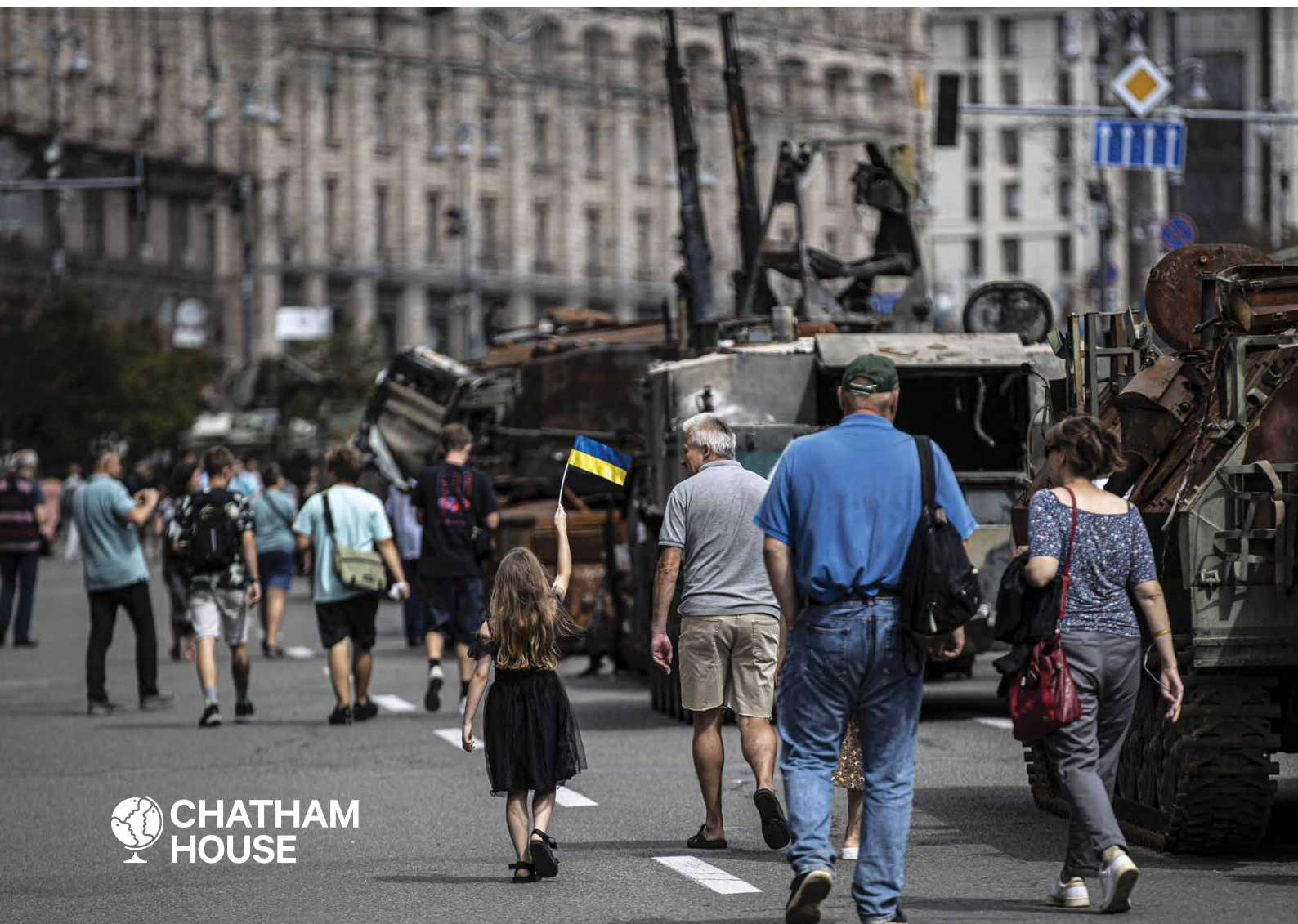

Report

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How to end Russia's war on Ukraine

Safeguarding Europe's future,
and the dangers of a false peace

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Contents

Summary	3
<hr/>	
Introduction James Nixey	5
<hr/>	
Fallacy 1 'Settle now: all wars end at the negotiating table' James Sherr	12
<hr/>	
Fallacy 2 'Ukraine should concede territory in exchange for peace' Simon Smith	16
<hr/>	
Fallacy 3 'Ukraine should adopt neutrality' Orysia Lutsevych	19
<hr/>	
Fallacy 4 'Russian security concerns must be respected' John Lough	23
<hr/>	
Fallacy 5 'Russian defeat is more dangerous than Russian victory' Keir Giles	26
<hr/>	
Fallacy 6 'Russia's defeat in Ukraine will lead to greater instability in Russia' Kataryna Wolczuk	29
<hr/>	
Fallacy 7 'This is costing too much, and the West needs to restore economic ties with Russia' Timothy Ash	33
<hr/>	
Fallacy 8 'Ukraine's pursuit of justice hinders peace' Kateryna Busol	36
<hr/>	



Fallacy 9

'This war is not our fight, and there are more important global problems' **41**

Annette Bohr

Conclusion: Assuring the future of Europe **45**

James Nixey

About the authors **51**

Acknowledgments **54**

Summary

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- It's now or never for Ukraine. A protracted or frozen conflict benefits Russia and hurts Ukraine, as does a ceasefire or negotiated settlement on Russia's terms. If Ukraine is to avoid these outcomes and turn tenacious defence and incremental battlefield gains into outright victory, it needs far more ambitious international military assistance than it has received to date. This report presents the case for an immediate and decisive increase in such support, seeks to dispel overhyped concerns about provoking Russia, and counsels against accommodating Moscow's demands.
 - Ukraine's need is all the more pressing because the United States – the principal donor of financial and military aid to Kyiv – is entering an election cycle that could soon reduce US foreign policy engagement or ultimately result in a more inward-looking administration in Washington. Increasing the West's supply of weaponry for Ukraine now would, in addition to helping ongoing military actions against Russian forces, provide a measure of insulation against any future weakening of US solidarity.
 - The argument for Western military and diplomatic resolve is reinforced by the impacts of Russian aggression beyond Ukraine itself. Not only is European security under threat, but the viability of the rules-based international order is potentially at stake. With this full-scale invasion, Russia has directly challenged arrangements that have helped to secure peace for over 70 years. The world will be safer with Russia defeated soundly on the battlefield than with an ambiguous outcome that, for instance, institutionalizes Ukrainian territorial losses.
 - The search for peace is fraught with pitfalls. Any temporary solution that preserves, or partially preserves, the battlefield status quo will buy time for Russian forces to regroup after recent heavy losses and prepare for the next onslaught, while leaving Ukraine enfeebled and less than fully sovereign. While a diplomatic solution seems attractive to many in the West, and may suspend hostilities for a period, it would merely postpone an essential reckoning with Russia and is pointless without an achievable long-term plan for Ukraine's security in place.
 - Any such plan must set out the conditions for, and pathway towards, a durable peace on Ukraine's terms. It must enshrine the principle of respect for the country's sovereign independence and pre-2014 territorial borders. It must also envision future security and political guarantees. The plan's chances of success will be greater if it supports Ukraine's aspirations for NATO and EU membership. NATO and other international allies of Ukraine will need to develop this plan jointly with the Ukrainian government, and must remain committed to implementing it.

- A stalemate in the war or military setbacks for Ukraine would increase pressure, including potentially from Western allies, for compromise. Calls for 'pragmatism' – often a euphemism for granting Russia its demands – are even now proliferating. To counter narratives that might lead in this direction, this report analyses nine commonly articulated fallacies about the approaches the West should adopt – and avoid – in the search for peace. These fallacies broadly fit into two categories: ideas on accommodating Russia's stated interests to accelerate a peace agreement; and objections to increasing military and other assistance to Ukraine.
- Although often well-intentioned, and despite their prominence in policy commentary as serious options for ending the war or avoiding escalation, such ideas are misguided, we argue. Most current suggestions for a settlement would, if implemented, crystallize Russian territorial gains and encourage further aggression in the future. Similarly, restraint in backing Ukraine for fear of provoking Russian reprisals is misplaced. By ignoring the true nature and agenda of Moscow's regime and the futility of hoping to engage Vladimir Putin in negotiations in good faith, most 'realist' arguments for mitigating risk are in fact less realistic than the name suggests.
- Backing a full and unambiguous Ukrainian victory is therefore essential not only on moral but also practical grounds. Although recent increases in Western supplies of munitions and other hardware are welcome, the fundamental solution to many of the problems raised in this report remains: that Ukraine still needs a massive influx of weaponry. Without it, Ukraine will cease to exist as a sovereign state and an emboldened Russia will continue its imperialist campaign of expansionism against neighbours and aggression against perceived adversaries, democratic and otherwise, the world over. In the longer term, backing Ukraine will serve to deter other aggressors while potentially sowing the seeds for positive political change in Russia.

Introduction

Russia's attempt to destroy Ukraine as an independent country cannot be allowed to succeed. This is not solely for the sake of Ukraine. At stake are the future of global security and the preservation of the core principles of international relations embodied by the United Nations.

James Nixey

Moscow's war of reconquest against Ukraine has confirmed in the most brutal terms how Russia rejects the values underpinning European security – the same values agreed between Moscow and the West at the end of the Cold War. As a revisionist power, Russia has made itself the primary obstacle to peace and security in Europe and beyond. For stability to be restored and protected, it is essential that the outcome of the war in Ukraine leads to a situation in which – in addition to the expulsion of occupying forces – the exercise of Russian power is contained rather than encouraged. Over time, Russia's leadership must also be persuaded to renounce its expansionist ambitions.

That these goals are difficult to achieve should not be used as a justification for 'Western' powers¹ to resign themselves to the pursuit of an inadequate or partial settlement between Ukraine and Russia. Such a concession, anathema to the government of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine, would ultimately favour Russia and solidify at least some of its territorial gains in Ukraine. Dispelling misplaced arguments for pragmatism and their variations, and making a plea for Western solidarity and resolve in arming Ukraine and resisting Russia, is the principal ambition of this report.

The report will set out a vision for the optimal outcome from this war. It imagines a secure and territorially whole Ukraine, which is a member of NATO and the EU. It also envisages the possibility – though a remote one – of a 'better Russia' in the longer term. This reformed Russia would be less authoritarian, more constructive in its foreign relations, and would at long last contribute to a more stable and cooperative Europe of the type imagined in 1991 but never realized. At enormous cost, Vladimir Putin has provided an opportunity for Western democracies and others to reprise such an endeavour.

But for all this to happen, the starting requirement is that Western governments and politicians challenge their own assumptions about the preconditions for peace. Accordingly, the report examines policy options widely advocated for ending the war

¹ Taken to mean, for the purposes of this report, key NATO members and some other allies of Ukraine.

and explains why they will not deliver lasting security. Similarly, the report critiques commonly raised objections to increasing Western assistance to Ukraine – objections that cite perceived risks such as military escalation, Russian state collapse of the type some thought they might see on 24 June 2023 with the Wagner Group's approach on Moscow, and financial cost. Most importantly, the report proposes what its authors believe are more effective alternative ways forward. These are largely based on resisting the temptation to settle too easily or too quickly, ignoring Russian (and Western) fearmongering, increasing the costs of the war to the Kremlin, persevering in the pursuit of justice, and dramatically increasing military support for Ukraine.

The problem with 'realist' arguments on Ukraine

Ever since Russian forces were pushed back from the Kyiv region in April 2022, the possibility of a successful outcome for Ukraine has been a prominent part of the international policy debate. A frequent question has been, 'What does a Ukrainian victory look like?' This question took on a new urgency on 24 June, with the Wagner Group's brief uprising exposing weaknesses in the Russian regime. Definitions of Ukrainian success and prescriptions for achieving it have ranged widely. At the 'maximalist' end of the spectrum – a characterization sometimes used pejoratively to suggest the victim of aggression is being unreasonable – are the demands of the Ukrainian government. These include the withdrawal of Russian troops and cessation of hostilities, the full restoration of Ukrainian territory, justice for war crimes, and reparations for war-related damages.²

At the other end of the scale are calls for Ukrainian compromise and concession as a means of expediting a ceasefire and then a permanent settlement agreeable to Russia. These calls are widely endorsed by influential policy commentators often categorized as 'realists'.³ The gist of these positions is that Ukraine is unlikely to be able to liberate its sovereign territory from Russian occupation, much less achieve justice through international courts – and that therefore, since the current bloodshed is futile, the sooner Kyiv is induced to accept a negotiated settlement and territorial losses, the better. Where the cost of leaving Ukrainian citizens under Russian occupation is recognized, it is presented as a lesser evil than fighting on to liberate them.⁴

The motives behind such proposals are largely well-intentioned, reflecting the desire of some policymakers for a rapid solution to a disastrous war. However, in addition to the detailed objections outlined in the rest of this report, settlement on any of Russia's terms makes little sense for two principal reasons. First, it has been decisively rejected by Ukraine itself. President Zelenskyy's government and the Ukrainian people remain unequivocally committed to decisive victory,

² This equates to Volodymyr Zelenskyy's 10-point peace plan, announced at the G20 in Bali in November 2022. The transcript can be found here: President of Ukraine (2022), 'Ukraine has always been a leader in peacemaking efforts; if Russia wants to end this war, let it prove it with actions - speech by the President of Ukraine at the G20 Summit', 15 November 2022, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-zavzhdi-bula-liderom-mirotvorchih-zusil-yaksho-rosi-79141>.

³ Prominently including, for example, Professor John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago. See CNN News18 (2023), 'The best that we can hope for is frozen conflict: John Mearsheimer', 28 March 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3411203822425860>; and *Foreign Affairs* (2023), 'Will Ukraine Wind Up Making Territorial Concessions to Russia?', Ask The Experts, 24 January 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/will-ukraine-wind-making-territorial-concessions-russia>.

⁴ For example, Samuel Charap, speaking at the Lennart Meri Conference, Tallinn, 13 May 2023.

and are lobbying hard for the West to supply more military equipment and related assistance. In this, Ukraine has the especially strong support of other front-line states neighbouring Russia, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. These states recognize clearly both the necessity of deterring and punishing, rather than tolerating, aggression and the vicious nature of the regime imposed on a previously free people in the territories now occupied by Russian forces.⁵

Second, the argument for Ukrainian concessions – in effect, surrender – risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Its proponents, many of whom have not changed their views on Russian pre-eminence since before the conflict, claim that since Ukraine cannot win, it should not be provided with the weapons to do so.⁶ This has had a pernicious effect on Western policy towards Ukraine. Combined with misplaced fears over Russian reactions, this rationale has retarded and constrained the supply of military equipment and other assistance.⁷ For wavering policymakers in the West, forcing Ukraine to concede looks like an easy way out. But while there is a self-evident risk that Ukraine may not achieve all its objectives, such an outcome is far likelier if the West fails to act decisively. In other words, there is no surer way of arriving at a dangerous and unsustainable outcome than *not* sending weapons to Ukraine.

That is why the authors of this report are convinced, based on their long knowledge of how Moscow operates and the nature of the threat from Russia, that looking for an easy solution would be disastrous. We collectively put forward the following essential conditions that need to be met to ensure that Ukraine is whole, free and independent, that the Russian state is no longer a threat to any other country, and that a precedent is not set to encourage other states with extraterritorial designs.

