

U.S. Policy for Ukraine

The Case For Accepting Ukraine into NATO and Committing to the Defense

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INTRODUCTION

As the Russo-Ukrainian war drags on, red lines are becoming increasingly blurred. Hesitancy in Washington under the Biden administration has prevented large amounts of financial and military aid from supporting Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his exhausted armed forces. Instead, the United States has supported the fight in piecemeal fashion because of mixed domestic support towards the conflict and a fear of crossing Russian red-lines. Fear grips the West as policy makers grapple with the, “what ifs”, weighing the possibility of the war pouring over international borders and sprawling into an even deadlier conflict between Russia and NATO on the European continent. Weighing even heavier on the minds of policy makers is the chance of Russian President Putin becoming more comfortable with a nuclear option, stoking fears of a modern nuclear crisis. A codified and clear policy is desperately needed to ensure the security of Europe.

On June 16, 2024, delegates from over 90 countries came from around the world to meet in Switzerland in what has become known as the “Ukraine Peace Summit.” However promising the semantics, the outcomes were unfortunately less than fruitful, and the path forward remains unclear. In summary, Russia and China was not present, and several non-aligned countries did not sign the communique at the conclusion of the two-day summit (Sapuppo, 2024). Ukraine has been a decisive point for the international community, allowing for an increasingly bipolar world. As Nivedita Kapoor argues in her text “Russia-EU Relations: The End of a Strategic Partnership,” the bipolar world is pushing Russia away from Europe and has caused it to become over-dependent on China and other autocratic, revisionist nations (Kapoor, 2021).

Tough issues on the subject were omitted, such as what a post-war Ukraine would look like and if Ukraine would be able to join NATO (Graham and Siebold, 2024). It is clear that the international community is ready for a resolution, but there is a lack of consensus over the details. Unfortunately, the world is far from brokering a ceasefire resolution. In a world where democracy is flagging and autocracies are on the rise, it is hard for the concept of compromise to resonate with policy makers. However, if a resolution is to be achieved and the likelihood of an expansive war reduced, concessions are needed on both sides, leading to a delayed but desired outcome.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Having been created in 1949 in response to the growing Soviet threat after the conclusion of WWII, NATO has grown in membership and has evolved immensely in response to the ever-changing geopolitical landscape. Several policy makers and geopolitical analysts have questioned the relevance of NATO after the fall of the Soviet Empire, since the communist threat was the main reason that the alliance was formed. Once a leading geopolitical scientist and well-known within the neorealist school of thought, Kenneth Waltz stated in the early 1990's that, "Without an external enemy, the alliance would lose its reason for existence... take away the (threat) and the United States would abandon the continent" (Frydrych, 2008). In 2024, the alliance is now larger than ever with 32 members, and it has taken steps to strengthen its position on the European continent and become rooted in Russia's periphery. Russia's concerns are well-warranted. A comparable fear that the West could have experienced if communism was not defeated is if the Warsaw Pact were to expand in Latin America and the Caribbean, violating every aspect of the Monroe Doctrine. It is too late to argue if NATO expansion was a mistake. More importantly, Russia does indeed pose a security threat to Eastern Europe, and a strong NATO is a strong deterrence.

In early 2022, it became apparent to military intelligence analysts, to the surprise of even European allies, that war was inevitable. Putin's army, under the impression that it would conduct exercises along its border and in the neighboring country of Belarus, was staged for an attack to seize the capital of Kyiv and topple the pro-Western government of Ukraine. Putin, following the success of the 2014 annexation of Crimea, fully believed that his military had the unrestricted capacity to dominate Ukraine and reach a conclusion in just three days with the goal of capitulating the government and installing a pro-Russian regime (Collins et al., 2023).

As Ed Corcoran, a former Strategic Analyst at the US Army War College, states about President Putin's intentions, "His belligerent military emphasis is fundamentally a show for the Russian people. He needs a visible enemy to distract public attention from his plutocratic elite, from internal repression, and from actions undermining Russia's professed democratic ideals" (Corcoran, 2020). President Putin then, in simpler terms, needed war, and will not risk long-term defeat, unless it be the end of his regime. However, his plan to capitulate the government and distract the Russian population quickly turned into a political and military disaster.

