukrainian-born Russian oligarch who has allegedly proposed to take Ukrainian citizenship was described as an “earthquake” for Russians and Ukrainians. Yet scholars countered that those oligarchs who seek acceptance in the West may have built their fortunes in Putin’s corrupt system, but they have already forfeited whatever influence they once had. The oligarchs who remain close to Putin still have influence, but their connections to the West have been severed since 2014.

If the West cannot pursue regime change directly, as scholars warned, what can it do? First, follow developments within Russia, including in the far-flung “national republics,” for early warning of changes. Second, be prepared to respond with offers of a path forward in case of even minor signs of positive change within Russia, and third, work with Russian civil society in exile to prepare for a time when they might return, and bring needed skills and energy back to Russia.

Investing in change in Russia, scholars suggested, is no less important than helping to arm Ukraine. This should include maximizing contacts with Russian technocrats, opposition and civil society, and ordinary people via secure channels like Telegram. Other scholars suggested that the West should simply focus on the 130 million people on Russia’s Western border, from Scandinavia to the Black Sea: supporting them is the best hedge against Russian aggression. Whenever or however Russia may change, some concluded, it may not simply become “pro-Western,” but rather could pursue a third path, lowering tensions with its post-Soviet neighbors, but still prioritizing relations with China, and seeking to maintain a solid “third place” behind Washington and Beijing in the global order.

### **The Russian People at Home and in Exile**

Members and scholars expressed hopes that the U.S. can effectively engage not only with the over 140 million people living in Russia, but those millions of Russians who have left their country through the years of Putin’s growing oppression, and especially in the wake of February. A scholar asked, what is the message for welcoming Russians into the West? A member asked, what hope is there for Russia’s “lost generation” of 30- and 40-somethings, while another worried about young people in Russia today becoming yet another lost

generation. Indeed, as scholars explained, one fourth of Russian university graduates now say they want to leave the country. Those hundreds of thousands who have done so can greatly benefit the countries that accept them, but their voices are no longer heard in Russia. Meanwhile, Putin's propaganda machine is targeting schoolchildren for indoctrination, dimming the hopes of the next generation.

Members wanted to know whether the Russian "creative class" in exile could ever return to Russia and how they might be received. How, in the meantime, should the U.S. engage with Russian exiles outside of Russia? Others wondered whether tough U.S. policies towards Russia as a whole had spilled over too much into attacks on Russian culture that would be seen as hostile by ordinary people, and even reinforce Putin's propaganda narrative that the West hates Russians.

It is clear that the longer Putin pursues his war in Ukraine, the deeper the wedge will grow between Russians and Westerners, but also between Russians still in Russia and those who have fled abroad. It is ironic, some scholars argued, that by welcoming only those Russians who oppose Putin in the West, we may actually help the regime maintain its control. At the same time, some opposition leaders have stayed in Russia, though they run great personal risks in doing so. And, as scholars pointed out, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is simply not possible to wholly close off a country from the world, especially one that remains connected to the Internet. This means that if Americans want to stay connected with Russians they can do so. However, members and scholars worried about the unintended consequences of sanctions in cutting off ties with ordinary people in Russia, and even Russians abroad, for example by blocking Russian passport holders' access to western credit card payment services, bank accounts, and even basic internet services such as AirB&B.

Some members recalled decades-long U.S. investments in exchanges, like the Library of Congress Open World Leadership Program, whose Russian programs are now frozen. Scholars noted that alongside over \$50 billion in assistance to Ukraine since February, the U.S. had invested almost nothing in "soft power" with Russians, and could do much more to build on alumni networks of U.S. government supported exchange programs like Open World and the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. Instead, these programs are paused or frozen, their U.S. participants and organizers have been attacked as "weak on Putin,"

and ordinary Russians are more likely to accept the Kremlin's narrative that Americans are their arch enemies.

### **Policy Reflections**

In their final session, members discussed possible policy approaches to address the issues raised during the conference. Some expressed concerns that the U.S. was headed into political "silly season" in the run-up to the 2022 elections, and that it may be hard for them to feel safe communicating in an open and honest way.

On Ukraine, members wanted more clarity about U.S. obligations under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which some described as morally and politically binding, but others suggested it might have legal weight in case of a Russian nuclear attack on Ukraine. Others worried about how far U.S. support for Ukraine could go: can Ukraine realistically roll back Russian forces from the Donbas or the South, perhaps even Crimea? If that is not realistic, should the U.S. start to signal it favors a negotiated settlement before the risks of escalation grow unmanageable? Still others countered that the U.S. should not validate Putin's aggression by accepting his control over Ukrainian territory, but at the same time should be prepared to support Ukraine in negotiations. Many members agreed that a longer-term diplomatic and development plan, besides providing Ukraine with weapons, is vital. Members worried that their constituents are going to get "tired and bored" of this far away war very soon.

When Congress votes to provide financial support for Ukraine, members suggested, it should not rush ahead without debating the details of the proposals. Previous votes were forced through as up or down decisions, which resulted in dozens of members voting "no," who would have been supportive if they had been able to offer amendments. One amendment that members supported was to authorize an Inspector General for Ukraine assistance. With over \$50 billion spent so far, and US taxpayers also footing the bill through much higher gas prices at the pump, they will expect to see accountability and transparency, which is the responsibility of Congress. Members also suggested more and better communication from the Executive Branch on its Ukraine strategy. Some said they wanted a clear definition of where the line is drawn between assistance to Ukraine and active participation in a war with Russia.

Members discussed examining U.S. "special drawing rights" with the IMF as a potential low-cost opportunity to support reconstruction in Ukraine. Congress, members discussed, would

have to set the terms for use of those funds, but new money would not necessarily have to be appropriated. Following the earlier discussions with scholars, members also strongly supported calling upon both European and Asian allies to do more to support Ukraine. Given the scale of U.S. assistance to help Ukraine defend itself, members expected that other states would step up to support Ukraine in rebuilding following a negotiated ceasefire.

Recognizing that Congress also faced a pressure to freeze contacts with Russians, members sought ways to show the Russian people they are not our enemy. They discussed how official “hotlines” for crisis management could be reopened, how exchange programs could be restarted, but most importantly how information and communication ties with ordinary people could be kept alive despite the current crisis. To offer an open hand to Russians fleeing Putin’s repression, members discussed options like temporary protective status, or the UK’s approach to welcoming people who fled Hong Kong in the wake of the Chinese crackdown on pro-democracy protests. In the long term, members underscored, the goal must be for these Russians to return to Russia—not to force change, but to respond quickly when change inevitably comes.

Taking note of the negative attitudes towards the United States among Russians, and among many in the global South reported by scholars, members called for much more active Congressional travel and outreach. Members discussed organizing CODEL travel to Central Asia, a region in the midst of generational political change and caught between intense pressures from both Russia and China. Kazakhstan was seen as an especially important opportunity, since it directly felt the economic impacts of sanctions on Russia, but was an important U.S. partner on Afghanistan, space launch, and nuclear disarmament. Elsewhere in the region, members suggested paying more attention to Belarus, Finland and Sweden, and Hungary and Poland, which is already taking the brunt of Ukrainian refugees from the war.

Members concluded by recommending more funding and more attention for U.S. government supported entities already working in Russia, Ukraine and the region. USAID was singled out for support, given its strong democracy promotion and women’s empowerment programs, as well as International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Peace Corps, and the U.S.-Russia Foundation. House members also underscored the importance of the House Democracy Partnership. Finally, members underscored the uniqueness of the Aspen Congressional Program’s in-depth,

extensive approach to Congressional travel and engagement in international affairs, and expressed their support for bringing new members from both parties and both chambers to participate in future conferences.



# **THE U.S. ROLE IN A NEW WORLD ORDER**

## ***BARONESS CATHERINE ASHTON***

Former High Representative for Foreign Affairs  
and Security Policy for the European Union

For the last century the U.S. has carried the torch of democracy and freedom, lighting dark corners of the world with the possibility of a brighter future. It is a heavy burden to be the superpower to whom many look to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. As the scale of crises grows across the world and the scale of Russia's ambitions becomes more evident, the need to review what that role should be for the future and the alliances that will matter.

The transatlantic relationship between the U.S. and Europe is core to promoting a way of life based on shared values. At the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of the countries that had been trapped behind the iron curtain chose to join the European Union and NATO. The EU gave them a common place at the table as democracies, and partners in the future of the continent. It offered economic security as part of the largest economic block in the world with free trade between its members and far-reaching trade agreements world-wide. NATO gave them solidarity in defense and security under U.S. leadership, with the certainty of help through the guarantee of Article 5.

As a new iron fringe descends across Europe, darkening the skies but not yet blocking the view, expectations are high amongst the former Soviet states, especially in the Baltic nations which feel most vulnerable. But how far is it reasonable to expect Americans to risk all for European allies when other issues both domestic and foreign crowd the agenda? President Kennedy in 1963 said "We cannot continue to pay for the military protection of Europe while NATO states are not paying their fair share and living off the fat of the land;" a sentiment echoed down the decades and made more vivid by President Trump.



Europe has responded to the calls, most especially because of the war in Ukraine, and individual nations have committed more the most notable amongst them being Germany with its commitment of \$112 billion to be spent on military procurement from a specially created fund, together with the pledge to allocate more than 2 per cent of its GDP to defense. NATO members are contemplating what might happen next on their borders and their ranks may soon expand. To ensure their security, Sweden and Finland are considering whether to join NATO. An alliance that a short time ago was contemplating where its future lay has no such problems today. Yet it remains heavily reliant on the willingness of the U.S. to commit the largest share of support. With mid-terms this year and a presidential election two years later, concerns are growing that the U.S. cannot be taken for granted. This requires new thinking in what reliable partnerships might look like in the future. As the Western alliance considers the possibilities of strengthening and renewing relationships, so Russia and China watch in anticipation. Any thoughts of a new order for the West will need to calibrate where its energies will be used over the coming decades.

Beyond security and defense, European leaders are uncertain where the priorities for the U.S. will lie. When President Obama announced his pivot away from Europe to focus more on China, it was greeted with dismay by some leaders who saw this as a significant move away from the transatlantic alliance. Others saw an opportunity to promote “more Europe”, integrating more policies and spending more on defense and security. President Macron claimed leadership of the future of Europe conferences during the French presidency of the EU, having won a second term on a pro-EU ticket. His ambition, shared by others, is a stronger political identity for the EU, together with more shared sovereignty on economic and foreign policy challenges. On the other end of the spectrum is Viktor Orban, newly re-elected Prime Minister of Hungary who, with an increased vote, claims sovereign states must make sovereign decisions; the EU must remain a servant and not take charge. Either way, what the U.S. prioritizes has a direct effect on the future of Europe.

The challenge of China and the desire to build relations in the Indo-Pacific region have become key priorities for U.S. foreign policy, as seen from Europe. The creation of AUKUS (a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) is a small but important example of the shifting landscape. For the U.K. it was an opportunity to showcase its new foreign policy outside of the EU. Working closely with its number one ally, the U.S., and its long-term friend, Australia, gave a much need fillip to a “global Britain” idea

that even the most ardent fans struggle to articulate. For France, and therefore to some extent the EU, it was a blow. Whatever the circumstances, the importance of where the U.S. puts its efforts is not to be underestimated. Doing so within a foreign policy framework for the longer term would give a picture that puts individual decisions in their place. U.S. positions on foreign policy were thought to be largely aligned between the two main parties until President Trump questioned some of the underlying assumptions. His support for the UK leaving the EU was a departure from previous presidents who had all supported the strengthening of the EU. Concerns that NATO, the cornerstone of transatlantic security, might be structurally unsound also raised alarm bells. Washington's future policies toward both will be studied hard in Moscow and Beijing as well as European capitals.

There is a dialogue needed between allies across the "pond" to work out what the future looks like. Domestic concerns for example, energy costs, inflation, immigration and the growing crisis of refugees across the world inevitably dominate the political agenda. Calls for governments to focus on home rather than away are plentiful. But the world is so interlinked that it is impossible to view any domestic problem as purely home-grown. Solving problems that exist elsewhere is a vital part of finding solutions to the genuine concerns of people at home. After all, global crises begin somewhere they just don't stay there.

In considering how the U.S. engages in the world there are three foreign policy lessons that come to mind, from my own experience in the EU, engaging with the U.S. and working across the world.

The first is that there is no issue a nation can solve by itself. Pandemics, countering terrorism, immigration policies, energy, pollution, climate change, security, and trade all require collaboration. The question is how to work together both with those with whom we share similar ideals, and with those we don't. Finding the right structure is an important part of working out a solution. Recent experiences suggest three options that have played their part in tackling problems successfully, or at the very least preventing them becoming worse.

The most obvious is the long-term formal partnership, often based on shared values and ideals. The UN, NATO and EU are obvious examples. As membership organizations they have the power to exclude or invite, and to consider lengthy engagement. It is the continuity that makes it possible for the EU to offer over 20 years of support to Somalia, or the UN to have a program in place in Haiti since the 1950s. It is the shared beliefs that makes NATO able to

offer guarantees, to bring forces together in common effort and to conduct missions that may last a decade or more.

Secondly, informal partnerships make sense when a coalition of the willing needs to be brought together for specific tasks. As a group there are few rules beyond the purpose to which they all came together in the first place. The advantages are clear; bringing unlikely allies together and using resources that might otherwise be unavailable.

The third is a hybrid between the two. The best example is the P5 plus 1 (the UN Security Council's five permanent members; namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany) brought together to negotiate the Iran nuclear deal. It drew its legitimacy from the UN Security Council which gave it authority, together with the EU as convener and leader of the talks, to find a solution.

Almost impossible to imagine now, relations between Russia, China, the U.S. and European countries were strong enough to hold together for over five years of intensive, continuous negotiations. Yet it had only one purpose, and once completed it ceased to exist. Short term, rooted in a formal structure, but wholly focused on one issue. This model or similar may be one for the future.

The second broad lesson for foreign policy generally is deep democracy. During times of upheaval, especially revolution against autocracy and dictatorship, the calls for democracy are loud and urgent. What transpires is most likely some form of election often flawed and questionable in terms of the real choices given to people. While elections are vital to democracy especially the promise of a peaceful transfer of power by themselves they are not enough. They are the cherry on the cake. We have to bake the cake first to make sure the elections are fair, open and respected. The cake is full of ingredients; free press, police force that is not corrupt; judiciary that follows the law; flourishing civil society; political parties. These interlocking elements of democratic life need to flourish. That means they must have time to embed and to withstand storms. Every democratic nation is still a work in progress to make sure their democracy is truly deeply rooted.

The third lesson is that many crises erupt from years of underlying problems. It is often the economic problems born of the political choices made by those in power that cause simmering resentments to erupt, economies to collapse or governments to fall. Economics and politics are two sides of the same coin and solutions need to address both. This requires a

comprehensive approach with a willingness to invest for the long term. If a problem has taken decades to emerge, it may need decades to be fixed. Short term solutions won't work; in the end it is more costly to keep going back to sort out the same issue.

The war in Ukraine has shifted the pieces in the kaleidoscope. We are not clear yet what this means other than our hopes for a peaceful European continent in the immediate future are gone. As the U.S. considers its future engagement in the world the organizational framework, alliances, and ways of working all need attention. This may be a time to reinvigorate them. Let us hope that the transatlantic relationship will become stronger over the next years and that the torch for democracy and freedom will burn brighter than ever.



# WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S OPENING REMARKS

***TEDROS GHEBREYESUS***

Director-General, World Health Organization

*Remarks given at luncheon briefing, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022*

Good afternoon, welcome to Geneva, and thank you all for the opportunity of spending some time today to talk about global health and WHO's role.

As you may know, I visited Washington D.C. in April, where I had the opportunity to meet with Secretary Becerra, Secretary Yellen and officials from CDC and NIH, as well as Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, including Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senator Lindsey Graham and several others.

WHO has had a long and fruitful relationship with the United States. Indeed, it was in 1945, during the Conference to establish the United Nations in San Francisco, that the idea of an international health organization was first proposed. And at the International Health Conference in New York City the following year, the Constitution of the World Health Organization was adopted by 51 Members of the UN, including the United States. So although we live in Switzerland now, you could say that WHO was born in the USA.

For the past 75 years, the United States has continued to be a strong and generous partner for WHO, and for global health. The U.S. played a pivotal role in eradicating smallpox – which remains one of the greatest achievements in human history. The WHO smallpox eradication campaign was led by an American, D.A. Henderson, who was later awarded the Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush. The U.S. has continued to be a leader in global health, through PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, as well as

through its support for the fight against malaria, tuberculosis, polio and many other diseases. As Minister of Health in Ethiopia, I saw first-hand the difference that U.S. support made.

The U.S. has also been a committed and generous supporter of WHO's work to respond to health emergencies, including the war in Ukraine. With support from the United States, WHO is working with Ukraine's Ministry of Health to keep the country's health system running, and we're working with neighboring countries to support access to care for refugees. Prior to the conflict, WHO was working with the Ministry of Health to prepare for the worst-case scenario, pre-positioning supplies in hospitals. Immediately after the Russian Federation's invasion, we sent in medical supplies, trauma kits and more from our logistics hub in Dubai, and were the first humanitarian organization to reach Kyiv with supplies. WHO and our partners have so far delivered more than 500 metric tons of medical supplies to the hardest hit areas in Ukraine, and we are preparing to deliver more. We have delivered enough supplies for almost 16,000 surgeries and to provide care for 650,000 people, plus diesel generators for hospitals and clinics, 20 ambulances, and tests and treatments for COVID-19.

In accordance with our mandate from the World Health Assembly, we also monitor attacks on health care. Since the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine began almost 100 days ago, WHO has verified 263 incidents of attacks on health care, with 156 people killed and 161 injured, including health workers and patients. Attacks on health care are a violation of international humanitarian law, and we have been clear in calling on the Russian Federation to stop the war. There can be no health without peace.

The United States has also been a strong supporter of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the largest financial donor to the ACT Accelerator, and the largest donor of vaccines to COVAX. I am painfully aware that the pandemic has taken a heavy toll in the U.S., with more than one million deaths. I'm pleased that two-thirds of the U.S. population is now vaccinated, and reported cases and deaths are at much lower levels, although I'm sure you would agree with me that more than 1,500 deaths a week is 1,500 deaths too many.

I also note that cases are rising in the U.S., as they are in many other countries. Which highlights an inconvenient truth: the pandemic is not over. Increasing transmission, plus

decreasing testing and sequencing, plus one billion people still unvaccinated, equals a dangerous situation. There remains a real and present danger of a new and more virulent variant emerging that evades our vaccines. We lower our guard at our peril.

WHO's primary focus now is supporting countries with the lowest vaccination rates to increase those rates as fast as possible, with a focus on health workers, older people and other at-risk groups. But even as we respond to the pandemic, we must learn the lessons it is teaching us, because history teaches us that it will not be the last one. We must therefore put in place the measures to prevent and prepare for future pandemics, and mitigate their impact.

There have been multiple independent reviews of the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 300 recommendations on how to make the world safer. WHO has synthesized these recommendations into a proposal for a stronger global architecture for health emergency preparedness and response, which we presented to the World Health Assembly last week. We have developed a white paper that explains this proposal in detail, which we would be very happy to share with you. But in brief, it includes 10 key recommendations for stronger governance, stronger systems and tools, stronger financing, and a stronger WHO at the center of the global health architecture. Key to strengthening WHO, and making it more efficient, is making our funding more sustainable and predictable.

As you may be aware, the World Health Assembly last week passed a landmark resolution to increase assessed contributions to a target of 50% of our budget by the end of the decade, from just 16% now. This gradual shift will go hand-in-hand with further strengthening WHO budgetary, programmatic and financing governance, which will be led by our Member States. This shift to better quality funding will have major benefits for WHO's ability to deliver long-term programming on U.S. priorities in countries, for example by attracting and retaining top global health experts to deliver that programming in a sustained way.

Overarching all these recommendations is the proposal for a new international instrument, to provide the framework for closer cooperation and coordination between countries in the face of global threats. This was a key recommendation of all the independent reviews. At a Special Session of the World Health Assembly last year, Member States including



the United States decided to embark on the process of negotiating a new international accord. That process has now begun. An international instrument will be an important complement to the International Health Regulations, which govern the global response to health emergencies.

I'm aware that there has been some concern expressed over whether such an agreement is an infringement of national sovereignty. The answer is: no. It's important to note that the negotiating process is a discussion among Member States—Member States themselves, including the U.S., will decide what the instrument will look like, not the WHO Secretariat. And it will be up to the United States as to whether you decide to become a signatory to the instrument. No other country or international organization can bind any Member State to any international agreement but that Member State itself. Of course, I very much hope that the United States will engage actively in the negotiating process, and that you will adopt the final product.

As you are well aware, more than 50 years ago the United States played a key role in developing the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; a treaty which remains all too relevant today. If the nations of the world can come together to agree to a common approach to the human-made threat of nuclear weapons, then it is common sense for countries to now agree on a common approach, with common rules for a common response, to threats arising from our relationship with nature—threats no human can entirely control.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the nations of the world came together to establish the United Nations and the World Health Organization, based on the realization that the only way to avoid international conflict is international cooperation. Seventy-five years later, we are starting to emerge from the most severe global crisis since the Second World War. We need the same realization now that the only way to avoid another global crisis is global cooperation. This is not even enlightened self-interest; it's garden variety self-interest to protect yourself by protecting others.

The pandemic is a vivid reminder that we are one species, sharing one planet. Bugs don't respect borders; pathogens don't need passports; and viruses don't need visas.

Earlier, I referred to D.A. Henderson, who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his work in eradicating smallpox. Let me finish with a quote from another recipient of the Medal of Freedom, Joshua Lederberg, who won the Nobel Prize in 1958 for his work on bacteria. Writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1988 as the HIV epidemic was erupting globally, Lederberg said:

“As one species, we share a common vulnerability to these scourges. No matter how selfish our motives, we can no longer be indifferent to the suffering of others. The microbe that felled one child in a distant continent yesterday can reach yours today and seed a global pandemic tomorrow.”

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lederberg’s words have a devastating ring of truth.

My hope, as Director-General of your World Health Organization, is that we will learn the lessons this pandemic is teaching us, and put in place the measures to keep our children and our children’s children safe.