First-order priorities are as follows:

1. The eviction of Russian forces from the occupied territories; the reintegration of those territories into Ukraine; and, consequently, the abolition of any territorial 'grey zones'.
2. Better defence across the whole Euro-Atlantic space against military and non-military threats from Russia, including the protection of economies and trade routes. Not least, this means ensuring that Russia's neighbours – whether in NATO or not – remain secure.

⁵ While some states formerly forced into the Warsaw Pact or the USSR have continued their alignment with Russia, others have been disproportionately generous to Ukraine in materiel terms and rhetorically clearer about the desired endgame. See, for example: Manenkov, K. and Dapkus, L. (2023), 'In Baltics, Poland, grassroots groups strive to help Ukraine', AP News, 18 February 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-politics-europe-lithuania-3be7be715093e4bc3ff5805181ab0cac>; and Euronews (2022), 'We know this history': Polish and Baltic leaders reiterate support for Ukraine during Kyiv visit', 14 April 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/2022/04/14/we-know-this-history-polish-and-baltic-leaders-reiterate-support-for-ukraine-during-kyiv-v>.

⁶ For example, Charap, S. (2021), 'Opinion | The U.S. Approach to Ukraine's Border War Isn't Working. Here's What Biden Should Do Instead.', Politico, 19 November 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/11/19/ukraine-russia-putin-border-522989>. This article advocated compromise with Russia even before the full-scale invasion. The author argued that as Russia would not make any concessions on the Minsk II agreements, Ukraine must. This was followed by a later argument, co-authored with Scott Boston, that weapons assistance to Ukraine would be unhelpful as the war was a foregone conclusion in Russia's favour. Charap, S. and Boston, S. (2022), 'The West's Weapons Won't Make Any Difference to Ukraine', *Foreign Policy*, 21 January 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/21/weapons-ukraine-russia-invasion-military>.

⁷ As described in detail in Giles, K. (2023), *Russian nuclear intimidation: How Russia uses nuclear threats to shape Western responses to aggression*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784135645>.

Medium- or longer-term priorities are as follows:

1. Ensuring that the experience of the war and its result lead Russia to change its foreign and security policy to become less aggressive and self-entitled. The ideal end state is for Russia to work within the rules-based international order, not attempt to bring the system down.
2. A national recognition within Russia that Ukraine is a sovereign independent state, and that Russia is not entitled to an empire. This requires a sea change in Russia's political and societal culture.
3. An admission by Russia that intolerable crimes have been committed, with acceptance in Moscow that Russia has to pay reparations to Ukraine.

It is important to note that these goals are not what the authors believe definitely *will* happen. But they *need* to happen if Ukraine is to remain sovereign and secure. And crucially, contrary to the assertions of 'realists', they *can* happen if the West makes the right moves.

Risks to the international system

How the West responds to the war has global implications. The consequentialist argument – in effect, 'sacrifice Ukraine, save the world from a broader conflict' – makes the wrong link between the war and international stability. It interprets security as the avoidance of all-out war between Russia and the West, rather than understanding that the health of the rules-based international order is intrinsically tied to Ukraine's victory. It ignores the fact that a broader conflict is already at hand, and that Russia has been overtly and covertly waging this campaign for decades.⁸ Putin has shown that Russia's ambition does not end with the subjugation of Ukraine. In fact, it never ends, because the Russian state in its current form has little interest in peaceful coexistence with the West.

This means that when Russia sees an opportunity to strengthen itself at home or abroad by the deployment of raw power, it takes it. Changes from within, such as mutinies of the like seen on 24 June, can weaken the regime, but they also tighten repressive mechanisms. For as long as these politics remain unchallenged, endless conflict is a normal and inevitable state of affairs.⁹ Any proposed solution that fails to break this cycle is merely setting up the conditions for deeper and more disastrous confrontation in the future.

Accommodating Putin's Russia is thus a dead end, we argue, both for Ukraine and its Western allies. It would deny the Ukrainian people's demonstrated ambition for membership of the transatlantic community. (Over 80 per cent of Ukrainians polled think their country should join NATO and the EU.¹⁰)

⁸ As laid out in detail in Giles, K. (2022), *Russia's War on Everybody: And What it Means for You*, Bloomsbury.

⁹ This is, in fact, the definition of a fascist state according to Timothy Snyder. Snyder, T. (2017), *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, The Bodley Head.

¹⁰ Rating Group (2023), 'ДВАДЦЯТЕ ЗАГАЛЬНОНАЦІОНАЛЬНЕ ОПИТУВАННЯ. ЗОВНІШНЬОПОЛІТИЧНІ НАСТРОЇ НАСЕЛЕННЯ (14-16 СІЧНЯ 2023)' [20th Nationwide Polling. Foreign Policy View], 23 January 2023, https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/dvadcyyate_zagalnonac_onalne_opituvannya_zovnshnopol_tichn_nastro_naselennya_14-16_s_chnya_2023.html.

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And in most conceivable instances it would leave Russia in the same position or better compared to where it was on 23 February 2022, the day before its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Any such 'solution' would not only position Russia to mount another assault on its neighbour whenever it felt ready, it would also leave Russia willing and able to destabilize the international order even further. Achieving the latter is an intrinsic element of Russia's ambition under its current leadership. If it is the West's ambition to preserve that order, then logic dictates that Russia's capability (and, in the longer term, intent) to weaken it needs to be removed.

It is often noted that much of the world, outside what is commonly referred to as the West, does not support Ukraine – certainly not fully. Some countries in the Global South, or elsewhere in the developing world, may not wish to invest in an outcome in which the West wins. Yet while it is comprehensible that a state in, say, Africa or Latin America may not be as concerned at Russia waging a distant colonial war in Europe, it must be remembered that many of the countries that support Russia or decline to condemn its aggression are already beholden to Moscow in some way or have ulterior financial or domestic regime-stabilization motives. Their stated concerns should thus be considered with the essential caveat that in many cases they are not objective.

Similarly, proclamations or even initiatives emanating from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and most notably China must be treated with caution. These countries have closer ties with Russia than with Ukraine, are inclined towards 'great power' politics, and have at best complicated relationships with the West. Ukraine would be bound to lose out from their arbitration if it were undertaken.

Scepticism of the West's motives and the accusations against it of hypocrisy must not be allowed to impede support for a European nation defending itself against a war of colonial reconquest.¹¹ The non-aligned world is suspicious of the West on many matters, not least considering the latter's colonial record. But betraying Ukraine would create a similar level of distrust among most of the countries bordering Russia for decades or longer. It would also provide destabilizing encouragement and precedent for other aggressors far from Europe.

About this report: chapter structure and audience

The chapters that follow examine nine misconceptions in the discourse on assisting Ukraine and ending the war. The report does not cover in depth every potential pitfall that such a complex and difficult situation as that in Ukraine presents for Western foreign and security policy. So, for example, the temptation to revive a 'Minsk'-type peace agreement (offering concessions to the aggressor) is not covered in detail, while the exaggerated fears that challenging Russia may

¹¹ Chappell, B. (2022), 'Kenyan U.N. ambassador compares Ukraine's plight to colonial legacy in Africa', NPR, 22 February 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/02/22/1082334172/kenya-security-council-russia>.

bring about nuclear escalation are considered here largely in the context of other arguments. Both subjects are also addressed in other recently published Chatham House material.¹²

The fallacies that we focus on in this report are as follows:

1. The apparently urgent need to settle, based on the factually incorrect supposition that all wars end at the negotiating table;
2. The proposition that Ukraine should give up territory – certainly Crimea, quite possibly more;
3. That Ukraine should (again) declare itself neutral, as it was between 1991 and 2014;
4. The need to take Russian security concerns, as defined by Russia, into account;
5. The assertion that a defeated Russia must not be pushed into a punishing kind of 'Treaty of Versailles redux', for fear that this will result in an even more resentful and fascist state;
6. The idea that military defeat risks catastrophically destabilizing Russia, with consequences that could include the break-up of the state or loss of control of Russia's nuclear arsenal;
7. The supposedly excessive financial cost;
8. The suggestion that the pursuit of justice hinders the quest for peace, on the outwardly reasonable basis that at some point regional stabilization may outweigh Ukraine's needs for prosecutions and reparations, however justified such demands may be; and
9. Finally, the assertion, espoused most prominently by the right wing of the US Republican Party, that this is simply 'not our war' – that the West has no obligations beyond perhaps humanitarian support.

This report is not aimed at the leadership of Russia, which stopped listening to Western advice decades ago. Nor is it aimed at Russia apologists, advocates of appeasement, or those who argue that the West is 'just as bad as Russia'. Those elements were, at least in part, the audience for *Myths and misconceptions in the debate on Russia*, a conceptually related Chatham House report published in May 2021.¹³ Moreover, the opinions espoused by Russia apologists have been discredited by the reality of events – the result, in large part, of Russia's actions in this latest war.

The intended audience for this report instead comprises reasonable, compassionate, well-informed individuals who sincerely believe that there may be a swift, relatively safe or easy solution to the current highly dangerous situation. The 'solutions' these people advocate or subscribe to are not generally irrational,

¹² Smith, S. (2023), 'One year on, how can the war on Ukraine end?', Chatham House Expert Comment, 20 February 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/02/one-year-how-can-war-ukraine-end>; and Giles (2023), *Russian nuclear intimidation*.

¹³ Allan, D. et al. (2021), *Myths and misconceptions in the debate on Russia: How they affect Western policy, and what can be done*, Report, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia>.

and are mostly worthy of respect, engagement and discussion. However, the report draws on the combined expertise and experience of its authors to explain why such ideas are counterproductive and dangerous. In doing so, it arrives at proposals for a better alternative – one that not only would benefit Ukraine in the short term, but safeguard the cornerstones of Euro-Atlantic security in the long term. Nothing could be more important.

Fallacy 1

‘Settle now: all wars end at the negotiating table’

The war is an existential one for Ukraine, and is also framed by Russia as a war of vital national interests. Similar conflicts have almost always ended with the victory of one belligerent and the defeat of the other. Calls to ‘settle now’ are based on false analogies and an underestimation of the issues at stake.

James Sherr

Fallacy

Calls by Western experts and politicians to reach a settlement of Russia’s war against Ukraine rest on a common belief: that wars should, and usually do, end in negotiation and compromise.

These two axioms are related but distinct. Sometimes they are expressed categorically, sometimes not. Barry Posen of MIT asserts that ‘there is only one responsible thing to do: seek a diplomatic end to the war now’.¹⁴ Richard Haass and Charles Kupchan are less emphatic: we ‘need to be formulating a diplomatic endgame now’.¹⁵ Their goal largely accords with that of US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan: to put Ukraine ‘in the best possible position on the battlefield, so that ... they will be in the best position at the negotiating table’.¹⁶ Echoing this view, British prime minister Rishi Sunak believes that ‘this will end as all conflicts do, at the negotiating table’.¹⁷

¹⁴ Posen, B. (2022), ‘Ukraine’s Implausible Theories of Victory’, *Foreign Affairs*, 8 July 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-07-08/ukraines-implausible-theories-victory>.

¹⁵ Haass, R. and Kupchan, C. (2022), ‘The West Needs a New Strategy in Ukraine’, *Foreign Affairs*, 13 April 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/russia-richard-haass-west-battlefield-negotiations>.

¹⁶ Cited in Stelzenmüller, C. (2022), ‘The West’s axis of prudence risks a Kremlin victory by default in Ukraine’, *Financial Times*, 20 December 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/7ae8433c-c8c3-4e34-b555-9c1548bcd4cb>.

¹⁷ Adu, A. (2023), ‘War will end at negotiating table with Ukraine in ‘best place’, Sunak says’, *Guardian*, 10 March 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/mar/10/ukraine-war-negotiating-table-zelenskiy-sunak-macron-paris-summit>.

Analysis

The first problem is that they don't. It is true that the majority of wars do not end in absolute victory. Ceasefire, armistice and stalemate terminate most conflicts, even if the 'peace' is infirm or short-lived.¹⁸ But where the stakes are absolute, as they were in the Napoleonic wars, the US Civil War and the Second World War, armed conflict usually ends in the victory of one side and the defeat of the other. Negotiation, compromise and reconciliation are undertaken with new regimes only after old regimes are defeated and removed. The Franco-German reconciliation invoked by Emmanuel Macron would have been inconceivable had the Nazis remained in power.¹⁹

The war that Russia renewed against Ukraine in 2022 falls into a similar category, at least in significant respects: it is unquestionably a war of survival for Ukraine; for Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, it is a war for the defence of Russian civilization, whose roots are deemed to lie in Ukraine.²⁰ Put another way, while Russia's sovereignty is not directly on the line, Russia is conducting hostilities *as if this were* a total war.²¹

The second problem lies in the fatalistic quality of many arguments ruling out the pursuit or even possibility of Russia's defeat. For Russia, Ukraine's subordination has long been considered a fundamental interest. But for Ukrainians, survival is the most elemental interest of all. Sixteen months into Europe's largest war since 1939–45, the armed forces of Ukraine, provisioned by the West, have exposed the pretensions, deficiencies and pathologies of Russia's state and military culture as no one else has managed to do. Yet inexplicably, the Westerners who call themselves 'realists' seem distinctly reluctant to concede that this matters. For Edward Luttwak, what matters is that 'the Russian Federation is a great power and it can absorb 20 defeats like Ukraine'.²² More modestly and perhaps more soundly, Barry Posen argues that Russia's economy is 'autonomous enough and Putin's grip tight'.²³ That is true for now. But for how long? The destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam on 6 June 2023 is a chilling demonstration of the lengths to which Russia will go to win this war. Yet it can also be seen as an admission

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¹⁸ A survey is available in Ricketts, P. (2022), 'How wars end', *Prospect*, 14 March 2022, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/38472/how-wars-end>.

¹⁹ RFI (2023), 'Macron says Germany and France must be 'pioneers' in Europe's development', 22 January 2023, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20230122-macron-says-germany-and-france-must-be-pioneers-in-europe-development-olaf-sholz-defence>.

²⁰ If we understand states simply as sovereign, territorially delimited jurisdictions, then the war is only an existential conflict for Ukraine, not for Russia. But if we understand Russia as the Putin regime understands it, as a 'civilization' that transcends its juridically demarcated borders, then it is an existential conflict for both. Note also the important related arguments by Keir Giles and Kataryna Wolczuk elsewhere in this report, essentially cautioning that Russian defeat would not materially endanger the Russian state, and that the war's importance as a project of the Putin regime should not be used by the West as an excuse to avoid 'humiliating' Russia. See 'Fallacy 5: "Russian defeat is more dangerous than Russian victory"'. On the negligible prospect of collapse of the Russian Federation, see 'Fallacy 6: "Russia's defeat in Ukraine will lead to greater instability in Russia"'.²¹

²¹ Even seven months before the outbreak of the war, Putin stated that Ukraine's 'anti-Russia' course was comparable to the 'use of weapons of mass destruction'. Putin, V. (2021), 'Статья Владимира Путина «Об историческом единстве русских и украинцев»' [On the historical unity of the Russians and Ukrainians], Presidential Administration, 12 July 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>. See also Sherr, J. and Gretskey, I. (2023), 'Why Russia Went to War', ICDS, Tallinn, 30 January 2023, <https://icds.ee/en/why-russia-went-to-war-a-three-dimensional-perspective>.

