

# The War against Ukraine and Russia's Position in Europe's Security Order

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Russia's aggressions against its neighbours since 2008 – first Georgia, then Ukraine twice – impel the urgent reconstruction of European security. While articulating a post-war European security order and Russia's place there is easy, implementing it is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, in Ukraine, Russia has unilaterally, and unprovokedly, violated or broken at least eight major international treaties and accords, ranging from the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, according to which Moscow had pledged to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, which prohibits nuclear threats against non-nuclear states.<sup>1</sup> It has also broken

<sup>1</sup> Ernest J. Moniz, *Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Energy*

NATO's (and especially Washington's) conventional deterrence.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Moscow's nuclear threats reveal its readiness to wage limited nuclear war without inexorably launching a general nuclear war: in other words, it could launch nuclear weapons against Ukraine or Europe, believing it could deter a US or NATO nuclear riposte using its full spectrum

*and Cyber, Nuclear Threat Initiative, Hearing on Russia's Waning Global Influence, 16 November 2022, <https://www.nti.org/?p=37152>.*

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca L. Heinrichs, *Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Energy and Cyber, Nuclear Threat Initiative, Hearing on Russia's Waning Global Influence, 16 November 2022, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA14/20221116/115182/HHRG-117-FA14-Wstate-HeinrichsR-20221116.pdf>.*

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nuclear capabilities while its doctrine and policy espouse limited nuclear war.<sup>3</sup> Given Washington and Europe's well-advertised reluctance to retaliate against nuclear weapons in Europe with nuclear counter-strikes, Russia believes it could escape nuclear retribution. Indeed, its actions in Ukraine negate notions of a shared concept of a mutually assured destruction (MAD) world.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, its war is arguably a genocidal war.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we must confront the problem of Russia in Europe and the requirements of invigorated conventional and nuclear deterrence.

To restore a nuclear order, the West must first postulate this order's foundational military, political and economic requirements, including: defeating Russia decisively and hopefully rapidly;<sup>6</sup> restoring Ukraine's

full sovereignty and territorial integrity as of 2013 (thus, including Crimea); granting Ukraine NATO membership – indeed the sooner, the better;<sup>7</sup> putting Ukraine on track for EU membership and rebuilding Ukraine's economy using Russian reparations; and war crimes trials for Russian perpetrators.

All this is easier said than done. Nevertheless, we must start building this order now, even if the war is in gridlock and will remain attritional for some time. This is especially necessary because Russian President Vladimir Putin will almost certainly fight to the bitter end. So, unless Russia is decisively defeated, no negotiated settlement is conceivable, let alone possible.<sup>8</sup>

### *Russia's imperial vision*

Since no rational assessment of Russia's interests justifies continuing fighting, the only explanation that makes sense is that Putin is now fighting first not to lose power and second to preserve a base for future imperial projects. Therefore, the current stalemate will not last forever, nor should we let it do so. Hence, rebuilding a viable and durable European security order now is essential for a number of reasons.

<sup>3</sup> Paul K. Davis, "Potential Implications of the War in Ukraine for Northeast Asia", in *NAPSNet Policy Forum*, 27 October 2022, <https://nautilus.org/?p=99413>; Stephen Blank, "Reflections on Russian Nuclear Strategy", in Adam B. Lowther (ed.), *Guide to Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of Great Power Competition*, Bossier City, Louisiana Tech Research Institute, 2020, p. 229-243; Sidharth Kraushal and Sam Cranny-Evans, "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons and Its Views of Limited Nuclear War", in *RUSI Commentaries*, 21 June 2022, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-nonstrategic-nuclear-weapons-and-its-views-limited-nuclear-war>.

<sup>4</sup> Alvin Powell, "60 Years after Cuban Missile Crisis, Nuclear Threat Feels Chillingly Immediate", in *The Harvard Gazette*, 17 October 2022, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/?p=349355>.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Snyder, "Russia's Eugenic War. Four Policies of Racial Cleansing", in *Thinking About...*, 8 January 2023, <https://snyder.substack.com/p/russias-eugenic-war>.

<sup>6</sup> Condoleezza Rice and Robert M. Gates, "Time Is Not on Ukraine's Side", in *The Washington Post*,

7 January 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/01/07/condoleezza-rice-robert-gates-ukraine-repel-russia>.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Blank, "Imitating the Action of a Tiger: How to Support Ukraine", in *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, No. 4/2022 (December 2022), <https://pism.pl/publications/imitating-the-action-of-a-tiger-how-to-support-ukraine>.

<sup>8</sup> James K. Sebenius and Michael Singh, "Russia and Ukraine Are Not Ready for Talks", in *Foreign Affairs*, 11 January 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/node/1129799>.