Thank you once again for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions and our discussion.



# **ENDING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC MEANS HELPING COUNTRIES TO CATCH-UP WITH VACCINATION, NOT GIVING UP**

***SETH BERKLEY***

CEO, Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance

**Originally published in the medical journal The BMJ, March 24, 2022**

The governments of predominantly wealthy nations with high vaccination coverage are beginning to relax their covid-19 restrictions and respond with an almost audible sigh of relief as societies reopen and life appears to return to normal. However, relaxing restrictions now is without question a gamble and risks sending a message that the pandemic is over. There are 2.8 billion people around the world still unvaccinated, and there is a constant threat of new variants triggering fresh resurgences. We are still very much in a state of global crisis; this pandemic is likely far from over.

The gamble could pay off if global leaders don't take their eye off the ball. Ending the covid-19 pandemic globally must continue to be a priority, alongside other pressing global crises, such as the looming global recession, the energy crisis and now the devastating conflict in Ukraine. If global leaders fail to finish the job they will reinforce the misleading message that covid-19 is no longer a threat to dozens of countries still struggling with low vaccination coverage. At a time when vaccine doses are finally beginning to flow freely to these countries, that could spell disaster.

With vaccination coverage now high in the global north, doses of covid-19 vaccines are finally flowing unhindered to the rest of the world. For the first time COVAX (the global collaboration to make equitable access to covid-19 vaccines available, led by Gavi, the Coalition

for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, the World Health Organization and UNICEF) is seeing supply outstripping demand. That is great news for the billions of people still waiting for their first shots. But it also brings into sharp focus one of the toughest challenges faced by the largest and most complex global deployment of vaccines ever – getting shots into the arms of billions of people living in some of the world’s most challenging and resource-constrained environments.

It’s hard to do justice to the scale of the vaccination effort. It means reaching billions of people in dozens of countries, many with weak health systems, often with highly complex and fragile political contexts, and all at the same time. Even well resourced, wealthy countries have struggled with their national covid-19 vaccination programs during the pandemic.

With over 1.2 billion COVAX doses already delivered to lower-income countries, many have made incredible progress towards their national vaccination targets. However, other countries, particularly low-income countries with poor health systems, are still struggling. The danger now is that complacency sets in, and countries with low coverage stop seeing covid-19 as a priority. This could lead to the entire global effort unravelling.

While it is possible that we won’t have to deal with further covid-19 variants of concern, it seems unlikely given that on average three have emerged each year. If we’re lucky, vaccines will still protect people from severe disease and death when the next variant emerges. In this scenario countries that are heavily vaccinated will do well, but those with low coverage will be at risk. If we’re unlucky, and vaccines are less effective, it would most likely restart the global scramble for vaccine doses as wealthy nations rush to protect their citizens with additional boosters. Either way, countries with low vaccine coverage will lose out and the virus will continue to spread, perpetuating the threat of new variants.

That is why no one can afford to be complacent and why the priority has to be supporting countries to achieve their national vaccination targets and vaccinate health care workers, people at high risk, and the vulnerable. In the face of vaccine hoarding, export restrictions and challenges in scaling-up manufacturing, COVAX’s priority has been securing doses. However, with doses now flowing and as our vaccine supplies continue to ramp up, COVAX is entering a new phase and shifting to a more country-centric approach.

This new phase will make COVAX more responsive to the individual needs of countries in scaling-up their vaccine delivery systems, ensuring they get the right vaccines, in the right volumes at the right time. It will also ensure that donated vaccine doses reach people, by helping lower-income countries with ancillary costs for essential equipment, like syringes, as well as transportation and insurance. To protect COVAX's supplies from future disruptions we are also requesting additional funding from governments and the private sector to create a Pandemic Vaccine Pool ready to buy doses in case there are any further shocks to global supply or new variant vaccines are needed.

Wealthy governments need to send a clear signal that covid-19 remains a global priority, and the best way to do that is by supporting this additional \$5.2 billion effort. The covid-19 omicron variant may have created the impression that covid-19 has become less of a threat, but the world remains at risk of new variants so long as the virus is able to circulate in large populations. Closing the vaccine equity gap is a race against time, and the only way to win it is to help countries catch up, not give up.

### **Footnotes**

- Competing Interests: Gavi, is co-lead of COVAX. Seth Berkley has no competing interests.
- Acknowledgments: We thank Duncan Graham-Rowe for support writing the article.
- Provenance and peer review: commissioned; not peer reviewed.
- This article is part of a series commissioned by The BMJ for the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) 2022. The BMJ commissioned, edited, and made the decisions to publish. The series, including open access fees, is funded by WISH.



# **EUROPE'S ROLE IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

***OKSANA ANTONENKO***

Director for Global Risk Analysis, Control Risks Group

*PowerPoint deck follows*



June 2, 2022

# Europe's Role in Crisis-Management

Presentation for The Aspen Institute Congressional Program

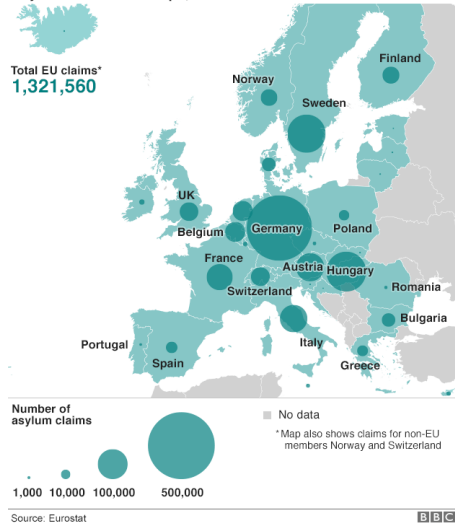
Oksana Antonenko  
Director, Global Risk Analysis  
Control Risks



0

## ► Europe had over a decade of crises and crisis-management

Asylum claims in Europe, 2015



War in Georgia 2008

Global Financial Crisis 2008-2009

Greece Debt and Eurozone crisis 2010-2018

Syrian Refugee crisis 2015-2016

Transatlantic Rift Period 2017-2020

Brexit 2016-2020

COVID Pandemic 2020-2021

... 2022 was supposed to be Europe's renewal moment

1

## ► Instead Europe now faces an unprecedented number of once-in-a-generation challenges, all of which could evolve into major crises

War in Ukraine and its regional spillovers (migration, economic disruption, reconstruction cost)

Europe's Strategic Russia challenge (sanctions/economic decoupling, security and resilience)

Social stability and return of populism  
Cost of living, inflation, social unrest and slow growth

Dual Energy security and energy transition challenge  
Meeting EU's ambitious decarbonization targets while cutting dependence on Russian hydrocarbons

Geopolitical transition (Europe's China problem)

Europe's periphery: Food security, failed states and increased irregular migration

EU-UK relations  
Northern Ireland protocol, Global Britain, security relationship

Reforming the EU (Franco-German relations and EU's evolution since Ukraine war)

2

## ► Conflict scenarios and sanctions outlook

### 4 weeks Conflict escalation

- **Drivers:** Ukraine and Russia improved expectations on the battlefield, US/Europe steps up supply of advanced weapons and money to Ukraine, Putin continues to enjoy domestic backing for the war
- **Triggers:** Russia's offensive in Donbass (and in the South), Ukraine's counter-offensive,
- **Black swans:** Spillovers (Moldova, refugees and
- **Sanctions:** Significant expansion (EU's oil embargo agreed in principle), US/EU/G7 unity maintained, sanctions still having limited impact on Russia, sanctions' purpose – punishment

### 6 months Stalemate

- **Drivers:** relative resilience of Russia and Ukraine to sustained losses and costs, sanctions impacts on Russia, strategic unity in the West (victory vs ceasefire)
- **Triggers:** Conflict fatigue, potential for localised/technical ceasefires
- **Black Swans:** WMD use
- **Sanctions:** Western/EU divisions over ending gas imports from Russia and implantation of oil embargo; sanctions relief discussion (link to ceasefire talks); secondary sanctions

### 2 years Conflict transformation

- **Drivers:** Russia's evolution (economy, elite cohesion, security posture), Western unity and priority to Ukraine, China challenge
- **Triggers:** Frozen conflict or fragile ceasefire;
- **Black Swans:** China-West tensions
- **Sanctions:** Structural Impact on the Russian economy, likely further divisions within the West (particularly if other crises emerge); sanctions role as a deterrence, ceasefire enabler and economic reparations mechanism

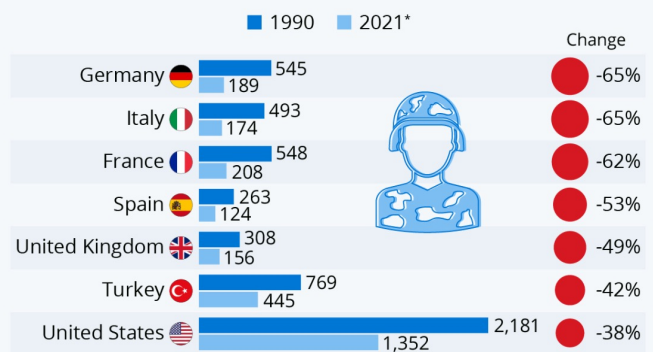
3

## ▶ NATO Revived, Transatlantic unity (and burden-sharing) strengthened

- ▶ Ukraine crisis has reinvigorated NATO after divisive Afghanistan withdrawal. **Increased US commitment to European security, but its strategic pivot to Indo-Pacific will continue.**
- ▶ EU's strategic autonomy will be developed alongside NATO, not in competition. **European countries, including Germany pledged increase in defence spending, but EU's strategic culture slow to evolve**
- ▶ NATO's mission in Eastern Europe will change from serving as a tripwire in case of a Russian attack to a full-fledged deterrent. **Increased NATO presence and visibility in Poland, Romania and rotating troop presence in Baltic states**
- ▶ Finland and Sweden applied to join NATO. Both countries will contribute to NATO's capabilities, **but accession process could be complicated. Rising transition risks**
- ▶ Russia-NATO tensions will continue to escalate while conflict in Ukraine continues. **Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions will remain high risk areas for accidental escalation**

## NATO Countries Have Heavily Cut Troop Levels

Number of military personnel in selected NATO forces (in thousands)

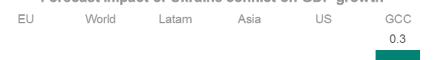


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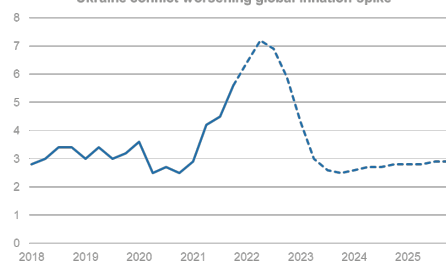
## ▶ Apart from Ukraine and Russia, Europe will carry the brunt of long-term financial costs of the war

- ▶ Major war in Europe – governments will prioritise security concerns over economic recovery. **Europe is likely to experience significant economic slowdown or recession**
- ▶ Geopolitical divisions between Russia and the West will be accompanied by rapid economic de-coupling. **Europe will carry the highest cost, particularly in the energy sector**
- ▶ High energy prices, food inflation and slower recovery will exacerbate already significant cost of living crisis in Europe increasing the risk of **social unrest and political instability in parts of Europe**
- ▶ Long term support for Ukrainian refugees and likely increase in irregular migration from the Middle East and Africa (driven by food security and climate risks) will place significant new **pressure on EU budgets, fuel support for populism**
- ▶ **Reconstruction of Ukraine** (currently estimated at Euro 600bn, but likely to be significantly higher by the end of the year) will pose both opportunities and risks for Europe. Ukraine's EU integration likely to be a lengthy process.
- ▶ EU would have to manage risks of co-existence with post-war Russia (isolated, economically weakened and unstable Russia). **High resilience costs for Europe.**

Forecast impact of Ukraine conflict on GDP growth

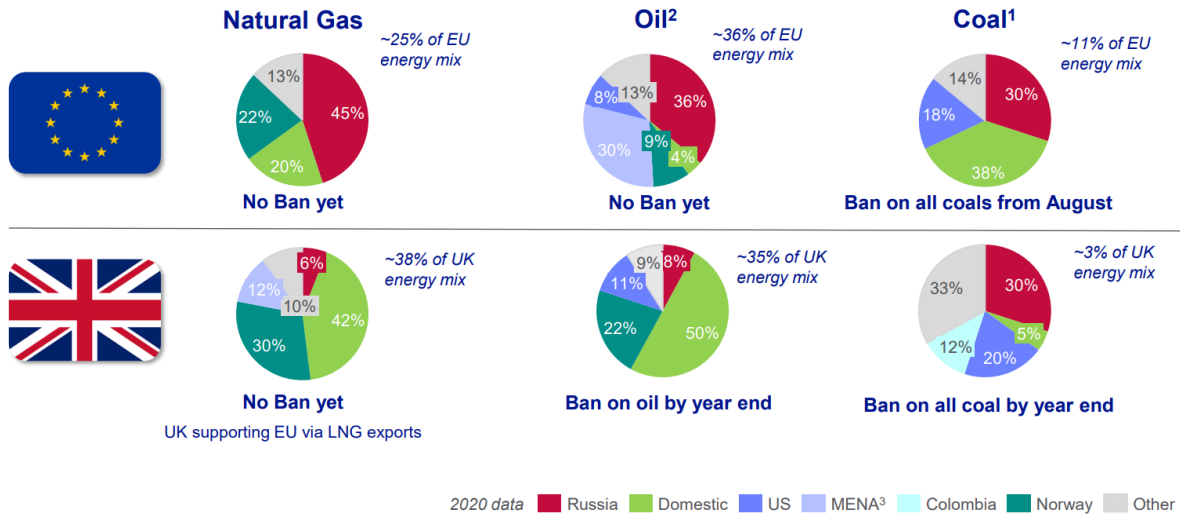


Ukraine conflict worsening global inflation spike



5

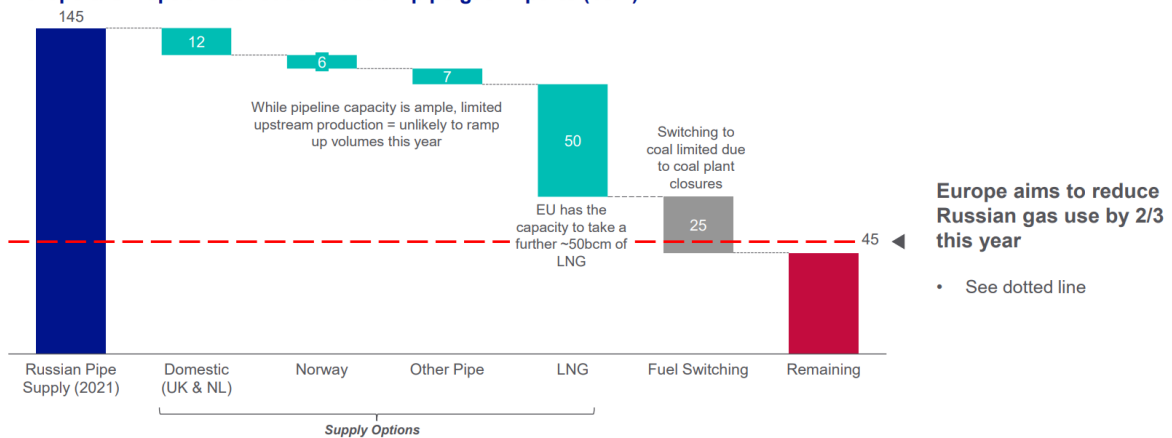
## Europe relies heavily on Russia for its energy supply and thus any bans will push up prices and impact global trade flows



6

► EU plans to reduce imports of Russian gas by two thirds by the end of the year is very challenging, will rely of high LNG spot prices

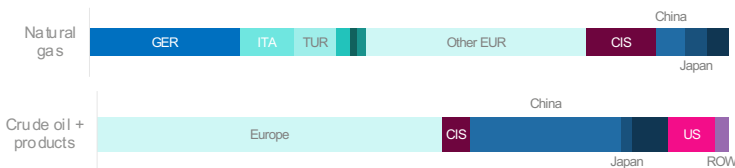
Europe & UK options to reduce Russian pipe gas imports (bcm)



7

## ▶ Western embargo on Russian oil will increase risks for oil importers globally

### Russian export reliance



### Overall import dependence

	Oil	Gas
Very high (75-100%)	Europe: Western Europe, CEE, Balkans, Turkey Asia: Taiwan, Japan, Bangladesh, India, Thailand, China, Pakistan MENA: Jordan Africa: S. Africa, Cote d'Ivoire Latam: Peru	Europe: Western Europe, CEE, Balkans, Turkey Asia: Japan, Taiwan, Singapore MENA: Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia Africa: S Africa Latam: Caribbean
High (50-75%)	Asia: Australia	Europe: UK, Ireland Asia: India Latam: Chile, Mexico

### Country

### Supply impact Price impact

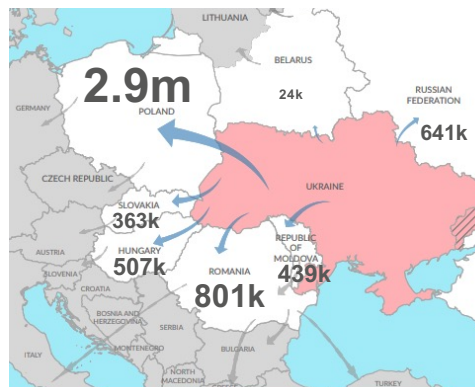
Country	Supply impact	Price impact
Germany	Red	Yellow
CEE	Red	Yellow
Italy	Yellow	Yellow
Turkey	Yellow	Yellow
Central Asia	Yellow	Yellow
Nigeria	Green	Yellow
North Africa	Yellow	Yellow
Gulf states	Green	Yellow
Sub-Saharan Africa	Yellow	Red
India	Yellow	Red
SE Asia	Yellow	Yellow

Source: BP, EIA

## ▶ Migration

### Overview

- ▶ Over 5m refugees have fled Ukraine during conflict; (10m possible under protracted conflict scenario)
- ▶ Adjacent CEE countries most directly and significantly impacted
- ▶ European governments have so far welcomed refugees (in contrast to 2015 Syrian refugee crisis), but long term integration may be difficult
- ▶ Increased and sustained migration is likely to gradually undermine public support and increase social tensions
- ▶ Food price inflation and shortages could drive new wave of economic migration from North Africa and the Middle East



### Country

### Migration impact

Country	Migration impact
Poland	Red
Slovakia	Yellow
Hungary	Yellow
Russia	Yellow
Moldova	Yellow
Romania	Yellow
W. Europe	Yellow
Belarus	Yellow
Rest of world	Green

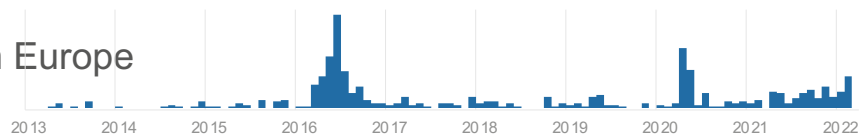
Source: UNHCR

## ▶ Food security related risks will have a major impact on Europe

### Overview

- ▶ World food prices at all time high due to rapid pandemic recovery, supply chain disruption, and Ukraine crisis
- ▶ Conflict disrupting physical exports from Ukraine and seasonal grain planting cycle; impacts likely to accumulate during 2022
- ▶ Sanctions also disrupting trade finance with Russia and fertilizer supply from Belarus, increasing likelihood of prolonged global food security crisis
- ▶ Over 40 countries have imposed protectionist export bans on many essential food products, driving shortages and prices even higher
- ▶ Surging staple food prices increase the likelihood of food-related unrest and political instability in the Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa
- ▶ UN expects worsening of food insecurity and humanitarian crises due to higher prices

Food-related unrest, 2013-2022



### High Ukraine/Russia grain import dependence

Country	Political Stability risk	Civil Unrest risk
Egypt	Medium	Medium
Tunisia	High	Medium
Lebanon	High	High
Yemen	Extreme	High
Turkey	Medium	Medium
Bangladesh	Medium	Medium
Nigeria	High	High
Azerbaijan	Medium	Low
Sudan	High	High
UAE	Medium	Very Low

### Country

### Supply impact

### Price impact

Egypt	Red	Red
Lebanon	Red	Red
Tunisia	Red	Red
Yemen	Red	Red
Turkey	Yellow	Yellow
Bangladesh	Yellow	Red
Nigeria	Yellow	Red
Kenya	Yellow	Red
Azerbaijan	Yellow	Yellow
Sudan	Yellow	Red
UAE	Yellow	Yellow
ROW	Yellow	Yellow

## ▶ Control Risks - Who we are



Control Risks is an independent, specialist risk consultancy that helps create **secure, compliant and resilient** organisations.

We believe that taking risks is essential to success, so we provide the insight and intelligence you need to realise opportunities and grow.

And we ensure you are prepared to resolve issues and crises. From the boardroom to the remotest location, we have developed an unparalleled ability to bring order to chaos and reassurance to anxiety.



# COOPERATION AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

***THOMAS GREMINGER***

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We live in an unpredictable world. Events seem to unfold quickly, often unexpectedly. At the same time, there are a wide range of slow-burning threats and challenges that are more predictable but receive less urgent attention. In times of unpredictability, states tend to retreat behind walls and seek national solutions. Or they seek to divert attention from national problems by stirring up trouble abroad. But in an inter-connected world, a do-it-yourself or beggar-thy-neighbor approach will not work. States need each other for trade, and for security. And to manage power rivalries states, especially neighbors, will have to find a way to get along. Furthermore, multilateral cooperation will be essential to deal with transnational threats. Therefore, cooperation is self-interest, it is realpolitik, not altruism or liberal internationalism. This paper looks at threats and challenges to security in wider Europe, explains why states should work together, and gives ten suggestions on how to enhance cooperation.

## **Unpredictability and the Security Dilemma**

Within the span of a generation, the new era of democracy, peace and unity declared in the 1990 Charter of Paris has come under threat from authoritarian and illiberal regimes, kleptocrats, and instability. While, until recently, war in Europe was “unthinkable”, in the past two decades there have been conflicts in the Western Balkans, South Caucasus, and Ukraine. And now there are *de facto* two wars in the heart of Europe; one between Russia and Ukraine, and the other between Russia and the West.