²² Taberidze, V. (2022), 'Interview: Edward Luttwak, A Military Advisor to Presidents, Explains How The Ukraine War Began And How It Might End', RFE, 11 June 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-war-luttwak-interview-putin-russia-plebiscite/31893485.html>.

²³ Posen (2022), 'Ukraine's Implausible Theories of Victory'.

that Russia no longer has a military path to victory. Handing Russia a ceasefire that leaves it in control of Ukrainian territory is not the most obvious response – and might well waste Ukraine's best opportunity to expel Russian forces.

Indeed, the risk is that recriminations over the Nova Kakhovka dam's destruction could reinforce the greatest fatalism of all: the belief among officials in several Western governments (including influential figures inside the Biden administration) that Russia will employ nuclear weapons rather than allow itself to be defeated. Yet there is a world of difference between an act of ecological terrorism undertaken without fear of retribution and the use of nuclear weapons in the face of a nuclear-armed alliance that has warned Russia of 'catastrophic' consequences.

The third deficiency of arguments to 'settle now' is their reliance on false analogies. Apart from the post-war incorporation of West Germany into NATO and that of post-Napoleonic France into the Concert of Europe, the most prevalent analogy invoked is the durability of the armistice that ended the Korean War.²⁴ Yet that armistice was concluded and sustained thanks to conditions vastly different to those we now face. First, it occurred because of Stalin's death and the wish of the post-Stalin leadership to end the war. Unlike South Korea, Ukraine is not at war with a Russian puppet state, but with Russia itself, and Putin is very much alive. Second, the American troops and nuclear weapons that have preserved the Korean armistice are not deployed in Ukraine, and Russia is repeatedly assured that they will not be.

The fourth and greatest problem is a failure to take account of the character of this war and the outlook of a systemic adversary viscerally hostile to the 'collective West' and the international order it claims to uphold. This war might not meet legal definitions of genocide, but the barbarism and the serial war crimes that have taken place – material, cultural and now ecological – have not been witnessed in Europe since the Second World War. Both sides emphasize that the war is not about territory but the independence and very existence of the entity we recognize as Ukraine.

In short, if Russian troops are not driven out of Ukraine by force of arms, they are most unlikely to leave. For Russia, 'frozen conflict' has never been a path to peace but a platform to further enfeeble presumptive adversaries. Vladislav Surkov, the coordinator of Russia's Donbas war after 2014, has recently admitted that the Minsk accords were never supposed to be workable.²⁵ Negotiations that would underwrite the continued Russian occupation of Mariupol, Berdyansk and Crimea will be a roadmap to Ukraine's economic ruin and the transformation of the Black Sea into a zone of Russian dominance. Any outcome short of Russia's expulsion from territories occupied since 24 February 2022 (at the minimum) will be read in Moscow as a victory and undermine confidence elsewhere.

This war might not meet legal definitions of genocide, but the barbarism and the serial war crimes that have taken place – material, cultural and now ecological – have not been witnessed in Europe since the Second World War.

²⁴ Rumer, E. (2023), 'Putin's War Against Ukraine: The End of The Beginning', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17 February 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/02/17/putin-s-war-against-ukraine-end-of-beginning-pub-89071>.

²⁵ Surkov, V. (2023), 'Сурков заявил, что он не надеялся на выполнение Минских соглашений' [Surkov declared that he didn't hope for the implementation of the Minsk accords], 16 February 2023, *Kommersant*, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5827271>.

Western policy must be underpinned by a long-term strategy – political, military and industrial – based on a sustainable definition of victory, not on a search for negotiation with an adversary whose minimal terms flatly contradict Western interests.

The way forward

The way forward will not be secure unless the West draws lessons from its own failures. Procrastination, risk aversion and the continued fear of victory will doom Ukraine to an infirm peace that exposes the West to further, possibly greater, tests in future. The war is being waged on an industrial scale. Western defence industries might not be able to meet this challenge over an indefinite period. These constraints make it doubly imperative to remove others of the West's own making.

Western policy must be underpinned by a long-term strategy – political, military and industrial – based on a sustainable definition of victory, not on a search for negotiation with an adversary whose minimal terms flatly contradict Western interests. If President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's definition of victory surpasses that of Ukraine's international partners, his willingness to make concessions to Russia is likely to depend on the West's own willingness in turn to provide a credible pathway to NATO membership. The latter goal is unlikely to be achieved at the Vilnius summit in July. But, as Henry Kissinger notes, the strongest case against NATO membership before 2022 was the risk of war. Ukraine was not offered membership, and it ended up with war. The case he makes is becoming increasingly difficult to refute.²⁶

²⁶ World Economic Forum (2023), 'A Conversation with Henry Kissinger: Historical Perspectives on War', 18 January 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbCFnn_g_MI.

Fallacy 2

‘Ukraine should concede territory in exchange for peace’

Any territorial concessions by Ukraine in a peace agreement with Russia will reward crimes and aggression. They will encourage, not end, Russia’s attacks on countries in its neighbourhood and elsewhere in Europe.

Simon Smith

Fallacy

The belief that Russia and Ukraine need to strike a deal (see preceding chapter) is frequently accompanied by the belief that a settlement has to include some Ukrainian territory being conceded to Russia, because Russia won’t settle for an outcome that does not include territorial gains. In this view, Crimea is often presented as the least problematic potential concession for Ukraine: supposedly a post-Soviet ‘grey area’ in terms of recognized borders.

Analysis

Ukraine’s 1991 borders have more than once been recognized by both Ukraine and Russia in international and bilateral agreements. Advocates of territorial concession therefore need to explain what other problems are supposed to be solved by rewarding Russia for its aggression. A territorial giveaway might be defended by some as a price worth paying for a lasting end to Russia’s efforts to destabilize its neighbourhood and create a 21st-century sphere of Russian domination. It is more likely to achieve precisely the opposite: emboldening Russia to sustain an expansionist strategy.

Russia under Vladimir Putin’s leadership has spent two decades frequently and systematically attacking the independence and sovereignty of many of its neighbours. Against this background, it is implausible to imagine that Putin would accept Ukrainian territorial concessions with relief, reflect on his good fortune, and resolve never again to gamble his country’s future on disastrous military adventures. Territorial concessions will, on the contrary, give a firm basis on which Putin and/or future leaders in the Moscow Kremlin can claim success for a strategy of weakening and destabilizing the neighbourhood. Aspiring future Russian

leaders will not choose a sober and repentant path of good-neighbourliness. They will seek to garner domestic public support with similar 'make Russia great again' manifestos.

But isn't Crimea a special case? Many well-intentioned advocates of an urgent negotiated peace see Crimea as somehow different. This view rests on various arguments: that Crimea is 'more historically Russian' (a view which ignores the Crimean Tatar perspective, and the centuries of history that preceded the Russian footprint on the peninsula²⁷); that its population is 'predominantly Russia-leaning' (although the last credible opinion poll before Russia's 2014 annexation showed 67 per cent of respondents preferred Crimea to remain Ukrainian²⁸); and that its transfer in 1954 from the Russian to the Ukrainian Soviet republic was an anomalous endo-Soviet 'mistake', making it a grey area in the context of post-Soviet border recognition. As a result, Ukraine can (or ought to) see Crimea as a more dispensable concession.

These arguments dangerously fail to address a fundamental point: a Crimea concession would be, as much as any other territorial transfer, a change to recognized 1991 borders, and a reward to Russia for its aggression. It would therefore not only fail to deter the Russian regime's campaigns to steal the territory and sovereignty of its neighbours. It would confer legitimacy on them.

But the crowning un wisdom in seeing Crimea as some sort of lower-cost consolation offering to Putin is a failure simply to look at the map. Crimea provides a geographical and logistical springboard from which Russia would with high likelihood launch future attacks on Ukraine, as well as further efforts to disrupt and destabilize the wider region, and hold to ransom the peaceful conduct of commercial navigation in the Black Sea. Nor would leaving the status of Crimea on ice for a few years make the issue easier to handle in future. Crimea would not remain frozen in time. It is much more likely that continuing Russian occupation would accelerate Moscow's efforts to militarize and Russify the peninsula.

An adage well used in several Slavic languages describes a situation where conflicting demands can be reconciled as one where 'the wolves are sated, but the sheep remain whole'. Territorial giveaways to Russia will achieve neither of these conditions.

The way forward

Absent an unlikely change in strategy and/or leadership in Moscow, a comprehensive defeat of Russia's threat to countries in its neighbourhood needs to remain a key objective for the West. Rather than offer Russia inducement to negotiate, the effort to drive up the costs of its deluded strategy must be continued and enhanced. A Russia which ceases to export 'Wagner values'

²⁷ See Lutsevych, O. (2021), 'Myth 12: Crimea was always Russian', in Allan, D. et al. (2021), *Myths and misconceptions in the debate on Russia: How they affect Western policy, and what can be done*, Report, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia/myth-12-crimea-was-always-russian>.

²⁸ Baltic Surveys/Gallup (2013), 'Public Opinion Survey Residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, May 16 – 30, 2013', <https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/iri.org/2013%20October%207%20Survey%20of%20Crimean%20Public%20Opinion,%20May%2016-30,%202013.pdf>.

Rather than offer Russia inducement to negotiate, the effort to drive up the costs of its deluded strategy must be continued and enhanced.

and recognizes the benefits of constructive and cooperative partnerships in the wider European region may seem a distant prospect now. But until there is a satisfactory minimum of shared vision on what will bring that region stability and success, a rush to negotiations is unlikely to end well.

In short, Crimea is not a 'special case'. Russia must be defeated, not appeased. Deterrence and containment of Russia must remain key objectives for Western governments and their allies.

Fallacy 3

‘Ukraine should adopt neutrality’

Calls for Ukraine to become ‘neutral’ because this will remove Russia’s incentive for aggression ignore the fact that Ukraine was already neutral when first attacked in 2014. Implementation of such proposals would expose Ukraine to future attacks that would threaten European security still further.

Orysia Lutsevych

Fallacy

A number of prominent commentators have proposed that, to end Russian aggression, Ukraine should adopt neutral status.²⁹ They argue that Ukraine should relinquish its aspiration to join NATO, rule out the presence of foreign military bases on its territory, and refrain from joint military exercises with NATO members. They further argue that potentially institutionalizing such an arrangement via US assurances to Russia regarding Ukraine’s neutrality would satisfy Russia’s so-called ‘security concerns’, which were among the pretexts for its full-scale invasion in 2022. This, it is claimed, would be sufficient to prevent further Russian attacks on Ukraine.

Analysis

Imposed neutrality would leave Ukraine exposed to a continued existential threat. It would invite more aggression from Russia and is contrary to a fundamental principle of international law – the sovereign right to choose international alliances. Russia itself formally recognized this principle as a co-signatory of the Istanbul Declaration of 1999.

Neutrality is commonly understood to mean the sovereign right of a country to refrain from taking sides during a military conflict. But this is not what the Kremlin wants. When Russians demand a ‘neutral’ Ukraine, they really mean making it defenceless against the Kremlin’s territorial claims, allowing the creation of a zone of undisputed Russian dominance, and ensuring the protection of Russia’s military bases in Crimea. The fact of the matter is that Russia attacked Ukraine in 2014 when it was already *de facto* neutral, and when ‘non-bloc status’

²⁹ Charap, S. and Priebe, M. (2023), *Avoiding a Long War: U.S. Policy and the Trajectory of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*, RAND Corporation, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA2510-1.html>.

When Russians demand a 'neutral' Ukraine, they really mean making it defenceless against the Kremlin's territorial claims, allowing the creation of a zone of undisputed Russian dominance, and ensuring the protection of Russia's military bases in Crimea.

was still a guiding principle of Ukraine's foreign policy. This has left a deep scar and aversion within Ukraine to any solution that proposes to restore that vulnerable status.

At the core of the expansionist agenda of Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, is a desire to regain what Russia (inaccurately) presents as historically 'Russian lands'.³⁰ The territory targeted by this project extends far beyond the bounds of Russia and all the way west to Kyiv, as well as including the whole of the Black Sea coast. Furthermore, Putin's address at the start of the war claimed that Moscow had a legitimate right to far more than Ukraine – in fact, to all former Russian imperial territory contained within the USSR at its creation in 1922.³¹ Sixteen months into the war, there is no indication that Putin is changing his aims. Indeed, they are consistent with a decades-long policy of persistent disrespect of Ukraine's territorial integrity. Following Ukraine's independence in 1991, its Soviet-era internal borders with Russia became external national borders. Russia acknowledged the existence of such borders in principle, but there was no agreement between the two countries on the precise demarcation of territorial boundaries.³² Even after recognition of Ukraine as an 'equal and sovereign' state in the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership, Russia's commitment to respecting the agreed 'inviolability' of the two countries' borders remained nominal. (Russian provocations included former Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov frequently referring in public to Sevastopol as a Russian city,³³ and Russia's attempt to join the Ukrainian island of Tuzla to the Russian mainland across the Kerch Strait in 2003 – an illegal dam construction project which led to a serious bilateral crisis.)

Neutrality would create new territorial grey zones, encouraging Russia to step up territorial claims against its neighbour on spurious grounds. It would embolden Putin to continue a tactic of 'salami slicing', incrementally absorbing Ukrainian lands into Russia. Experienced observers of Russia have no doubt that after restoring its military capabilities, Moscow would continue its campaign of territorial conquest to reach – at a minimum – the administrative borders of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. (Russia proclaimed the 'annexation' of all four regions in September 2022, although a large proportion of their territory remains under Ukrainian sovereign control.)

Moreover, even if Russia were to provide security guarantees to a neutral Ukraine, the invasion and related atrocities and war crimes committed by Russia have removed any grounds for trust in such assurances. Early in the war, in March 2022 when Kyiv was at risk, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was ready to put neutrality backed by viable security guarantees on the table.³⁴ However, Russia's

³⁰ Roth, A. and agencies (2022), 'Putin compares himself to Peter the Great in quest to take back Russian lands', *Guardian*, 10 June 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/10/putin-compares-himself-to-peter-the-great-in-quest-to-take-back-russian-lands>.

³¹ President of Russia (2022), 'Address by the President of the Russian Federation', 21 February 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>.

³² Wolczuk, K. and Dragneva, R. (2022), 'Russia's longstanding problem with Ukraine's borders', Chatham House Explainer, 24 August 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/08/russias-longstanding-problem-ukraines-borders>.

³³ Focus (2010), 'Лужков: Севастополь - русский город, база России' [Luzhkov: Sevastopol – Russian city and military base], *Focus*, 22 July 2010, <https://focus.ua/politics/133984>.

³⁴ Reuters (2022), 'Ukraine offers neutrality in exchange for NATO-style security guarantees at Russia talks', 29 March 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-offers-neutrality-exchange-nato-style-security-guarantees-russia-talks-2022-03-29>.

actions throughout the course of the war – including the mass killing of civilians in Bucha – have ruled out this option. Russia is now a pariah state led by a war criminal wanted by the International Criminal Court. Since its initial invasion of eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has violated more than 400 international treaties and conventions, most significantly the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. It was in return for the security guarantees enshrined in this memorandum that Ukraine relinquished its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal, at the time the world's third largest.

