

Russia and the Anti-Western Axis Must be Militarily Defeated:

***Shifting the Western consensus toward ending
Russia's military threat to Ukraine and the West***

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Cover image: ‘Ukrainian military holds the flag of Ukraine. The concept of victory. The war between Ukraine and Russia’ taken by Dmytro Sheremeta for Shutterstock.

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Executive Summary

The new Cold War pits a Russia-China-Iran-North Korea¹ axis against the West. The goal of this anti-Western axis is the defeat of the US-led unipolar world that has been in place since the end of World War II. Hamas' recent brutal terrorist attack against Israel, and Iran's subsequent threats of regional escalation, have brought home the strategic necessity of Western democracies standing together with the clear goal of the military defeat of the anti-Western axis. This wider threat makes it more important than ever to deliver a decisive defeat against Russia, one of the leading members of this new anti-Western axis.

This paper argues that the Western doves approach of drip-feeding military assistance to Ukraine, including by the US, has been wrong and has led to higher civilian and military casualties, more destruction, and the slow pace of Ukraine's on-going counter-offensive. It further argues that the West should stand united in its support for Ukraine's military victory and Russia's military defeat. Such a defeat is practical and would deliver a humiliating defeat to the forces currently promoting global disorder. It would also allow the West to turn its focus to the larger strategic threat of China, as well as the renewed threat posed by Iran.

It is evident that Ukraine and Israel, two states under threat of extinction by Russia and Iran² respectively, are now battlegrounds in the war launched by the anti-Western axis against the Western order. Russia's military defeat is understood as Ukraine's liberation, with Western assistance, of all its territories occupied by Russia since 2014. It is to be acknowledged that Crimea's liberation and re-integration will be the most challenging aspect for Ukraine. This paper argues that, irrespective of nuclear threats in the Russian media and issued by some Russian politicians, the threat of nuclear escalation is low and has been de-escalated under pressure from China.

In backing Russia's military defeat, the West should support:

1. restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity;
2. resisting 'land for peace' negotiations;
3. deterring future Russian invasions and wars by providing Ukraine with NATO membership;
4. transferring frozen Russian assets to Ukraine for the rebuilding of the country;
5. pursuing war crimes trials of Russian political leaders, experts and journalists who supported the invasion and war and promoted genocidal discourse; and
6. supporting the transformation of Russia into a post-imperial democracy that is no longer a threat to its neighbours and at war with the West.

Although the West cannot state this as one of its goals, Ukraine's liberation of its territory through Russia's military defeat will lead to regime change in Russia as it is inconceivable President Vladimir Putin could remain in power after leading his country to a disastrous defeat. A post-Putin Russia would not automatically lead to a more nationalistic regime; in fact, Russian military defeats in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries following the Crimean war, Russian-Japanese war, and World War I have historically led to reforms and liberalisation. Military defeat could also lead to the fracturing of the Russian Federation with a return to the failed, dysfunctional state of the 1990s with national minorities clamouring for greater autonomy and sovereignty and in some cases independence. A growing number of commentators have welcomed a potential disintegration of the Russian Federation for two reasons.³ The first because it would represent the end of Russian military expansionism and the second because a smaller Russian nation-state would facilitate democratisation.⁴

Introduction

The West is not fully united in its approach to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The hawks, led by the UK, together with four Scandinavian and six central-eastern European states, openly state their goal is the military defeat of Russia. The doves, led by three of the largest members of NATO – the US, France and Germany – have never declared Russia's military defeat to be their goal.

This paper argues that it is in the interests of the West for Russia to be militarily defeated, and that this is even more pressing as other threats to the West from Iran and China continue to gather. The likelihood is that Russia's defeat would lead to the replacement of President Vladimir Putin. It is difficult to comprehend how anybody who succeeds Putin could be worse, an argument often put forward by Western doves; indeed, Russian military defeats have historically led to reforms and liberalisation. An arrest warrant was issued in March 2023 for Putin by the ICC (International Criminal Court). The UN and other international organisations and human rights bodies have documented extensive evidence of war crimes, including the forcible deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia for which Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation, was issued with an arrest warrant by the ICC.