Borders have been changed unilaterally by force. Sovereignty and territorial integrity have been violated. The dream of a Europe whole and free has been replaced by the reality of new dividing lines, barbed wire fences, walls and now civilians being targeted and killed, and



cities destroyed. The old order has been swept away: treaties have been torn up; and principles and commitment violated. Europe faces its biggest crisis since the end of the Cold War.

In the absence of order or trust and in the face of increased unpredictability and risks states are seeking to strengthen their sovereignty or achieve “strategic autonomy”. However, in the process of trying to enhance its own security—particularly military capabilities—a state may make others feel less safe. This provokes a reaction whereby the other state seeks to enhance its security, which is then perceived as a threat. This is sometimes referred to as the “security dilemma” or “security paradox”. As a result, a one-sided quest for security without cooperation increases risk rather than security. Today we see the consequences.

Furthermore, many assumptions on which European security has been based for decades have been called into question: such as European countries share the same values; the United States provides the security umbrella for Western Europe; *pacta sunt servanda*; democracy is the only system of government that people aspire to; or that the EU will continue to grow rather than shrink.

This uncertainty is compounded by a range of issues that challenge sovereignty in ways that our states and international organizations are not used to dealing with: terrorism; the rise of non-state actors; large flows of refugees and migrants; disruptive technology; and of course COVID.

Within societies there is a breakdown of trust of people in their governments to deal with these risks and challenges. This creates greater polarization within politics, but also disillusionment with politicians. By proposing simple solutions and using simple slogans, populists are profiting from the failure of governments to deal with complex challenges. Facts and the truth are trampled and manipulated by leaders who lack direction because they have smashed their moral compass. The result is even greater instability within states, a downgrading of democracy, and heightened nationalism.

A similar trend is evident at the inter-governmental level. States don’t trust each other, and they don’t believe that international organizations (even ones that they are members of) are able to cope with the problems of the day. The deficit of trust was deepened further by the mishandling of COVID. As a result, the institutions that were created to address threats and challenges to security are being by-passed or gridlocked. And governments tend to seek

unilateral solutions or ad hoc coalitions. As a result, multilateralism is being undermined at the very time when it is needed the most.

### **Ten Ways to Enhance Cooperation**

As we reach this inflection point, what can be done to overcome these risks, divisions and dilemmas in order to reduce tensions and promote greater cooperation to address common threats and challenges? Allow me to make ten suggestions.

#### ***1. Deterrence but also dialogue if not détente***

In the near future, the focus will most likely be on deterrence, for example in relations between Washington and Beijing and between Russia and the West. But negotiations must continue.

That said, based on President Putin's recent track record he will only stop when he hits steel. Showing resolve is actually one of the few ways to induce cooperation with such leaders. When that day comes, it will be important to engage in dialogue as unpalatable that may be; after all, a nuclear war is even more horrendous.

Any postwar discussions on a new European security order will take time, as with the Helsinki process between 1972 and 1975, or the talks between the U.S. and the USSR between 1986 and 1991. With its broad membership, principles and commitments including on arms control, good-neighborly relations, and confidence- and security-building measures the OSCE seems like the most logical place to seek to rebuild security in Europe.

#### ***2. A spirit of reciprocity***

Dialogue should be carried out in what Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has described as a "spirit of reciprocity". This spirit is at the heart of almost every faith and religion in the world and seems to be a guiding principle for why we have survived as a species: you help me and I will help you, you harm me and I will harm you. At the moment we are witnessing a dangerous tit-for-tat, particularly between Russia and the West, including an arms race. This must be replaced—quickly—by a virtuous circle of de-escalation measures before the situation spirals dangerously out of control. A positive spirit of reciprocity can lead to a series of trust-inducing measures that can build trust and maintain peaceful relations. Taking a step or making a

gesture to build confidence is not a sign of weakness, as currently perceived by major powers, rather it is one of strength.

Reciprocity does not require trust, but it can build trust. Nevertheless, confidence can not be built on lies. As U.S. President Ford said when signing the Helsinki Final Act, states will be judged not by the promises that they make, but by the promises they keep.

### ***3. Greater predictability***

But dialogue around the negotiating table will only work if there is a corresponding de-escalation of tensions on the ground. Since unpredictability creates fear and uncertainty, it is vital to have in place means of communication to seek clarity, regular dialogue, exchanges of information, and provisions to deconflict potentially dangerous situations. To restore stability in Europe, diplomacy and demilitarization will have to go hand in hand. Concretely, this means more regular military to military dialogue, agreements on the prevention of incidents on and over the high seas, more effective use of bodies like the NATO-Russia Council and the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, joint military commissions in hotspots (like Ukraine), implementing confidence and security building measures (such as from the 2011 Vienna document), as well as verification regimes. Ideally, there would be a sequence of steps. First, Russia will have to demonstrate restraint in deeds and not just words by withdrawing its troops, weapons and hardware, and signaling, verifying and reciprocating de-escalation measures. This should be followed by short- to medium-term military risk reduction measures and a strengthening of confidence and security-building measures. In time, the parties should explore how to repair the safety net of arms control agreements that are so vital for increasing transparency and predictability, and for reducing tensions and the number of weapons. Furthermore, there should be greater transparency concerning the development of new and destabilizing weapons systems. Such an approach could be facilitated by a commonly agreed framework for arms control.

### ***4. Identifying common interests/islands of cooperation***

Great powers, despite their differences, have a national interest to work together with other powers when it comes to common challenges. For example, Russia and the United States should both have an interest in promoting nuclear disarmament, containing a spill-over of drugs and instability from Afghanistan, reaching an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, combating violent extremism and terrorism, and ensuring peace and cooperation in the Arctic.

There are also challenges on the horizon that will necessitate multilateral cooperation including among the great powers: such as dealing with the security implications of climate change; the governance and management of the global commons; ensuring the peaceful use of outer space; promoting sustainable development; managing migration; and ensuring that scientific and technological advancements are used in peaceful and ethical ways.

Cooperation in these areas can build trust and lead to more constructive dialogue on other topics. Countries, even rivals, may not share the same values or assumptions, but they should have some common interests, even if they are just a few “islands of cooperation”. This is not liberal internationalism, it is *realpolitik* and it serves the national interest.

### ***5. Shared rules of road***

Restoring a security order in Europe will require reaffirmation of existing principles and commitments. To prevent future collisions there must be commonly agreed rules of the road. But in the current environment, simply reaffirming the existing principles and commitments that have been violated would lack credibility. Therefore, it could be prudent to discuss the existing principles, dilemmas between fundamental principles, and to understand what their validity and what they mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, it is time to discuss what further measures and treaties may be necessary, for example for dealing with new challenges (such as climate change and security, disruptive technologies, cyber security or arms control). That said, this should be done in a way that enhances the implementation of the existing principles and commitments rather than undermining them. At a minimum we must hang on to what we have.

### ***6. Use negotiation frameworks***

There are plenty of negotiation frameworks that exist but which could be used more effectively. Think of the Co-chairmen of the Minsk Process that involve three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: France, the Russian Federation and the United States. Or the 5+2 process that involves *inter alia* the EU, the United States, the Russian Federation and Ukraine aimed at finding a diplomatic settlement to the Transnistria conflict. Or the Normandy format talks involving France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Another example is cooperation among the P5 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely the U.S., U.K., China, Russia, and France) plus Germany and the EU in the context of talks on Iran’s nuclear program. These frameworks provide platforms for great

powers to meet and work together to resolve conflicts. And, as a side effect, these processes can build confidence among the mediators as well as the parties.

### ***7. Informal spaces for dialogue***

Today's security challenges and those that are emerging are too complex and interconnected to be tackled by diplomats, soldiers or politicians alone. Furthermore, in the current geostrategic environment there is little appetite for dialogue, for example between the West and Russia or the United States and China. In the absence of formal dialogue, it is vital to use and if necessary create informal spaces for dialogue. Furthermore, it is essential to involve a wide set of actors including area experts, complexity scientists, civil society, the private sector and youth. Such an inter-disciplinary approach goes to the roots of the Aspen Institute, and it is very much the approach at the Geneva Center for Security Policy. For example, we have a Polymath Initiative that brings together people who understand science and technology but also policy making to look at the impact of technologies like artificial intelligence, advanced robotics, blockchain, neurotechnology, nano-technology and synthetic biology. One could also add lethal automated weapon systems. We need to better understand and prepare for the risks and challenges of tomorrow and this is best done using an inter-disciplinary and inter-generational approach. Furthermore, at a time when there are few links between governments and civil society organizations and think tanks are under pressure in some countries, it is vital to provide support and a space for these actors and to build initiatives from the bottom up where it is difficult to engage leaders from the top down.

### ***8. Making the case for cooperation***

Fostering cooperation will require a well-articulated and convincing counter-narrative to selfish, short-sighted and nationalist policies. The experience of COVID provides important lessons on the need for early warning, sharing of information, as well as the self-interest of solidarity. The war in Ukraine shows the importance of good-neighborly nations, and the devastation of war for all sides. While people and states may not be convinced of the need to work together, they should at least be made aware of what happens if they do not. In an interconnected world faced with inter-linked and cascading threats, business as usual could lead to our demise while working together can bring common benefits.

### ***9. Institutions fit for purpose***

The institutions that are designed to promote security and cooperation in Europe are facing a mid-life crisis, and international organizations like the United Nations are facing a major stress test. If they do not adapt they will turn into theatres of public diplomacy, but little else. And yet it would be very difficult to create from scratch institutions and commitments to promote and preserve security in Europe. Therefore we need to transform the existing institutions and make them fit for purpose. This means using modern management practices, attracting and maintaining the best staff, providing sufficient resources, ensuring that organizations respond to the needs of their members, and building effective partnerships. And while NATO and the European Union have a new sense of purpose and are united like never before, we must not abandon the idea of pan-European security. Otherwise we would split the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian halves of the continent and lead to a new Cold War (or worse).

### ***10. A future-oriented and cooperative security agenda***

While the world is on fire, we cannot stand and watch it burn. We need to address the serious challenges of today, but also lift our heads and look to the future. We should not be refighting the Cold War nor blaming each other for who lost the peace. Rather we need to look to the future, to ensure that Europe as a continent is ready for the challenges of the future. Therefore, we need to engage in strategic forecasting, and look over the horizon to what our common future might look like. And we need to think strategically about how to rebuild trust, how to de-escalate tensions, and work together on common threats and challenges. Such ideas may not be for today, or even tomorrow. But the day will come. And when that opportunity arises, we need to be prepared to seize it.



# **RUSSIAN WAR IN UKRAINE: SCENARIOS AND POLICY OPTIONS**

***VASYL FILIPCHUK***

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine was expected long before it began and predicted decades earlier. Samuel Huntington in his "Clash of Civilizations"<sup>1</sup> described discussions in early 1990s between U.S. scholars on inevitability of Russia—Ukraine war. Since the Munich and Bucharest speeches of Putin fifteen years ago, revisionism became an official foreign policy line of Russia. After the attack on Georgia, the illegal annexation of Crimea and the launching the war on the Donbas in Ukraine, no ambiguity was left that Russia is ready for everything to prove to the West the seriousness of its intentions. Since September 2021 all international media were writing almost daily on the possible Russian invasion of Ukraine; no doubt was left on who will be responsible if the war started.

Nevertheless, Putin decided to invade Ukraine. It is still hard to believe that Russia was capable not only of carrying out such a brutal crime, but also of miscalculating so badly. It is difficult to understand if it was an irrational paranoid decision of an isolated person or if it was a rational decision of a Russian leader and his entourage who live in the world of resentment and grief for the lost empire and believe they can change the course of history and return to the pre-Gorbachev USSR of 1984. They succeeded to create an Orwellian state in Russia and believed in their holy war with the West, where the attack on Ukraine was a natural part of their pathetic crusade.

Whatever the explanation, there is no justification for their decision. This war, which has already destroyed millions of lives, is a crime, which should and could have been prevented. The mistakes that brought the situation to war must become a handbook for politicians and diplomats in order to prevent such a disaster befalling another country in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York :Touchstone, 1997



In 2017-2018 the author of this paper predicted in many articles<sup>2</sup> and during the Aspen congressional conference in Helsinki in June 2018<sup>3</sup> that unless a mutually acceptable peace deal was agreed with Russia, it was extremely likely that Ukraine would become a battlefield. Back then, suggestions for security guarantees and other innovative diplomatic steps were criticized, but two months ago security guarantees were the only serious issue Ukrainian and Russian delegations could agree on when they met to discuss ways to end the war. Yet, in light of the horrors of Bucha, Mariupol and other Ukrainian towns, even these ideas are now probably too little, too late. But the conclusion must be drawn that policymakers better take into account ideas, vision, and proposals from experts in order to prevent worst case scenarios instead of dealing with their consequences.

With peace negotiations stalled, prospects for a peace agreement are currently very slim. In military terms, both sides are too strong to lose and too weak to win. Ukraine's army and society are committed to defending the country. Military and financial aid from the West has significantly enhanced Ukraine's military power, strengthening the country's ability to withstand Russian aggression. However, Russia remains a military superpower with some 5,977 nuclear warheads<sup>4</sup> and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) veto. Furthermore, it is an authoritarian country, where wars help to increase control over society. Russia also remains a relatively big economy, which could withstand sanctions and economic isolation for years, especially in alliances with anti-Western and antiliberal regimes all over the world.

There may be no ambiguity for policymakers: **it is essential for the world and vitally important for the country itself that Ukraine wins the war.** A Russian victory would mean decades of war, resistance, hundreds of thousands of deaths and ruining Ukraine like it happened with Bucha or Mariupol. Russian victory would weaken democracy and liberalism, strengthen authoritarianism, lead to the end of the Western-dominated world and a transition of power to the Chinese-Russian alliance. It would result in the demise of international law. Rule of law would shift to rule of force. Russian imperialism will encourage other countries with territorial or other claims towards neighbours to take aggressive steps to

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<sup>2</sup> Vasyl Filipchuk. Exchange coin or a battlefield: what will happen with Ukraine. 9 steps to peace. Kyiv: Apostrophe, January 3, 2017

<sup>3</sup> Vasyl Filipchuk. Apple of Discord or a Key to Big Deal: Ukraine in U.S.-Russia Relations. Helsinki-Tallin: The Aspen Institute Congressional Program, 2018

<sup>4</sup> Claire Mills. Nuclear weapons at a glance: Russia. London: House of commons policy brief, 2022

achieve their goals. Nuclear non-proliferation risks being forgotten, as the possession of nuclear weapons will be viewed as the only way to guarantee a nation's security—as proved by Ukraine.

Vice versa, Ukraine's victory is not only existential for Ukraine. Russia's defeat would lead to the reestablishment of the international order and rule of law, strengthen the unity of democracies and their ability to shape results of key global developments. Ukraine's victory will also encourage other countries to follow a democratic path, rely on international institutions, and prove that liberal values and principles can prevail over authoritarianism and illiberal state or crony capitalism.

A Russian defeat would be good for Russia itself too. The country has become close to being an international pariah state comparable to North Korea or Syria. It could help Russian society to see the consequences of the irresponsible imperialistic policy of their leaders and potentially bring about a democratic and liberal development path.

**Ukraine's victory and Russia's defeat is a *main policy goal* for Ukraine and the whole Euro-Atlantic community.** The key challenge in this context is to find out **how to deal with Russian aggression in order to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity, diminish human suffering, prevent the further destruction of the country, and to punish Russia for crimes committed against humanity while not provoking a nuclear attack or spill-over of the conflict.** To prepare effective and meaningful policy recommendations in this respect the following key questions must be answered:

1. How long can this war last, when and how it can end, what are possible scenarios?
2. What type of peace deal is possible? If a peace deal is impossible how can a *modus vivendi* with Russia be developed if Moscow remains aggressive, imperialistic and unpredictable?

Answers to these questions can help define policy options and recommendations for both Ukrainian and Western governments.

## **Scenarios**

The following scenarios describe how the war could further develop. They reflect the author's experience and understanding of the current state of play on the battlefield. Unforeseen events sometimes change the course of history. It is impossible to predict "black

swans”, which could dramatically influence developments on the ground. The author’s previous policy analysis and forecasts all proved to be correct except one—namely the assessment of the likelihood of Russian aggression. This was viewed as unlikely as the costs/benefits of an invasion showed that Russia would significantly lose, and any gains would weaken Russia and result in the country losing more than it would gain. The developments of the last three months prove that this cost/benefit analysis was correct. Russia’s decision to start the war was a major error—for interests of Russia first of all. While the irrationality and miscalculation of those who made this decision is inconceivable, today the Kremlin seems to have adopted a more rational approach to its tactics and decision making process, although this has not tampered the thirst for victory and of destroying or weakening as much as possible the Ukrainian state. The Kremlin’s actions are taken in the tight frame of war with Ukraine, a fragile internal situation, weak ideology and not efficient economy, conflict with civilized world and few options in relations with some authoritarian or third world countries.

Now Russian decisions can be calculated more definitely though predicting how the war will end is far from easy. All the scenarios described below are not mutually exclusive. One might be combined with or preceded by another one. Together they give us a frame of possible further developments.

1. **Deadlock:** *position war now and the freezing of the conflict in the future without any ceasefire or peace agreement.* This scenario implies reaching a dead end in military fighting and a subsequent de-escalation of the conflict. The situation will remain fragile and unstable, each side will be unsatisfied with the intermediate result. There are many examples of such a situation such as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict prior to Azerbaijan’s 2020 military victory. These conflicts are either renewed with a new level of hostilities or remain frozen, keeping sides under the permanent threat of new attacks, thereby exhausting their economic and human potential. This option is possible under current circumstances as the zone of possible compromise is too narrow, none of the sides is able to win, resources have not yet been exhausted but costs of the war are very high. A qualitative strengthening or weakening of one of the sides will unfreeze the conflict and lead to a new phase of the war.

One may argue that it is a desirable scenario for Ukraine, which will strengthen its military capability and Russia will weaken in terms of its internal political and economic situation and military potential. However, this assessment may be questioned. Ukraine has already lost

half of its GDP, its economy is ruined and at least every third person (probably more) is displaced. It is unclear for how many years the country can sustain such a deadlock even with strong Western support. Areas that have been under intensive bombardment have become ruins, every day of war means new ruins and death. No clarity when the war ends would limit the economic recovery and return of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees. The viability of the country will weaken. So, even if the deadlock was an acceptable scenario, it should last for only a very limited time. This time should be used for intensive preparation for a quick and victorious second phase. Otherwise it would only transform Ukraine into a potentially decades-long battlefield and ruin.

2. **Istanbul-1:** *achievement of a peace agreement with possible partial settlement of some of the roots of the conflict.* In theory it is a very likely scenario, a reminiscence of the Minsk agreements but under a new title and on a new level. As Turkey is likely to be a negotiating place we call it Istanbul-1.

It is a scenario by which most of the protracted conflicts proceed in the modern world. The sides will exhaust their resources and subsequently decide that under the existing circumstances it is better to stop direct military fighting than to continue. The level of violence will decrease significantly, there will be formal channels of contact established and certain issues settled. Under such a scenario the conflict can last for decades. However, regional security will remain fragile, Russian-Ukrainian bilateral relations will transform into a long-lasting rivalry with a possibility for renewed low or high intensity conflict.

This scenario may however develop into more positive picture if it settled some of the key reasons for the conflict such as mutual Russian and Ukrainian security concerns. Conclusion of a security guarantee agreement as part of a wider deal or as a separate agreement would be perceived as a victory on one side by the Russians as Ukraine would agree not to join NATO, on the other side—by Ukraine, as it would give Ukraine security guarantees similar to Article 5 of Washington treaty, basically similar to NATO member states. This approach was described a long time ago by the author of this paper as based on the famous Kissinger formula “security in exchange for territorial integrity” used for Egypt and Israel in the 1978 Camp David Accords<sup>5</sup>. Unlike five years ago, it is rather impossible that sides would settle territorial issues such as

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<sup>5</sup> Quandt, W. B. Camp David and Peacemaking in the Middle East. *Political Science Quarterly*, 1986, 101(3), 357–377 and many other articles on this subject

Crimea in this agreement but an agreement to postpone status discussions for some years is an option used in many similar cases. With time and changes in Russia there is a theoretical possibility that sides may come to other key roots of the conflict, achieve some compromises and develop peaceful modus of coexistence.

However, there are serious doubts that under current circumstances this scenario still remains realistic. Huge human and material losses, bombed and destroyed cities, thousands of killed and millions of destroyed lives lead to widespread indignation and hatred, and demand for retaliation and punishment for the horror Russia brought to Ukraine. Ukrainian president Zelensky in his speech on 9 of May compared Putin`s Russia to Nazi Germany, saying that Russians “repeat now terrible crimes of Hitler regime, follow Nazi philosophy, copy everything what they did”.<sup>6</sup> Similarly some politicians and experts inside and outside of Ukraine say that “it is impossible anymore negotiate anything with Putin. He is like Adolf Hitler and one should not negotiate with Hitler”. This comparison ignores, however, the key difference between Hitler and Putin. Unlike the Nazi Fuhrer, the Russian leader had almost six thousand nuclear warheads, which can destroy the planet number of times. If the choice is negotiating with Putin or to start nuclear war those who make such comparisons will have difficulties to take the right decision. But, in any case, it must take months for fighting, strong political will and many other conditions to be in place for the sides to come to an agreement.

3. **Armistice:** *technical ceasefire agreement.* Despite the second option being possible, there are serious objections against it. Istanbul-1 would only be acceptable if Russia returned to the status quo of February 23, 2020, before the war started. Moreover, the crimes that have already been committed by the Russian army demand steps to punish those responsible and ensure that they pay compensation and/or for recovery costs. Russia might insist on keeping territorial gains, including a “land bridge” from Crimea to Donbas. If Russia will refuse to take responsibility for war crimes and destruction, Ukraine will continue to fight but will be unable to take back all the occupied territories. The front line will change but at a certain point the sides would exhaust their resources or would not see any significant gains in case of the continuation of the conflict. Under these circumstances they could agree to a technical ceasefire agreement – not similar to Minsk-2 but more along the lines of the Korean

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-z-nagodi-dnya-peremogi-nad-na-74925>

armistice agreement of 1953<sup>7</sup>. Such a technical ceasefire agreement would not even touch the status of territories or any other significant issues. It might just fix the front line, facilitate an exchange of prisoners of war, include possible conditions of disengagement and withdrawal of forces, etc. Such an agreement could have been concluded on a technical level and political leadership might decide even not to sign it—as was in the case of the 1983 Korean armistice agreement.