To the surprise of the international community, Ukraine was able to sustain control of key terrain, block waves of Russian soldiers, and destroy much of the Russian armor which had advanced only to the city's periphery, having never penetrated the city limits (Collins et al., 2023). Putin has had a series of obstacles to overcome since the failed invasion, including the near coup staged by now-assassinated Yevgeny Prigozhin, the rearrangement of end goals, and the continuous shake-up of military top brass.

Now, the conflict has reached an absolute stalemate due to the advances of drone warfare, flagging morale on both sides, inept military leadership, and limited resources. Scenes from the



front lines grimly represent scenes not observed since the First World War. This war has now crossed the threshold of being longer and deadlier than 90% of all interstate wars within the last 200 years (Jensen and Hoffman, 2024). The casualties have been catastrophic. To put the numbers into perspective, during the War on Terror, the United States lost just over 7,000 personnel (“Costs of War”). The war in Gaza as of May 2024 has witnessed over 34,000 killed (“Gaza Death Toll...,” 2024). The war in Ukraine has taken over 500,000 lives on both sides, soldiers and civilians (Cooper et al., 2023). That is more than 7,000% greater than what the U.S. lost in the war on terror and 1,400 % of the lives lost in Gaza and Israel. This is not to assume that the war in Gaza is less catastrophic, but these statistics clearly represent the sheer immensity of violence within the meat-grinder that is Eastern Ukraine.

The outbreak of the war gave the United States the chance to portray a good versus evil, autocracy versus democracy, tyranny versus freedom scenario on the world stage and quickly form a coalition of support for Kyiv. Since the beginning of the invasion, the United States has committed over \$51.9 billion in aid to Ukraine, which includes air defense systems, mortars and artillery, tanks, aircraft, small arms, and maritime assets (“Fact Sheet on U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine,” 2024). These deliveries have proven to be successful on the battlefield; however, they have not been enough to successfully push Russian forces back substantially closer to pre-2022 borders. A failed counteroffensive during the summer of 2023 convinced leaders in Washington and the Pentagon that a successful offensive campaign was going to take more time, effort, and resources. Most recently, as of June 13th, 2024, the Biden Administration and Ukraine signed into law a 10-year bilateral security agreement that aims at strengthening Ukraine’s position, creating a NATO-standard military, and unfreezing Russian funds to funnel back to Ukraine (Shalal, 2024).

Ultimately, in accordance with this policy recommendation, the United States is trending in the right direction, especially with the latest bilateral security agreement. However, some members, including NATO allies and U.S. congressmen, are concerned over lack of strategic vision and the relevancy of the United States spending tax dollars to fuel a war on another continent. Washington must understand that there will be no quick solution and that our best hope is to make President Putin understand that he will never win the war. He will eventually be forced to make concessions at the negotiating table.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this policy recommendation is to force President Putin to the negotiating table after he realizes there are no more options within his military arsenal to obtain further political objectives. Furthermore, this recommendation is to not advocate for the destruction of Russia nor regime change, but to contain the fighting within Eastern Ukraine. This policy recommendation is broken down into three aspects. First, the United States must not rule out



Ukraine's eventual accession into NATO and consider the acceptance following the conclusion of the 10-year bilateral security agreement. This is largely recommended to provide a carrot to President Zelenskyy during a future ceasefire negotiation.

Secondly, Ukraine and the West must develop a defensive strategy designed to drag the war out and bleed Russia dry while simultaneously building defense networks (both physical and technological), increasing ammunition stockpiles, and increasing air defense capabilities. This does not advocate for further loss of life but instead argues for method of deterrence, a portrayal that the front line is impenetrable, and a cultivation of a sense that the potential risk of an offensive would far outweigh any reward.