The drip-feeding of military supplies to Ukraine since Russia launched its 24 February 2022 invasion is prolonging the war. This has allowed Russia to deepen its control of occupied areas by building three lines of fortifications and laying hundreds of thousands of mines which in turn are leading to high Ukrainian military and civilian casualties. 'I wanted our counteroffensive to happen much earlier, because everyone understood that if the counteroffensive unfolds later, then a bigger part of our territory will be mined. We give our enemy the time and possibility to place more mines and prepare their defensive lines,' Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told CNN.⁵ Western training of new Ukrainian brigades is outdated and 'based on operational analysis from the 20th century that did not contend with a range of technologies employed in Ukraine.'⁶

It is in the interests of Ukraine and the West to end the war as quickly as possible by supporting the goal of Russia's military defeat; the West should, therefore, supply Ukraine with everything it needs to win the war. This should include long-range missiles, cluster munitions for non-artillery use, more tanks, mine clearing equipment and artillery, attack helicopters and jets. The only weapons off limits would be nuclear, chemical and biological.

There is greater public appetite than Western ruling elites possibly consider for a more robust Western military posture in the war. Thirty-one percent of Americans support the sending of troops to Ukraine.⁷ Americans between the ages of 27 and 42, commonly referred to as 'Millennials', were the strongest supporters of the US sending troops to Ukraine, with nearly half (47 percent) of 18–26-year-olds backing this.

Some former NATO pilots have expressed interest in conducting flying missions for Ukraine in the F16s that will be provided and will be combat ready in Winter 2023–2024. The UK is already providing its air force to protect Ukrainian ships exporting grain and other products and the UK Minister of Defence supports increased joint UK-Ukrainian military production and, the first NATO member to do so, UK forces training the Ukrainian armed forces inside Ukraine.⁸ In Spring 2023, the US adopted the Black Sea Security Act of 2023 which provides for the deployment of a military contingent in the Black Sea.⁹ Four of the seven countries in the Black Sea are NATO members (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Türkiye) and two more (Ukraine, Georgia) seek NATO membership. With the more direct assistance of the US, the Black Sea could follow the Baltic Sea in becoming a second NATO lake.

Following Ukraine's liberation of south-eastern Ukraine, Western pilots could be expanded in number to provide a no-fly zone that would dissuade Russia from attempting to re-occupy the region. A no-fly zone would encourage internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees to return home and, without the threat of further military attacks, allow for the rebuilding of civilian homes and infrastructure, including the Nova Kakhovka dam that was blown up by a Russian terrorist attack in June 2023. Fewer refugees from Ukraine will return home if there is a prolonged war; indeed, it is estimated that as many as 3.3 million Ukrainians may remain in the West which would negatively impact Ukrainian economic prospects.¹⁰

Russian Weakness Versus Western Strength

Within the former USSR, Russia's sphere of influence has declined to just Belarus and Armenia. At the UN, of 15 former Soviet republics, only Belarus votes with Russia. Already a declining great power prior to its invasion of Ukraine, Russia's decline has accelerated since the invasion. Russia is the weaker of the two in its relationship with China. Russia's desperation in seeking military assistance from Iran and North Korea reflects its diminished status as a great power and the poor performance and quality of its armed forces in the war in Ukraine. The West has the strength to support Ukraine in defeating an increasingly weakened Russia.

Russia has lost the European energy market, which accounted for 40 percent of its government revenue prior to the invasion of Ukraine. Russia is losing contracts for arms sales in the light of its poor performance in the war against Ukraine.

There are two factors that reinforce the central argument of this paper to quicken the pace of the war and support Russia's military defeat.

The first is that public support in Russia for the war against Ukraine is declining.¹¹ Candidates for Putin's ruling United Russia Party were ordered to drop pro-war slogans in the September 2023 Russian elections because of the growing unpopularity of the so-called special military operation.¹² With Russian casualties estimated by both the West and Ukraine at over 200,000, and the negative impact of Western sanctions on the Russian economy and standards of living, it was inevitable the popularity of the war would eventually begin to decline.

The war is being brought home to Russians through Ukraine's growing number of attacks inside Russia by air- and sea-launched drones and missiles, and by the partisan attacks by Ukrainian special forces and anti-Putin Russian military units organised by Ukraine.¹³ Bolder Ukrainian attacks inside Russia are being undertaken using domestically produced weapons; Western-supplied long-range missiles can be only used within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders, which includes Crimea.