Even if Russia were to provide security guarantees to a neutral Ukraine, the invasion and related atrocities committed by Russia have removed any grounds for trust in such assurances.

Given these aggravating factors, expecting the adoption of neutrality by Ukraine to provide a route to peace is simply not feasible. No Western country or coalition could compel Ukraine to do so. The country has passed the point of no return in its choice of alignment with the West. Any changes to its security status would demand amending the Ukrainian constitution, which since February 2019 has enshrined an aspiration for NATO and EU membership. With 80 per cent of Ukrainians supporting NATO and EU membership,³⁵ and only 9 per cent believing that 'neutrality with some kind of international guarantees' could secure the country,³⁶ there is no democratic means of arriving at a 'neutral' Ukraine.

The way forward

Neutrality is thus doomed for failure as a proposed remedy. To secure Ukraine, as well as Europe more widely, a transatlantic consensus must form around the strategic objective of defeating Russia. This means, as the war goes on, ensuring that the Ukrainian armed forces have all the necessary resources to defeat Russia's occupying troops. It includes providing military equipment on a sustained and strategic basis, offering lend-lease funding to underwrite the costs of the war, sharing intelligence and cooperating on cyber defence. Russia's military calculus is only likely to change if it understands that Western financial resources will flow to Ukraine for the foreseeable future.

Ultimately, there remains no substitute for NATO membership, which should be the aim for Ukraine once the war is over. Interim multilateral security guarantees should be viewed only as a temporary solution. In the light of Russia's aggression and likely future expansionist ambitions, NATO's leadership and members should offer Kyiv a clear pathway to full membership during the Vilnius summit in July 2023. Any accession process is likely to be facilitated by the fact that the Ukrainian army has already adopted many of NATO's procurement, land combat and logistics standards in the course of the war with Russia. Ukraine's armed forces are rapidly moving towards closer 'interoperability' with other NATO forces. Integration would also be aided by internal reform of Ukraine's security sector.

³⁵ Rating Group (2023), 'ДВАДЦЯТЕ ЗАГАЛЬНОНАЦІОНАЛЬНЕ ОПИТУВАННЯ. ЗОВНІШНЬОПОЛІТИЧНІ НАСТРОЇ НАСЕЛЕННЯ (14-16 СІЧНЯ 2023)' [20th Nationwide Polling. Foreign Policy View], 23 January 2023, https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/dvadcyste_zagalnonac_onalne_opituvannya_zovn_shnopol_tichn_nastro_naselennya_14-16_s_chnya_2023.html.

³⁶ Ukrinform (2022), 'Найкращою гарантією безпеки 49% українців вважають вступ до НАТО' [49% of Ukrainians believe NATO membership is the best security guarantee], 29 December 2022, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3643276-najkrasou-garantieu-bezpeki-49-ukrainciv-vvazaut-vstup-do-nato.html>.

NATO membership would provide a powerful deterrent to future aggression by Russia. But in addition to the protection Ukraine would enjoy, its accession would also benefit NATO by providing the alliance with one of the most combat-ready armies in Europe.

Another necessary step to reinforce Ukraine's resilience and security is to push ahead with EU membership. Accession would consolidate Ukraine's economic and political alignment with the West, and allow for mutual defence assistance from external threats. Provision for such assistance was introduced as part of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 (Article 42). In addition, EU membership would improve Ukraine's internal resilience by providing access to the European single market, helping post-war reconstruction and offsetting the decade-long decline in Ukraine's historical trading relationship with Russia. The formal process of accession would also help to introduce higher standards of governance as Ukraine reformed its economy and legal system to meet EU requirements. A priority for Ukraine and the EU should therefore be to open accession negotiations as soon as possible.

Fallacy 4

‘Russian security concerns must be respected’

Calls to treat as legitimate the ‘security concerns’ raised by Russia, and to account for these in a future settlement of the war in Ukraine, disregard the fact that Moscow’s requirements are fundamentally incompatible with European security.

John Lough

Fallacy

Proponents of a settlement in the war on Ukraine often put forward the idea that Russian ‘security concerns’ must be taken into account in any such settlement, but also in broader revisions to the European security system.

These proposals echo the Russian information campaign over the past 30 years to persuade European publics that there can be ‘no security in Europe without Russia’.³⁷ They provide false support to the argument that Western security policy after the collapse of the USSR unnecessarily encroached on core Russian interests by expanding NATO and forcing Moscow to militarize its foreign policy. In this telling, Russia was merely challenging what it viewed as an unjust European security order.

Analysis

The main problem with the idea of accommodating Russian ‘security concerns’ is that Russia’s requirements in their currently stated form do not provide a reasonable basis for discussion with Ukraine and its Western allies. Nor can such requirements be satisfied without compromising the security of Ukraine and other countries in the region. Moscow’s agenda in this area in large measure reflects the paranoia of a leadership that, through its efforts to increase its *own* security, has paradoxically made itself increasingly insecure by intimidating its neighbours, its Western partners and its own citizens.

³⁷ See, for example, Federal Foreign Office (2016), “‘Fear is not a good guide – and nor is it a policy’”, interview with Foreign Minister Steinmeier, published on 29 July 2016 in *Passauer Neue Presse*, 29 July 2016, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/-/282446>.

Despite its claim to respect the principle of equal and indivisible security, the Kremlin fully subscribes to the traditional view held by imperial centres that their security needs trump those of neighbouring countries. A logical consequence of this is that efforts by Russia's neighbours to integrate with NATO and the EU are viewed as a direct threat to Moscow's definition of national security interests.

Russian military thinking is not exceptional in believing that a country is best defended by ensuring that conflict takes place beyond its borders. Indeed, Russia developed as an empire because of rapid territorial expansion in search of natural defences. This required maintaining over centuries what Moscow today calls a 'zone of privileged interests', based on an instrumentalized definition of 'good-neighbourly' and 'friendly' relations with adjacent peoples.

This imperial policy continues. It requires the former Soviet republics to accept that, despite now being independent countries, they must demonstrate loyalty to Russia by not joining alliances or organizations that Moscow regards as having hostile intentions towards Russia. 'Hostile', in this definition, includes the ability of an alliance or organization – the EU, for example, or NATO – to change the geopolitical orientation of such countries. In the view of today's Russian leadership, there is also a cultural dimension to this definition of security interests that compels it to defend the rights of Russians in neighbouring countries, and to prevent those states from becoming 'anti-Russian'.

Taking Russia's security concerns at face value also disregards the fact that the Russian military's general staff, the nerve centre of the armed forces, does not believe in the concept of mutual security beyond strategic nuclear weapons. The way in which NATO seeks to build security based on member states using cooperation as a tool to narrow differences and increase trust contrasts with the Russian approach, which emphasizes the military benefits of seeking positions of advantage in preparation for possible conflict. This deep conceptual difference explains why NATO's model of cooperative security based on wide-ranging partnership initiatives has never genuinely appealed to Russia's political and military leadership class.

Prioritizing Russia's security concerns distracts attention from the steps that NATO countries must take to rebuild their collective defence and deterrence capabilities and ensure that Russia can never again start a war in the heart of Europe. The West did not win the Cold War by worrying about the USSR's security concerns. Instead, it did so by defending itself and demonstrating the superiority of its political and economic model.

The way forward

The West's challenge on this occasion is not dissimilar. It must demonstrate to the Kremlin that it will devote the necessary resources to preserving Ukraine's independence and ensuring that the country can be rebuilt in peace. The precondition for Ukraine's reconstruction is guaranteed security. Without it, the hundreds of billions of dollars of investment necessary will not arrive.

Prioritizing Russia's security concerns distracts attention from the steps that NATO countries must take to rebuild their collective defence and deterrence capabilities and ensure that Russia can never again start a war in the heart of Europe.

The West's immediate strategic goal must be to change Moscow's calculus of its security needs, as it did in the 1980s. Containment worked because it persuaded the Soviet leadership that confrontation was too costly, and that the way forward instead lay in reducing tensions and pursuing radical economic reform.

The longer-term ambition for Western policymakers should be to make a compelling case to a post-Putin leadership that Russia must de-imperialize its approach to security to feel secure. This opportunity was missed in the early 1990s when a small group of Russian reformers looked to the West to help them consolidate Russia's democratic gains by tying the country to NATO and offering the prospect of membership.

The end of the Putin era – whenever that occurs – is likely to create new possibilities to align Russian and Western security interests, but only if a future Russian leader concludes that Russia must build cooperative security relations with the West to manage relations with China and prevent Moscow from becoming dangerously dependent on Beijing. The West must ensure that the tools of cooperation are available if Moscow wishes to use them.

Fallacy 5

‘Russian defeat is more dangerous than Russian victory’

Fears of inflicting a humiliating defeat on Russia because of immediate retaliation from Moscow or longer-term revanchism are misplaced. Instead, a convincing defeat of Russia is essential both for European security and for change in Russia itself.

Keir Giles

Fallacy

A wide range of Western public figures, most prominently French president Emmanuel Macron,³⁸ have argued that Russia must not be ‘humiliated’ by resounding defeat in Ukraine. Russian defeat is repeatedly presented as being more dangerous than a stalemate or settlement in the conflict, or even than Russian victory.³⁹ This concern is entirely one-sided – there are no calls to avoid similar ‘humiliation’ for Ukraine, while Ukraine’s desire to evict invaders from its territory is presented as unreasonable and ‘maximalist’.⁴⁰ Fear of Ukrainian victory has constrained Western support for Kyiv, and thus protected Russia from the consequences of its actions.⁴¹

Analysis

Whatever the outcome of the fighting in Ukraine, Russia will still be there and will still nurture the same ambition to expand its power at the expense of its neighbours.⁴² Therefore a vital component of the war’s outcome must be to minimize the Kremlin’s ability to undertake aggression abroad. This implies a need to inflict the maximum

³⁸ Reuters (2022), ‘Russia must not be humiliated despite Putin’s ‘historic’ mistake, Macron says’, Reuters, 4 June 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-must-not-be-humiliated-despite-putins-historic-mistake-macron-2022-06-04>.

³⁹ Zubok, V. (2022), ‘No One Would Win a Long War in Ukraine’, *Foreign Affairs*, 21 December 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/no-one-would-win-long-war-ukraine>.

⁴⁰ Brennan, D. (2022), ‘Ukraine Leaders Eye Maximalist War Goals as Russian Lines Collapse’, *Newsweek*, 12 September 2022, <https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-war-goals-demands-nato-russia-lines-collapse-kharkiv-counter-attack-1742009>.

⁴¹ Straus, I. (2022), ‘Ukraine must be allowed to strike back against targets inside Russia’, Atlantic Council, 22 November 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraine-must-be-allowed-to-strike-back-against-targets-inside-russia>.

⁴² Fiala, P., Heger, E. and Morawiecki, M. (2023), ‘The Free World Must Stay the Course on Ukraine’, *Foreign Affairs*, 24 April 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/free-world-must-stay-course-ukraine>.

possible damage on Russia's armed forces – and thus is another powerful rationale for providing Ukraine with all means by which that damage can be achieved. Front-line states donating entire sectors of military capability to Ukraine know that by doing so, they are investing in safeguarding their own future.⁴³

Those who fear defeat of Russia look to the precedent of the end of the First World War. Russia's overt cheerleaders,⁴⁴ as well as those independent foreign policy commentators who consistently advocate Russia's preferred solutions,⁴⁵ invoke the Treaty of Versailles as a cautionary tale. Like so many arguments for not confronting Russia, the analogy does not stand close inspection.⁴⁶ Defeat of Russia will not lead to a new 1939 because we are already there – Russia has already followed a parallel trajectory to Germany's after 1919. Russia has created its own 'stab in the back' myth; it has leveraged resentment based on the economic trauma of the 1990s; it has created its own brand of fascism through relentless indoctrination of its youth; and it has launched its war of expansion as soon as it felt powerful and confident enough to do so. Russia cannot be transformed any further into a revanchist power when revanchism already defines the entirety of its state policy.

Russia has also deliberately stoked fears of a nuclear response to defeat.⁴⁷

But there are few circumstances in which defeat in the field in Ukraine could be construed as an existential threat to Russia itself, or to the leadership elite, despite Putin's disingenuous presentation of the war as one of survival for Russian civilization.⁴⁸ And there are even fewer grounds to suppose that that elite would wish to transform survivable defeat into an existential threat by unleashing nuclear exchanges.

For all that Russia may claim that the subjugation of Ukraine and occupation of Crimea are its national destiny, this does not mean that in reality Russia would be incapable of relinquishing captured or 'annexed' territory if the alternative was a real core interest, such as the survival in power of Putin and those around him. The more likely course – borne out repeatedly through history – is for Russia to swallow defeat, and trade in what is negotiable to preserve what is essential. And throughout history, the positive effect of this has been transformation within Russia itself. Another, even deeper, transformation is essential if the country is finally no longer to persist in being the only hard security threat on the European continent.⁴⁹

Those who fear defeat of Russia invoke the Treaty of Versailles as a cautionary tale. Like so many arguments for not confronting Russia, the analogy does not stand close inspection.

⁴³ *The Kyiv Independent* (2023), 'Minister: Latvia to send Ukraine all its Stinger air defense systems', 21 April 2023, <https://kyivindependent.com/minister-latvia-to-send-ukraine-all-its-stinger-air-defense-systems>.

⁴⁴ Bolger, B. P. (2022), 'The Peace Proposal in Russia: Shadows of Versailles', *The National Interest*, 4 December 2022, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/peace-proposal-russia-shadows-versailles-205973>.

⁴⁵ O'Hanlon, M. and Sisson, M. W. (2022), 'Weaken, but don't ruin, Russia', *The Hill*, 18 May 2022, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3491087-weaken-but-dont-ruin-russia>.

⁴⁶ Quinn, W. (2022), 'Bad history — why the Treaty of Versailles is an imperfect guide to future Russia-West relations', *Engelsberg Ideas*, 27 May 2022, <https://engelsbergideas.com/notebook/bad-history-why-the-treaty-of-versailles-is-an-imperfect-guide-to-future-russia-west-relations>.

⁴⁷ Giles, K. (2023), *Russian nuclear intimidation: How Russia uses nuclear threats to shape Western responses to aggression*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784135645>.

⁴⁸ For more on this, and on the extent to which Putin presents the war as a struggle for a Russian civilization, see the related arguments by James Sherr earlier in this report, in 'Fallacy 1: "Settle now: all wars end at the negotiating table"'.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Rostowski, J. (2022), 'Russia Must Be Humbled', Project Syndicate, 25 October 2022, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-putin-humiliation-in-war-often-drives-progress-by-jacek-rostowski-2022-10>.

This transformation – along with the process of truth and reconciliation that Russia avoided at the end of the Cold War, and eventual justice for war crimes and reparations – lies long in the future. But it is certain that it will never be achievable in circumstances short of clear and unambiguous defeat for Russia in the current war with Ukraine. And this defeat must be not only clear but with long-lasting effects. The examples of Germany after 1919, and Iraq after 1991, show the dangers of considering the problem solved once the fighting is over.