Third, the U.S. must not have the end goal of recapturing all Ukrainian territory, but to eventually agree to let Russia retain portions of the Eastern oblasts. Which oblasts is a question that depends on the battle lines years in the future. In essence, Washington and its European allies must convince Kyiv that it will not recapture Russian-controlled territories and that it must look instead at NATO accession and building up long-term defenses.

The end state of this policy is a cease-fire agreement between Russia, Ukraine, and the West, and additionally, to deter actors from potential violent land grabs. Deterrence is a likely outcome due to the sheer loss of life, the stress on the economic system, and the geopolitical standing in which the nation now finds itself. The unfortunate reality is that even though this war is broadcast as a paradigm of good versus evil, the West and Kyiv must realize that in the nuclear age, complete Ukrainian victory should never be considered a realistic nor likely outcome.

POLICY RATIONALE & SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Solidify NATO strength

Ukrainian accession into NATO would deal a devastating defeat to President Putin, deter future autocratic nations from deciding to use military force to expand their borders, and ensure the security of Ukraine. Ukrainian entry into NATO is the lesser of the two evils. President Putin must not be allowed to grab another batch of Ukrainian territory without certain actions that would prove the West is adamant in standing up to the Kremlin. To secure a win for both Ukraine and the West, leaders must remain resolute and stand firm in the face of Russian aggression by eventually accepting Ukraine into the alliance. Not just peace through strength, but peace through a unified West, is our greatest hope.

The United States and its NATO allies undoubtedly find themselves in a perilous position with Russia. However, such a position has brought to the West a unique opportunity to seize the political and military high ground, solidify alliances, and establish a new relationship with President Putin on the grounds of open communication, mutual trust, and a secure future. The



bottom line is that it is in the best interest of the United States to formulate a stronger NATO and communicate clear red lines.

The United States has leverage in the long game

The second portion of the policy recommendation calls for a defensive strategy. A defensive strategy would be designed to leverage time, bleed Russia dry of resources, and eventually sign a lasting ceasefire agreement that will give Ukraine time to restock weapon and ammunition stores, construct defensive infrastructure with foreign funds, and give Russia an opportunity to save face on the international stage. As stated previously, all future negotiations will depend on where battle lines are drawn in the future. More than likely, under this recommendation, Russia would be allowed to retain the regions which have been captured including Luhansk, Donetsk, Mariupol, and Crimea, leaving Zaporizhzhia, due to the security of the nuclear power plant, and Kherson under Ukrainian control. Secession of these territories would be in return for regional stability and a chance for Ukraine to rebuild basic infrastructure that would enhance the current quality of life, including energy facilities, transportation, and residential living spaces.

Additionally, it is important to note that a successful counteroffensive is not likely and would be extremely costly for both sides. Without superior control of the skies and robust missile and armor support, Ukraine could not penetrate Russian defenses. Defenses in depth with layers of impenetrable minefields, constant drone surveillance, and layered obstacles make it deadly to fight for even an inch on the battlefield. Using resources to develop a defense network can only ensure a greater preservation of life and the deterrence of future Russian attacks.

The most vital pieces of a defensive network are weapons that have the greatest tactical impact and enough ammunition stockpiles to continue to beat down Russian advances, making the front lines unsurvivable. Firstly, Russia must not have control of the skies; defenses including Patriot Missile systems would be invaluable. Secondly, enough 155mm artillery shells and HIMARS missile systems to destroy Russian armor and troops are needed to slow any ground force advance. Thirdly, for close combat, supply enough Stinger and Javelin missiles to destroy air and armored assets that have slipped past the longer-standoff weapon systems. Both portable weapon systems have proved to be extremely effective in the modern battlespace.

Most importantly, the West must stand firm in both narrative and policy that these weapons are purely for defensive purposes. Ukraine should only be able to strike Russian sites that directly contribute to the targeting and destruction of Ukrainian military and civilian facilities. Instead of fueling a conflict, the West is only giving Ukraine the means to protect its sovereignty.