The second is the approaching March 2024 Russian presidential elections. If Ukraine has battlefield successes by the early months of 2024, even Putin's regimented system with fraudulent elections would find it hard to cover up the dissatisfaction of the Russian public in the face of humiliation on the battlefield. One such battlefield success for Kyiv would be the liberation of south-eastern Ukraine, which would split the Crimean-Donbas land bridge. UK Storm Shadow, French SCALP, US ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile System) and possibly German Taurus long-range missiles would threaten Russian military bases in Crimea and make Russia's military presence on the peninsula no longer tenable. A highly successful attack was launched in September 2023 against the Sevastopol naval repair yards, destroying the *Rostov-on-Don* submarine and *Minsk* landing ship, and against the Sevastopol headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet.¹⁴ The demilitarisation of Crimea would have a devastating impact on Putin's popularity while strengthening Ukraine's hand and the West's leverage in negotiations with Russia.

Misplaced Fears

Not seeking Russia's military defeat fails to resolve the underlying causes of the biggest European crisis for seven decades. These roots lie in Putin's anti-Western xenophobia, bitter anger at the disintegration of the USSR and nostalgia for the USSR, and his personal obsession with destroying Ukraine and replacing it with a 'Little Russia' within the Russian sphere of influence. Russia's subjugation of Ukraine and defeat of the West would, Putin believes, give him an honoured place in Russian history alongside Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great and Joseph Stalin. After visiting an exhibition to the Tsar who created the Russian Empire in 1721, Putin said, 'Peter the Great waged the great northern war for 21 years. It would seem that he was at war with Sweden, he took something from them. He did not take anything from them, he returned [what was Russia's].'¹⁵

A 'land for peace' agreement would reward Russian military aggression and open the Pandora's box for other countries to follow suit. It would be viewed by the Russia-China-Iran-North Korea anti-Western axis as the West's defeat and would end the US-led unipolar world. China would be emboldened to become more militarily aggressive against Taiwan.¹⁶ And such an agreement would be merely a truce until Russia launched a second round of military aggression after rebuilding its military. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 followed Russia's occupation of Crimea and first invasion of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine eight years earlier.

Mick Ryan, retired Major General in the Australian Army, and frequent commentator on the military aspects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, argues that 'the West should make explicit that its goal is a Ukrainian victory achieved through a Russian defeat.'¹⁷ It is in the national interests of the West to support the military defeat of Russia. This would end the crisis, prevent future rounds of Russian military aggression and crises, and be viewed as a victory of the Western international order. China would be more fearful of invading Taiwan.

The consensus among Western experts is that Russia would not use nuclear weapons against Ukrainian forces. Meanwhile, it is difficult to imagine a more extreme nationalistic leader than Putin taking power in Russia. Putin's successor is more likely to be a pragmatic nationalist keen to end the war and, with the ending of sanctions, to rebuild Russia's economy and armed forces.

The Threat of Nuclear Weapons

Western fears of escalation and Russian 'red lines' have been raised extensively since Russia launched its invasion. Each time Ukraine has asked for weapons, Russian leaders have warned about escalation which has then been echoed by some dovish Western policymakers. But on each occasion when the West crossed Russia's imaginary 'red lines' there was no Russian response. We must conclude that Russia is fearful of challenging the West and NATO; it is noteworthy that Russia has never attacked deliveries of military equipment crossing from NATO member states into Ukraine.

Misplaced fears of Russia resorting to nuclear weapons 'is grounded in decades of research and analysis on Russian nuclear doctrine. But it is not clear that this research applies now, if it ever

did.¹⁸ At the 2023 annual Valdai conference, Putin said Russian military doctrine included two scenarios when nuclear weapons would be used; the first is a retaliatory strike in response to a nuclear attack against Russia and the second is when the Russian state is threatened.¹⁹ Neither scenario could be initiated by Ukraine. Instead:

foreign policy thinkers in Moscow who call for the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine do not seem to be guided by any of the ideas that Western analysts believe guide Russian foreign and security policy. In fact, their arguments seem to draw from another purported Russian doctrine, namely the idea of “escalating to de-escalate”—using a nuclear or other similarly catastrophic attack to shock an opponent into submission.²⁰

Nevertheless, Russian rhetoric threatens the use of nuclear weapons daily, whether on state-controlled television and social media or through the ramblings of Russian politicians, such as former President and Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev, now deputy head of the Russian Security Council. Medvedev’s threats against the West have become so extreme and out of touch with reality they have lost any ability to scaremonger Western policymakers and observers of the war in Ukraine.²¹