First, Russia's post-2014 aggression does not merely target Ukraine. Instead, it deliberately assaults the very idea of international order, particularly that of a European security order.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Putin, Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Nikolai Patrushev and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov proclaim the collective West is at war with Russia.<sup>10</sup> Russian nationalist political scientist Sergei Karaganov openly says that "We are at war with the West. The European security order is illegitimate."<sup>11</sup> Therefore and second, the invasions of Ukraine confirm that Putin's Russia can only survive as an empire, entailing the diminished sovereignty of all its post-Soviet neighbours and also Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, post-Soviet Russia has not really recognised the sovereignty or territorial integrity of any of these states.<sup>12</sup> Russia's quest

for empire necessarily entails war, because it requires curtailing these states' sovereignty, endangering their territorial integrity, while demanding not only imperial restoration, but also a free hand to pursue it. This outcome is only attainable by force, that is, war – and not just in the former Soviet Union.

Since the nature of the European order hinges on the outcome of this war, leaving Russia in control of any Ukrainian territory by a Korea-like negotiation or negotiating over Ukraine's head, as many advocate, would confirm Moscow's beliefs in its imperial destiny and Western weakness. That would only give Russia a reprieve, entailing continued Russia's war against the West to enshrine Putin's autocracy and its inevitable corollary, empire. In that order, security is only conceivable as being against Russia, with European security becoming an anomic order with no norms other than a permanent state of siege, if not actual war. Consequently, Russia, not the West, has excluded itself from any future European order that it cannot overawe. Its foreign policy rhetoric, as expressed by Putin, Lavrov, former Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and innumerable foreign policy thinkers, now emphasises rejecting Europe and identifying Russia as an Asiatic, Eurasian state that is the south's

<sup>9</sup> Fyodor Lukyanov and Ivan Krastev, *New Rules or No Rules*, Moscow, Valdai Discussion Club, March 2015, <https://valdaiclub.com/files/11484>.

<sup>10</sup> Guy Faulconbridge, "Russia Is Now Fighting NATO in Ukraine: Top Ally Says", in *Reuters*, 10 January 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-ally-patrushev-says-russia-is-now-fighting-nato-ukraine-2023-01-10>; Russian Presidency, *Vladimir Putin Answered Questions from Journalists*, 22 December 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70170>; Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Interview with Newsweek*, 21 September 2022, [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/1830540](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1830540).

<sup>11</sup> Federico Fubini, "Sergey Karaganov: 'We Are at War with the West. The European Security Order Is Illegitimate'", in *Corriere della Sera*, 8 April 2022, [https://www.corriere.it/economia/aziende/22\\_aprile\\_08/we-are-at-war-with-the-west-the-european-security-order-is-illegitimate-c6b9fa5a-b6b7-11ec-b39d-8a197cc9b19a.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/economia/aziende/22_aprile_08/we-are-at-war-with-the-west-the-european-security-order-is-illegitimate-c6b9fa5a-b6b7-11ec-b39d-8a197cc9b19a.shtml).

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Blank, "The Values Gap between Moscow and the West: The Sovereignty Issue", in *Acque & Terre*, No. 6/2007, p. 90-95; Stephen Blank, "Russia and the Black Sea's

Frozen Conflicts in Strategic Perspective", in *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Summer 2008), p. 23-54; James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion. Russia's Influence Abroad*, London, Chatham House, 2013, p. 61-62; Susan Stewart, "The EU, Russia and a Less Common Neighbourhood", in *SWP Comments*, No. 3 (January 2014), p. 2-3, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/the-eu-russia-and-their-neighbourhood>.

global natural champion.<sup>13</sup> A Korea-style negotiation would also permit a continuation of domestic Putinism that can only exist by inciting a global (not merely European) state of siege in world politics: an undefeated and thus unreformed Russia will resume a new political or non-kinetic war against Ukraine and the West preparatory to another effort to destroy Ukraine or other states within its alleged imperial sphere of influence.

For there to be a genuine order that resolves border and sovereignty issues de facto and de jure with ensuing legitimacy, Russia must be defeated and Ukrainian borders restored to the status quo ante Russia's first invasion in 2014.

### *Ukraine's European future*

Moreover, we must fully integrate Ukraine into NATO and the EU. It does not suffice to affiliate Ukraine with NATO, as Henry Kissinger suggested.<sup>14</sup> Neither will a new security organisation, as US foreign policy expert Michael O'Hanlon proposed, be an acceptable format for defending Ukraine and other states because only NATO remains the "gold standard" among binding alliances with credible security

guarantees.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Ukraine must receive a fast track for EU membership. Obviously, there must be more to this new order, but those are prerequisites for its durability and viability. Indeed, a, if not the, precondition for a viable and durable European security order is foreclosing Russia's imperial option by defeating it decisively, and that entails Ukraine's full integration with European security institutions and ensuing security.