Widen the terms of negotiation: Complete victory in Ukraine is not possible

The third aspect of this policy recommendation would be the eventual compromise between Russia and Ukraine. The current terms of negotiations are extremely polarized, leaving little room for a win for either side. Russia has made clear its demands: subjugation of the Ukrainian



state, demilitarization of the Ukrainian military, new leadership in Kyiv, and holding onto land previously captured by Russian forces. Ukraine, on the other hand, demands that Russia recedes from all pre-2014 territory, a demand that Russia could never agree to and would do the unthinkable to prevent (Slantchev and Goemans, 2024).

For this to succeed, President Zelenskyy will have to balance bolstering society's morale with offering realistic assessments of what can be achieved. According to a Carnegie sponsored research poll in March 2024, Ukrainian adults are 96% in favor of a full withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory, with only 22% in favor of drawing the line on where it currently stands (Gonick and Ciaramella, 2024). In other words, President Zelenskyy will have the difficult task of gaining support for such a policy. However, with time, the amount of Ukrainian support for a total victory will begin to dwindle.

As Dan Altman, a leading political scientist and member of the Council on Foreign relations, states, "Reshaping Russia's long-term calculus is as important as winning today's battles... The objective is to make Russian leaders fear a long war. That fear is vital to avoiding one" (Altman, 2024). With a defensive approach, it would be vital for Ukraine to continue to receive aid in the form of both money and weaponry to continue to resist Russian aggression and build stockpiles. Russia ultimately believes that it can outlast Ukrainian defenses because of the belief that western support will continue to deteriorate over time. With this paradigm, time is in Russia's hands. But if the United States and its NATO partners agree to this defensive strategy and continue to aid Ukraine with the intention of wearing down the Russian war machine, this outlook is bound to change.

COUNTERARGUMENTS

Russia must learn that actions have immediate consequences

The leading counterargument against a defensive strategy is to ensure Ukraine's complete victory of pushing Russian forces out of Russian-controlled territory, including Crimea. This is the current view held by Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, who has been consistent in his messaging to world leaders that his armed forces will continue to fight until Ukraine is made whole again to its previous 2014 borders. This view is expected to be held by the President. Any other view would severely compromise the ongoing campaigns on the front. Anne Applebaum, a senior fellow at the Agora Institute at John Hopkins University, argues this case in her 2023 article for The Atlantic. Aligned with views of Ukrainian leaders, she believes that victory can only be achieved if Kyiv retains all internationally recognized territory, including Donetsk, Luhansk, Mariupol, and Crimea (Applebaum and Goldberg, 2023). The main supporting argument for this policy is that Russia will be tempted to gain more territory in the future and will embolden other autocratic leaders, such as Chinese President Xi Jinping and Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to follow suit.



Unfortunately, the idea victory is extremely idealistic in the nuclear age. Additionally, it comes with a heavy price tag and drives President Putin closer to using his nuclear safety net. It is a near certainty that President Putin would make Ukraine a ongoing hellscape if Ukraine continued to see victory in the field. The Kremlin, if it does not resort to a tactical nuclear strike, would continue to bombard Ukrainian energy infrastructure and continue to make life miserable to save face on the international stage. A more specific argument against this case is regarding Crimea. Crimea is composed of 60% ethnic Russians. Any Ukrainian offensive into Crimea would be both costly and destructive. It is a real possibility that doing so would cede the moral high ground and put into question if such an offensive would be based on national pride as opposed to liberating an oppressed people (Vohra, 2023).

The United States should practice neoconservatism and focus less on European security and instead on great power politics

A second counterargument, at the other end of the policy spectrum, is for the United States to return to its usual peacetime policy of retreating from global agreements and instead focusing on the largest threats, more specifically China. There is sound reasoning behind this policy. According to a poll by the Chicago Council of World Affairs, 55% of Republicans argued that the costs outweigh the benefits of maintaining a forward global presence (Byers and Schweller, 2024). Former President Trump famously responded earlier this year to a question regarding American involvement if a NATO country came under attack, “No, I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay. You gotta pay your bills” (Byers and Schweller, 2024). The Trump administration appeals to several politicians in Washington by limiting the reach of American foreign policy and retreating from several foreign entanglements, such as encouraging South Korea to take more responsibility in containing Kim Jung Un and removing troops from Afghanistan in 2020. Neoconservatism is not bad foreign policy - it allows the United States to pour more resources into great power competition and will create further leverage over China. However, abandoning Ukraine and NATO would be disastrous for our national security and make world leaders question our commitment to other security agreements.