Russian media and bombastic rhetoric by ruling elites threatening the use of nuclear weapons are directed at a dovish audience in the West. China has supported Western calls for Russian leaders to de-escalate their rhetoric on using nuclear weapons. ‘While advocating for global annihilation’, extreme Russian television presenters portray Russia as a victim of Western subterfuge and an existential threat, ‘that can only be stopped by a nuclear strike, leaving no room for alternatives’. Such war mongering, ‘encourages Russian citizens to accept the inevitability of nuclear warfare and the potential necessity of a tactical strike for survival.’²²

Military experts such as Lawrence Freedman²³ play down Russia’s use of nuclear weapons because fundamentally they would not improve Russia’s position or degrade Ukraine’s ability to fight on the battlefield. Depending on the direction of the wind, a Russian tactical nuclear strike would potentially lead to high Russian (as well as Ukrainian) casualties. When Russia blew up the Nova Kakhovka dam, it did not warn some of its military units and Russian soldiers drowned. An additional factor that mitigates against the use of nuclear weapons is that the US has threatened that it would lead to a devastating US conventional response that would heavily incapacitate or destroy Russia’s army in Ukraine and result in its rapid military defeat. US Senators have warned that Russia’s use of tactical nuclear weapons or a terrorist attack at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe, would trigger article five of collective defence in NATO’s Charter.²⁴

The Crimean 'Red Line'

In 2014, Western governments advised Ukraine to not fight for Crimea. This was a strategic error that sent a signal to the Kremlin that Ukraine would also not fight Russia's invading forces in eastern Ukraine. This proved to be untrue and in August of that year Russia invaded the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to prevent its proxies from being defeated.

President Zelenskyy ignored Western government advice to accept Crimea's loss and raised the question of why Crimea was not included in the September 2014 and February 2015 Minsk agreements on the war in eastern Ukraine. Putin refused to revise these agreements to include Crimea. In August 2020, Zelenskyy launched the Crimean Platform to lobby internationally for Ukraine's sovereignty over the peninsula.²⁵

Western doves fear a Ukrainian attempt to liberate Crimea would trigger a 'red line' that would lead to Russia using tactical nuclear weapons. As Casey Michel has written, the Crimean red line no longer exists, if it indeed ever did.²⁶ There is no question Crimea will be the most difficult territory for Ukraine to liberate and reintegrate after eight years living under Russian occupation. Following the liberation of south-eastern Ukraine, the Crimean conundrum could possibly be resolved by a Western offer of Ukrainian membership of NATO in exchange for agreeing to Russia maintaining control of Crimea. It remains unclear though if either Kyiv or Moscow would agree to such a deal.

Ukrainian and Western backers, such as former Commander of US Army Europe Ben Hodges, do not envisage a Ukrainian military campaign using ground troops to liberate Crimea which would be costly in military and civilian casualties. Using HIMARS and long-range missiles firing their projectiles from the liberated Black Sea coast, Ukrainian policymakers, and Western supporters such as Hodges,²⁷ believe Crimea could be made untenable for Russia's occupation through its demilitarisation. Zelenskyy and Hodges believe Russia's war against Ukraine should end where it began in Crimea in 2014. Russia's continued control of Crimea allows it to threaten south-eastern Ukraine and blockade Ukrainian trade; therefore, a 'land for peace' deal that leaves Crimea in Russian hands is unacceptable to Kyiv.

Western Policy Mistakes Towards Russia

Former Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov reminded Western policymakers that:

Impunity for Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 brought about its occupation of Crimea in 2014; impunity for the occupation of Crimea led to the occupation of Donbas; impunity for the occupation of Donbas allowed for Russia's aggressive intervention in Syria; impunity for Syria and inattention to events in Crimea and Donbas resulted in the full-scale war in Ukraine – with hundreds of thousands killed, millions of refugees and humanitarian and ecological disasters.²⁸

Indeed, President Barack Obama's 'red line over Syria is remembered as a defining moment of his presidency' when he failed to follow through to halt Syrian chemical attacks against its population.²⁹

The West imposed no sanctions against Russia for its 2008 invasion of Georgia and the Kremlin's support for the 'independence' of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The West imposed weak sanctions in 2014 in response to the occupation of Crimea, invasion of eastern Ukraine and creation of two puppet entities in the Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics).