The way forward

Russia's onslaught on Ukraine has finally destroyed many of the West's most cherished fantasies about Russia as a benign state with which the West can coexist. Far more politicians, officials and analysts are now willing to admit the true nature of the challenge from Moscow, that this is an existential conflict not only for Ukraine but for the rules-based international order, and that it cannot be resolved by negotiation now that Russia has, as long expected, embarked on open warfare.⁵⁰ An ideology as fanatical and as alien to our way of thinking as that of Nazi Germany, Islamic State or the Khmer Rouge requires eradication, not accommodation.

Clear and unequivocal defeat of Russia will bring both immediate and long-term benefits for European security. Any reduction in Russian military capacity, including through destruction in combat, increases the time and resources that Russia will need to expend on reconstituting its military capability before launching another attack on a neighbour.⁵¹ And in the long term, it is only a substantial and undeniable defeat that will cause Russian attitudes to begin the slow process of change. Russia's leadership needs to be brought to understand that it has made a colossal blunder in launching its full-scale war on Ukraine, and the population more broadly needs to understand that the age of empires is over for Russia just as it is for other European powers. Without resolution of these two challenges, Russia will never cease to be a threat to Europe.

Thus, as well as the moral argument for backing Ukraine to victory over the Russian invader, the strictly practical reasons are compelling. Defeat for Russia will make Europe, and the world, a safer place.

Any reduction in Russian military capacity, including through destruction in combat, increases the time and resources that Russia will need to expend on reconstituting its military capability before launching another attack on a neighbour.

⁵⁰ As described in Giles, K. (2019), *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West*, Chatham House/Brookings, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/01/moscow-rules-what-drives-russia-confront-west>.

⁵¹ Dyner, A. (2023), 'The Next Reform of Russia's Armed Forces', PISM Strategic File, 1 March 2023, <https://pism.pl/publications/the-next-reform-of-russias-armed-forces-is-it-a-new-threat-or-just-for-appearances>.

Fallacy 6

‘Russia’s defeat in Ukraine will lead to greater instability in Russia’

Fear of destabilizing Russia or even causing its break-up must not deter the West from pressing for a Ukrainian victory. To do otherwise is to protect Russia and Putin from the consequences of their actions in Ukraine and, if anything, increase Russia’s instability in the longer term.

Kataryna Wolczuk

Fallacy

There is a growing narrative that were Russia to suffer a major defeat in Ukraine, then some sort of severe internal turbulence would invariably follow, with speculation on the likely consequences ranging from increased political instability to the break-up of the country.⁵² The failed Wagner Group mutiny on 24 June 2023 provided a dramatic illustration of how military infighting might threaten Vladimir Putin’s regime. For many in the West, the worst scenario would be the fragmentation of the Russian Federation into its constituent parts, resulting in the loss of control of nuclear weapons or the creation of a geopolitical vacuum filled by China.⁵³

According to this logic, further political instability in Russia is therefore to be avoided at all costs,⁵⁴ which means that the country’s armed forces must not be allowed to suffer a catastrophic defeat in Ukraine. This in turn risks encouraging the view that Ukraine’s victory is less important than the avoidance of a Russian defeat.

⁵² Sannikova-Franck, M. (2023), ‘Discussing Russia’s Future’, LibMod, 17 February 2023, <https://libmod.de/en/discussing-russias-future>.

⁵³ The instability argument is a flipside of the nuclear threat argument. According to Andrei Kozyrev, two opposing arguments are used against Russia’s defeat in Ukraine. On the one hand, Russia is too strong. It is a superpower that will use nuclear weapons. On the other, Russia is too weak and fragile, an almost failed state that would descend into chaos. Kozyrev, A. (2023), Twitter thread, 22 January 2023, <https://twitter.com/andreivkozyrev/status/1617220599478198273?cxt=HHwWgoC9taPkwvEsAAAA>.

⁵⁴ Maria Domanska examines the narrative in Domanska, M. (2023), ‘The fetish of Russia’s stability: an intelligent weapon against the West’, *New Eastern Europe*, 24 March 2023, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2023/03/24/the-fetish-of-russias-stability-an-intelligent-weapon-against-the-west>.

Analysis

One of the problems with worrying about what Russia might become is that it overlooks what is happening in the country right now: descent into a neo-totalitarian system,⁵⁵ whose leaders maintain that the salvation of Russia depends on the annihilation of Ukraine as both a state and a nation. To control and mobilize society, the regime presents the war in Ukraine as a zero-sum game for Russia, with all means justified to achieve victory.⁵⁶ Propaganda and coercion are used in tandem to ensure societal acquiescence and create support for a drawn-out war against Ukraine and the West.⁵⁷ Equally, wars and geopolitical rivalry offer a means for autocratic political regimes in Russia to sustain themselves – this was the case before Vladimir Putin, and will still likely be true after his eventual departure.

Although the Wagner rebellion is a major setback for the Russian leadership, this should not obscure the fact that in significant respects the war to date has consolidated Putin's regime.⁵⁸ Both the Russian military and vast numbers of state officials remain loyal to it, and thus willing actors in external aggression and domestic repression. Ultimately, the status, security and wealth of Russian officials rely on regime preservation, so the litany of blunders, miscalculations and battlefield catastrophes do not automatically translate into an increased likelihood of Putin's removal.⁵⁹ Facilitating the regime's survival both prolongs the war against Ukraine and risks leading to the deeper, longer-lasting brutalization of Russian society.⁶⁰ The sorts of massive losses experienced by Russia on the battlefield would stop most governments in their tracks. But despite the

⁵⁵ On his experience as a political prisoner, Vladimir Kara-Murza has observed: 'I've been surprised by the extent to which my trial, in its secrecy and its contempt for legal norms, has surpassed even the "trials" of Soviet dissidents in the 1960s and '70s. ... In this respect, we've gone beyond the 1970s — all the way back to the 1930s.' Kara-Murza, V. (2023), 'Opinion | Vladimir Kara-Murza's last statement to Russian court: A reckoning will come', *Washington Post*, 10 April 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/04/10/vladimir-kara-murza-final-statement-court>.

⁵⁶ Rumer, E. (2023), 'How Putin's War Became Russia's War: The Country Will Struggle to Reckon With Its Crimes in Ukraine', *Foreign Affairs*, 9 June 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/how-putins-war-became-russias-war>.

⁵⁷ Centre for Democratic Integrity (2023), 'Putin's Russia: From dictatorship of spin to dictatorship of fear. Interview with Sergei Guriev', 11 May 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11fkHYun_us.

⁵⁸ It is important to stress the difference between Putin's leadership, the political regime and the Russian state. After 23 years of Putin's leadership, many Western analysts equate his possible fall with the implosion of the political regime and even the disintegration of the state. Many people simply presume that Putin's departure (if resulting from Russia's defeat in Ukraine) would inevitably result in a Soviet-style collapse. See, for example, Treisman, D. (2022), 'What Could Bring Putin Down?', *Foreign Affairs*, 2 November 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/what-could-bring-putin-down>. However, experienced analysts such as Maria Domanska and Duncan Allan point out that, even in the case of Putin being replaced, core features of the Russian political regime and state system would be preserved. Therefore, Putin's departure is unlikely to lead to the disintegration of Russia. See Allan, D. (2023), *Imagining Russia's future after Putin: Possible outcomes of a defeat in Ukraine*, Briefing Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784135737>; Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) (2023), 'Russia's neototalitarianism. The future of Putin's Russia', 8 March 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMvdFh7NcTs>; and Sannikova-Franck (2023), 'Discussing Russia's Future'.

⁵⁹ Hill, F. and Stent, A. (2022), 'The World Putin Wants: How Distortions About the Past Feed Delusions About the Future', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2022, 25 August 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/world-putin-wants-fiona-hill-angela-stent>.

⁶⁰ Pomerantsev, P. (2023), 'What lies behind Russia's acts of extreme violence? Freudian analysis offers an answer', *Guardian*, 11 June 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/11/ecocide-russia-ukraine-war-kakhovka-dam-destroyed>.

current military infighting, there is no sign yet that the number of Russian casualties is making the leadership think twice about pursuing maximalist goals *vis-à-vis* Ukraine.⁶¹

Much is made of the prospect that in the event of military defeat, the Russian Federation could disintegrate. Indeed, some hope for Russia's break-up precisely as a route to achieving the implosion of Putin's regime.⁶² Yet there is no evidence that disintegration of the state would be likely. The preconditions for a break-up are lacking: the regions lack the political leaders, resources, ideologies and instruments to challenge Moscow. The centre's tight political and economic control, including of personnel and security agencies, provides the regime with significant – though not inexhaustible – capacity to persist, even under extreme stress. Russia's military intelligence agency, the GRU, is believed to have worked hard behind the scenes to defuse the Wagner Group tensions.

Moreover, Russia's minorities – which account for about 20 per cent of the population – have little interest in secession. Most non-Russian republics favour decentralization to create a genuine federation, rather than dissolution of the state. These republics are only too aware of how Chechnya was pacified, and clearly have no wish for a similar experience. The temptation to create a parallel between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the current political situation ignores the vast and pivotal differences in conditions between the USSR and Russia today.

Crucially, narratives on the impending demise of Russia are not only uncorroborated by facts on the ground but counterproductive for Western policy.⁶³ Waiting for Russia's imagined collapse is a way to defer confronting the challenges the regime presents now. It is revealing that countries neighbouring Russia – i.e. those most vulnerable to conquest and occupation, or with the most experience of Russian aggression – seem the least fearful of what may hypothetically happen inside the country; their politicians and leaders are far more concerned with what Russia does today than with speculating about the future.⁶⁴ Conversely, commentators and officials in more distant countries that are less vulnerable or exposed seem to worry most about the consequences of Russian defeat.⁶⁵

The problem with the latter way of thinking is that, even if inadvertently, those afraid of instability in Russia *de facto* advocate prolonging Putin's regime – Russia, in effect, is deemed too important to be allowed to fail. Yet fetishizing a false stability in the hope of 'modulating' a political change whose contours inherently

Waiting for Russia's imagined collapse is a way to defer confronting the challenges the regime presents now.

⁶¹ Landsbergis, G. (2023), '7 myths standing in the way of Ukraine's victory', Politico, 19 March 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-war-victory-russia-7-myths/amp>.

⁶² Bugajski, J. (2023), 'The benefits of Russia's coming disintegration', Politico, 12 January 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/opinion-russia-benefits-disintegration>.

⁶³ Vock, I. (2023), 'No, Russia isn't about to break apart', *New Statesman*, 14 February 2023, <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/ukraine/2023/02/russia-federation-break-up>.

⁶⁴ Besides Ukraine, the countries which seem most undaunted by imagined prospects of Russian collapse are arguably Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, because all experienced what happens when Russia is *not* stopped and is allowed to invade and occupy. Raik, K. (2022), 'Don't Be Afraid of a Russian Collapse', *Foreign Affairs*, 8 December 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/12/08/ukraine-russia-war-escalation-collapse-victory-baltic-poland-putin-imperialism>.

⁶⁵ Many countries are experienced in interacting with Russia. Yet dealing with Russia from a distance – through diplomatic channels, cultural exchanges, trade and international organizations – is rather different to a direct experience of Russian invasions and occupation, which countries such as Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine have had.

defy prediction vastly overplays the West's influence on Russia. It amounts to an unworkable re-interpretation of the 'responsibility to protect' principle – in which, implausibly, the aggressor country is to be protected from the consequences of its own wrongdoing.

The way forward

Western policy cannot be premised on the belief that internal instability in Russia is a greater evil than the war itself and the Kremlin's domestic repressions. In fact, Russia's defeat in Ukraine is a necessary condition – if perhaps insufficient on its own, as mentioned – for the demise of Putin's regime. The Russian opposition cherishes the prospect of military defeat as a means to create cracks in the regime and facilitate a political thaw. Seen from this angle, although a decisive Ukrainian military victory offers *no guarantee* of toppling Putin and is unlikely to radically destabilize Russia, it still provides the best chance for political reform in the country and is needed, at the very least, to tame Russian imperialist ambitions.⁶⁶

The West needs to deal with the problem in hand – namely, undermine the will and capacity of Russia's leaders and state to launch wars of aggression and conquest in Europe – rather than devising grand schemes to modulate political change and prevent further possible instability inside Russia.⁶⁷

As the former US diplomat George Kennan said: 'Few of us can see very far into the future, all would be safer if we take principles of conduct, which we know we can live with, and at least stick to those, rather than try to chart our vast schemes.'⁶⁸ This realization ought to transcend the defeatism among those who think that 'firmness against Russia can only bring war', when, in fact, it is indispensable for bringing peace.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ According to Maria Domanska: 'Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exposed the nexus between repressive domestic rule and aggressive foreign policy. As long as Russia remains a dictatorship, it will pose an existential threat to the security order in Europe. It is, therefore, in the West's interest to see a permanent dismantling of the current model of government in Russia. Putin's departure from office will create a short-term window of opportunity for political change. Contrary to widespread fears, the end of this autocratic pseudo-stability may pave the way for sustainable peace in Europe.' Domanska (2023), 'The fetish of Russia's stability'.

⁶⁷ It is very unlikely that Russia will relinquish the idea of conquering Ukraine and destroying its statehood. Therefore, the West needs to foresee effective measures to deter Russia and make it incapable of waging wars in the medium to long term. See Osmolovska, I. and Maksak, H. (2022), 'Five Security Scenarios on Russian War in Ukraine for 2022–2023: Implications and Policy Recommendations to Western Partners', GLOBSEC, 12 December 2022, <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/five-security-scenarios-russian-war-ukraine-2022-2023-implications-and>.

⁶⁸ Gaddis, J. L. (2011), *George F. Kennan: An American Life*, Penguin, p. 369.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Fallacy 7

‘This is costing too much, and the West needs to restore economic ties with Russia’

The financial costs of pushing back against Russian aggression in Ukraine are high, but entirely manageable given the size of Western economies. Failure to act would leave Europe at risk of further Russian expansion, attack and economic blackmail, ultimately costing the West much more over the long term.

Timothy Ash

Fallacy

Vladimir Putin’s war in Ukraine, and indirectly on the West, is imposing a huge financial cost on Ukraine, the West and indeed the global economy. A common misconception stemming from this situation is that the West simply cannot afford the financial burden of continuing to help Ukraine, given other economic priorities, and that the best way to end tensions with Russia is to return to the pre-war status quo of economic interdependency. Only then, this argument goes, will Russia have an interest in de-escalation.

Analysis

Western budgetary support for Ukraine since February 2022 has totalled around \$46 billion, while military assistance is estimated to have cost around \$50 billion thus far.⁷⁰ Putin’s restrictions on energy trade in response to Western support for Ukraine are estimated to have reduced GDP growth in the EU by around 1 percentage point in 2022 (equivalent to a €200 billion loss)⁷¹ and forced

⁷⁰ Author’s estimates, based on sources that include Mills, C. (2023), *Military assistance to Ukraine since the Russian invasion*, House of Commons Library Research Briefing, 23 May 2023, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9477>; and Ministry of Finance of Ukraine (2023), *Ukraine – Monthly Report, March 2023, Wartime Edition*, 12 April 2023, see <https://mof.gov.ua>.