To portray our commitment to Ukraine in a more realistic light, it is important to realize how little the cost is compared to the value of the reward. The 20-year War on Terror cost the United States trillions of dollars. Funds to Ukraine have been an insignificant fraction of that amount. We are draining a near-peer competitor and entangling them in a quagmire while simultaneously testing equipment and learning their order of battle. We have found success in this realm before, when the CIA trained and equipped Mujahideen fighters in the mountains of Afghanistan to inflict significant amounts of damage on the Russian military during Operation Cyclone. Furthermore, it is important to note that China is watching. The United States cutting the cord on Ukrainian support would only serve to embolden China in its future pursuits of military intervention on the island of Taiwan. As stated previously, it is not only about



containing the conflict in Europe but deterring other adversaries from making any future land grabs.

POLICY ANALYSIS

Cost

As stated previously, this is a very low-cost war plan for the West and for Ukraine. Over the span of the United States' war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan, over \$8 trillion was spent ("Costs of War"). The United States has sent just over \$50 billion to Ukraine. This is less than 1% of what we spent during our campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a low-cost operation with significant results. In terms of cost, this course of action is undoubtedly worth the cost.

Risk

By reorienting Ukraine's effort towards their own defense, the risk of war expanding throughout Eastern Europe drops significantly. Russian resources will continue to bleed into Ukraine, and make many Russian officials fear a similar outcome as the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. If the United States and Ukraine trend towards recapturing Russian-controlled territory, it will inevitably create anxiety in the Kremlin and push President Putin closer to considering nuclear weapons.

Time

Such a resolution could take years due to the extremity of the demands on both sides. A speedy resolution is nearly impossible, and Russia will continue to hurl both funds and bodies at the front line to produce further leverage for any future negotiations. It is important to note that both parties feel that time is on their side. Russia believes that Western support will ultimately flag, and some Western officials believe that time will eventually sap Russia of war resources, troop morale, and domestic support. The signing of the 10-year bilateral security agreement is a strong political win and must be honored by present and future leaders within the NATO alliance.

Domestic support

Most recently, on April 18th, 2024, the U.S. Congress passed the budget bill with broad bipartisan support which allowed another \$61 billion to eventually go to Ukraine. Although a major success, Congress has yet to authorize President Biden's 10-year plan, essentially making it a vocal promise. There is a growing isolationist faction in the Republican party that vehemently opposes tax dollars being sent overseas ("The House of Representatives..." 2024). An election of President Trump could greatly improve their standing within Congress and spell disaster for any policy towards Ukraine.

President Trump has often discussed pulling out of NATO and following a path of isolationism. If the next presidential election puts President Trump in office, it will play right into the hands of



President Putin. With a window to expand the conflict, President Putin could be more inclined to attack the Suwalki gap, a land bridge between Poland and Lithuania that connects Belarus to Kaliningrad, an isolated oblast on the Baltic Sea. Such an attack would draw all European powers into a devastating and violent confrontation with Russia.

International support

The international community has not been consistent with its support for Ukraine. Since the inception of the conflict, the Global South has not been vocal against Russia nor supportive of aid to Ukraine. As Kadri Liik, a senior policy fellow at the European Council of Foreign Affairs, writes, much of the global south does not align itself with narratives but instead with pragmatic relationships, which is something that Russia has the distinct advantage (Liik, 2023). In February, 2023, a year into the conflict, the United Nations General Assembly voted on a resolution that would end the war and give Ukraine the territory it had lost to Russia. Although 141 nations voted in favor, 32 nations, including China and India, abstained from voting, and another 7, including Russia, vetoed the resolution (Masih, 2023). The United States must continue to court the Global South, not by narrative but through pragmatic action. Although not a priority for the policy recommendation, it is vital that the United States is seen in a more positive light on the world stage, which could result in more favorable outcomes for future U.N. resolutions.