It is difficult to imagine now that such an agreement could include a demilitarization zone as Ukraine will never agree with limiting its rights to return control over its sovereign territory by military means. International organizations or foreign countries are also very unlikely to agree to send a peacekeeping presence there to oversee the armistice.

Such a scenario might lead to different developments in the future. It could lead to a very quick renewal of the conflict. Or, as in the case of Korea—lead to almost a 70 years-long ceasefire and relative peace. Ukraine as South Korea would prove its viability by modernizing its economy and developing high social standards while Russia would hold on to acquired territories as North Korea in political isolation, with poverty and a population that would dream to flee from Russia controlled territory to Ukraine. One of experienced former Western diplomats making peer review of this text even assumed that under this scenario—preferred one for him—Ukraine could even easily apply for NATO membership and receive at least strong security guarantees from US and other Western partners. We could agree on the issue of security guarantees but NATO accession will depend first of all on position of all NATO members and their calculation on possible Russia reaction. Our understanding that in foreseeable future countries like France or Germany will not agree with Ukraine`s accession to NATO. But, of course, in the future, especially with internal changes in Russia, this might be possible too.

4. **Victory of justice:** *defeat of Russian forces and liberation of Ukrainian territories.* After three months of the war, Ukrainian victory is already perceived as not only desirable but also rather possible. But still it will be difficult to achieve, especially if the liberation of Ukrainian territories implies not only a return to the status quo of February 23, 2022, but also the return of Donbas and Crimea to Ukraine`s control. For the Russian leadership

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<sup>7</sup> James Hoare: The Korean Armistice North and South: The Low-Key Victory. London: LSE, 2004 and multiple other researches on the subject

this would be equal to a devastating defeat with an extremely high political price inside and outside of the country. On the other hand, if that happens, there will be a high chance to reorder European security on the basis of a renewed respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Special measures will be required to address the issues of Russian revisionism in the future. Carrying out of such a scenario would be completely dependent on the military campaign and may take several months to several years. It would be possible either if Ukrainian forces decisively defeated the Russian army on the battlefield or if the Russian side exhausted its human and military resources. It also would be possible if internal opposition in Russia would increase and the Kremlin will declare withdrawal of its forces pretending that they fulfilled their assignment and leave the territory to local separatists. It would look like Afghanistan for the USSR in 1988 or for U.S. in 2021. If the Russian army does not support separatists, Ukraine will take over these territories in a course of days.

This scenario is very attractive, but there are some challenges too. The Russian army is not yet destroyed and will remain capable to fight. If the Ukrainian forces took over Donbas it would certainly lead to internal consequences for the Russian leadership, most likely growing pressure on the regime and renewed attacks. If Ukrainian forces take over Crimea the threat from a nuclear attack will arise. Therefore the easiest and the safest way for Ukraine`s victory is if it will be combined with changes in Russia described below.

5. **Game-changer:** *change of regime in Russia.* The military forces of both sides as already noted, are close to being equal under the current circumstances. Neither of them is strong enough to win or weak enough to lose. Therefore, a real game changer in the current war is a change of regime in Russia. Mass protests in Russia against the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions leading to street protests is not likely to happen for the moment, yet. But internal fights between different groups in the Russian military and political elite, lack of progress and realization of losses, are bleak prospect of a "North-Korean" future for Russian elite and society might result in a decrease of support for President Putin and eventually in a regime change. Coup-d'état organized by some groups around Putin is more likely than popular street protests forcing him to leave. But, in any case, Western and Ukrainian policies must be focused on support and encouragement of opposition to Putin and his war on both levels—national protests and elite resistance to Putin to prevent him from destroying Russia by his horrible war in Ukraine.

Regime change in Russia is likely to happen under the increasing pressure of sanctions and/or military defeats. It means that a time horizon for such developments varies from several months to several years. But if this change of regime comes it would open the way for Ukraine to regain its territory including Crimea. Chaos following any change would create perfect conditions to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity without risking a nuclear attack. While the issue remains over how to deal with a new Russian regime and its policy towards Ukraine, it would certainly be a new beginning with better starting positions for Ukraine.

However, some experts on Russia doubt any of the mentioned possibilities. They argue that Putin "succeeded to learn his entourage and the society to live in the world of confrontation with the West. Russian elite lost some yachts and assets but he warned them already many years ago to return their money and wealth back to Russia. He will give them enough of state procurement and possibilities to earn inside of the country or in China or India. Average people have some uncomfortable limitations but they are confident that Putin's decision was the last resort to defend Russia against the West. Turkey and Egypt will remain open for Russians and the few those who disagree with Putin already left with no intention to return. They all—elite and average Russians—believe that in 2-3 years this crisis will be over and normality returns—why then would they have to risk with fighting against regime?". It is not necessarily the only correct reading of the situation, there might be different interpretations too. What is certain that Ukraine and the West need to work to support anti-Putin forces but be ready for the scenario when regime change in Russia might take years and years to come. In our assessment there will be many opportunities to generate and encourage opposition to Putin in Russia.

6. **End of history:** *nuclear strikes or the transformation of the war into a regional or continental conflict.* Even if Russian leadership publicly declares that a nuclear option is not considered at this stage it should not be completely dismissed. First of all it was clearly mentioned that nuclear weapons will not be used *at this stage*, which means it can be used at the next one. Given Russia's threats, lack of conventional success as well as the extremely high political cost of a defeat, the risk of Moscow using nuclear weapons is unusually high. Tactical nuclear weapons are more likely than strategic ones.

But a decision to use nuclear weapons is not only difficult to take, but also difficult to fulfil. The Russian president is running the risk of his order being denied and becoming a



moment of regime change. If that happens, it would mark the beginning of the collapse of the current political regime.

If his decision will be implemented and a nuclear strike made, it would mean a dramatic escalation of the conflict. It is difficult to calculate London or Washington's response as nuclear strikes will be already a challenge not only to Ukraine but to them too. Direct response with a nuclear counterstrike might lead the world to nuclear catastrophe. They might consider an asymmetric response but options are almost exhausted.

Another threat is the spill-over effect of the conflict to the neighboring states. It might be as unthinkable as the war in Ukraine was, but if one analyzes the mindset of the Russian leadership and its resolve to act then it might be rather possible. As one insider told the author of this paper, "for Putin and his entourage it is not a war against Ukraine. Special military operation in Ukraine as they call it is not a war with Ukraine but a demonstration to the West that Putin does not bluff, that he is ready to go further, he is serious to defend declared red lines. Ukraine is for him just a place where he renews Russian empire, challenges the West, ruins international law imposed by the West, builds a new world more comfortable for Russia. Therefore, Putin will not seriously talk to Ukraine as it lost its international identity for him and is just an instrument in Washington's hands. Putin will talk to Biden, maybe to leaders of Turkey, France or Germany, why he has to talk to Zelensky, who is a U.S. puppet? He will sell ultrasonic technologies to China and oil to India, support Latin American regimes, split the EU, oust U.S. and Norway from the Arctic, undermine the U.S. dollar, make steps to intensify illegal migration flows to Europe and radical movements in U.S. etc. And, of course, "liberate brother Ukrainians from Nazi regime and U.S. influence". And there are other countries too, who should be liberated".

With such a mindset it is not unreasonable if Russian leadership made steps to spill over the conflict. They already tried publicly to provoke a discussion about "plans of Poland to deploy forces in Western Ukraine aimed at taking over the territory"<sup>8</sup>. Russians might wish to encourage western neighbours of Ukraine for territorial claims projecting to them their own aspirations and weakening NATO. They also threaten to hit deliveries of military assistance to Ukraine. In case if Russia hits neighbouring NATO country it will bring the conflict on a new level. Direct NATO— Russia military conflict will lead to a fully-fledged third world war with

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/830152>

unpredict consequences as both sides have nuclear arsenals able to demolish the planet a number of times.

Nuclear strikes or spill over of the war are the worst possible scenarios. With a view of irresponsible Russian leadership, its strategic miscalculations (or in case if they will have no options left) these scenarios should not be excluded though many experts consider that Russia will not cross this red line and continue a focus on Ukraine. It is better not to test if Russian leadership will make such a step or not. Investing into quick and decisive victory of Ukraine and into internal change in Russia is a much preferable option.

7. **Ruin:** *a long war with indefinite end until exhausting resources of one or another side.* The war might not end in the foreseeable future as described above because resources of the sides will allow to keep fighting and the zone of possible agreement will remain too narrow. Therefore, continuing the war might look like a better alternative to sides than a negotiated agreement. It will not be a new hundred years war but some Ukrainian officials already publicly declared that the war will last till 2035 and those not ready for a decade of war would better leave Ukraine to Spain or other “warm and peaceful” countries<sup>9</sup>. Interestingly that the official who said this was criticized not because it was a wrong statement but because it discouraged Ukrainians to return to their homes and renew economic activities.

This is a very dark and unattractive future. Moreover, it will be unusual in our times that an active phase of costly modern wars lasts decades. But as no agreement is concluded and grievances and hatred grow the end may come only with military victory or when one or both sides are totally exhausted. It might be Russia slowly running out of money, weapons and resources for further military engagement. That will either lead to a nuclear option or to negotiations with a much softer Russian position. Or it might be an exhausted Ukraine losing the capacity to fight more quickly than it can be compensated by Western assistance. If that happens, Kyiv will find itself increasingly under pressure to end the war. However, given the current resolve of the West to provide Ukraine with necessary financial and military assistance and huge Russian human, natural, and financial resources it might be possible that the war in Ukraine will last years and years.

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<sup>9</sup> Statement of O.Arestovych, spokesman of the office of the president of Ukraine, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yL3herynCQ>

This scenario puts a possible deal over the horizon but its frame will be still close to the options described above. The only difference will be the greater numbers of death and human suffering, transferring one or both countries into something close to Hollywood apocalyptic movies or historical scenes of XVII century Ruin<sup>10</sup>.

One might ask why some other scenarios are not analyzed. For example a scenario of “Ukrainian forces victory march on the Red Square” with a burned Kremlin as some Ukrainians want. Or, as it is said from the aggressor side, a threat of renewed attack from Russian side with possibility to take over Kyiv still exists. We do not see any of these scenarios as realistic in the foreseeable future. Of course, if after many years or decades of war one of the sides was exhausted enough or there will be internal coups and chaos then one might imagine any of these scenarios, but we do not see a need in this paper to go so far.

### **Policy Options**

All scenarios above are theoretically possible and as mentioned not mutually exclusive. Of course scenarios 4 and 5 are the most preferable. Scenarios 1, 2 or 3 are more likely for the foreseeable future and policy planning should take them as basic with the last two - 6 and 7 - as the worst case scenarios, which must be prevented.

Based on this analysis some policy options are easy to draw. Western partners must help Ukraine to defend itself but cannot engage directly as it will lead to the third world war with the threat of nuclear attack. The West must calibrate assistance to avoid giving Russians a pretext for transferring military actions to NATO territory. Ukraine has no option but to rely on its own forces and Western military/financial assistance while defending the country. The sooner the war ends the better for the Ukrainian people and for the world, but the end of the war might be only acceptable if there is an option to restore Ukraine’s territorial integrity—now or in foreseeable future.

However, there some difficult questions policy planners have to answer. What if after months and months of fighting the Ukrainian army will not be able to take over all its territory

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<sup>10</sup> The Ruin is a historical term describing historic period in Ukraine during the second half of the 17th century. The period was characterized by continuous chaos, wars, foreign invasions, overall decay.

or return to the status quo of February 23, 2022 but the economy will further sink in deep crisis, people will continue to leave and Russia would still have resources to fight? Deadlock scenario 1 is a less preferable solution for longer than 3-4 months' time. No foreign assistance will substitute the ability of people to live in their country. There will be some groups of people who under no circumstance leave, but as the last three months proved more than 30% (but probably much more) of the population displaced and more than half of business entities stopped. Ukrainians still believe that the war will end in the course of the summer of 2022 but if it will not, the majority of economically active people might leave the country or move to the Western part. No restrictions will stop many people from leaving who do not see peaceful future for their families in the country.

Therefore our policy recommendation is that a ceasefire agreement is better than a deadlock. If Ukraine regains territories or if an agreement would lead to the status quo of February 23, 2022, then it would be possible to consider scenario 2 of Istanbul-1 agreement. If Ukrainian forces still will not be able to liberate all its territory, then a technical armistice agreement concluded by military commanders as described in scenario 3 could be an option. In terms of time the best option if such an agreement could be concluded during the next 3-4 months. If described situation remains more than a year or two then we could conclude that scenario 1 transformed into scenario 7.

It might be very difficult to take a decision to agree with a formal agreement or even a technical armistice. But there are incentives like EU membership. It will be impossible to conduct EU accession negotiations or to accept the country to the EU during the war or with military deadlock on its borders. But a formal peace agreement could enable EU accession, which in the course of 3-5 years will dramatically change the country. This in turn will facilitate liberation of territories occupied in 2014.

Current successes of the Ukrainian army, devotion to fight and liberate the country together with strong Western assistance as well as discovered weakness and disorganization of the Russian army could help Ukraine to achieve military success on the battlefield and in course of the next months take over control of territories occupied during the war. The most difficult will be in the south, close to Crimea, but it is feasible that the Ukrainian army might take by force all the mentioned territories. Then the question arises if it is better to stop and seek a negotiated agreement or to continue liberation of territories occupied in 2014. We can imagine

how Russians would declare that they achieved their goals and left territories to the self-proclaimed people's republics which would fall in the course of days. It will lead to dramatic internal consequences in Russia up to the regime change. But also it could motivate Russian leadership to start threatening Ukraine with nuclear attack, especially if the Ukrainian army crossed the Crimean isthmus.

It is difficult to predict all the complexity of the situation when Ukrainian forces will come back to Chongar (entry point to Crimea) and will be ready to cross the isthmus. Following success on the battlefield in Crimea there might be something close to scenario 6 making parts of Ukraine and other European countries ruined and intoxicated. Any decision to start the liberation of Crimea should be carefully examined and agreed with Western partners. As Russian military defeat will inevitably lead to internal political turmoil in Russia it could be better to liberate Crimea in the course of scenario 5, which could create better conditions to finish the war without nuclear attack.

But expecting better we have to be prepared for other scenarios too. No formal peace or ceasefire deal is likely in upcoming months. The level of atrocities committed by the Russian side and its demands leaves Ukraine little space for compromises. Russia's demands that Ukraine recognizes the annexation of Crimea, the independence of the Donbas and Luhansk regions, neutrality and disarmament are not acceptable. On the other hand, Ukraine's expectations that Russia surrender and withdrawal from all the occupied territories is also beyond reach yet. The military campaign on the ground seems costly, risky and difficult for both belligerents. Reaching a compromise may take some time, but a window of opportunity might be open for a very short period of time in the course of the next 2-5 months.

A formal agreement is a better option than no agreement even if it may be violated in the future. Some issues are fundamental. One of them is Ukraine's future security. Russia has been obsessed with its 'red lines' and NATO expansion without being attacked or threatened. Ukraine, after experiencing a full-scale and unprovoked Russian invasion, has all the reasons to be not less concerned about its future. How can it be secured?

In the world before February, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, many things were considered impossible. For instance, overwhelming sanctions against Russia and massive military aid to Ukraine from a consolidated West. The world today is different from the one we lived in three months ago. New solutions are not only possible but necessary.

One of them is providing Ukraine with security guarantees in a format similar to NATO membership. So far Ukraine's neutral (or non-block) status looks like one of the few possible cornerstones of a compromise. But it would require some compensation for Ukraine, especially given that no guarantees from Russia are going to be taken as reliable by Kyiv.

The boldest decision would be granting Ukraine EU membership. Something unimaginable before Russia's invasion, today it may be the right response to the war puzzle. Joining the EU would provide Ukraine with opportunities to recover, open new trade and economic perspectives and grant Ukrainians access to the fundamental freedoms of Europe. What is even more important, this may be the best solution for the EU itself—and from a very pragmatic point of view. Without stopping the war the EU will continue to pay an extremely high price just for being a neighbour to a large-scale military conflict, not to mention possible future geopolitical clashes with Moscow.

Additional options can be bilateral defense treaties with one or several Western powers. The U.S. has provided security guarantees to dozens of countries since World War II, after shifting from isolationism to global leadership. Risks of going to war against Russia one day may be much less than the price for a continued military standoff in the middle of Europe.

If the issue of security guarantees to Ukraine is resolved, the rest will be easier. Russia will have to withdraw its troops at least to the status quo of February 23, 2022. Disputed territories—Crimea and Donetsk/Luhansk—can become a matter of a separate negotiation later, if parties oblige not to resolve the issue by force. Additional space for negotiations may be provided by financial compensations by Russia to Ukraine, the volume of which may also be a matter of discussion, thus making the 'pie' broader and easier to divide. Restoration of justice is also needed. An attempt to brutally attack and subdue a sovereign country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should not be left unpunished, since it only would welcome other acts of aggression globally—and undermine further the normative foundations of the world order.

Meanwhile until negotiations restarted coordinated efforts should be taken at all levels and as soon as possible to decrease the level of violence, prevent the war from escalation and spill-over and establish a working format for managing the conflict.

To conclude, alternatives for policymakers are clear. One possible policy can be directed at ending the war as soon as possible, with mutual concessions shaped by the military standoff.

In that case establishment of a sustainable negotiations format, engaging mediators and defining key features of a post-war settlement would be among key priorities.

Another option is about winning the war with as much damage as possible inflicted to Russia's capacity to wage an aggressive war in the future. That would require more emphasis on weapons supplies, sanctions, financial support and other steps aimed at enhancing Ukraine's chances to overcome Russia.

Key actors in all countries involved are likely to choose between these two policy options. That choice would determine other decisions and steps on a tactical level.

### **Security Guarantees**

The most important element for both sides as well as for all the other members of the Euro-Atlantic security area in case of the negotiated agreement is the issue of security guarantees. Given the scope of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as well as its dramatic impact on European security, the issue of security guarantees for Ukraine is becoming critically important. It is at the heart of the ceasefire negotiations and is likely to become one of the cornerstones of the future peace settlement.

Russia's revisionist and aggressive foreign policy of recent years makes an effective security mechanism a necessity for Ukraine. Security guarantees have become a more complicated and rare tool in international politics over recent decades. Extending them to other countries engages a high risk of military involvement into violent conflicts. Guarantors often get nothing in return. What has been an effective mechanism at times of the Cold War rivalry has turned in many cases into a source of unjustified commitments.

Those considerations may help explain why Ukraine, as well as some other post-Soviet countries, didn't get NATO membership. But the context has changed. First, the intensification of global rivalry makes alliances once again more valuable. Second, Russia's aggressive foreign policy has reshaped the perceived threats to Europe as a whole, and a number of countries in particular face these threats. A risk of being drawn into an escalation may seem justified against the backdrop of a possible protracted war in the center of Europe. Risk avoidance which may result in the failure of containment may prove to be much more dangerous.

Ukraine is seeking security guarantees, but their scope and format are still unclear. 'Guarantees' most likely imply different sorts of commitments for different countries, with some of them supplying weapons, some of them introducing sanctions, and hardly any of them sending troops to fight in Ukraine.

In other words, a potential *de jure* mechanism of guarantees is seen as the one currently being implied *de facto*. Sanctions are requested to be implied immediately or even preemptively; while weapons supplies to start within 24 hours. It should be noted that the efficiency of such guarantees is still questionable, as it still remains to be seen if they are capable to stop the ongoing aggression.

Such a mechanism of sanctions may be also tricky, since participating countries may fall under the free-rider effect: each of them will be hoping that the other will come to help Ukraine—and as a result the amount of help provided may be critically small. Ukraine is currently betting on a multilateral mechanism, involving an open list of 'coalition of the willing' for potential guarantors; together with vague requirements that could lead to lack of efficiency as well.

On a technical side, agreement on security guarantees for Ukraine is likely to be separated from an agreement on ceasefire/peace agreement that ends the war. That is logically more coherent and corresponds to the usual practice of ceasefire agreements involving Russia (e.g. Agreement on the Principles of Settling of Georgian-Ossetian Conflict in 2008).

One of the possible ways to prevent another Russian aggression against Ukraine is through temporary deployment of international (e.g. UN) peacekeepers in potentially dangerous areas. Not completely the security guarantee Ukraine is looking for strategically, but it can reduce the risk of another escalation before the two countries elaborate some minimal rules of conduct.

No formal security guarantees might be considered sufficient by Ukraine. Recent practice demonstrates that international commitments are perceived by states as rather weak. For Russia it won't be a problem to break any international agreement; so 'guarantees' should rather be linked to commitments by other states to assist, rather than to an obligation by Russia not to attack.

On the other side, as one of the members of Ukrainian delegation said, during the last Istanbul meeting delegations agreed that in case of invasion on Ukraine, guarantors, including



NATO member states may provide military assistance including with troops on the ground. It proves that there are some changes in Russian position and in case if conditions are ripe the sides may conclude an agreement that would return sustainable peace to Ukraine.

Such a deal will be perceived satisfactory in both countries—in Russia as it will remove an issue of “NATO accession of Ukraine” and in Ukraine as it would give guarantees close or even stronger than NATO membership security guarantees. Some experts in discussions with the author of this paper insisted that security guarantee would lead to announcement of a formal neutrality status of Ukraine. It is one of number of options. Other options include “armed neutrality”, when Ukraine with assistance of Western partners will be armed to an extent when attack of any foreign country would become a “suicide attempt”. Another option is not to announce any neutrality status but just remain out of any military block. This would enable bilateral or multilateral military assistance agreements with countries like US, UK, Poland and others.