⁷¹ Lefort, J. S. (2022), ‘Ukraine economic shock’, European Investment Bank, 14 June 2022, <https://www.eib.org/en/stories/ukraine-trade-inflation>.

multiple European countries (namely EU members, the UK and Norway) to announce energy relief measures to the tune of \$800 billion.⁷² The war has also boosted inflation across the euro area by between 5 and 6 percentage points.⁷³ In response to Russia's invasion, defence spending in NATO countries is now set to increase from an average of around 1.5 per cent of GDP to 2–2.5 per cent of GDP, equivalent to an additional \$375 billion of recurring costs.⁷⁴

Taken together, these sums are huge, but there is no credible alternative to increased spending for the West. No scenario can simply set the clock back to 23 February 2022. European security has been fundamentally weakened because of Russia's aggression, and the West must adjust accordingly. This means putting its security at the fore when it comes to economic choices.

Through its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has surely proven its aggressive intent towards the West. If it is not stopped in Ukraine, there is a credible risk of further Russian expansion into Europe. Restoring economic relations with Russia would only assist Moscow in swiftly rebuilding its military forces. If this then leads to Russia defeating Ukraine and extending its reach into Poland, the West would have to spend much more on defending its borders, but from a greatly weakened position and with Russia in the ascendancy.

Conversely, the rationale for the West holding firm in resisting Russia is boosted by the greater relative economic impact on Russia of continuing the war. Current economic constraints on the country mean that replacing conventional military capacity lost in Ukraine will entail difficult choices to be made in other areas of state spending – a classic 'guns versus butter' dilemma. This in turn has the potential to create new political and social fissures in Russia, perhaps even opening opportunities for political change, to the West's – and Russia's own – long-term benefit.

NATO's best strategy is forward defence by stopping Russia in Ukraine now. This is also the cheapest option. In fact, the sums currently being spent to help Ukraine defend itself – and, by extension, to protect the security of the West – remain relatively small in the context of overall NATO financial commitments. At around \$96 billion to date, the combined defence spending and budgetary support for Ukraine thus far represents just 0.2 per cent of the GDP of the Western alliance working in support of Ukraine, with the defence component equivalent to around 4 per cent of defence spending in these countries. That represents a phenomenal return on investment if estimates are correct that around half of Russia's conventional military capability has thus far been destroyed in Ukraine.

In response to the idea that the West is *still* spending too much, it is also important to note that the economic impacts of the war – in terms of depressing European growth and prompting the launch of energy adjustment measures – represent

⁷² See Abnett, K. (2023), 'Europe's spend on energy crisis nears 800 billion euros', Reuters, 13 February 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/europes-spend-energy-crisis-nears-800-billion-euros-2023-02-13>.

⁷³ See Arce, O., Koester, G. and Nickel, C. (2023), 'One year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine – the effects on euro area inflation', 24 February 2023, The ECB Blog, European Central Bank, <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/blog/date/2023/html/ecb.blog20230224~3b75362af3.en.html>.

⁷⁴ Author's estimate.

NATO's best strategy is forward defence by stopping Russia in Ukraine now. This is also the cheapest option.

costs that are locked in and cannot be recovered. Partly these sunk costs are the result of past policy failures in not taking the threat from Russia seriously, a mistake Europe cannot afford to make again.

The way forward

The West needs to reduce its economic dependency on Russia, and thereby limit the latter's ability to use economic blackmail as a tool of statecraft. Cutting Russia out of supply chains will, as the recent oil price cap⁷⁵ introduced by the G7, the EU and Australia has shown, limit Russia's pricing power on international markets. This will restrict the financial resources available to Russia to rebuild its military capacity – which, unless checked now, will likely be used against the West in the future.

The West needs to reduce its economic dependency on Russia, and thereby limit the latter's ability to use economic blackmail as a tool of statecraft.

Russia has demonstrated that it is an unreliable energy partner, and Europe cannot credibly return to the status quo that prevailed before the invasion by simply turning Russian energy taps back on once the war is over. Europe has now to ensure its energy security by diversifying supplies away from Russian energy and accelerating the low-carbon transition. Much of the \$800 billion in energy support allocated by European countries consists of investment needed for that adjustment – and investment in energy security will also help revive European growth.

Ensuring the defence of Ukraine in this war, and Ukraine's successful post-war reconstruction to make it economically self-sufficient in defence, is the best investment the West can make in its own security, and thereby the best way to reduce defence spending over the longer term.

⁷⁵ HM Treasury (2023), 'UK and coalition partners announce price caps on Russian oil products', 3 February 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-coalition-partners-announce-price-caps-on-russian-oil-products>.

Fallacy 8

‘Ukraine’s pursuit of justice hinders peace’

Many believe that for Ukraine to insist on judicial redress is unrealistic and should not be a precondition of a peace settlement. However, quite apart from the moral imperative, the reality is that peace will not hold unless justice – in the form of trials and reparations – is served.

Kateryna Busol

Fallacy

Some experts are advocating setting aside the issue of justice for Ukraine – at least for now and in the immediate post-war period – in order to find a quicker path to peace. They argue that Ukraine’s proactivity in seeking accountability in international and domestic courts in respect of the Russian state, its political and military leadership, propaganda figures and soldiers might act as a deterrent to ending the war.⁷⁶ At the heart of this misconception is the idea that Russian officials might be less willing to end hostilities if they perceive a viable possibility of incarceration for the crime of aggression and related atrocities that are alleged to have been committed by the regime.

Analysis

Russia is pursuing the neo-imperial subjugation of Ukraine.⁷⁷ Atrocities are a central part of the Kremlin’s tactics, as was also the case in Chechnya and Syria.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Corder, M. (2023), ‘War-crime warrant for Putin could complicate Ukraine peace’, Associated Press, 2 April 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/putin-arrest-warrant-ukraine-war-crimes-court-93bfa0eb81dd2abe5edb008b78df568d>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (2023), ‘China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis’, 24 February 2023, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html; Krastev, I. and Leonard, M. (2022), ‘Peace versus Justice: The coming European split over the war in Ukraine’, European Council on Foreign Relations, 15 June 2022, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/peace-versus-justice-the-coming-european-split-over-the-war-in-ukraine>.

⁷⁷ Zabrodskyi, M., Watling, J., Danylyuk, O. and Reynolds, N. (2022), *Preliminary Lessons in Conventional Warfighting from Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine: February–July 2022*, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, pp. 10–11, <https://static.rusi.org/359-SR-Ukraine-Preliminary-Lessons-Feb-July-2022-web-final.pdf>; and Jordash, W. (2023), ‘Геноцид в Україні’ [Genocide in Ukraine], *Ukrainska Pravda*, 28 March 2023, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2023/03/28/7395377>.

⁷⁸ Wilson Center (2022), ‘The Echo of Chechnya in Russia’s War with Ukraine’, 1 June 2022, <https://5g.wilsoncenter.org/event/echo-chechnya-russias-war-ukraine>.

Constraining Ukraine's pursuit of justice contravenes the requirement under international law that the perpetrators of atrocities be prosecuted, and would send a discouraging message to civil societies opposing oppressive regimes globally.

Unless the pattern of impunity is broken, Russia will continue to perpetrate direct and proxy violence globally.

As emphasized by Oleksandra Matviichuk, a Ukrainian lawyer and head of the Center for Civil Liberties, a Nobel Peace Prize-winning non-governmental organization (NGO): 'Justice should not depend on the durability of authoritarian regimes.'⁷⁹ War crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression pose a threat to the international rules-based order and must be prosecuted. The 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocol I, binding upon both Ukraine and Russia, envisage the prosecution of grave breaches of their provisions; such breaches include killing, torture, deportation and the holding of sham trials.⁸⁰ The UN rejects amnesties for atrocity crimes in peace agreements and in proceedings before UN-affiliated courts.⁸¹ Constraining Ukraine's pursuit of justice contravenes the requirement under international law that the perpetrators of atrocities be prosecuted, and would send a discouraging message to civil societies opposing oppressive regimes globally.

Russia's weaponization of torture, sexual violence, deportations, summary executions and attacks on civilian objects in Ukraine plausibly meets definitions of war crimes, crimes against humanity and, perhaps, genocide.⁸² The scale of Russia's recent crimes is such that in 2023, after a period of relative inactivity concerning Ukraine in 2014–21, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for two high-profile Russian figures, including President Vladimir Putin. Parallel investigations are under way in Ukraine and numerous other countries⁸³ with the aim of securing prosecutions for possible atrocities committed during the conflict. Ongoing processes include efforts to prosecute the crime of 'aggression' – considered the 'supreme international crime' by the 1945–46 Nuremberg International Military Tribunal⁸⁴ – to reinforce the message that neocolonial war and the perpetration of atrocities in the attempted subjugation of another nation are impermissible.

⁷⁹ Matviichuk, O. (2023), 'A Speech to Europe 2023: Read the Full Text or Watch the Recording', 9 May 2023, <https://www.iwm.at/news/a-speech-to-europe-2023-read-the-full-text>.

⁸⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross (2004), 'How "grave breaches" are defined in the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols', 4 June 2004, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/faq/5zmgf9.htm>.

⁸¹ United Nations (2004), *The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2004/616*, 23 August 2004, paras 10, 32, 64(c), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/pcs-s-2004-616.php>.

⁸² Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2023), 'Summary', *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine*, Human Rights Council, A/HRC/52/62, 15 March 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_AUV_EN.pdf. Specifically on genocide allegations, see Jordash (2023), 'Геноцид в Україні' [Genocide in Ukraine]; Marchuk, I. and Wanigasuriya, A. (2022), 'Beyond the False Claim of Genocide: Preliminary Reflections on Ukraine's Prospects in Its Pursuit of Justice at the ICJ', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 9 November 2022, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14623528.2022.2143528>; Global Rights Compliance (2023), 'New Torture Chamber evidence uncovered from liberated Kherson', 2 March 2023, <https://globalrightscpliance.com/2023/03/02/new-torture-chamber-evidence-uncovered-from-liberated-kherson/>; Azarov, D., Koval, D., Nuridzhanian, G. and Venher, V. (2022), 'Genocide committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine: Legal Reasoning And Historical Context', SSRN, 15 September 2022, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4217444.

⁸³ Crawford, J. and Cruvellier, T. (2022), 'Ukraine Responds to Warfare with "Lawfare"', Justice Info, 25 March 2022, <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/89266-ukraine-responds-to-warfare-with-lawfare.html>.

⁸⁴ International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg), Judgment of 1 October 1946, p. 25, <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/45f18e/pdf>.

Justice is crucial to Ukrainians' vision of victory. Ukraine has investigated conflict-related crimes since 2014, established a specialized war crimes unit in 2019 and further expanded prosecutions in 2022.⁸⁵ Ukrainian atrocity survivors and members of civil society have consistently demanded that the Russian leadership and direct perpetrators of conflict-related crimes be held accountable.⁸⁶ Survivors expect prosecutions and wider individual reparations, including medical, psychological and housing support.⁸⁷ Human rights NGOs have submitted numerous communications about documented atrocities to the ICC. They have advised domestic investigators, backed the enhancement of Ukraine's criminal legislation on conflict-related proceedings and advocated for prosecution of the Russian leadership for the crime of aggression.⁸⁸ Human rights NGOs have also consistently called for Kyiv to ratify the ICC Rome Statute – which would allow Ukraine to nominate ICC judges, elect the court's prosecutor and participate in the deliberations of the ICC Assembly of States Parties, including on reforming the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression.

Ukrainians' deep desire for justice and the extensive efforts committed thus far to its pursuit suggest that any peace deal that mitigated accountability for Russian perpetrators would likely activate acute social discontent.

Thus, beyond the moral and strictly legal dimensions, Ukrainians' deep desire for justice and the extensive efforts committed thus far to its pursuit suggest that any peace deal that mitigated accountability for Russian perpetrators would likely activate acute social discontent. Ukrainians also remain strongly opposed to bargaining in exchange for peace.⁸⁹ For these reasons, the notion that legal action and reparations should be subordinated to the imperative of ending the war does not seem viable.

Finally, compromising justice for Russia's atrocities in Ukraine would undermine civic transformations more broadly in the post-Soviet region, especially in Russia and Belarus. Impunity for the Russian and Belarusian leaderships would devalue the efforts of citizens in both countries who have opposed the war on principle and have been persecuted as a result.⁹⁰ Deprioritizing fair examination of the Kremlin's crimes would also deprive the Russian and Belarusian peoples of an impartial assessment of their own direct or indirect complicity in supporting

⁸⁵ Busol, K. (2022), 'If Ukraine's Fate Is not a Menu à La Carte, then Ukrainian Voices Must Be Heard', EJIL:Talk!, 20 June 2022, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/if-ukraines-fate-is-not-a-menu-a-la-carte-then-ukrainian-voices-must-be-heard>.

⁸⁶ ZMINA (2021), 'Як українці ставляться до перехідного правосуддя – соціологічне дослідження' [The Attitudes of Ukrainians to Transitional Justice – a Sociological Survey], 17 March 2021, <https://zmina.info/articles/doslidnyky-rozpovily-pro-stavlennya-ukrayincziv-do-perehidnogo-pravosuddya>.

⁸⁷ Nassar, A., Busol, K. and Sydor-Czartorysky, A. (2022), *Ukraine Study on the Status of and Opportunities for Reparations for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, Global Survivors Fund, pp. 47–51, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ff7d9f4dd4cdc650b24f9a4/t/62c3d1610bf4cc740f73fb56/1657000313991/GSFReporUkraine_ENG.pdf.

⁸⁸ 'Memorandum of Civil Society Organizations of Ukraine: Shared Guiding Principles on Accountability for Grave Crimes Committed in Ukraine', <https://rights-justice-peace.in.ua/en-us>.

⁸⁹ 84 per cent of Ukrainians oppose any territorial bargaining with Russia in exchange for peace. Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2022), 'Dynamics of Readiness for Territorial Concessions for the Earliest Possible End to the War: Results of a Telephone Survey Conducted on July 6-20, 2022', 27 July 2022, <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1124&page=1>.

⁹⁰ *Novaya Gazeta Europe* (2023), 'Not only do I not repent, but I am also proud', 10 April 2023, <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/04/10/not-only-do-i-not-repent-but-i-am-also-proud-en-news>; Human Rights in Ukraine (2022), 'International Memorial: we are against the war with Ukraine', 25 February 2022, <https://khpg.org/en/1608810139>.

the war or acquiescing to it.⁹¹ Without a profound reckoning of society's role in these events, and its contribution to the creation of the environment that enabled them, an eventual democratic transition in Russia and Belarus is impossible.

The way forward

An immediate practical task is to help Ukraine process its huge backlog of criminal prosecutions. There are currently 89,000 war-related proceedings under way in the country.