Germany continued to build Nord Stream II after 2014. Despite the 2006 and 2009 Ukrainian-Russian gas crises, Europe did not see a threat to its national security in being dependent on Russian gas. Nord Stream II was only shelved after the 2022 invasion when Europe, except for Hungary and Austria, became energy independent of Russia.³⁰

Russia illicitly purchased or obtained Western technology for its military arsenal that is now being used against Ukraine. Western companies continue to invest in Russia. Since the invasion, over 1000 companies have pulled out of Russia; nevertheless, some companies such as Unilever continue to operate there.³¹

High European dependency on Russian gas was lubricated by Russia's weaponisation of corruption. Russian oligarchs continued to be welcome throughout the Western world until Russia's invasion – even though they were Putin's indirect emissaries. Putin's weaponisation of corruption, which flowed through Russian oligarchs, was undertaken through invitations to join boards of directors of Russian companies, donations to political parties, paid vacations, consultancy contracts, and the purchase of media outlets. In 2020, the Conservative Government elevated Russian oligarch Evgeny Lebedev, the owner of British newspapers *The Independent* and *Evening Standard*, to a life peerage in the House of Lords. His father Alexander Lebedev was a 'former' officer of the KGB and SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service, one of several successors to the KGB) and a Russian oligarch.

And yet Putin never hid his anti-Western xenophobia and use of hybrid warfare against the West. Russia's first cyber-attack against NATO member Estonia took place as far back as 2007, the same year as his speech to the Munich Security Conference. Nevertheless, Western governments

ignored these signals for nearly two decades prior to the invasion of Ukraine. Western governments preferred to attempt resets with Russia, such as the Barack Obama administration in 2009, which not surprisingly failed. In the 2012 US presidential elections, Obama ridiculed Republican candidate Mitt Romney as a Cold War warrior for declaring Russia to be 'our number one geopolitical foe,' saying 'the Cold War's been over for twenty years,'³² only two years before Russia's occupation of Crimea and first invasion of eastern Ukraine.

The Obama administration and David Cameron's government ignored US and UK commitments to provide security assurances to Ukraine given under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum in return for giving up the world's third largest nuclear weapons arsenal. Obama added insult to injury by vetoing the provision of military assistance to Ukraine after 2014.³³

President Donald Trump did not veto US military assistance to Ukraine and sanctioned Nord Stream II; these sanctions were lifted by incoming President Joe Biden. But Trump was impeached for pressuring Zelenskyy to provide negative information on his competitor, Biden, in the US 2020 elections in return for allowing military aid to be sent to Ukraine.

On the eve of Russia's invasion, both Western governments and the Kremlin believed Russia had the second-best army in the world and Ukraine would be quickly defeated.³⁴ The US, UK and a small number of other Western governments therefore only sent weapons such as Javelins and NLAWs to be used for guerrilla warfare under a Russian occupation of Ukraine. Twenty months into the war, it is abundantly clear that Russia only has the second-best army in Ukraine.

Over nearly two decades prior to the invasion, Western governments got Russia wrong in many areas. It is therefore important for Western policymakers to not repeat these mistakes, to outline new policies to deal with the biggest crisis facing Europe since 1945 and to unite around the goal of supporting Ukraine's military victory and Russia's military defeat.

Hawks and Doves

The West is divided into hawks and doves over how to respond militarily to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The hawks are primarily the UK; four Scandinavian states of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland; three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; Poland; the Czech Republic; Romania and Japan. They declare that their goal is to support Russia's military defeat in its invasion of Ukraine.

The doves are led by the US and Germany who declare their goal as assisting Ukraine to not be defeated but these two countries have never stated their goal is the military defeat of Russia. France has shifted to a more hawkish stance, as seen in its supply of SCALP missiles and support for Ukraine joining NATO; nevertheless, President Emmanuel Macron has never said that he seeks Russia's military defeat.³⁵ 'I do not think, as some people do, that we must aim for a total defeat of Russia, attacking Russia on its own soil,' Macron said.³⁶

The US Biden administration is giving Ukraine enough military assistance to prevent military defeat but at the same time not enough to allow it to achieve Russia's military defeat. This is best reflected in the drip-feeding of military equipment to Ukraine. Ukrainians ask for specific supplies and they are told 'No!' They then ask again a month or so later and the response changes to 'Maybe?' On the third attempt the answer is 'Ok!' This has especially been the case with the supply of tanks, long-range missiles and fighter jets. France and Germany follow the US in the drip-feeding of the delivery of military equipment to Ukraine.