The best combination to return peace would be EU membership together with defense agreement with the U.S. Minimum level of security commitments could be comparable with those under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 (no guarantee of intervention, but high level of all other commitments); while the optimal model would be that of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U.S. and Japan of 1960 (a military alliance).

### **Policy Recommendations**

In light of the different scenarios and policy options laid out in this paper, the following policy recommendations should be considered.

- 1) **Arm Ukraine.** Ukraine’s ability to defend itself and resist Russian aggression is crucial for re-establishing the regional security system—and for the West to play a decisive role in the process. Ukraine’s defeat would be a disaster for the West, which is why it has invested so much in Kyiv. However, Ukraine needs much more support. This should go far beyond pre-war or even current limits. Supplies of weapons and large-scale financial assistance are critically important, but may be not enough. The development of **anti-missile air-defense system** similar to Israel’s Iron Dome is vitally important not only to resist Russian airstrikes and missile attacks but also to revitalize the economy and social services in Ukraine. It would also allow refugees

and IDPs to return, and make investments and other economic activities in the country possible. In addition to this a **long-range missile system** designed to provide the Ukrainian armed forces with the capability to destroy heavily armoured ground (and air) targets as well as contain future Russian attacks, is crucially important. The Kremlin must understand that Ukraine will respond to any attack with an attack on Russia. This is the best deterrent against new waves of aggression from Russia and feasibly the quickest way to achieve peace. Thirty years ago, the West disarmed Ukraine. It is now the responsibility of the West, first of all the U.S. and the other cosignatories of the Budapest memorandum, to arm Ukraine to such a level that Russia will be afraid to even consider an attack.

- 2) **Keep the doors for a deal open.** All wars end with negotiations. Thus, the war should not be turned into a purpose in itself. The sooner the war ends the better placed Ukraine will be to defend its territorial integrity and security. Ukraine's foreign partners should facilitate a peaceful settlement of the conflict based on the position of Ukraine, using all necessary political, economic and other instruments. As soon as the conflict is ripe for a peace deal, third parties should double-down on mediation efforts. A possible framework for a deal should be prepared in advance. Other related changes in international relations should be formulated. First and foremost should be reform of the OSCE and UN. Particular attention should be paid to re-establishing a strong non-proliferation regime, as Russia's invasion and nuclear blackmailing may significantly weaken it.
- 3) **The EU membership for Ukraine** is the best soft security guarantee. While the traditional EU membership procedures make rapid accession impossible, the moment may be politically right to re-examine the issue. A strong and sustainable democratic Ukraine will become key to Euro-Atlantic security; while a broad access to European markets and institutions can be the best way to assure Ukraine's sustainability. Accepting Ukraine as an EU member with all the short-term risks that this may entail, could prove to be a strategically better solution for Europe than the continuation of the war.
- 4) **Multilateral or a package of bilateral agreements on security guarantees** is the best hard security option to stop the war and protect the peace in the future. A

- defense agreement with the U.S. is a vitally important part of security arrangements for the future.
- 5) **Reconstructing Europe's and international security architecture** should be a priority. Europe will need to build a new normative and power basis for its own security from scratch. The war has changed the perception of traditional alliances, Russia's containment and possible threats. Thorough and detailed work at all levels will be required to address these changes. In the UN efforts should be intensified to deprive or limit Russia's veto right at the Security Council. The OSCE should either be reformed to provide efficient assistance to conflict prevention and settlement, or abandoned as unnecessary structure.
  - 6) **Sanctions** must be strengthened until Russia leaves the last square meter of Ukrainian territory and pays for all its crimes. A multilateral regime of sanctions must be developed, ideally adopted by the UN General Assembly and becoming part of international legislation. More attention should be paid to dialogue with **China**. On a global level the war may be seen as a manifestation of a power transition and a struggle for dominance between China and the West. If that is the case, then the moment may be right for the West and China to shape their competition or rivalry and create a framework for it.
  - 7) **Support anti-Putin opposition** on the level of elites and among the population. Ukraine and the West must send a clear signal that all those who are against Putin and his criminal war in Ukraine are potential friends and will be supported. Massive counterpropaganda efforts must be undertaken. There should be more confidential contacts with representatives of the Russian elite who might support anti-Putin actions either on the streets or in high offices. Creating problems at home for Putin must be a priority next to arming Ukraine to defend itself.

These are recommendation based on current analysis and prediction of the future. The situation quickly changes and the war will continue to transform the world. Depending on when and how it ends, we will discover how far back history has rolled for Europe.

# GLOBAL ZEITENWENDE: GREAT-POWER COMPETITION OR UNDIVIDED SECURITY?

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*\*Regrettably, unforeseeable circumstances prevented  
Dr. Krumm from participating in the conference*

Riga, May 3, 2022

“Nothing will be as it used to be” was the warning of a high-ranking German diplomat only three years ago, describing the unstable security environment in Europe and beyond. His reasoning was based on rapidly growing security challenges on multiple fronts and the usual suspects: Russia, Iran and North Korea. But what he was referring to was the emergence of an unpredictable partner within NATO and the transatlantic bond: the United States. Its president Donald Trump did not seem to be interested in collective security, multilateral policy or organizations such as the United Nations. This attitude greatly dismayed Europeans. According to an opinion poll commissioned by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in 2019 more people in France and Germany felt threatened by the U.S. than by Russia.<sup>1</sup>

With the arrival of the new administration of President Joe Biden this perception has faded away, even though Europeans still fear that the U.S. is domestically far less stable than it used to be. And as if this uncertainty is not enough, on February 24<sup>th</sup> this year Russia invaded Ukraine, sending shockwaves through Europe not known since the Cold War. The security order based on the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Paris Charter (1990), already severely damaged by the Russian annexation of Crimea and Moscow’s interference in the Donbass, has completely collapsed.

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 FES Security Radar, Wake-up call for Europe, Vienna 2019, page 23f, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/wien/15176-20190412.pdf>. Seven countries were polled: France, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine.

Only three days after the start of the Russian invasion, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a “Zeitenwende” (a change in an era) in German policy, the equivalent of a “Ground Zero” for enhancing German and European security. Equally dramatic were the words of Counselor of the U.S. Department of State, Derek Chollet, who declared the war in Ukraine to be a “once-in-a-generation crisis” with unforeseeable global effects.<sup>2</sup> One outcome is that Finland and Sweden are now contemplating joining NATO, which so far both countries were very hesitant to do. Another is the threat of hunger in some African countries because of the anticipated meager grain harvest in Ukraine due to the war.

### **Stumbling Blocks for European Security**

In a survey which was conducted before the war in Ukraine, citizens of 14 states within the region of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were asked about their threat perceptions.<sup>3</sup> They saw several stumbling blocks for a stable European security architecture, including the following:

1. A belligerent Russia with “a sense of unachieved entitlement among the Russian public;”
2. “Emphasis on national interests and heightened expectations of national governments;”
3. Doubts about “the reliability of the United States as the security guarantor for Europe;”
4. The perception that “the EU, the aspiring actor to fill the potential gap left by a U.S. focused on domestic matters or the growing Sino-American differences, is still nowhere to be seen.”

The challenges for Euro-Transatlantic security go far beyond Russia. They include climate change, global migration, populism, terrorism, poverty and pandemics. Therefore, both the EU and NATO have been working for some time to carve out a new strategic approach. “NATO 2030: United for a new era” is a report based on a review of challenges by a reflection

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<sup>2</sup> Interview, War on the Rocks, Texas National Security Review, Austin, 4.13.2022, <https://warontherocks.com/2022/04/a-conversation-with-the-counselor-derek-chollet-on-navigating-the-world/>.

<sup>3</sup> 2022 FES Security Radar, Navigating the disarray of European security, Vienna 2022, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/wien/18980-20220310.pdf>. 14 countries were polled: Armenia, Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States.

group, which resulted in 138 recommendations and was published in November 2020.<sup>4</sup> The EU went further with the aim to have a consensus document with a clear understanding of common threats, as well as measures to counter them and strengthen the EU as a regional and global political and security entity. The final result, “A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense,” was adopted in March 2022.<sup>5</sup>

### **A World Shaped by Raw Power Politics**

The Strategic Compass calls for a “quantum leap forward” and has listed the threats to European security. The EU’s High Representative Josep Borrell describes a “world shaped by raw power politics,” where brute force is more important than international law. Accordingly, the EU needs to step up its efforts to find answers in a world that is multipolar, where competition will get fiercer and where partnerships are even more important.

If the EU takes its approach of Strategic Autonomy seriously then foremost it has to look at its unstable geographical surroundings. These include an aggressive and domestically oppressive Russia, the not very stable Eastern neighborhood and the frustrated states of the Western Balkans, as well as the southern shores of the Mediterranean. But there is also China, which is described as simultaneously “a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival.”

Other major regions and continents, including the Middle East, the Gulf region, Africa, Asia and Latin America are mentioned in the document as well. All of these concerns are almost the same as those mentioned in the report “NATO 2030,” even though the latter’s foreign policy challenges are mostly connected with its Eastern flank, with Russia as the main worrisome factor. At the same time, the NATO report also raises concerns about China’s rise and the alliance’s unstable southern flank.

Both organizations point out the major global security threats posed by terrorism, cyberattacks, interference, the increasing absence of a reliable arms control architecture, as

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<sup>4</sup> NATO 2030: United for a New Era, Brussels 2020, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense, Brussels 2022, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic\\_compass\\_en3\\_web.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf).

well as climate change. The EU has the responsibility as a global actor to engage constructively with these issues, whereas NATO primarily focuses on collective defense.

### **Five out of Nine Nuclear Powers do not Condemn Russia's War**

The important question is how the collective West can manage and counter global threats, even as a multipolar world emerges that is not even remotely united in having a common approach. A good example of this challenge is the UN General Assembly vote taken on March 2<sup>nd</sup> in favor of a resolution condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The result seems clear, with 141 of 193 states supporting the resolution, 5 opposing it and 35 abstaining. A deeper look at the 35 abstaining states puts the seemingly clear vote into a different perspective, however.

Those states that abstained represent about half of the world's population. Thus, although it is easy in the West to feel that the entire world is united against Russia's actions, this is actually far from the case. The combined economic strength of the abstaining nations represents about one fourth of global trade. And most importantly, some of these states are responsible for global security or the lack thereof. Three nuclear powers abstained (China, India, Pakistan) and two (Russia, North Korea) voted against the resolution, which makes them a majority among the de-facto nine states that have nuclear weapons.

Geographically almost half (17) of the countries that abstained are located on the African continent. Additionally, if one looks at the countries that voted against the resolution, did not vote or abstained, one observes that the only former republics of the Soviet Union in favor of the resolution were the three Baltic states (EU and NATO members) and those with an EU association agreement: Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine.

Most of the countries that abstained are not prominently placed in the well-known rankings of democracy, freedom, corruption and transformation. About two thirds are listed as "not free" by Freedom House,<sup>6</sup> three quarters of them belong to the 50% most corrupt countries in the world.<sup>7</sup> Fifteen of these countries are described as "closed autocracies" by the

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<sup>6</sup> Freedom House, Global Freedom Scores 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.

<sup>7</sup> Transparency Corruption Perceptions Index 2021, <https://bti-project.org/en/index/political-transformation>.

Bertelsmann Transformation-Index 2022,<sup>8</sup> ten as “moderate autocracies” and ten as “severely defective democracies” or “defective democracies.”

### **There is no Institution to Enforce International Law**

If one puts the 35 states that abstained from condemning Russia for its war against Ukraine into the context of their political and economic position in a globalized world, this shows the challenges of international law and the rule-based international order. These states are surely not in favor of the invasion of Ukraine. Nonetheless, apart from their partial dependence on Russia’s support in various areas such as military equipment, they seem to be united in their opposition to a Western-dominated international order and in condemning what they see as a hypocritical normative discourse. They point to the great harm inflicted by the West on other countries and their citizens and infrastructure. Afghanistan is one of the latest examples; Iraq and Libya are others.

That Russia abuses these arguments to justify its own brutal military actions is cynical and counterproductive, because it only proves that Russia’s often-used argument of being an alternative to the West or even the stern supporter of international law is a propaganda hoax. Still, that does not harm Russia’s close cooperation with China, the largest of the 35 states that abstained. The relationship is ambivalent, but still, among the various levels of partnerships that Beijing offers, only one country has a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for a New Era” with China – the Russian Federation.<sup>9</sup>

This is one of many problems for the EU and the U.S. In the past, international law and standards mostly worked well because there was an overall consensus and a proven track record of their effectiveness and success. One example was the Iran nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Up to now, the highest institution of global adjudication has been the UN Security Council and its five permanent member states. But they are not independent and unbiased judges. States such as China, Russia and also the U.S. do not accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of

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<sup>8</sup> Bertelsmann Transformation-Index 2022, <https://bti-project.org/en/index/political-transformation>.

<sup>9</sup> Helena Legarda, From marriage of convenience to strategic partnership: China-Russia relations and the fight for global influence, Merics, Berlin, August 2021, <https://merics.org/en/short-analysis/marriage-convenience-strategic-partnership-china-russia-relations-and-fight-global>.



Justice. A system of restrained self-interest and orderly behavior operated more or less successfully after the end of the Cold War because of a very powerful United States, a very weak Russia, and a China that was more interested in economic progress than geopolitics. But it loses its effectiveness in a multipolar world where major powers such as Russia and China and others such as India are not interested in self-restraint—nor is the United States, for that matter. If we add the fact that nationalism is back and that decoupling economic ties is seen as something positive, it seems inevitable that military conflicts and wars will become far more difficult to prevent. Worse, humanity will face even greater challenges in fighting global threats.

### **Dissatisfied with the Status Quo**

This situation will be even further exacerbated if the United States becomes less engaged. In such a scenario, Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, expects “a world that is less free, more violent, and less willing or able to tackle common challenges.”<sup>10</sup> If the West wants to have wider support for an international rule-based order, such a world must be attractive also to those 35 states that are not yet convinced by the current status quo and are looking instead to states such as Russia.

As of now, one could argue that many states have profited, but the main beneficiaries from the Western-led international order are the Western states themselves. For others, the economic aspects of that order appear instead as unjust trade, unequal opportunities, unfair wealth distribution and too much dependence on the West in general. Right now, they might also add their criticism about the differing treatment of refugees fleeing to Europe, depending on their origins: great attention and assistance for those coming from Ukraine; far less for refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria.

Also domestically, a number of societies among the NATO states would argue that by far not all Western citizens are able to profit from the current globalization based on international law and order. The clear victory of Viktor Orban in Hungary, the strong candidacy of Marine Le Pen during the presidential elections in France and the continuing vocal support for Donald Trump in the U.S. are a few examples that illustrate the dissatisfaction of many voters within

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Haass, *The Age of America First*, Foreign Affairs, 6/2021, Washington D.C., page 98, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-09-29/biden-trump-age-america-first>.

the Western world and highlight also the domestic side of the international challenges facing the EU and the U.S.

### **Looking for a Global and Comprehensive United Positive Agenda**

The possible components of a national security strategy take both international and domestic challenges into account. According to Paul Lettow, a former senior director for strategic planning at the National Security Council staff in the White House, the three pillars for the United States are firstly “the physical security of the nation, secondly the maintenance of the country’s constitutional system and thirdly an international environment conducive to American prosperity.”<sup>11</sup>

To face all the above challenges, some U.S. experts suggest the creation of a Western “super bloc,” as formulated in a recent article in the journal *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>12</sup> This would mean reinforcing U.S. leadership of the West by reinvigorating transatlantic cooperation, both economically and militarily. Such a “super bloc” would be in competition with the 35 states that abstained during the UN vote—and possibly with an even greater number, since the number of abstaining countries increased to 58 when the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council.

A different approach, as the head of the SPD faction in the German Bundestag mentioned in a recent interview, would be to continue working on a concept of “undivided security,” as once envisioned by the Paris Charter of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Avoiding opposing camps and blocs clearly is a long-term policy process and, as during the Cold War, is based on strong defense capabilities.

Such an approach might be congruent with U.S. policy under the Biden administration, even if Washington has always thought in terms of great-power competition. Europe in general is much warier of a world dominated by opposing powers because of its different approach as a

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Lettow, U.S. National Security Strategy: Lessons Learned, in: Texas National Security Review, Vol. 4, ISS 2, Spring 2022, Austin, page 122, <https://tnsr.org/2021/04/u-s-national-security-strategy-lessons-learned/>.

<sup>12</sup> William H. McRaven, Peter Orszag, Theodore Bunzel: Made in the Alliance, Foreign Affairs, Washington D.C, April 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-04-20/made-alliance>.

multilateral actor, its geographical proximity to Russia, as well as lingering uncertainty about U.S. commitment to Europe. Brussels now understands that it has to promote and protect its interests but also its norms and values more than ever before and in cooperation with Washington.

Still, it is more Europe than the U.S. that is searching for a “united positive agenda,” which the former Secretary General of the OSCE Thomas Greminger sought to promote while in office from 2017 to 2021. He meant a vision based on how George F. Kennan once described his home country of the United States almost a hundred years ago, which might still be part of the continuing but perhaps fading American dream: “boundless optimism in perpetual prosperity and the general righteousness of things.”<sup>13</sup> With a similar aim, Europe and its citizens are looking for islands of certainty and partners in turbulent seas of challenges.

For that search, the UN and also the OSCE are the multilateral organizations that are worth being “updated and upgraded”<sup>14</sup> to give international law the needed support and legitimacy it so badly needs, in the opinion of European citizens surveyed. This longing for stability and security might be an indicator of why they see not only cooperation at the national and regional level but also international collaborations at a higher level as necessary to overcome global threats as well as deepening global divisions.

The expression “Zeitenwende” should not be seen as only German or European but as referring to a global change of an era. Perhaps now is the real beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The previous era began with World War I and the Russian Revolution. And today, just as more than one hundred years ago at the beginning of that turbulent century, we do not yet have a blueprint for how to proceed.

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<sup>13</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, George F. Kennan, New York 2011, page 50.

<sup>14</sup> FES 2022 Security Radar, page 102, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/wien/18980-20220310.pdf>.

# AMERICA'S INTEREST IN UKRAINIAN VICTORY

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*A Russian defeat could reshape the security landscape  
to U.S. advantage in Europe and beyond.*

On April 8, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen declared during a visit to Kiev that “Ukraine belongs in the European family,” offering to fast-track Ukraine for EU membership. This dramatic U-turn was comparable in scope with German chancellor Olaf Scholz’s repudiation of the last three decades of Germany’s Russia policy in his February 27 speech to the Bundestag. Meantime, others in Europe, especially Poland, Romania, and the Baltic States, have been relentless in their effort to supply Ukraine with weapons, both from their own stocks and those of other NATO allies. Most importantly, U.S. assistance to Ukraine has been expanding. For the first time in three decades, NATO is speaking with one voice in response to the Russian threat.

This realignment presents a historic opportunity to remake Europe’s security landscape. A defeat of Vladimir Putin’s army at the hands of the Ukrainians would redefine the geopolitics of Eastern Europe, ending the region’s status as a “crush zone” of Great Power imperialism. Historically, this enduring vulnerability has enticed Germany and Russia to compete for domination of this region, helping push the continent into two devastating world wars. If Russia’s neo-imperial drive isn’t checked today, it could eventually expand into a global confrontation. The Sino-Russian alliance already presents the U.S. with a two-frontier crisis in Europe and in the Indo-Pacific, at a time when our armed forces are not set up to fight in two major theaters simultaneously.

The dramatic change in European relations with Ukraine owes everything to that country's unyielding resistance against Russia and to the decision by the U.S. and allied democracies to support Ukraine with the weapons it needs. Now, as the Russian army regroups for its decisive offensive into Ukraine's east and south, Putin's decision to escalate the war—and especially his order to unleash indiscriminate bombing and shelling of Ukrainian cities—has changed the battlefield dynamic. Up to now, the West has supplied Ukraine with weapons necessary to hold out against the Russian assault. But shoulder-fired anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles are not enough to allow the Ukrainian armed forces to launch counteroffensives that can liberate the country's territory.

However, if fully stocked with long-range artillery, air- and missile-defense systems, and tanks, Ukraine has a fighting chance to turn back the invasion. In this military contest, while population resources favor Russia on paper, Ukrainian troops have proved orders of magnitude more motivated and more effective on the battlefield. Assistance from the United States and its allies has thus far sufficiently offset Ukraine's economic and equipment deficiencies.

The most important factor, however, has been Putin's fundamental miscalculation of the relative strength of Russia and Ukraine. Whether because of a massive intelligence failure or his own wishful thinking, Putin misread the political situation in Ukraine. He drastically misjudged both his army's skillset and his officers' leadership qualities, and he vastly overestimated the effectiveness of Russian weapons. For Putin, the subpar performance of the Russian military and the losses it has suffered must have been the most humiliating aspect of this war. The vaunted Russian army has been shown to be incapable of effective maneuver; its logistics is in tatters, its fighting spirit is nonexistent, and its officers are unable to inspire and lead. Having committed roughly 80 percent of his ready force, and with roughly a quarter of that number already destroyed, Putin faces an outcome that only a few months ago seemed unimaginable: a defeat of his force at the hands of the Ukrainian military.

If the Ukrainian military—properly equipped with the weapons it needs—defeats the Russian army and liberates its national territory, it will have effectively nullified the Putin–Xi gambit, ending the two-front simultaneous threat to the United States and its allies. Those in Washington who continue to argue that the war in Europe is a distraction from the real “pacing threat” in Asia should understand that the defeat of the Russian army in Ukraine would make their strategic priority a reality. Russian defeat would free the United States to focus on the

Indo-Pacific, in the process solidifying NATO and finally bringing about a genuine rearmament of Europe.

Those who believe that the United States and its allies should ensure only that Ukraine “stays in the fight” should realize that another stalemate similar to what has prevailed in eastern Ukraine since 2014 is unlikely. If Putin succeeds in severing Donbas from Ukraine and establishing a land corridor to Crimea, the Ukrainian rump state will have no industry left to speak of, becoming another Moldova on a larger scale. The Ukrainian leadership understands this. Hence the grand strategic musings about “freezing the conflict” entertained in European capitals and in some quarters in Washington are largely divorced from reality.