An immediate practical task is to help Ukraine process its huge backlog of criminal prosecutions. There are currently 89,000 war-related proceedings under way in the country.⁹² Ukraine needs permanent on-the-ground expert advice in handling these, particularly in investigating and prosecuting more challenging atrocities such as conflict-related sexual violence, indiscriminate shelling and genocide. Any allegations of misconduct by Ukrainian military personnel should also be impartially investigated to ensure equal treatment of all victims. There remains a need to step up engagement with vulnerable survivors, such as children and victims of sexual violence; processes will need to be carefully crafted to avoid the retraumatization of victims. Kyiv needs to develop a comprehensive transitional justice framework covering criminal proceedings, truth-telling, reparations for victims and non-repetition guarantees.⁹³ Steps such as these will normalize Ukraine's application of international law domestically, strengthen the expertise of national criminal justice professionals, enhance conflict-related proceedings and increase overall compliance with the rule of law – in visible contrast with Russia.

By backing comprehensive justice for Ukraine, the international community will strengthen access to justice for atrocity victims globally. States should launch more universal jurisdiction proceedings for atrocities committed in Ukraine and elsewhere through their domestic courts, to narrow impunity for geographically distant crimes and to assist countries such as Ukraine that are overwhelmed with cases.⁹⁴ States should execute all ICC arrest warrants, including for President Putin, and ensure that the court has resources for effective investigation of international crimes in all situations, including Ukraine.⁹⁵

⁹¹ As of early 2023, around 75 per cent of Russians and 33 per cent of urban Belarusians supported the war against Ukraine. Bne IntelliNews (2023), 'Levada poll finds 75% of Russians supporting war', 24 February 2023, <https://www.intellinews.com/levada-poll-finds-75-of-russians-supporting-war-271068>. See also Belarus Initiative (2023), 'Fifteenth Survey Wave: Belarusians' views on the war and value orientations (poll conducted March 15-27, 2023)', 12 April 2023, <https://en.belaruspolls.org/wave-15>.

⁹² As of 26 May 2023, Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, official Twitter account, https://twitter.com/gp_ukraine?fbclid=IwAR3bax_gy5dASd1k4-GYNUFdcE6lhVT-7H0OxDTH-Qc3YoxL12Xasl514.

⁹³ OHCHR (2023), *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine*, A/HRC/52/62, 15 March 2023, para 105, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_AUV_EN.pdf.

⁹⁴ Crawford, J. and Cruvellier, T. (2022), 'Philip Grant: "Ukraine is Accelerating a Revival of Universal Jurisdiction"', Justice Info, 29 November 2022, <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/109532-philip-grant-ukraine-revival-universal-jurisdiction.html>. On different modalities of universal jurisdiction proceedings, see the country-specific research at 'Justice Beyond Borders': <https://justicebeyondborders.com>.

⁹⁵ International Criminal Court (2023), 'Situations under investigations' [as of 1 June 2023], <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations-under-investigations>.

Finally, given the ICC's limited jurisdiction in respect of the crime of aggression,⁹⁶ states should support proposals for the establishment of a special tribunal for Russia's aggression. In addition, Ukraine should ratify the ICC Rome Statute and catalyse reform of the ICC to enable it to prosecute future cases of aggression free from the current jurisdictional constraints around political consent.⁹⁷ This will allow Ukraine to hold Russia's leadership accountable and to become an agent of change for atrocity victims worldwide.

⁹⁶ International Criminal Court (2011), *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, arts. 15bis, 15ter, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>. See also the following definition as cited by the European Commission: 'The International Criminal Court (ICC) is competent to prosecute the most serious international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It is also competent to prosecute the crime of aggression but only in relation to those countries that have accepted its jurisdiction in relation to this crime.' European Commission (2023), 'Statement by President von der Leyen on the establishment of the International Centre for the Prosecution of Crimes of Aggression against Ukraine', 4 March 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_1363.

⁹⁷ This two-pronged approach is already supported by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. PACE (2023), Resolution 2482 (2023): 'Legal and human rights aspects of Russia's aggression against Ukraine', 26 January 2023, para 9, <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/31620/html>; OHCHR (2023), *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine*, A/HRC/52/62, 15 March 2023, para 104.

Fallacy 9

‘This war is not our fight, and there are more important global problems’

The West cannot stand aside from Russia’s war on Ukraine. Moscow’s attack on the core interests and values of the transatlantic community has global repercussions, while arguments that fighting Russia reduces scope for climate action or containing China present a false dilemma.

Annette Bohr

Fallacy

The notion that the war in Ukraine is a faraway territorial dispute with few ramifications for the transatlantic community is upheld by segments of the Republican right in the US, notably the ‘MAGA’⁹⁸ faction unofficially led by former US president Donald Trump, as well as by anti-war movements in several European states.⁹⁹ A corollary of this mistaken assumption is the idea that Western expense and effort dedicated to defeating Russia in Ukraine are a distraction from more important geopolitical concerns, such as managing an adversarial China or responding to climate change.

Analysis

At a time when democracy is in decline by all measurable indicators,¹⁰⁰ the transatlantic community cannot afford to allow the regime in Moscow to make imperial aggression and annexation an acceptable form of politics. If Western

⁹⁸ ‘Make America Great Again’, or MAGA, is a political slogan made popular by Donald Trump in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election.

⁹⁹ Choudhury, S. (2023), ‘Standing Against the Warmongering Tide – Protests for Peace Around the World This Weekend’, Stop the War coalition, 23 February 2023, <https://www.stopwar.org.uk/article/standing-against-the-warmongering-tide-protests-for-peace-around-the-world-this-weekend>.

¹⁰⁰ See Freedom House (2023), *Freedom in the World 2023: 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2023/markings-50-years>.

If Western nations do not fully embrace the war in Ukraine as their own fight to achieve a Russian defeat, there is a risk of creating a future in which petro-tyrants are allowed to rewrite the world order.

nations do not fully embrace the war in Ukraine as their own fight to achieve a Russian defeat, there is a risk of creating a future in which petro-tyrants are allowed to rewrite the world order.

Allowing Russia to remain in control of any Ukrainian territory could lead to further land grabs by Moscow, just as allowing the annexation of Czechoslovakian territory in 1938 did not halt Hitler's *Lebensraum* campaign. While it is highly doubtful whether Vladimir Putin's regime has the ability to battle a NATO member successfully, the non-NATO states of Moldova and Georgia would be vulnerable to attack after a period of Russian regeneration.

How the US's position develops will be particularly important, given its domestic divisions over continued support for Ukraine. Some US analysts have argued that such assistance 'remains squarely in [America's] own self-interest', reflecting the fact that US economic and strategic agendas have been deeply intertwined with Europe's security and prosperity for decades.¹⁰¹ But theirs is not the only voice, and increasingly strident postures on the right wing of the US Republican Party in particular could endanger solidarity against Russia. Statements by Trump that he will 'end the war in Ukraine in a day' if re-elected to the US presidency in 2024¹⁰² risk prolonging the conflict by signalling to Moscow that the Russian leadership perhaps only needs to ride out the last 18 months of Joe Biden's presidency before Kyiv is forced to the negotiating table by its Western supporters.

There is also the matter of Western responsibility for the situation in Ukraine. Aside from the obligations of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on security assurances, which persuaded Ukraine to surrender what was then the world's third largest nuclear arsenal,¹⁰³ European NATO allies form the most proximate major Western power to Ukraine. And Russia's full-scale invasion has exposed Germany's misguided *Wandel durch Handel* ('change through trade') approach, according to which economic interdependence was supposedly an impediment to war. Instead of making conflict impossible, poorly diversified trade with Russia gave Moscow the leverage to weaponize energy flows.

The war in Ukraine has precipitated supply chain disruptions, soaring energy prices and wider inflationary pressures. Global food insecurity has increased dramatically. Russia's invasion has also created one of the largest displacement crises since the Second World War: according to UNHCR, at the end of 2022 a total of 11.6 million Ukrainians had been displaced (5.9 million within their country, and 5.7 million abroad).¹⁰⁴ All of these repercussions have been keenly felt in the West and beyond.

¹⁰¹ Cohen, R. S. and Gentile, G. (2023), 'Support to Ukraine continues to be for America first', *The Hill*, 15 February 2023, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3858658-support-to-ukraine-continues-to-be-for-america-first>.

¹⁰² James, L. (2023), 'Donald Trump claims he could end war in Ukraine in a day if re-elected to White house', *The Independent*, 3 May 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/donald-trump-ukraine-putin-farage-b2331973.html>.

¹⁰³ Pifer, S. (2019), 'Why care about Ukraine and the Budapest Memorandum', Brookings, 5 December 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/12/05/why-care-about-ukraine-and-the-budapest-memorandum>.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2023), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022*, June 2023, p. 8, <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>.

Rather than distracting attention from other global issues, focusing on the threats posed by Russia may enable Western policymakers more effectively to address geopolitical concerns deemed by many to be of greater importance, such as climate change and Chinese revisionism.

Yet a large part of the non-aligned world is still sitting on the sidelines of the war in Ukraine. Many states will either resist pressure to pick a side or attempt to play Russia and China off against each other. A solid Russian defeat in Ukraine would increase Western influence in the Global South, making it harder for Russia or China to broker international alliances in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East in the future, and helping countries in these regions to 'multi-vector' their foreign relations more effectively.

Moreover, rather than distracting attention from other global issues, focusing on the threats posed by Russia may enable Western policymakers more effectively to address geopolitical concerns deemed by many to be of greater importance, such as climate change and Chinese revisionism. For example, the war in Ukraine has prompted many Western countries to reduce their dependency on imports of Russian fossil fuels, increase energy efficiency and accelerate the move to renewables (although some countries are seeking new sources of fossil fuels to make up for the interruption of supplies from Russia).¹⁰⁵

The supposed choice between the strategic challenges presented by China and Russia is also a false one, given that certain of these challenges are interconnected. First, Moscow's diminishing international influence is in any event an undesirable development for Beijing. Without a strong Russia, it would be much more difficult for China to achieve its own objective of revising the world order. Second, strong Western resolve to defeat Russia is much more likely than diplomatic entreaties to temper Chinese foreign policy behaviour. Third, the faltering course of the war for Russia has made conflict in the Indo-Pacific region less likely in light of China's surprise at the unity of the West in resisting Russia. Not least, a Russian defeat in Ukraine would underscore for Beijing the high risks and costs that a potential Chinese military invasion of Taiwan would incur, thereby lessening the chances that the West could be required to support two theatres of war simultaneously.¹⁰⁶

The way forward

As Russia's military shifts to a defensive stance, the transatlantic alliance is at a critical juncture. Allied leaders must arm Ukrainian fighters for a strategic win instead of a stalemate. Western arms deliveries have steadily grown in both sophistication and volume. But rather than arguing about the depletion of weaponry stocks, NATO should shift into full wartime production.¹⁰⁷ In addition to securing Ukraine's sovereignty and deterring further aggression, only a clear defeat for Moscow will allow Russia the possibility to eventually discard its imperial mentality and thus shed its international pariah status.

¹⁰⁵ See *New Energy World* (2022), 'Europe plans bolder phase-out of Russian fossil fuel dependency', 25 May 2022, <https://knowledge.energyinst.org/new-energy-world/article?id=126987>; Siddi, M. (2023), 'Europe's Energy Dilemma: War and the Green Transition', *Current History*, (2023) 122 (842): 83–88, 1 March 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2023.122.842.83>; and Couto, L. (2022), 'Chapter 06: Climate finance', in Vinjamuri, L., Malloch-Brown, M. and O'Neill, J. et al. (2022), *Building global prosperity: Proposals for sustainable growth*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784135508>.

¹⁰⁶ Baev, P. (2023), 'Taiwan is feeling the pressure from Russian and Chinese autocracy', Brookings, 16 March 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/03/16/taiwan-is-feeling-the-pressure-from-russian-and-chinese-autocracy>.

¹⁰⁷ Michta, A. A. (2023), 'Why is the West self-deterring in Ukraine?', *New Atlanticist*, Atlantic Council, 13 April 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/why-is-the-west-self-deterring-in-ukraine>.

Despite the impact of the war on global food supplies, many of the countries enduring acute hunger remain susceptible to Russian disinformation that would seek to place the blame for shortages and price hikes on European sanctions rather than Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Black Sea blockade.¹⁰⁸ At a time when Russia is bolstering its relations with the Global South, including by selling more hydrocarbons to India, the transatlantic community can better exert its influence in the non-Western world – and counter potential Russian narratives on responsibility for international problems – through increased re-engagement initiatives, such as debt relief and reallocations of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs).¹⁰⁹ Reallocating SDRs to the most vulnerable middle- and low-income countries could increase their resilience to global shocks and help to offset their reliance on Russia and China.¹¹⁰

Surrender on unjust terms does not translate into lasting peace. Ukrainian resistance has presented the West with an historic opportunity to deal Russian imperial ambitions a fatal blow, and to pre-empt further open warfare as well as the ongoing low-intensity hybrid operations that undermine European security and peace. Only then can the process of reconstructing Ukraine and fully integrating it into the transatlantic community begin in earnest.

¹⁰⁸ Savage, S. (2023), 'Russians bearing gifts shove Ukraine aside to win over Global South', Politico, 17 March 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-ukraine-war-win-global-south-fertilizer-grain>.

¹⁰⁹ The Special Drawing Right is an interest-bearing international reserve asset created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement other reserve assets of member countries.

¹¹⁰ Hott, A. and Sembene, D. (2022), 'Opinion: Ukraine conflict shows urgency of SDR reallocation for Africa', devex, 24 May 2022, <https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-ukraine-conflict-shows-urgency-of-sdr-reallocation-for-africa-103279>.

Conclusion: Assuring the future of Europe

A range of immediate measures is needed to secure long-term solutions and end the war on Ukraine's terms rather than on Russia's.

James Nixey

If you do not regard Ukraine as a European democracy with full sovereign rights, and if you do not see Russia as a fascist, imperialistically minded state, this is probably not the publication for you. But you would also be ignoring the evidence to hand. These labels are facts, and they lead to what ought to be inescapable operational conclusions.

As noted in the introduction, there is a potential world of difference between what *should* happen and what *will* happen in this war. Ukraine 'should' win (in the sense that it is essential on both moral and practical grounds that it does); whether it *will* win is not yet determined. But if the policy pitfalls described in the preceding chapters are avoided, then Ukraine has a much stronger chance of victory. Concomitantly, Russia will be more likely to lose, with European security and the rules-based international order more likely to be preserved.

This is a solutions-based report, designed to help get to the 'should' – the optimal outcome. In this context, the report has repeatedly challenged the notion of compromise with Russia and the related aphorism that one should 'not let the perfect be the enemy of the good'. Outwardly reasonable suggestions about ending the war in Ukraine often reference the 'reality' of settlements and imperfect peace agreements achieved in other conflicts – such as in Colombia¹¹¹ and Northern Ireland – where justice for some families and communities was subordinated

¹¹¹ See, for example, comments by former Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos at the Munich Security Conference in February 2023, suggesting there is always a tension between peace and justice, and the need to end the war as opposed to winning it. Erlanger, S. (2023), 'A Nobel Peace Prize Winner Sees Perils in the West's Focus on Ukraine War', *New York Times*, 20 February 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/20/world/juan-manuel-santos-ukraine.html>.

to a wider regional or national stabilization agenda. Crucially, however, those two settlements were put to referendums (Ireland's was approved, Colombia's narrowly rejected).