The number one challenge that the United States faces while fulfilling this policy is pressuring NATO allies into making considerable contributions. Domestic support could falter if the bill is heavily footed by Washington. As of April 2024, the United States has provided nearly \$80 billion in aid, while Europe has contributed \$110 billion. The U.S. has spent nearly 5 times as much than the next European country, Germany. In terms of value, the United States has contributed more for tanks, armored personnel carriers (APCs), Howitzer artillery pieces, and multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) to Ukraine (“Ukraine Support Tracker,” 2024). Although having a higher GDP, America has clearly pulled its weight, and it will require consistent pressure on NATO allies to do the same.

POLICY RELEVANCE

This policy is a hedge against an unpredictable President Putin and a nuclear war

As discussed earlier, threats of nuclear war have remained on the back burner for several decades but are now beginning to resurface as threats rise and red lines begin to become blurred. What was once a Cold War memory has grown into a modern threat. Although the concept of mutually assured destruction has solidified into policy in both Washington and the Kremlin, the use of smaller, tactical nuclear strikes with precise and limited effect would be the



weapons of choice. World leaders would need to decide if a tactical strike would be worth the escalation.

Any move by the West to secure a rapid victory or to support Ukraine in regaining all lost territory could lead to a potential nuclear standoff. President Putin is well-versed in nuclear deterrence and is more than capable of bringing the United States to the brink of war. Since the 2022 invasion, Russia has tested its nuclear systems, pulled out from the START treaty, and threatened to start nuclear testing. Several of these threats have been acknowledged but largely ignored by western leaders (Schroeder, 2023). The victory in Ukraine is a paramount Russian objective. Securing Kyiv from Russian forces has been a secondary objective of Washington. President Putin would be more willing to risk war with NATO than the West would be to risk war with Russia, furthering the effectiveness of the deterrent. In the nuclear age, it is in the West's best interest to avoid the possibility of any standoff, and to continue to support Ukraine without supporting the idea of a reunified Ukraine.

China, Venezuela, and North Korea are watching

From a larger perspective, the western response is to retain the global order. Other revisionist actors such as China, Venezuela, and North Korea are all watching this conflict closely. The outcomes will largely influence them in determining if land grabs are worth the risk. It is a moral and strategic imperative that they see Russia bleed out and end with a small reward that was not worth the years spent, lives lost, and resources consumed.

Since the nationalist Kuomintang withdrew themselves from mainland China to the island of Taiwan following a defeat from Mao-Ze Dong's communist forces, China has been intent on devouring the island nation. According to a 2022 white paper, the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) claimed that reunification is vital to its process of rejuvenation ("Confrontation Over Taiwan," 2024). According to the PRC's 100-year plan, this reunification could happen by 2048. The United States continues to support a peaceful reunification but also supports Taiwan's defense. A violent confrontation between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Taiwan armed forces would spell disaster in Southeast Asia and potentially draw the world into a third world war.

In Venezuela, President Nicolás Maduro has been increasingly confrontational towards Guyana over Essequibo. Essequibo, a region that comprises over $\frac{2}{3}$ of Guyana's territory, has been the center of debate between Venezuelan nationalists that claim that it has always rightfully belonged to Venezuela, while the international community views the land as Guyana's. In 2015, oil giant Exxon Mobile discovered vast oil fields below the region. Naturally, Venezuela became much more interested in a land grab and control over a resource that could alter the future of Guyana for the better (Salim-Peyer, 2024). Even more threatening is the close relationship that President Maduro shares with the Kremlin. A lively trade of arms and weapons is shared between Russia and Venezuela, and Venezuela is one of the few countries that sided with



President Putin during the initial outbreak of the war. The West's actions in Ukraine will undoubtedly shape President Maduro's strategy in Guyana.