Today, the United States and its allies face a choice: go for a stalemate and all but ensure that Putin, once he has reconstituted his forces, will invade yet again (this time with a greater risk of escalation into NATO territory); or supply Ukraine with what it needs today to defeat Putin’s army and, in doing so, transform the regional security equation. Only when Russia has been pushed out of Eastern Europe will the region have a shot at becoming anchored in the West, leaving behind its legacy as Europe’s “crush zone.” Most importantly, at this moment of historical change in global power distribution, Ukraine’s victory over Russia could bring about a lasting peace in Europe and, with it, a fundamental change in the security equation in Asia.

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# **RUSSIA ON THE ROAD TO DICTATORSHIP**

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*Internal Political Repercussions of the Attack on Ukraine*

The invasion of Ukraine on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 has catapulted Russia from hard autocracy into dictatorship. The relationship between state and society is growing increasingly totalitarian. This is no bolt from the blue: Today's wartime censorship and repression are based on laws passed successively since the early 2010s. Vladimir Putin's decision to go to war has absolutized the Russian power vertical. The negation of rights has accelerated, propaganda is massive and the suppression of independent media, opposition and civil society comprehensive. This will not change as long as Putin remains in power. But in the medium term the immense pressure generated by the war and the Western sanctions could bring about domestic political change and see an end to Putin's regime. The conceivable scenarios, however, point to destabilization rather than democratization.

The meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2022, shortly before the invasion of Ukraine, was staged to demonstrate the overwhelming power of the Russian President. In an opulent setting in the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin sat alone at a table to receive confirmation of his decision to recognize the "People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk" from the Council's permanent members. The gathering included the highest representatives of the Russian government, of the two chambers of parliament, and of the security services. Although some were visibly uneasy, they all backed Putin's decision and



signaled their personal loyalty and the subordination of the institutions they represent to his will. It would be hard to find a clearer metaphor for the Russian power vertical.

### **Absolutizing the Power Vertical**

The power vertical is the structural backbone of the Russian political system, functioning to tie all political and economic institutions, structures and actors to the person of the president. Its origins lie in the early 2000s, when newly elected President Putin broke the power of the provincial governors and consolidated the predominance of the center in Russia's federal system. As well as undermining the Russian state federalism, Putin gave Russia's oligarchs the choice between political subordination or persecution and exile.

The end of the oligarchy also changed the media landscape, which had been characterized by great freedom in the 1990s. Many oligarchs had influential media outlets in their business empires. Their dismantling in the early 2000s put an end to this "oligarchic media pluralism" and the state asserted increasing control over Russia's information space.

The following years saw growing electoral fraud and manipulation, obstruction of the political opposition, the establishment of United Russia as the "party of power", and growing restrictions on civil society. The influence of the security services expanded as Putin filled key political and economic positions with his confidants. A new layer of political/economic actors emerged, extracting profits from Russia's resource exports and accumulating enormous wealth.

The presidency of Dmitry Medvedev (2008–2012) simulated a phase of greater political diversity for the last time. Vladimir Putin's return to the Kremlin in 2012, which was accompanied by mass protests against irregularities during the Duma election of December 2011 and a wave of harsh repression, finally cemented the power vertical into place. The process of autocratic centralization and personalization of the political system now became inexorable. "Conservative" values and nationalism increasingly served as the basis of legitimacy. Attempts to create political alternatives to the ruling elite, first and foremost by Alexei Navalny and his supporters, were suppressed with increasing rigor.

Since 2020 Russia has experienced another drastic [round of autocratization](#), with the constitutional reform in 2020 and the unprecedented wave of repression before and after the State Duma elections in September 2021. The new constitution enables Putin to remain in power long beyond the next presidential election in 2024. That certainty itself boosts his already omnipotent position. Institutional checks and balances have been swept away, the independent judiciary is no more. The business elites, for years intimately intertwined with the state, no longer represent a counterweight. Horizontal structures between state and society, such as political parties and nongovernmental organizations, have been systematically eliminated. Alexei Navalny nearly died in a poison attack in August 2020 and has been in prison since January 2021. His political organizations have been dismantled.

During the pandemic Vladimir Putin has become increasingly detached from the political system's other institutions and actors. This distance and isolation contributed to consolidating the hierarchy of the power vertical. He made the decision to invade Ukraine in this isolation. Now it must be implemented, with all consequences, by the subordinate instances.

### **Negating Rights**

The Russian autocracy has long employed legal instruments to successively restrict political liberties and participation. Over the course of a decade parliament and state have created a comprehensive body of repressive legislation. This includes the "foreign agent" law, [legislation](#) restricting freedom of information and [assembly](#), and curbs on "extremist" and "undesirable" organizations. When the war began a legislative armory was already available to crush opposition.

It was thus a simple matter to impose war censorship. On the first day of the "special military operation" in Ukraine, February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, the media regulator Roskomnadzor ordered the Russian mass media to use only official Russian sources for their reporting. The terms "war", "attack" and "invasion" were prohibited.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> the State Duma met in special session to [drastically increase](#) the punishments for [three offenses](#): Disseminating disinformation concerning the Russian armed forces now incurs fines of up to 700,000 rubles (roughly €8,100) and imprisonment for up to fifteen years if "serious consequences" are involved; discrediting the armed forces, including calling for unauthorized public manifestations, is punishable by fines of up to one million rubles

(roughly €11,600) and imprisonment for up to three years. The same potential sentences apply to calls for sanctions against Russia.

More than [180 media outlets](#) have been blocked, including the flagships of independent Russian journalism, the Echo of Moscow radio station and TV Rain. Echo of Moscow's frequency has already been transferred to the propaganda station Russia Today. TV Rain had already lost its terrestrial broadcasting license in 2014 for its critical reporting of the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass, but had remained available on the internet. The prestigious *Novaya Gazeta*, whose editor-in-chief Dmitry Muratov received the Nobel peace prize in 2021, suspended publication for the duration of the "special operation" after two official warnings from Roskomnadzor. Western social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have been blocked, Facebook's owner Meta classed as an extremist organization. Access to YouTube, which is used by many dissenting independent journalists, is also threatened. Without tools like VPN, Russians have no access to information deviating from the state propaganda.

The outcome of this process is the complete destruction of independent media in Russia. Dozens of independent journalists have fled abroad. This goes beyond dismantling broadcasters, newspapers and internet media through blocking and bans. Under the present circumstances any attempt to engage in independent professional journalism represents an existential risk.

The [ending](#) of Russia's membership of the Council of Europe represents another step into lawlessness. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the day after the invasion, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided to suspend the Russian Federation's rights of representation. That had already occurred once before, in 2014, after Russia's annexation of Crimea. In 2019 Russia's voting rights were restored. Now both sides made the separation permanent. On March 15<sup>th</sup> the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe declared that Russia could no longer be a member in view of its fundamental violation of the norms of peaceful coexistence, and Russia announced it was leaving the organization.

After a six-month transition ending on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2022, Russian citizens will thus lose the possibility to apply to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Currently there are still about [18,000 Russian cases](#) pending at ECHR, including several from Alexei Navalny. It is questionable whether rulings will be issued in the short remaining period, or implemented

by the Russian government. After leaving the Council of Europe Russia is no longer bound by the European Convention on Human Rights.

Ending membership also offers the Russian state the opportunity to reinstate the death penalty, which exists under the Russian legal system but has been suspended since the 1990s in association with accession to the Council of Europe in 1996 and the partnership and cooperation agreement with the EU. Depending on how the domestic political situation develops, the return of capital punishment in Russia cannot be excluded.

### **Propaganda, Ideology, History**

Russia has further intensified its anti-Ukrainian propaganda in connection with the war. In the days leading up to the invasion Moscow repeatedly asserted that the “fascist junta in Kiev” was committing genocide against the Russian and Russian-speaking population in Donbas. Russian propaganda also exploited an argument that had hitherto been part of the Ukrainian and Western discourse: With the war and suffering in Donbas dragging on for eight years it was finally time to liberate the people there from the threat of the “fascists in Kiev”.

The accusations of fascism weave the Russian “special operation” into another strand of state propaganda. The Soviet victory over fascism in the “Great Patriotic War” (as Russians call the Second World War) has become the latest since 2014 a central pillar of the state’s legitimacy narrative. Its importance has increased still further since 2020. The propagandistic instrumentalization of the 75th anniversary of the end of the war merged both with the constitutional reform (Putin had to remain president because only he could protect Russia from its enemies) and with the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic (where Putin declared victory in summer 2020 with the approval of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V). Martial representations of Soviet heroism are ubiquitous in public space, while nationalistic/militaristic content has penetrated ever further into the education system and other spheres of life.

The second pillar upon which this propaganda narrative rests is defense against Western aggression. Here Ukraine is seen not as an independent actor but as an instrument of Washington employed to force Russia into submission. In this reading Russia is not only “protecting” its own “compatriots” in Ukraine against the “fascist clique” in Kyiv, but also “defending” itself against the aggression of the United States and the “collective West”.

This basic Russian propaganda narrative validates the Russian war aims of “denazifying” and demilitarizing Ukraine and features in speeches made by Vladimir Putin since February 2022. The state-controlled [media](#) sometimes go even further to call for “denazification” of the whole of Ukrainian society. Within Russia, Putin threatens opponents of the war openly, asserting that the Russian people will recognize this “fifth column” as “traitors” and “spit them out like an [insect](#)”. The language of Russian propaganda is increasingly characterized by fascistoid allusions to purity and cleansing of “harmful elements”. The letter “Z” (“Za pobedu!” – “For victory!”) became the main symbol for support of the “special operation” a few days after the war began and is now ubiquitous in public space.

War propaganda is everywhere. The state-controlled television stations are no longer broadcasting light entertainment. Instead, the entire schedule is dominated by reporting on the progress of the “special operation” and propagandist political talk shows. After the suppression of the independent media they form the only remaining information space that is easily accessible to Russian citizens. When the war began, schools received instructions from the education ministry about how to handle the “special operation” in class. [Universities](#) and other [educational institutions](#) are required to support “patriotic actions”. State employees are urged to display the “Z” symbol. The huge rally in Moscow’s Luzhniki Stadium on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2022 to celebrate the eighth anniversary of the annexation of Crimea emblemized the cult of personality being created around the Russian president.

### **Suppressing All Opposition**

During the first days of the invasion there were signs of broad resistance in Russian society. The hashtag #нетвойне (#notowar) was widely shared in social media [across the country](#). Internet [petitions](#) and other initiatives gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures.

Russia’s repressive legislation makes demonstrations almost impossible. Public gatherings have to be approved, giving the state the possibility to prevent them from occurring in the first place. Calling for or participating in unauthorized demonstrations can incur fines and even (for repeated offences) prison sentences of up to fifteen years. In [2021](#) thousands of Russians were prosecuted for participating in pro-Navalny protests. That in itself is enough to deter many citizens from taking to the streets. Even so public protests occurred in many

Russian cities in the first days of the war, with the human rights organization OVD-Info recording more than 15,400 detentions since February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Many of those who participated in protests, expressed criticisms on the internet, in petitions or by other means, or attempted to avoid the new language rules in universities, schools, cultural institutions and other contexts immediately felt the consequences. They were visited by the security forces, given official warnings by employers, threatened, in some cases physically attacked. Performers, school and university teachers, journalists in the state-controlled media and others were dismissed or left of their own volition. The laws against “disinformation about the special operation” and “discrediting the armed forces” played their part in silencing dissent.

Shock, repression, censorship, and also the immediate economic repercussions of the Western sanctions led thousands of Russians to leave the country in the first weeks of the war. This exodus is unprecedented in the country’s post-Soviet history. To date it has principally involved political and civil society actors, independent journalists, as well as many politically unorganized individuals who see no future for themselves in the country and can afford to leave. Young men flee to avoid military service. Jewish people take the chance to emigrate to Israel. The number of applications for Israeli citizenship was already increasing before the war.

It must be assumed that many more will leave if and when they find the opportunity. Tipping into totalitarianism, the state has finally transgressed the line between public and private. Even those who are not politically active but hold different opinions find themselves exposed to massive hostility, defamation and denunciation. They can no longer withdraw into their private niches. Many will therefore seek to leave the country. Ever more professions will be affected. The post-invasion emigration has only just begun. It could assume dimensions comparable to the 1917–22 exodus triggered by revolution and civil war.

### **A Brittle Consolidation of Society**

In barely a week between February 24<sup>th</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup> 2022 the Russian state suppressed the anti-war mood in parts of society and forced hundreds of thousands into exile. That is important to remember when considering opinion polls showing continuously growing support for the war and for the Russian political leadership. According to the state-affiliated

polling institutes VTSIOM and FOM, [support](#) for the “special operation” grew from 65 to 73 percent between 27 February and late March. In roughly the same period [support](#) for the Russian president grew from 62 percent before the invasion to 82 percent in early April. The independent Levada Institute found an even clearer trend: In a [survey](#) published on 31 March 2022, 81 percent supported the actions of Russian armed forces in Ukraine and 83 percent supported the policies of the Russian [president](#). These figures reflect a [closing of ranks](#) similar to that following the annexation of Crimea.

Three factors reinforce this effect. Many people believe the official version that Russia must defend itself against gratuitous, punitive and anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the West. The numbers who say they are [affected](#) by the Western sanctions are also increasing. And at the same time [attitudes](#) towards the West have deteriorated even further since the invasion.

So large parts of Russian society are turning even further away from the West and blaming the Western sanctions for their deteriorating standard of living. This even applies to groups that were previously not uncritical towards the political leadership. Stark isolation from the Western world is also likely to further strengthen conformism within Russia. Finally, the societal trauma of the brutal war is liable to lead many people to deny Russia’s responsibility for its invasion.

Nevertheless, the survey findings should be treated with caution. A dictatorial political environment and massive propaganda place obvious caveats on the survey findings. In this environment pollsters are forced to avoid referring to “war”, which distorts the findings. Intimidation and fear of repression encourage affirmative responses and reduce the willingness to participate at all or to openly express critical opinions. Independent sociologists observe that large parts of the Russian population are in the first place politically apathetic and wish to avoid any conflict with the state. It is very likely that the ostensible consolidation of Russian society around Putin and his war of aggression against Ukraine will be more brittle than the cited survey findings would suggest.

### **Political Change in Russia – When and How?**

In deciding to invade Ukraine, Vladimir Putin and his circle have taken their country from autocracy to dictatorship, and to the brink of the abyss. Russia faces enormous pressures, with the Western sanctions expected to trigger a deep economic recession in the coming months.

The standard of living has been declining for ten years, and is set to deteriorate drastically. The profits from resource exports, whose informal redistribution has kept the Russian elites on board, will shrink dramatically. The longer the war drags on the more Russian families will be mourning fallen soldiers. To date the political leadership in Moscow has succeeded in delegating the war dead almost entirely to the local and regional levels. They in turn pressure the affected families not to create publicity. It remains to be seen how long that can function.

The same question arises in connection with the relationship between state, elites and society altogether. Violence, repression and totalitarian propaganda are the only tools left in the hands of the Russian regime to preserve stability. The war in Ukraine can be expected to drag on. Repression will sharpen. The past month and a half has shown that this can succeed in the short term. But in the medium term, every day the war continues places the Russian regime in greater danger.

If the invasion of Ukraine leads to political change in Russia, one must be prepared for different scenarios, of which the positive are not the most plausible. Three aspects must be considered:

1. If its pinnacle is destabilized the power vertical faces acute danger of collapse. And if the Russian political system implodes a major destabilization must be expected. Regional secessionism, violence, even civil war would not be excluded. The biggest risk in this context would be Ramzan Kadyrov's reign of terror in Chechnya.

2. Vladimir Putin's worldview is shared by an overwhelming majority of the Russian political elites. A political transition negotiated among elite groups would therefore offer scant prospect of substantive political change, especially with respect to foreign policy, Ukraine and the Russian neighborhood.

3. The transition to dictatorship has enormously exacerbated the atomization of Russian society. The kind of horizontal structures required for alternative currents to form and acquire political influence no longer exist. The capacity for self-organization has hit rock bottom. There is therefore little prospect of Russian society playing a constructive role in a process of political transformation – less even than in the latter-day Soviet Union.



None of this is an argument against sanctions. Germany and its partners must do everything in their power to constrain Russia's ability to wage war on Ukraine. At the same time they must be prepared for political change in Russia, when it does occur, to create major new challenges. One way to prepare for those challenges will be to offer unbureaucratic support to democratic politicians, independent media and civil society actors who have left the country, and assist them in establishing exile structures.

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# WITH PUTIN, RUSSIA FAILS IN ITS AGE-OLD GAME

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Those who unleashed and support the war with Ukraine think about the world in a certain way. They see a map with borders, spheres of influence, objectives, and targets. In that view, might makes right and the weak have no choice but to accept it. Nations group together, form alliances, enter into conflicts, and make peace with each other. The weak states must fear the strong states and can expect only a little sovereignty. Larger and stronger states, meanwhile, can afford greater sovereignty. The biggest states get all the sovereignty imaginable. This has been Russia's rulers' worldview for centuries now.

Nations with a lot of sovereignty play the "great game," moving their pieces on the "great chessboard." These states have "grand strategies" and "geostrategic goals" that determine the "world order."<sup>1</sup>

## **Selective Modernization**

It is clear now to everyone that Vladimir Putin has made it his mission to fight and win the "great game." He is not the first to follow that path as it is a longstanding Russian tradition. In the country's imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet history, it often plays out through "selective modernization," which we've seen with Peter I, Catherine II, Stalin, and now Putin.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The piece is based on: Trudolyubov, Maxim. Putin's Ancien Régime. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25763.4>; Trudolyubov, Maxim. War without people How the 'geopolitical worldview' among dictators and scholars alike enables the unthinkable in Ukraine. Meduza. May 2, 2022. <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/05/02/war-without-people>; Trudolyubov, Maxim. Russia's Catastrophic Geopolitics. The Russia File. April 20, 2022. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/russias-catastrophic-geopolitics>

<sup>2</sup> Kotilaine, Jarmo. A Muscovite Economic Model. The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), 2004. [https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2004\\_817-05\\_Kotilaine.pdf](https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2004_817-05_Kotilaine.pdf)

Russian leaders have often found themselves in a situation in which the leader's sense of entitlement to a great mission conflicted with the country's level of economic development. "Russia's involvement [in military conflicts with the West] revealed a curious internal conflict between the tasks of the Russian government that were "modern" in the contemporaneous sense of the word and the hopelessly backward economy of the country on which the military policies had to be based," the Russian-born American economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron has argued back in the 1960s.<sup>3</sup>

The general idea of a gap between Russia's desired role in history and Russia's real ability still stands. Most Russian leaders have seen bridging this gap as their main mission. Because they viewed their country as a great power, they felt compelled to do something to catch up with, even overtake, other great powers. However, they always lacked the resources to do so. Time and again, economic and developmental breakthrough was a plan that remained half-fulfilled. That is why Russia's leaders have ended up trying to punch above their weight. Their vision would always include battling for prominence against the background of perceived hostility toward Russia on the part of all the other big international players.

Vladimir Putin is a "normal" Russian leader in the sense that he realized early on that his mission, like that of many of his predecessors, was to close the gap between the advanced and hostile West and the ascendant Russia of his dreams. To ensure that Russia was accepted as an equal at the table with the world's preeminent nations, Putin set about restoring and modernizing its armed forces. As in most other historical instances of modernization drives (including that of Stalin), these attempts became highly selective and technical, focused largely on the military. Since 2008 Russia has undergone several transformative military reforms and modernization programs.

### **Modern Means, Age-old Ends**

Despite these efforts at modernizing, the disparity between Russia's and NATO's military capabilities is still enormous. This gap makes it strategically important for the Kremlin to keep everyone guessing whether Russia will strike again—and, if it strikes, exactly where. If this kind

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<sup>3</sup> Gerschenkron, Alexander. *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966. P. 17.

of projection is meant to compensate for the military disparities between Russia and NATO, it probably serves its purpose, as Putin has learned from his predecessors. According to a report published by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia is “even taking pride in a decision-making process as inscrutable and unpredictable as possible. The ability to make strategic decisions quickly and to implement them militarily and politically with great speed and agility sets Russia apart from the tsarist Empire or the USSR.”<sup>4</sup>

Russia creates a geopolitical reality and then works, often unsuccessfully, to get it recognized by everyone else. Such “facts” on the ground created by Russia over nearly 30 years of post-Soviet history include a part of Moldova (Transnistria), parts of Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), parts of Ukraine (Crimea, and parts of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts), even more parts of Ukraine (Kherson and the “Southern corridor” to Crimea as of this writing). One of these territories was annexed, some function as breakaway states, some claim sovereignty—but all are assisted and backed by Russia.<sup>5</sup>

Crimea is, of course officially and according to international law, a part of Ukraine. But Russia has it that Crimea is Russian. For Russia, that is a fact on the ground: for the rest of the world, it is not. Russia wants to maintain a de facto reality which does not go well with the de jure situation. This is just one example of how Russia creates a geopolitical reality and then tries to get it fixed and recognized by everyone else—by force.

It is not just on the ground that the Kremlin creates its “facts.” We should note the various events or pieces of information that Russia presents as one thing and the rest of the world sees as another. These include election interference, criminal acts, and disinformation—all of which the Kremlin denies. The Kremlin is constantly playing with these two realities, the de facto and the de jure. It lacks the resources to make everyone acknowledge the realities it has created on the ground or believe its “truths,” but it does have enough resources to provoke, and dare to create more of those unrecognized “realities.”

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. 2016. The Effects of Finland’s Possible NATO Membership: An Assessment. <https://www.frstrategie.org/web/documents/publications/autres/2016/2016-heisbourg-mfa-finland-nato.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Treisman, Daniel. Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin. *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 95, No. 3 (MAY/JUNE 2016), pp. 47-54. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-russian-president-putin-took-crimea-from-ukraine>

## **Domestic Politics As the “Home Front”**

The Kremlin has not officially claimed that Russia is “at war,” but it does say the country is rife with foreign agents. The Russian people must rally together and identify the foreign agents in their midst, it is argued. The front lines in this battle may be fuzzy, but a strong home front is nonetheless needed. In times of peace, the argument goes, no one would resort to such measures. But today, with the harsh reality of containment by the West, vigilance is needed, says the Kremlin. Therefore, elections will be little more than a formality. How can there be political competition when the country is under siege? If this or that candidate is barred from running in an election, well, he or she must have been aiding the enemy. No one really believes that elections in Russia involve true freedom of choice—but with the enemy at the gates, this semblance of democracy is all that society can muster.