Other NATO members are either sitting on the fence and straddling the hawkish and dovish positions or they are internally divided. Türkiye has adopted both pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian stances throughout the war and is one of several countries accused of assisting Russia to break Western sanctions.³⁷ Nevertheless, since the July 2023 Vilnius NATO summit, Türkiye has aligned more closely to NATO and Ukraine's position. Hungary's blatantly pro-Russian stance and refusal to become energy independent of Russia makes it an outlier in NATO.

Canada and Israel have both been disappointments. Canada, which has a large Ukrainian diaspora and has traditionally been a strong supporter of Ukraine, has blamed its small military assistance to Ukraine on a low military budget in place since the early 1990s. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told NATO that Canada will never meet NATO's two percent of GDP defence spending target adopted in 2006.³⁸ Israel, which has historical ties to Ukraine, a country led by a Jewish president whose family was murdered by the Nazis in the Holocaust, has turned down Zelenskyy's requests to provide military assistance. This is surprising in view of Russia's close military alliance with Iran, a country that is arguably Israel's biggest security threat.³⁹ Israel and Ukraine are the only two countries threatened with extinction by Iran and Russia respectively.

This paper argues that the only way to remove Russia as a threat to Western security and end the war in Ukraine, which has had global ramifications, is by supporting the goal of Russia's military defeat which would lead to the end of Putin's rule. Russia's confrontation with the West,

which can be traced back as far as his xenophobic speech to the 2007 Munich Security Conference,⁴⁰ and Russia's war against Ukraine will not end if Putin remains Russia's president. Meanwhile, a negotiated 'land for peace' deal, that would reward Russia's military aggression with Ukrainian territory and would maintain Putin in power, would postpone the war to a second phase after Russia had rebuilt its military forces. Putin's Russia will never end its goal of destroying and subjugating a pro-Western Ukraine and replacing it with a loyal pro-Russian 'Little Russia'.

A New Strategy to Militarily Defeat Russia

The crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had global ramifications and comes on the back of the Covid pandemic. The costs to the world economy of Russia's invasion are astronomical. According to the UN, the Russian invasion has affected 1.6 billion people in 94 countries by triggering the biggest global cost of living (i.e., food, finance, energy) crisis.⁴¹

In the pre-1991 Cold War, China and Russia had poor relations, a situation that is no longer the case.⁴² The new Cold War pits a Russia-China-Iran-North Korea⁴³ axis against the West. The goal of this anti-Western axis is the defeat of the US-led unipolar world that has been in place since the end of World War II. China, using North Korea as an intermediary, Iran and North Korea are supplying Russia with military equipment. China supplies Russia with 67 percent of the components for its drones.⁴⁴ India, South Africa and Brazil lean heavily towards Russia. Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand are aligned with the West.

NATO and the EU are reinvigorated.⁴⁵ NATO has enlarged to include former neutral countries Finland and Sweden and the EU has offered candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova. The Baltic Sea has become a *de facto* NATO lake and the Black Sea could follow. The highest number of NATO members ever now support Ukraine joining NATO after the war ends. Through the provision of military assistance and training to Ukraine, the EU has become a military actor for the first time in its history.

Six Western Goals

Support Russia's Military Defeat: Following its defeat, Russia would take between five and ten years to rebuild its military forces. That would provide the West with a breathing space to 'park Russia' and focus on the bigger strategic threat of China. The West would find it very difficult to confront Russia and China simultaneously: supporting Ukraine's military defeat of Russia removes that potential scenario.

End the Drip-Feeding of Military Assistance: Ukraine should be given all the means needed to militarily defeat Russia, including intelligence on Russian military and political affairs and defence against cyber warfare.

Treat Putin as a Pariah and Russia as a Terrorist State: With an arrest warrant issued by the ICC, Putin should be treated as an international pariah and the West should stand firm in supporting war crimes trials after Russia is militarily defeated. The public murder of Wagner leader Yevgenny Prigozhin shows Russia to be a mafia state,⁴⁶ a description first made as long ago as 13 years back.⁴⁷ The US should declare Russia to be a state sponsor of terrorism.