Lastly, and potentially most dangerously, North Korea has been developing a more interactive relationship with Moscow. Immediately following the 2022 invasion, North Korea was one of four countries to reject a UN resolution condemning a resolution. Apart from the diplomatic front, the two nations have become increasingly intertwined with arms trades in support of the Ukrainian war. According to a report from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Russia has accepted more than 3 million artillery shells from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as well as DPRK's ballistic missiles, which have been used to strike deep targets on both military and civilian infrastructure within Ukraine. In return, Russia has provided North Korea vital information to develop its missile program ("North Korea...", 2024). DPRK's Kim Jong-Un has been threatening the safety and security of South Korea since the beginning of his reign and has overseen the development and fruition of his nuclear arsenal. Russia's success or failure in Ukraine will heavily influence Kim's decision to continue to deter through show of force or make a move into the South, which could spell one of the deadliest initial hours of combat in human history, considering the population density that is within DPRK artillery range.

Future of NATO and a secure Eastern Europe

Ultimately, this policy determines the future security position of Europe. In an interview with President Zelenskyy with The Atlantic in 2023, he portrays his worst fear if the United States were to stop supporting Ukraine. He states that if aid stops flowing:

"(We) will be weak. If we will be weak, they will occupy us. If they occupy us, they will be on the borders of Moldova, and they will occupy Moldova. When they have occupied Moldova, they will [travel through] Belarus, and they will occupy Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. That's three Baltic countries which are members of NATO. They will occupy them. Of course, [the Balts] are brave people, and they will fight. But they are small. And they don't have nuclear weapons...they will be attacked by Russians because that is the policy of Russia, to take back all the countries which have been previously part of the Soviet Union" (Applebaum and Goldberg, 2023).

This policy prevents this most dangerous course of action while simultaneously preventing President Putin from resorting to deadlier nuclear means. The end state would be comprised of a more secure Eastern Europe and both Russian and Ukrainian life preserved.



CONCLUSION

It is a grim reality that black and white scenarios do not exist. Compromise, advantages and disadvantages, pride - all influence a world that is increasingly gray. War between the Russian and the Ukrainian people could drag on for decades or as long as the two countries exist. Memories of soldiers killed, homes destroyed, and children lost will all continue to burn the ravaging fire of revenge. The only hope as policy makers is to ensure that war is contained, and an eventual cease-fire deal is obtained. It will not be a glorious end to a war: there will be no parades in Kyiv, no flowers flung from overhanging balconies, no waving to masses of soldiers returning home by train or by boat. There will be only a quiet acceptance, a nightmare that will continue to live on in the minds of millions.

The Latin phrase *si vis pacem, para bellum*, or "If you want peace, prepare for war," a practice manifested into policy under the presidential administrations of Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and Donald Trump, is truly the soundest reasoning for constructing an American foreign policy for the twenty-first century. *Si vis pacem, para bellum* is not necessarily a call to arms, but a call for strength - larger, better prepared ground, sea, and air forces, stronger alliances, and an understanding of the realities of the current international order. It is much too late and much too dangerous for Ukraine to try to revert to a pre-2014 order, but it is never too late to ensure a similar invasion of Ukraine or neighboring lands never happens again.



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ABOUT THE GLOBAL POLICY HORIZONS RESEARCH LAB

Webster University's Global Policy Horizons Lab is a policy-focused research entity where students, Lab researchers, affiliated faculty, as well as members of the policy community from across disciplines, can explore national and global security issues, generate original research, as well as produce peer-reviewed policy papers and commentaries. The Lab pursues innovative research focusing on unconventional threats, identity and security, role of technology in security, economic security, as well environmental and food security. The goal of the Lab is to become a knowledge hub that informs national governments and other members of the global policy community on contemporary and future security challenges.



The current Director of the Lab is Professor Dani Belo, PhD.