However, there are signs of public discontent with Russia’s political establishment. Moscow’s war against Ukraine has failed to produce a rally around the flag effect comparable to the one caused by the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the Kremlin is uneasy. Putin has been engaged in suppressing institutions, not in order to break down something outdated, but in order to combat enemies and to erect something on the ruins of the Soviet institutions and unfinished post-Soviet constructions. Putin and his team have striven to take full advantage of the strong executive power laid down in Boris Yeltsin’s constitution.

After more than twenty years of power, the office of the president could hardly offer anything promising and new—other than a new wave of “turbo acceleration” launched by a foreign escapade. Based on his stubborn legacy worldview, this is exactly what Putin did.

## **Black Magic In Politics**

The geopolitical worldview had its heyday in European and American thinking between the latter half of the 19th century and the end of the 20th century.<sup>6</sup> In more recent decades, support for these ideas among political elites has often been only implicit because two world wars, the deaths of untold millions, and unfathomable destruction combined to discredit geopolitics as a lens for understanding human affairs. The culmination of geopolitical thinking

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<sup>6</sup> Sloan, Geoffrey. *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategic History*. Routledge, 2018

was the Second World War, which began as an attempt by several countries, namely Germany and Japan, to reshape the world order in their favor.

Despite this history, the geopolitical worldview hasn't vanished; in one form or another, under the guises of "structural realism" or "great power politics," it remains common with scholars of international relations and among some politicians—especially the aggressive ones. Geopolitics is irresistible to political leaders who cultivate "historical resentment"—a toxic mix of historical myths, national grievances connected to seized territories and economic failures, and obsession with external threats and foreign enemies who reject the nation's value system. This thinking poisons not only the platform of Vladimir Putin but also the work of other leaders who are essentially his kindred spirits: politicians like the leaders of Hungary, Venezuela, Cuba, Serbia, and partly China and Turkey. All these men complain constantly about past humiliations, insufficient recognition, the hostility of certain foreign powers, and supposedly unfair modern-day borders.

This perspective appeals not only to politicians pandering to mass resentments but also to foreign policy theorists, academics, and analysts who try to understand and sometimes even justify Russia's war against Ukraine by speaking the language of "great power politics." The Russian authorities' favorite scholar in this field is University of Chicago political scientist John Mearsheimer, who never tires of repeating that the United States and Western Europe bear responsibility for the war unleashed by Moscow. According to Mearsheimer, blame for Russian troops bombing peaceful cities in a neighboring country falls on the expansion of NATO and "turning Ukraine into a pro-American liberal democracy," which he says constitutes "an existential threat" "from a Russian perspective."<sup>7</sup>

### **The World's Dehumanization**

Such reasoning precludes the subjectivity of "regular" nations in relation to "greater powers." Viewing the world this way treats "powers" like single, uniform entities, as if they were individual people. This kind of thinking cannot accommodate all the life within these countries—all the people with their different beliefs, faiths, disagreements, plans, and dramas. This

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<sup>7</sup> Chotiner, Isaac. Why John Mearsheimer Blames the U.S. for the Crisis in Ukraine. For years, the political scientist has claimed that Putin's aggression toward Ukraine is caused by Western intervention. Have recent events changed his mind? March 1, 2022. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/why-john-mearsheimer-blames-the-us-for-the-crisis-in-ukraine>

worldview is blind to that diversity, seeing only an imaginary monolith of economic and cultural activity. This substitution is tangible even at the linguistic level. Look at any geopolitical insight and you'll read about how countries "decide," "want," "suffer," "are humiliated," "are outraged," and "call for." But a state can't do any of these things—only living, breathing people can. Any "national decision," moreover, has many opponents within that very nation.

First, the disappearance of all living things happens in theory, in the process of unpacking or discussing the next grand geostrategic idea. For most people who think in terms of "world orders" and "great power politics," however, this erasure of life takes hold and shapes future ideas. Those who embrace this worldview only impoverish themselves; they're stuck talking about rearranging lifeless entities or studying them for academic degrees. The real disaster comes when this "science" is applied—when geopolitics becomes the only language spoken by those who wield power. When this happens, war begins.

The world's dehumanization is no longer a theoretical exercise but something unfolding in reality. Applied geopolitics sweeps away any concept of living people, their deeds, and views, it destroys their homes, spares no values other than survival, and makes power extreme and regimes and state borders sacred. This breed of politics forces people to die for lines on the map and shed blood for dirt. Applied geopolitics replaces a productive economy with the mobilization of any resources that can be grabbed for war, regardless of people's rights to life, freedom, and property.

At an official level, Russia ignores the casualties among its own military and civilians because a struggle waged between faceless entities—between national powers—doesn't have to acknowledge the deaths of "ordinary" people. After all, both the actors and the victims here are powers, not people. This is how the dehumanization of the world works.

### **Failed Ambition**

Realizing that resources are scarce, the next authoritarian ruler decided to concentrate on modernizing the army and navy, postponing other sectors until later. As a result, the autocrat gets a country that's poorly developed economically and technologically but capable to varying degrees of waging war.

Underdevelopment and corruption make Russia attractive to no one; the nation fails as a model for anyone in anything. Russia can offer the world only brute force, which is also the only means by which it can build alliances, given that no one voluntarily becomes Russia's ally.

That's the situation in theory, but the reality is actually worse. Russia has demonstrated to the world that it cannot even manage brute force. When taking on the "business" of a great power, it has to be handled responsibly. In Russia, we see failures not only in the civilian economy and technological innovations but also, it seems, in what ought to be the core of all great power politics: the quality of military organization.

This isn't the first time this has happened. "For half a millennium, Russian foreign policy has been characterized by soaring ambitions that have exceeded the country's capabilities," says historian and Stalin biographer Stephen Kotkin. "Throughout, the country has been haunted by its relative backwardness, particularly in the military and industrial spheres. This has led to repeated frenzies of government activity designed to help the country catch up, with a familiar cycle of coercive state-led industrial growth followed by stagnation."<sup>8</sup> This pattern has only widened the gap between Russia and the West.

Russian authoritarianism creates the conditions for its own collapse. The autocrat makes all the key decisions himself, receiving less reliable information as he inspires more fear in those around him. As they try to protect themselves from the sovereign's rage while simultaneously getting rich, these cronies do their best to deliver only the facts that the ruler wants to hear.

The authoritarian ruler is convinced that he knows better than others, but this confidence is based on the lies of subordinates. And herein lies authoritarianism's fundamental problem. This is why authoritarians are both powerful and extremely vulnerable at the same time. They're vulnerable especially in the event of systemic malfunctions, which is precisely the nature of the failure unfolding today in Russia (whatever happens in Ukraine). Built on lies and corruption, Putin's geopolitics has failed. He's failed in his attempt to reproduce the geopolitics of the 20th century in an era when economics and technology are more important than geography.

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<sup>8</sup> Remnick, David. The Weakness of the Despot. An expert on Stalin discusses Putin, Russia, and the West. March 11, 2022. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/stephen-kotkin-putin-russia-ukraine-stalin>



## **The Return of Human Beings**

Hidden behind Putin's geopolitical smokescreen, there's an emptiness that defies understanding. Maybe he wanted to spark another crisis to maintain his grip on power and merely miscalculated the scale, or perhaps he wanted revenge on the Ukrainians for insulting him and simply took it too far. Nothing here constitutes an excuse, but these motivations are nevertheless couched in the language of geopolitics, which assumes contempt for the lives of people. When pursuing any "geopolitical" project, individuals cease to be relevant to the authorities.

If Russia has any future at all, there can be no room for geopolitics, just as there should be no room in tomorrow's Russian government for any adherents of this black magic. There should be no place for the public cultivation of foreign threats, the creation of enemies of the people, or trading in national grievances allegedly rooted in seized territories. Borders today must lose their invented sacredness. After all, they've always been inventions—the result of wars, collapsed empires, negotiations, random decisions, and mistakes. Borders are battles buried in the earth, and it should be forbidden to dig them up.

Russia lost this war morally simply by starting it. No matter what happens on the battlefield, Russia has lost this war as a political, economic, and social entity: as a country, as a part of the global community. In Russia, there was a time when the word war, without any qualifiers, always referred to the Great Patriotic War. Now this word has a different meaning. War, without any qualifiers or adjectives now refers to the war that Putin started, which rendered all other Russians, this writer included, responsible for the catastrophe that he has brought about.

But there is a larger point to make here. If there's any positive aspect to today's catastrophe in Ukraine, it's the moral bankruptcy of geopolitics laid bare. Geopolitics sees the world from the cockpit of a bomber jet. And Russia's warmongers are not alone in there: everyone who tries to justify war using the language of "great power politics" is seated right there beside them.

# **ELITES HAVE HIJACKED RUSSIA AND CONFLATED THE COUNTRY'S INTERESTS WITH THEIR OWN**

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Anywhere you turn in Moscow, it's easy to find members of the Russian elite who wonder why the West thinks that war in Ukraine is the Kremlin's preferred course of action. Even if the Russian army managed to force Kyiv into a swift and humiliating defeat without too many casualties, the damage to Russia's national interests would surely outweigh any potential military gains.

The problem is that the same logic was just as true eight years ago when the fateful decisions were made to annex Crimea and to stir conflict in Ukraine's Donbas region. The fact that Russia has been able to endure the international fallout for all these years helps to explain why the region finds itself again on the brink of war.

When it comes to Ukraine, people in Moscow and the West can be forgiven for assuming that the Kremlin's policy is informed by a dispassionate strategy derived from endless hours of interagency debate and the weighing of pros and cons. What actually drives the Kremlin are the tough ideas and interests of a small group of longtime lieutenants to President Vladimir Putin, as well as those of the Russian leader himself. Emboldened by perceptions of the West's terminal decline, no one in this group loses much sleep about the prospect of an open-ended confrontation with America and Europe. In fact, the core members of this group would all be among the main beneficiaries of a deeper schism.

Consider Mr. Putin's war cabinet, which is the locus of most decision-making. It consists of Nikolai Patrushev, the head of the Security Council; Alexander Bortnikov, the head of the FSB (the main successor agency of the KGB intelligence service); Sergei Naryshkin, the head of

Russian Foreign Intelligence Service; and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Their average age is 68 years old and they have a lot in common. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which Mr Putin famously described as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, was the defining episode of their adult lives. Four out of five have a KGB background, with three, including the president himself, coming from the ranks of counterintelligence. It is these hardened men, not polished diplomats like Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who run the country's foreign policy.

In recent years members of this group have become very vocal. Patrushev and Naryshkin frequently give lengthy interviews articulating their views on global developments and Russia's international role. According to them, the American-led order is in deep crisis thanks to the failure of Western democracy and internal conflicts spurred by the promotion of tolerance, multiculturalism and respect for the rights of minorities. A new multipolar order is taking shape that reflects an unstoppable shift in power to authoritarian regimes that support traditional values. A feisty, resurgent Russia is a pioneering force behind the arrival of this new order, along with a rising China. Given the state of affairs in Western countries, the pair contend, it's only natural that they seek to contain Russia and to install pro-Western regimes in former Soviet republics. The West's ultimate goal of a color revolution in Russia itself would lead to the country's conclusive collapse.

Washington sees unfinished business in Russia's persistence and success, according to Putin's entourage. As America's power wanes, its methods are becoming more aggressive. This is why the West cannot be trusted. The best way to ensure the safety of Russia's existing political regime and to advance its national interests is to keep America off balance. Seen this way, Ukraine is the central battleground of the struggle. The stakes could not be higher. Should Moscow allow that country to be fully absorbed into a western sphere of influence, Russia's endurance as a great power will itself be under threat. On a personal level, the world view of the hard men is an odd amalgam of Soviet nostalgia, great-power chauvinism and the trappings of the Russian Orthodox faith. The fact that the new elite in Kyiv glorifies the Ukrainian nationalists of the 20th century and thumb their noses at Moscow is a huge personal affront.

Why then are the people around Putin not scared about possible fallout from a new round of far-reaching economic sanctions? In their eyes, the sanctions that the West imposed to punish Russia for the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas were intended largely to

check Russia's rise. America and its allies would have found a way to introduce them one way or another, they were just looking for an excuse. Since 2014 such views have solidified. Patrushev, Bortnikov and Naryshkin all find themselves on the U.S. Treasury's blacklist already, along with many other members of Putin's inner circle. There is no way back for them to the West's creature comforts. They are destined to end their lives in Fortress Russia, with their assets and their relatives alongside them.

As for sanctions by sector, including those that President Joe Biden's team plans to impose should Russia invade Ukraine, these may end up largely strengthening the hard men's grip on the national economy. Import substitution efforts have generated large flows of budget funds that are controlled by the coterie and their proxies, including through Rostec. The massive state conglomerate is run by a friend of Putin's from his KGB days in East Germany, Sergey Chemezov. In a similar vein, a ban on food imports from countries that have sanctioned Russia has led to spectacular growth in Russian agribusiness. The sector is overseen by Patrushev's elder son Dmitry, who is Putin's agriculture minister.

Similarly, much-touted financial sanctions have led to a bigger role for state-owned banks which, unsurprisingly enough, are also filled with KGB veterans. If anything, further sanctions wouldn't just fail to hurt Putin's war cabinet, they would secure its members' place as the top beneficiaries of Russia's deepening economic autarky. The same logic is true of domestic politics: as the country descends into a near-permanent state of siege, the security services will be the most important pillar of the regime. That further cements the hard men's grip on the country.

After two years of covid-induced self-isolation for Kremlin bosses, there is a clear tendency toward tunnel vision and a dearth of checks and balances. Russia's interests are increasingly becoming conflated with the personal interests of the people at the very top of the system.



# THE RUSSIA THAT PUTIN KILLED

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This article is not about a Western-friendly democratic Russia that many people hoped would emerge from the turbulence of 1990s although Putin surely had a role in making sure that that Russia never materialized. Instead, this article is about a Russia that could have emerged in our days, but before February 24, 2022: suspicious of the West, mindful of its own interests, realistic, if occasionally ruthless in its means. This Russia would not have been a superpower, but still a strong player beyond its own region. It would not have been part of the Western community, nor a firm ally of China—but it would have cultivated relationships in many corners of the world, making use of them to advance its own interests and to hedge against a bipolar world of U.S.-China rivalry.

Domestically, this Russia would surely not have been a full-fledged democracy—but it would have had some institutional checks and balances, some accountability, and high degrees of professionalism in many fields. It would not have been an easy partner for the West—instead, quite often its goals would have been at odds with those of the West. But this Russia would still have benefitted the West in ways that would not necessarily have been pleasant—by forcing the West to take a more realistic view of its own ends, means and abilities.

Years ago—probably during the waning days of the Medvedev presidency—the Russian scholar Dmitri Trenin suggested that if democracy were to rise in Russia again, it would be driven by needs, rather than ideals. It would be promoted not by liberal intellectuals wanting to embrace the West and its values, like in the 1990s, but rather by small- and medium-sized business owners, who needed some rule of law to work and function. That would result in a cruder form of democracy than that seen in the West, but it would still give the Russian system some checks, balances and accountability—plus, it would have the virtue of being a homegrown, rather than imported system.

At the time, the prediction seemed far-fetched, but more recently, I found myself thinking of it again and again. While doing research in Russia I would often come across people who—fairly or otherwise—hold a critical view of the West, but in domestic matters effectively act as agents of democracy, by demanding rule of law, independent courts or media freedom. These people are driven not so much by ideas and ideals, as by professional needs and concerns. To work as a journalist or academic, one needs some freedom of expression. To be a good civil servant, one needs a system that rewards skills, rather than just loyalism. To have a fulfilling career even in a state company, just loyalism is not enough.

These people mostly come from the professional class. As is often the case with people over-exposed to propaganda, they tend to have aversion to ideology of any kind—be it Putinism or Western liberalism. But they adhere to the standards of professionalism, and they follow their own conscience, even in situations where that can cause trouble. This can result in policemen refusing to arrest peaceful protesters, journalists judiciously sticking to facts, officials following the rule of law. There is ample evidence of such cases from Russia over the past years.

For now, these cases have amounted to just that—isolated cases of independent-minded individuals with high professional standards and/or civic position. But the tendency was there, and it could have evolved into something more systemic—especially if combined with a scenario of post-Putin transition that had seen political power, now concentrated in single hands, fragmented, and moved back to institutions.

One could also see signs of that new country in Russia's foreign policy debate. For decades, the West had been a vocal point for Russia's foreign policy—whether it sought to emulate or beat it. In recent years, though, one could increasingly hear voices that suggested 'abandoning the old disappointments' and looking at the world with fresh eyes, prioritizing Russia's interests without necessarily asking if they confronted or aligned with those of the West. In some areas this was already happening. Russia's presence in Syria, for instance, may have started out as an attempt to 'teach the West a lesson,' but then it transformed and became much more about other perks of regional presence—not least being taken seriously by Saudi Arabia when it comes to setting oil production quotas.

The same goes about Russia's presence in Africa. Yet again, it may have started as a way to annoy the Western powers present, but many in Russia viewed Africa as an important

end in itself—increasingly important for trade, and a place where Russia could enjoy access and positive reputation by virtue of not being a former colonial power like the countries of the West, or a suspected future colonial power like China.

In late 2021, one could say that Russia had made peace with not being a superpower. It was finding its feet and focus as a lesser power, and it was being remarkably successful in matching its ends and means—even if the West did not necessarily like neither the ends nor means. This middle-power Russia had also some remarkably professional cadres to rely on—from diplomats to technocrats to technicians. And its political system, while being destructively personalist and de-institutionalized, had a potential to evolve into something much more accountable without major upheavals.

February 24, 2022 changed all that. Now, the independent-minded professional class is all but outlawed in Russia. In a black and white world, unconditional support is demanded by the Kremlin. Expressions of independence are rare, risky, and—maybe most depressingly—result in very little. It is now hard to see an evolutionary way out of the dead end of the Putinist system in Russia. As to foreign policy—it seems inevitable that Putin’s war has condemned Russia to a new deep and lasting stand-off with the West, and left it both politically and economically at the mercy of China in ways that cannot be in harmony with Russian interests. Putin has essentially put an end to Russia’s status as an independent global actor. Willingly or otherwise, Russia is now wedded to an archaic domestic political system, archaic economy, archaic foreign policy agenda, and archaic debate. The mature and independent, though not Western-friendly, Russia that was there just couple of months ago has been killed.

This move defies rational explanation. Anything that Moscow could rationally have wanted—a neutral Ukraine, revision of security architecture, arms control talks—was available via diplomatic means. Moscow could have received all that without sacrificing relationships, trade links, status or domestic equilibrium. Moscow’s coercive diplomacy was ugly, but it was working—the Kremlin managed to make the West discuss the issues the West did not want to discuss. Results were within reach. And then Putin abandoned it all for the sake of a landgrab.

So, what now? For the short term, Russia is probably destined for consolidation around the Kremlin’s agenda—the Kremlin leaves the country with no other choice; and the country is unwilling or unable to decisively challenge the Kremlin. But in the medium term, Russia’s future is widely open—both as concerns its domestic set-up as well as its foreign policy agenda. Some



of it will be decided on the battlefields in Ukraine. But some will be decided in its future interactions with the West.

In the early 1990s, the West tried to fashion Russia to its own face. This was done with Russia's approval, in fact, at Russia's invitation—so it would be unfair to criticise the West for 'imposing its vision', as many do. Even so, for multiple reasons Russia failed to become a member of the Western community in the 1990s, and it is unlikely to do so also when a post-Putin era arrives. But it is feasible to end up with a Russia that, while not sharing all of the West's political agenda, can still be rationally cooperative on some issues, and also admit the guilt for what it has done to Ukraine. This should be the message in future exchanges with Russians: "you are fine to have your own views on world affairs, but you are not free to commit the crime of war." This is also something that the de facto agents of democracy in Russia—the professional class described above (that group right now is voiceless, but that can still play a role in the future) would be able to sign up to. And they are not the worst allies one can have in Russia.

# **PUTIN'S NUCLEAR BLUFF: HOW THE WEST CAN MAKE SURE RUSSIA'S THREATS STAY HOLLOW**

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Few if any wars have been launched with as much nuclear posturing as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. One week before beginning its offensive, Moscow conducted previously planned exercises of its nuclear launch systems. A few days later, Russian President Vladimir Putin falsely accused Ukraine of building nuclear weapons. When starting the invasion, Putin warned that any outside country standing in Russia's way would face "consequences such as they have never seen in their history"—a thinly disguised nuclear threat. Almost as soon as the fighting began, Russia's military attacked and seized Ukrainian nuclear facilities while falsely claiming that Kyiv wants to build dirty bombs. And as Russian forces began to meet stiff resistance, Putin announced that Russia's deterrence forces—which include its nuclear weapons—were shifting to "a special regime of combat duty." It then ran another set of (possibly routine but still notable) launch drills.

Many analysts and observers have been frightened by Putin's actions, and for good reason. Whenever the leader of a nuclear-armed state signals a readiness to use nuclear weapons, it is worth taking seriously. That is especially true when the threats come from a man who controls the world's largest nuclear stockpile and who is simultaneously conducting an unprovoked, full-scale military invasion of a neighboring country. Putin is powerful, belligerent, and evidently unconcerned about casualties.

But although the Kremlin has shown a willingness to kill civilians and wreak havoc, using nuclear weapons would deviate from Russia's own nuclear doctrine. The country does not need them to defeat Kyiv, and even if it did, detonating weapons of mass destruction would provoke international retaliation, including, quite possibly, direct military involvement from NATO. This risks both massive conventional war and further nuclear escalation—an outcome that Putin does not want. Rather than seriously considering strikes, Putin is more likely using the specter of nuclear escalation as cover for increasingly brutal tactics on the ground and to pressure Kyiv into surrendering. He may also hope that by threatening attacks, he can scare NATO away from increasing its involvement in the conflict or even get the West to make Ukraine submit.