The evidence shows that if the same were to be attempted in Ukraine, an overwhelming majority of citizens would vote against anything less than a restoration of pre-2014 borders (including Crimea), reparations from Russia (if not already addressed through the seizure and repurposing of Russian individuals' and state assets), and a judicial reckoning for the crime of aggression (with the leading perpetrators of atrocities and war crimes, presumably including President Vladimir Putin, tried in international courts).¹¹² Taking into account the nature of the Russian regime, any settlement that does not encompass these elements would be guaranteed to fail.

Another misconception is that the stakes are not as high as Ukraine and its supporters claim, at least in the sense that the rules-based international system is not at risk.¹¹³ Quite apart from the dubious inference that Ukraine can be sacrificed for some greater good, and that everywhere beyond Ukraine would thereafter and forever be secure, this position disregards Russia's track record across the globe and its embrace not only of conventional aggression but of other hostile measures such as extraterritorial assassination and electoral manipulation. If Russia wins, not only is Ukraine gone; no one is safe from a Kremlin made bolder by success.¹¹⁴

Only an overwhelming Ukrainian military victory can deliver what Ukrainians themselves reasonably demand. This can only be achieved with external military support, in particular from the US. The arguments against providing Ukraine with advanced weaponry are spurious. What is needed is a greatly enhanced commitment by all of Ukraine's backers to providing war-winning materiel as swiftly as it can be delivered and absorbed by Ukraine's armed forces. This should include more air defence systems, long-range missiles, combat aircraft, advanced main battle tanks, and other such weapons systems as may be identified as essential to victory. Half-measures short of this will prolong the conflict, at a continuing cost in Ukrainian lives and also at great cost to the long-term prospects for the security of Europe.

There also needs to be a clear acknowledgment that Vladimir Putin has passed the point of no return and has to go. The president is an intrinsic part of the

What is needed is a greatly enhanced commitment by all of Ukraine's backers to providing war-winning materiel as swiftly as it can be delivered and absorbed by Ukraine's armed forces.

¹¹² International Republican Institute (2023), 'National Survey of Ukraine (IRI): February 2023', 23 March 2023, slide 26 (territorial integrity), slides 29 and 37 (reparations), https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/national_survey_of_ukraine_iri_february_2023.html (accessed 8 June 2023). On judicial reckoning, see Sociological Group "Rating" (2023), 'LEGAL PROTECTION OF VICTIMS FROM THE WAR CRIMES OF RUSSIA (DECEMBER 23-26, 2022)', 15 February 2023, https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/pravoviy_zahist_postrazhdalih_v_d_vo_nnih_zlochiv_v_ros_23-26_grudnya_2022.html.

¹¹³ See, for example, comments by Charles Kupchan, such as in Council on Foreign Relations (2023), 'How Does the War in Ukraine End?', meeting, 15 March 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/event/how-does-war-ukraine-end>. Kupchan is also an advocate of a settlement by the end of 2023.

¹¹⁴ For insight into how Russia conducts campaigns across the globe, see Giles, K. (2022), *Russia's War on Everybody: And What it Means for You*, Bloomsbury.

For all the talk of security guarantees for Kyiv, up to and including NATO and EU membership, Ukraine and the West can never feel secure while Putin remains in power.

problem of Russian expansionism – although by no means its sole architect.¹¹⁵ The immediate issue of safeguarding Ukraine can be achieved by defeating Russia militarily. But addressing the longer-term challenge to Europe, given deep-seated attitudes and assumptions held across Russian society, requires change within Russia itself.¹¹⁶ Such change needs to be far more constructive than the kind Yevgeny Prigozhin – himself a staunchly nationalist, pro-war figure – would have brought had his challenge to Putin succeeded. Nevertheless, a lasting resolution, with or without the recovery of Ukraine's territory, is simply impossible with the current political configuration in Moscow. To believe otherwise is to misunderstand Putin himself, his personal obsession with Ukraine, the broader antipathy of much of the Russian population towards Ukraine, and the popular assumption within Russia of entitlement to empire more broadly. For all the talk of security guarantees for Kyiv, up to and including NATO and EU membership, Ukraine and the West can never feel secure while Putin remains in power, and while Russia's leadership and many Russian people believe the Ukrainian people and polity should rightly be ruled from Moscow.¹¹⁷

What happens if Russia is not defeated

We already have multiple guides to the consequences of a false peace with Russia. The drive to end conflict by imposing unworkable ceasefires led to the 'six-point plan' for Georgia after Russia's 2008 invasion, multiple flawed ceasefire agreements in Syria, and the two Minsk agreements on Ukraine following Russia's first invasion in 2014. Crucially, capitulations by the West not only allowed Russia to retain occupation of substantial parts of Georgia's and Ukraine's sovereign territory, they also showed Russia it could go further. This encouraged the full-scale onslaught on Ukraine in 2022.

But the scale of the 2022 invasion is such that the international ramifications of a settlement imposed on Ukraine would now be far greater. First, Ukraine's existence as a sovereign state would be fatally undercut. Next in line could be Moldova, an obvious target considering its adjacency to Ukraine, its unilateral exit from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in May 2023 and its broader westward drift. After that, the Baltic states and Poland – despite their NATO membership – would be left more vulnerable by the message that the West is not prepared to face down Russia. After all, if Western states cannot enforce the specific commitments in the Budapest Memorandum,¹¹⁸ why would they honour the vaguer promise of collective defence enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty? (Contrary to how it is routinely portrayed, Article 5 does not unequivocally oblige

¹¹⁵ For detailed explanations as to why this is not all down to one man, see Giles, K. (2019), *Moscow Rules: What Drives Russia to Confront the West*, Chatham House/Brookings, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/01/moscow-rules-what-drives-russia-confront-west>. See also Noble, B. and Schulmann, E. (2021), 'Myth 15: It's all about Putin – Russia is a manually run, centralized autocracy', in Allan, D. et al. (2021), *Myths and misconceptions in the debate on Russia: How they affect Western policy, and what can be done*, Report, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, pp. 91–95, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia/myth-15-its-all-about-putin-russia-manually-run>.

¹¹⁶ Meduza (2023), 'The only thing worse than war is losing one', 3 June 2023, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2023/06/03/the-only-thing-worse-than-war-is-losing-one>.

¹¹⁷ McGlynn, J. (2023), *Russia's War*, Polity.

¹¹⁸ The text of the treaty deposited with the UN is available at <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52241.pdf>.

member states to use armed force – or in fact take any measures at all – in support of another member under attack.¹¹⁹) Some Balkan states could also be at risk from an unrestrained Russia.

This report has argued that any proposed solution which leaves Ukraine with less than 100 per cent of its territory restored and Putin in power is not viable. Unless or until such point as Ukraine's defeat is assured and there is no other option, calls for compromise are specious. This is not only because compromise will be unacceptable to Ukraine, which perfectly well understands that the West has let it and other countries down repeatedly this century in conflicts with Russia. It is also because any perception of success – which Russia will measure by ground held, not by lives or materiel lost – will convince the Kremlin that its assault on Ukraine was the correct choice.

A ticking clock – the case for urgent action

Most publications of this nature seek enduring relevance, a 'shelf life'. Not here. US assistance remains decisive, but America is approaching another momentous electoral fork in the road, with a stark choice between an administration currently doing the right thing – albeit hesitantly and with one foot on the brake – and one that would wish to abandon Ukraine or, if possible, Europe altogether. This, then, is the decisive year in which to give Ukraine the necessary military assistance to win, before the 2024 US election distracts from and constrains Western action – or, in the event of a victory for Donald Trump or his fellow travellers, hands victory to Russia. Far too much time has already been lost to timidity and misplaced fears of Russian escalation.¹²⁰ This delay could well prove tragic. If the recommendations in this report – principally to ensure Ukraine's military victory and the reduction of Russia as a future threat – are not taken up within months, all is potentially lost.

Western politicians too readily use the word 'unacceptable'. Wars of aggression, annexations, mass killings, breaches of the Geneva Conventions, radiological and chemical weapons attacks, mass murder of airline passengers, ecocide as exemplified by the June 2023 destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam, and the vast array of Russia's hostile actions against its neighbours and perceived adversaries further afield have all been described thus. But Russia has never been confronted with sufficiently severe consequences for its behaviour, which therefore has been *de facto* accepted as the norm.

Ukraine, by contrast, understands the true meaning of unacceptable actions because they threaten its existence. The lesson from Ukraine and its plight is to understand that if you consider something unacceptable, you must stand against

This is the decisive year in which to give Ukraine the necessary military assistance to win, before the 2024 US election distracts from and constrains Western action – or, in the event of a victory for Donald Trump or his fellow travellers, hands victory to Russia.

¹¹⁹ Article 5 leaves flexibility for member states to avoid the use of force after Article 5 is triggered. It states that NATO members agree, in the event of an armed attack on another NATO member, that each 'will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking ... such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area'. The phrase 'such action as it deems necessary' keeps open non-military options. NATO (2019), 'The North Atlantic Treaty', https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm. For more on the misinterpretation of Article 5, see Stoicescu, K. (2022), 'Myth 3: 'Russia wouldn't attack a NATO member state'', 14 July 2022, Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/06/myths-and-misconceptions-around-russian-military-intent/myth-3-russia-wouldnt-attack-nato>.
¹²⁰ Giles, K. (2023), *Russian nuclear intimidation: How Russia uses nuclear threats to shape Western responses to aggression*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784135645>.

it, defeat it and prevent it from happening again. This means imposing meaningful costs and consequences on the perpetrator. As observed by Estonia's prime minister, Kaja Kallas, Russia's leaders have seen throughout history that there is little consequence or sanction for waging war – it is essential now to break the cycle in which, through the centuries, one country in Europe repeatedly attacks its neighbours with minimal accountability.¹²¹

At the time of publication of this report in June 2023, as a Ukrainian counteroffensive gets under way and as the Kremlin survives an attempted power grab from a paramilitary entity of its own creation, Ukraine's fate hangs in the balance – and with it the longer-term security of the European continent. A plethora of wrong choices is available. They would crystallize Ukraine's territorial losses, cost more lives in the longer term, and perpetuate and encourage Russia's global malignancy. This report is a plea for making the right choice.

Summary of principles for Western policy on the war

- Ukraine must not be pressured, directly or indirectly, into a negotiated pause to the fighting. Instead, **Kyiv must be allowed to fight the war to a conclusion** before a peace is negotiated. Anything short of this grants Russia success and will encourage future Russian invasions.
- Ukraine's Western backers must recognize that **territorial concessions by Ukraine – including over Crimea – are not a workable solution**. Granting Russia its wishes will confirm for Moscow that the path of conflict is the right one.
- **Ukraine must be provided with genuine security guarantees** to provide for its future safety. 'Neutrality', Ukraine's status before 2014, provides no such guarantee. This war proves that real safety against Russia lies only within NATO, and with Ukraine's completed transformation from former Soviet republic to full and free partner within the transatlantic community. Ukrainian membership of NATO and the EU should be a priority.
- Ukraine's Western backers **must overcome their fear of inflicting a clear and decisive defeat on Russia**. The dangers of this defeat are far outweighed by those of Russian success or an ambiguous end to the conflict.
- The potential for **political instability within Russia should not be a deterrent to pressing home Ukraine's advantage**. Indeed, the attempted Wagner Group mutiny of 24 June 2023 showed that domestic tumult can offer a tactical edge to Ukraine. The war has shaken the Russian regime, as the rebellion showed, although state fragmentation is unlikely even in the event of Russia's defeat.
- The financing of support for Ukraine must be recognized as an investment in Euro-Atlantic security, and one which is yielding enormous returns in neutralizing the most acute threat to that security. **Western governments**

¹²¹ Speaking at the Lennart Meri Conference, Tallinn, 13 May 2023.

should make it clearer to their electorates what this investment buys, and if necessary adopt public communications strategies challenging narratives around the fiscal costs of supporting Ukraine. For example, governments should make clear that headline figures on the value of weapons and other equipment supplied to Ukraine mostly do not represent new costs, but materiel already purchased and on hand.

- **NATO must urgently increase production of munitions and weapons systems,** with the aim of matching rates of consumption in Ukraine. This is not only to sustain the Ukrainian armed forces in the current conflict, but also to replenish and augment stockpiles across NATO in readiness for an extended period of military tension, and the possibility of high-intensity warfare. NATO should facilitate international defence procurement collaboration and – in consultation with the EU – remove systemic obstacles such as protectionism impeding multinational defence orders.
- **The vital requirement for justice for Russia's war crimes and atrocities must not be disregarded for the sake of a settlement with Moscow.** Only accountability will prompt change in Russia. Most pressingly, Ukraine needs ongoing assistance with its vast caseload of war-related proceedings, as well as with the establishment of a special tribunal for Russia's crime of aggression. Ultimately, support to win the war is necessary to allow a prospect of justice being delivered.
- **Economic and financial sanctions must be constantly refined and honed to ensure they remain effective.** Policy in this area should be informed by an understanding that Russia is involved in a huge effort to get around sanctions. Sanctions remain important in imposing a cost on Russia. They will have an increasing role in constraining the ability of the Russian military-industrial complex to rebuild offensive military capability eroded in Ukraine.
- **The frozen assets of the Russian state and private individuals must be repurposed to finance reconstruction of Ukraine's society, infrastructure and economy.** Western government funding and private sector investment will not be enough on their own to meet Ukraine's needs. Asset seizures or some variation on them, quite apart from being the moral choice and a source of substantial additional finance, are also necessary to show Russia and the Russians that crime doesn't pay. In fact, they should be an essential part of the de-Putinization process that Russia must undergo if it is to join the civilized community of nations.
- Finally, **it is essential that Western countries – and partners further afield – recognize and accept that the outcome of Russia's war on Ukraine is a key determinant of their own future safety and security.** Any genuine, durable plan for peace can only be implemented after hostilities have ended in Ukraine's favour. And it must enshrine the principle of respect for the country's sovereign independence and pre-2014 territorial borders. Any other outcome will set a precedent that encourages aggressors worldwide and degrades the rules-based international order. Ongoing, long-term deterrence of Russia after this war is an essential condition for preserving peace.

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This is the sixth major multi-author report the Chatham House Russia and Eurasia Programme has produced in just over 10 years (the first, *Putin Again: Implications for Russia and the West*, came out in 2012). These publications are always more than the sum of their parts; and as with any such large-scale endeavour, there are twice as many people vital to its realization as there are authors. Here are just a few to whom the authors are especially indebted:

Lubica Polláková has project-managed to perfection. Without her, you wouldn't be reading this until December, or maybe not at all.

It is not easy to work within the constraints imposed by this format, so Keir Giles, also an author here of course, took on the Herculean task of standardizing each chapter. Perhaps he felt guilty as this was also his idea in the first place.

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Finally, this is also the first of those six reports to directly address Russia's war in Ukraine. It is, of course, designed to assist in ensuring that it ends satisfactorily for Ukraine and far beyond. Had Ukraine buckled in those first few days, or at any time since, the world would be a very different and considerably uglier place. It is to the Ukrainian nation that we owe our deepest gratitude. Слава Україні.

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Cover image: Seized military equipment and weapons, including tanks and motorized artillery systems belonging to the Russian army, displayed in Kyiv on the Day of the State Flag of Ukraine, 23 August 2022.

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