In parallel, every member of a reinvigorated NATO must sustain credible conventional deterrence of Russia from the Arctic to the Black Sea, the latter being particularly needful of strengthening.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, if Putin retains power or Putinism continues after him, NATO must establish an equally credible nuclear deterrent to prevent any new nuclear threats from inhibiting NATO's conventional response to Russian aggression. Indeed, Putin and his supporters have shown not only that limited nuclear war is conceivable but also that they believe it may not inexorably trigger a full-scale nuclear war.<sup>17</sup> This task of deterring conventional war and preventing its escalation to the nuclear

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Blank, "Russia's New Foreign Policy Orientation", in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (6 January 2023), <https://jamestown.org/?p=94850>.

<sup>14</sup> "A peace process should link Ukraine to NATO, however expressed. The alternative of neutrality is no longer meaningful, especially after Finland and Sweden joined NATO." Henry Kissinger, "How to Avoid Another World War", in *The Spectator*, 17 December 2022, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-push-for-peace>.

<sup>15</sup> Lise Howard and Michael O'Hanlon, "What Should Eurasian Security Look Like After the Russia-Ukraine War?", in *The Hill*, 26 December 2022, <https://thehill.com/?p=3786748>; Lawrence Freedman, "Who Can Guarantee Russian Security?", in *Comment is Freed*, 17 December 2022, <https://samf.substack.com/p/who-can-guarantee-russian-security>.

<sup>16</sup> Ben Hodges, "The Black Sea or ... a Black Hole", in *CEPA Articles*, 21 January 2021, <https://cepa.org/?p=1641>.

<sup>17</sup> Paul K. Davis, "Potential Implications of the War in Ukraine for Northeast Asia", cit.; Stephen Blank, "Reflections on Russian Nuclear Strategy", cit.

level is admittedly particularly difficult for NATO, both historically and given the current transformation that has made conventional weapons as lethal as nuclear ones. It also requires a new NATO nuclear policy, always a difficult issue for NATO. Nevertheless, this European order must necessarily exclude Russia until a fundamental transformation occurs not only of the Russian state but of Russia's political culture. These are tasks for the Russian people, not Europe, and this transformation is best accomplished peacefully over time. But it must terminate Russia's autocracy-empire nexus. Defeat in war, the sooner the better, is a necessary condition of this transformation. Then Europe can begin the gradual reintegration of Russia much as West Germany, Italy and Austria each underwent an enduring transformation to democratic governance after 1945.

Therefore, this order must also develop a more robust economic-political dimension. This requires resuming the EU's enlargement, not only to Ukraine but also to the Western Balkans, as well as a genuinely credible path to including Turkey that entails its ultimate democratisation. These additions to the EU are necessary to stimulate European economic growth, vision, democracy and political stability, while depriving Russia and its Balkan allies (Serbia and Bosnia's Serbs) of opportunities for subversion and political warfare that potentially incites ethnic conflicts, for example, in Kosovo or Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>18</sup> Achieving

<sup>18</sup> Matteo Bonomi et al., *In Search of EU Strategic Autonomy: What Role for the Western Balkans*,

these objectives would also give Europe and the West more instruments for dealing with Middle Eastern crises and countering Russian machinations there, as well as reducing Russian influence on Turkey that must be an integral component of any new order.<sup>19</sup>

### *Looking to the future*

Equally important to the economic-political pillar of a new order is Ukraine's democratic reconstruction and the EU finding new sources of hydrocarbons while simultaneously moving to a carbon-free environment to free itself from dependence on third, problematic countries. This trend will also compel a hopefully democratising, non-imperial Russia to overcome much of its historical economic-technological inefficiencies in its own interest. But perhaps most importantly, these moves would accompany and parallel a strategy to help a long-term enduring Russian socio-economic-political-cultural transition to a liberal, democratic order. Then perhaps Russia can recover its European vocation and escape the pattern by which every prior liberalisation has been thwarted by a coalition espousing autocracy and empire. Putin and Putinism represent the latest incarnation of this pattern, and his Mafia state and imperialistic wars reveal where such governance ends up.

Defining a new European order and both Moscow and Kyiv's places in it must begin immediately. It must combine the

Rome, IAI, June 2021, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/13530>.

<sup>19</sup> Ben Hodges, "The Black Sea or ... a Black Hole", cit.

EU's and NATO's democratic expansion, robust, credible conventional and nuclear deterrence, and economic transformation with both containment and the flexibility to accommodate a potentially democratising Russia. To paraphrase William Pitt, Ukraine has "saved itself by its exertions and Europe by its example." It's time we learned the lessons from that example.

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