So far, this strategy has failed; Kyiv and its backers have held firm. But they have wisely avoided escalatory language and steps of their own. They should continue to do so, because although the risk of nuclear escalation may be low, it is real. Russia has a diverse arsenal of nuclear weapons, large and small, and both Russian and Western nuclear thinkers have discussed nuclear use as a way of demonstrating resolve and pressuring adversaries. The risk of nuclear war would grow particularly acute if NATO forces become more directly involved in the invasion, because from Russia's perspective, a war with NATO would threaten its sovereignty and existence.

Western powers should keep assisting Ukraine with the aim of convincing Moscow to reverse course and reach a negotiated settlement with Kyiv, one that guarantees Ukraine's security. But as Western states debate new weapon provisions and ways of engagement, they must be aware of the dangers and avoid mission creep. If NATO offers Ukraine increasingly direct help, the organization risks finding itself in a war against Russia despite every intention of avoiding it.

## **TALK IS CHEAP**

It is not easy to divine the meaning of Putin's nuclear declarations. To keep the West on edge, the Russian president has been deliberately ambiguous, and despite the menacing tone, his statements are not explicitly or uniquely about nuclear weapons. As Russia defines them, its "deterrent forces" include its nuclear arsenal, but also its conventional long-range strike systems, some of which are already being used in Ukraine. Although it has not been used

before, Putin's phrase "a special regime of combat duty" does not appear to signal a serious change in Russia's nuclear posture. When Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu explained the details of the order, he said it entailed staffing up Russia's nuclear strategic force command centers—all of which were already well staffed. The phrase, in other words, had little real meaning.

If Russia were to detonate nuclear weapons as part of the invasion, it would run counter to the state's official doctrine and Vladimir Putin's stated nuclear plans. In "Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Nuclear Deterrence," the government stated that it will not use nuclear weapons unless the "very existence" of the Russian state is threatened or if Russia's nuclear deterrent capacity—that is, its nuclear forces and command and control—is at risk. Putin has emphasized one specific scenario, indicating in spoken remarks that Russia would use nuclear weapons if under missile attack. But either way, even dramatic losses in Ukraine would fall short of meeting these thresholds.

Doctrines, of course, are subject to interpretation, and Putin and his advisers may view the serious sanctions levied against Russia and a bogged-down invasion as threats to the country's existence, particularly as the costs build. Putin may also equate the Russian state with his own leadership, something that defeat in Ukraine and Western sanctions could threaten. And Putin has plenty of personal incentives to avoid losing office. Leading Western politicians are calling for Russian officials—including the president—to be overthrown and charged with war crimes in The Hague, and the International Criminal Court has opened an investigation into Russia's conduct.

But right now, Putin faces no serious threats to his power, and Russia is not losing on the battlefield. Despite substantial Ukrainian resistance, the Russian military continues its slow advance on Ukraine's major cities. It retains tremendous conventional combat power, which it can use to destroy both military and civilian targets. As the conflict currently stands, the use of nuclear weapons would serve no military purpose besides shock and horror, which Russia has other ways to inflict. This means that the current nuclear posturing is almost certainly meant to deter direct Western involvement in the fight—including to defend Ukraine's airspace by enforcing a no-fly zone—or to compel Kyiv into making concessions at the negotiating table.

If Russia were facing defeat, a nuclear strike could force Ukraine to concede. But it is unlikely that this would ultimately protect Russia or help Putin and his allies stay in power. Instead, the radioactive fallout from the attack would spread for hundreds of miles, if not more, including to Russia itself and NATO countries. The former could risk Putin's domestic position; mass poisoning one's population is generally not a recipe for political success. The latter, meanwhile, may well be seen as an assault on NATO, triggering its conventional involvement in the conflict, the very thing Russia wants to deter. (The Russian government is aware it would lose a war with NATO.)

### **STEERING CLEAR**

But low risk is not the same as no risk, and many Western analysts believe that the Kremlin is more willing to use nuclear weapons than it publicly suggests. The country has an arsenal of roughly 2,000 nonstrategic nuclear weapons: smaller, lower-yield warheads that nonetheless approach or exceed the blast power of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These weapons seem to have little purpose in a purely responsive doctrine and appear designed for wartime use.

Instead of mere protection, these analysts—including in the United States government—believe Russian nuclear doctrine calls for a more aggressive tactic that they term, alternately, "escalating to de-escalate" and "escalating to win." They believe that if Russia is faced with the prospect of losing a conventional war, it would detonate a nuclear weapon in order to demonstrate resolve and force adversaries to back down.

This is unlikely to be Moscow's actual nuclear strategy. Instead, if Russia uses nuclear weapons to signal resolve, it will be because it indeed sees an existential threat—not to win a smaller conventional conflict which it would otherwise lose. It is difficult to imagine such a threat coming from Ukraine itself. But Russian nuclear use would become far more plausible if Moscow feels that direct NATO military involvement is inevitable. The Kremlin believes that in a war between NATO and Russia, the West would inevitably target Russian leadership and preemptively strike its nuclear capabilities. This, of course, would meet all the criteria in Russia's nuclear use doctrine, perhaps leading Moscow to launch the first bomb.

In the event of such a conflict, the West could try to persuade the Kremlin that it had limited aims. But doing so would be extraordinarily difficult through the fog of war. Even in the absence of active conflict between the alliance and Moscow, Putin sees NATO with tremendous hostility. He has condemned the organization for arming Ukraine, compared the West's financial sanctions to an "act of war," and declared that he would consider any country that lets Ukrainian planes land on its territory "a party to the conflict." These statements, like his general nuclear threats, are designed to deter, but they also reflect his genuine views. Combined with Russia's nuclear doctrine and the Kremlin's hostile posture, these statements underscore the importance of avoiding a direct conflict between NATO and Russia.

That means the West must be careful in how it handles the ongoing invasion. Member states should continue to supply Ukraine as it defends itself, but NATO should not institute a "no-fly zone" over Ukraine, which would entail using Western airpower or the threat thereof to stop Russian aircraft from flying in Ukrainian airspace, potentially bringing NATO and Russian forces into direct military combat. They should slow plans to supply equipment such as fighter jets, which could require the use of their own airfields. They should promise to ease old and new sanctions if Russia de-escalates and withdraws its forces.

Such caution and concessions may not bring emotional satisfaction; there is certainly a visceral appeal to proposals that would have NATO forces directly help Ukraine. But these would dramatically heighten the risk that the war becomes a wider, potentially nuclear conflict. Western leaders should therefore reject them out of hand. Literally nothing else could be more dangerous.

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# **NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE AFTER THE INF TREATY**

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The Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty was rightly regarded as one of the most important nuclear disarmament agreements. By eliminating all ground-based intermediate- and shorter-range missiles the treaty resolves tense nuclear standoff in Europe and helped end the cold war by changing the security environment on the continent. The INF treaty was probably as much a product of this change as its catalyst, but it was still a remarkable arms control achievement.

Unfortunately, thirty years later the security environment in Europe has changed again as the relationships between Russia and the United States and its NATO allies took a turn to the worse. A dispute about INF treaty compliance led to the demise of the treaty in 2019. Russia's invasion in Ukraine that began in February 2022 brought that relationship to a new low most likely making any new arms control agreements impossible for a long time.

The new security environment in Europe certainly creates strong incentives for the United States and its NATO allies to strengthen their military position in Europe. It is, however, important to avoid developments that could produce a dangerous nuclear confrontation.

## **Missiles in Europe and the INF treaty**

One challenge on the way to repairing the damage caused by the end of the INF treaty is that the treaty succeeded because it was supported by a number of other arms control and disarmament measures. The treaty itself banned only ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with a range between 500 and 5500 km, leaving other systems, in particular long-range



sea-launched and air-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs and ALCMs respectively), outside of its scope. This was not, however, a significant problem since ALCMs were included in the scope of the START treaty that limited strategic arsenals. As for sea-launched missiles, the United States removed all nuclear weapons from its surface fleet as part of the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives in 1991. Shortly after that, in 1994, nuclear cruise missiles were removed from attack submarines as well.<sup>1</sup> Russia had a very small number of nuclear SLCMs and by all indications kept them off submarines.<sup>2</sup>

Although nuclear weapons remained in Europe— in several NATO states as well as in Russia—their role was largely political. The United States reduced its arsenal in Europe to about 150 gravity bombs. Russia’s non-strategic arsenal was estimated to be considerably larger—up to 2000 nuclear warheads—but Russia insisted that all its weapons have been “concentrated at centralized storage bases”.<sup>3</sup> While a significant presence, because of their non-deployed status none of these weapons posed a threat that would be comparable to that of hundreds of nuclear-armed SS-20 intermediate-range missiles deployed in Europe by the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

However, the INF Treaty, which eliminated SS-20 as well as other missiles, is no longer in force. In 2014, the United States publicly accused Russia of developing a long-range land-based cruise missile in violation of its INF treaty obligations. According to the United States, the 9M729 missile, which was in development since the mid-2000s, has a range of up to 2,350 km.<sup>4</sup> While Russia insisted that 9M729 has never been tested to a prohibited range, the dispute was never resolved, and the United States withdrew from the INF treaty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nuclear SLCMs were fully retired after 2010. Hans M. Kristensen, “US Navy Instruction Confirms Retirement of Nuclear Tomahawk Cruise Missile,” *Federation of American Scientists*, March 18, 2013, <https://fas.org/blogs/security/2013/03/tomahawk/>.

<sup>2</sup> When the START treaty was signed, the United States and the Soviet Union made a commitment to provide annual declarations about their plans to deploy nuclear long-range SLCMs. Both states exchanged these declarations until 2009, while the treaty was in force. U.S. consistently declared zero deployed SLCMs and Russia apparently declared no plans to deploy nuclear SLCMs as well. Pavel Podvig, “Do Russian Attack Submarines Carry Nuclear Weapons?,” *Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces*, September 15, 2006, [http://russianforces.org/blog/2006/09/do\\_russian\\_attack\\_submarines\\_c.shtml](http://russianforces.org/blog/2006/09/do_russian_attack_submarines_c.shtml).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, “Statement by Mikhail I. Uliyanov, Acting Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” May 1, 2015, [https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/1May\\_Russia.pdf](https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/1May_Russia.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ankit Panda, “U.S. Intelligence: Russia Tried to Con the World With Bogus Missile,” *The Daily Beast*, February 18, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/us-intelligence-russia-tried-to-con-the-world-with-bogus-missile>.

<sup>5</sup> Pavel Podvig, “Did the United States Just Change Its Theory of INF Violation?,” *Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces*, February 19, 2019, [http://russianforces.org/blog/2019/02/did\\_the\\_united\\_states\\_just\\_cha.shtml](http://russianforces.org/blog/2019/02/did_the_united_states_just_cha.shtml).

## A Moratorium Instead of the Treaty?

Following the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty, Russia pledged that it “will not deploy them in any given region until U.S.-made intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles are deployed there”.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Russia proposed establishing a moratorium on deployment of INF-range missiles and later offered to include the contested 9M729 missile in the moratorium.<sup>7</sup> The United States and NATO, however, did not accept the offer since in their view Russia has already deployed a system of this kind and that the moratorium would not be viable unless all 9M729 missiles are eliminated.<sup>8</sup>

While it is extremely difficult to imagine that the Russian moratorium proposal could be effectively implemented in the environment created by Russia’s invasion in Ukraine, the core idea of this proposal deserves serious consideration.

At the very minimum, the United States and NATO should attempt to preserve the ban on deployment of intermediate-range *ballistic* missiles. A moratorium on ballistic missiles might not require a formal agreement as long as the United States and Russia refrain from deploying missiles of that kind. An arrangement based on mutual restraint could be rather fragile, however, especially given the fact that both states have active missile development programs. Russia has already developed (but not deployed) what is essentially an intermediate-range ballistic missile, RS-26.<sup>9</sup> The United States does not have a similar program at the moment but is planning to develop a new ballistic missile with a range of 3,000-4,000 km in the near future and is considering deploying these missiles in Asia.<sup>10</sup>

While NATO may see military benefits in deploying its own land-based intermediate-range missiles in Europe, it should recognize that the potential Russian response would most likely include the deployment of the RS-26 missiles that could prove deeply destabilizing. The United States and NATO have already announced that they have no plans to deploy new *nuclear* missiles in Europe. Moreover, political constraints would probably rule out the option of bringing

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<sup>6</sup> “Statement by the President of Russia on the Unilateral Withdrawal of the United States from the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles,” President of Russia, August 5, 2019, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61271>.

<sup>7</sup> “Statement by Vladimir Putin on Additional Steps to De-Escalate the Situation in Europe in the Wake of the Termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty),” President of Russia, October 26, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64270>.

<sup>8</sup> “Brussels Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels,” June 14, 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_185000.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Pavel Podvig, “RS-26 and Other Intermediate-Range ICBMs,” *Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces*, July 18, 2017, [http://russianforces.org/blog/2017/07/rs-26\\_and\\_other\\_intermediate-r.shtml](http://russianforces.org/blog/2017/07/rs-26_and_other_intermediate-r.shtml).

<sup>10</sup> Kingston Reif, “Trump Increases Budget for Banned Missiles,” *Arms Control Today*, May 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-05/news/trump-increases-budget-banned-missiles>.

additional U.S. nuclear weapons to Europe. Russia has no constraints of this kind and it is almost certain that should RS-26 be deployed it will be carrying nuclear warheads. In that regard, this deployment would be as destabilizing as that of the Soviet SS-20 missiles in the 1970s.

### **Getting Beyond Land-Based Missiles**

Although the efforts to preserve the key elements of the INF treaty are extremely important, it should be recognized that returning to the limit on deployment of land-based intermediate-range missiles would deal with only one aspect of the greater problem of the growing presence of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. Land-based missiles may stand out as particularly destabilizing, but they are not the only, and as yet not the most important, source of risk.

The deployment of “multiple battalions” of 9M729 should be compared with the plan to deploy a substantially larger number of long-range cruise missiles deployed at sea or delivered by aircraft. Variants of the long-range Kalibr SLCM have already been deployed on a range of surface ships and submarines. Air-delivered missiles include Kh-101 ALCM and Kinzhal ballistic missile. All these weapons have been used by Russia in its war in Ukraine (and, with the exception of Kinzhal, in Syria).

The United States and NATO also have a large arsenal of long-range cruise missiles that has never been constrained by the INF treaty. It includes SLCMs deployed on submarines and surface ships as well as air-launched cruise missiles, including those delivered by non-strategic aircraft.

The crucial difference between these arsenals is that almost all Russian systems are nuclear-capable. Russia clearly maintains the option of deploying at least some of its non-strategic missiles with nuclear warheads.

The United States does not have a similar capability at the moment. It is, however, a self-imposed constraint—the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review already called for the development of “a modern nuclear-armed” SLCM, explicitly framed as a way to compel Russia to reverse the deployment of new ground-launched cruise missiles. The recent deployment of low-yield nuclear warheads on some U.S. Trident D5 sea-launched ballistic missiles should also be considered in the European context. Even though Trident SLBM is a strategic delivery system, the low-yield warhead is supposed to provide the United States with flexibility in managing a

potential conflict between NATO and Russia, effectively making it “a European weapon.”

These developments suggest that avoiding a potential nuclear standoff in Europe is no longer a matter of limiting the deployment of ground-based intermediate-range missiles. With or without the INF treaty, Europe was drifting in the direction of having significant presence of nuclear weapons on and around the continent. If the current trend is left unchecked, Europe is likely to find itself in a situation where most of its territory will be within reach of multiple nuclear weapon systems. This is exactly the scenario that the INF treaty was designed to prevent.

### **Addressing the Risks**

There are several ways to address the prospect of increased nuclear danger in Europe. The traditional arms control approach would call for a limit on the number of non-strategic nuclear warheads. A significant obstacle to such an agreement is the difficulty of designing a verification arrangement that could be applied to non-strategic nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.

But even if an agreement limiting the number of non-strategic weapons were possible, it is unlikely to reduce the risks associated with the presence of nuclear weapons in Europe. The role of non-strategic weapons today is radically different from that in the past. They remain an instrument of deterrence, of course, but the primary deterrence mechanism is not an overwhelming firepower but rather the threat of nuclear escalation that is constantly present as long as these weapons are deployed. In fact, this is largely the logic behind the U.S./NATO nuclear posture in Europe. The recent U.S. decision to deploy low-yield warheads on Trident submarines follows this logic as well. The purpose of that deployment was not to compensate for the numerical disparity between Russia and NATO but rather to provide the United States with an option of managing a potential nuclear escalation.

While Russia maintains a relatively large arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons, it also appears to rely primarily on the threat of nuclear escalation rather than numbers for deterrence. The prospect of nuclear weapons becoming part of a conflict, even if they remain on the background, is seen an effective tool of keeping the United States and NATO from getting involved in those conflicts where their vital interests are not at stake. Ambiguity regarding nuclear capability of various weapon systems and the deployment status of nuclear

weapons also plays an important role as it introduces additional uncertainty into the probability of escalation.<sup>11</sup> This appears to be exactly the calculation that was made by Russia in the beginning of the invasion in Ukraine.<sup>12</sup>

The reliance on non-strategic nuclear weapons for escalation control creates an uncomfortably large space for miscalculation, misunderstanding, or an accident. Intentions can be easily misjudged, assessments of stakes in a conflict can be wrong, signals can be misread or misinterpreted. The addition of new weapons that can strike most of Europe will certainly make this situation worse by increasing the level of tensions and creating additional risks.

### **Non-Deployment of Non-Strategic Weapons**

It may well be that these dangers cannot be fully addressed as long as states continue to rely on nuclear deterrence. It should be possible, however, to substantially reduce the risks related to the inherent ambiguity of most non-strategic weapon delivery systems by ensuring that non-strategic nuclear weapons, no matter what the range or the platform, are not deployed on a permanent basis.<sup>13</sup>

This kind of arrangement would take advantage of the fact that most of its elements are already in place today. Russia has repeatedly stated that all its non-strategic nuclear weapons are concentrated in central storage facilities. U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe are currently deployed closer to their delivery aircraft, but they could be consolidated in a similar way. The major advantage of this arrangement is that it can be verified with the already existing tools and procedures.

The normal operating procedure for land-based non-strategic weapons and all air-delivered weapons is that they are normally not loaded to the delivery platform. This means that an inspection would need to confirm that no nuclear weapons are stored in any of the

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<sup>11</sup> Pavel Podvig, "Blurring the Line between Nuclear and Nonnuclear Weapons: Increasing the Risk of Accidental Nuclear War?," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 72, no. 3 (April 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2016.1170363>.

<sup>12</sup> "Address by the President of the Russian Federation," President of Russia, February 24, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

<sup>13</sup> Pavel Podvig and Javier Serrat, "Lock Them Up: Zero-Deployed Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe" (UNIDIR, 2017), <http://unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/lock-them-up-zero-deployed-non-strategic-nuclear-weapons-in-europe-en-675.pdf>. See also Alexei Arbatov, "A Russian Perspective on the Challenge of U.S., NATO, and Russian Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons," in *Reducing Nuclear Risks in Europe: A Framework for Action*, ed. Steve Andreasen and Isabelle Williams (NTI, 2011), [https://media.nti.org/pdfs/NTI\\_Framework\\_Chpt8b.pdf](https://media.nti.org/pdfs/NTI_Framework_Chpt8b.pdf).

facilities located at the inspected storage base.<sup>14</sup>



*Figure 1. Nuclear weapon storage facilities in Russia.*

For this arrangement to work, it is important to ensure that nuclear weapon storage facilities are separated from the bases where delivery systems, such as missiles or aircraft, are deployed. This separation already exists in Russia. The 12th Main Directorate of the Ministry of Defense, which is responsible for all operations with nuclear weapons, operates a network of storage sites that includes 12 national-level facilities and about 30 base-level facilities that are located near the bases where delivery systems are deployed (see Figure 1).<sup>15</sup>

In the non-deployment arrangement nuclear weapons would be verifiably removed from all base-level sites that support operations of non-strategic delivery systems and consolidated at the 12 national-level storage facilities. While the consolidation itself would not prevent nuclear weapons from being returned to a base, it will create a significant barrier to redeployment. For example, weapons from the base-level facility that serves all units deployed in Kaliningrad would

<sup>14</sup> Pavel Podvig, "Verifying the Absence of Nuclear Weapons in a Field Exercise," *Proceedings of the INMM & ESARDA Joint Annual Meeting*, August 2021, <https://resources.inmm.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/a1687.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Pavel Podvig and Javier Serrat, "Lock Them Up: Zero-Deployed Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe." Almost half of the base-level facilities support strategic nuclear forces – 11 storage sites service the Strategic Rocket Forces, two are located at the strategic bomber bases, and one supports the missile defense system deployed around Moscow. Naval storage facilities at the Northern and Pacific Fleet probably have the capability to store strategic as well as non-strategic weapons.

be removed to the national-level facility near Vologda, more than 1,000 km away.

Nuclear weapons storage arrangements implemented at NATO bases in Europe would probably require consolidating the weapons in dedicated storage facilities. While this measure could present certain challenges, practical as well as political, none of them seem unsurmountable.

### **Conclusions**

The demise of the arms control architecture in Europe and Russia's invasion in Ukraine should lead to a re-evaluation of the nature of risks associated with the presence of nuclear weapons in Europe and stimulate efforts to reduce these risks. The conflict in Ukraine demonstrated the dangers of keeping non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe and the value of making sure that these weapons are separated from their delivery systems. Although this would not eliminate all nuclear risks in Europe, this step could significantly raise the threshold for involvement of nuclear weapons in a security dispute or a conflict.

[Note: This essay is an updated and edited version of an earlier publication: Pavel Podvig, "Nuclear Weapons in Europe after the INF Treaty," *Deep Cuts Issue Brief #10*, June 2020, [https://deepcuts.org/files/pdf/Deep\\_Cuts\\_Issue\\_Brief\\_10-NW\\_Post-INF\\_Europe.pdf](https://deepcuts.org/files/pdf/Deep_Cuts_Issue_Brief_10-NW_Post-INF_Europe.pdf)]