Promote Dissent Within Russian Elites: Western intelligence agencies should reach out to dissenters in the Russian elites and members of the *siloviki* (security forces). The CIA has released a video aimed at recruiting such dissenters.⁴⁸ The West should provide training and military support to Ukrainian-backed anti-Putin proxy military forces. The June 2023 Wagner mutiny

showed how a sizeable constituency of Russian elites are unhappy with the direction Russia is taking.⁴⁹

Provide Ukraine with NATO Membership: Future rounds of the crisis can only be averted by closing the grey zone of security between the West (NATO, EU) and Eurasia (Collective Security Treaty Organisation, Eurasian Economic Union). Russia will only be thwarted from launching a second attempt at conquering Ukraine, after rebuilding its military forces, if the grey zone of insecurity is closed and Ukraine is a NATO member.⁵⁰ Ukraine should, therefore, be invited to join NATO after the war comes to an end – irrespective of whether it has liberated all its territories. After all, Western Germany joined NATO in 1955 before its eastern territory (the German Democratic Republic) was liberated and reunited 45 years later in 1990.

Manage Russia's Military Defeat: The West should support the transformation of Russia into a post-imperial democratic state through the management of regime change, secessionist threats and ensuring continued control over nuclear weapons. Russia's military defeat could presage the fracturing of the Russian Federation into different parts, similar to the way the USSR disintegrated in 1991, or it could again become a dysfunctional and failed state with autonomous republics operating as *de facto* independent entities, as it was in the 1990s. Nearly a third of Russia's population are national minorities who resent their use as cannon fodder in the war against Ukraine.⁵¹

Conclusion: Three Future Scenarios

Ukrainian Military Defeat: Assuming continued Western military, economic and financial support, Ukraine's military defeat is unlikely. Most Western military experts, including The Institute of War,⁵² a Washington-based think tank that has produced a daily *Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment*, believe Russia has insufficient reserves and its forces are too degraded to launch new military offensives.

The Kremlin is betting on a US election victory by Donald Trump that would end, or reduce, US military assistance to Ukraine. The outcome of the US elections cannot be predicted but it is important to understand that Trump – unlike Obama – did not veto the sending of military assistance to Ukraine and did impose sanctions on Nord Stream II. If Trump were to win, it is unclear, therefore, if this would automatically lead to a curtailment of US military assistance to Ukraine. Western policymakers should understand that the curtailment of military assistance could lead to Ukraine's military defeat with the war then being fought not indirectly through Ukraine but directly between NATO and Russia – with all the dangers this entails, including nuclear escalation.

It is unclear if a reduction in US support would influence European assistance to Ukraine. The EU provides more than double the humanitarian assistance to Ukraine (€7.6 billion) than the US (€3.6 billion), although the US has provided more military aid (€43 billion) compared to the EU (€28 billion). Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of Europeans support the supply of military assistance to Ukraine with Sweden, Portugal and Denmark having the highest support and Bulgaria, Cyprus and Slovakia the lowest.⁵³

'Land for Peace': A 'land for peace' agreement, championed by the Western left, Russophiles and realists, has very little public support in Ukraine and has been rejected out of hand by President Zelenskyy.⁵⁴ Between May 2022 and May 2023, 82–87 percent of Ukrainians opposed territorial concessions for peace.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the slow pace of Ukraine's counter-offensive is increasing public support in some Western countries for some form of negotiations to take place. At the same time, the opposite trend could take place if Ukraine is successful in breaking through Russia's fortifications in south-eastern Ukraine and reaches the Black Sea coast, which NATO leaders believe will take place in 2024. Ukraine's counter-offensive will continue during the 2023–2024 rainy and winter seasons. A 'land for peace' scenario would be a bad deal for Ukraine. The Kremlin has not publicly dropped its goal of subjugating all of Ukraine, however unrealistic this goal currently is, and a 'land for peace' deal would merely put off future wars after Russia had rebuilt its military power. In 2014, two Minsk peace agreements were signed by Russia and Ukraine after Russia occupied Crimea and half of the Donbas region of Ukraine. Throughout the next eight years, conflict continued as Russia never gave up its goals of using the Minsk agreements to transform Ukraine into a client state; when this failed, Russia launched its full-scale invasion to occupy all of Ukraine in 2022.

A 'land for peace' scenario would be a bad deal for the West. 'Land for peace' would postpone war until a second round of the world crisis, leading to a downturn in economic growth and trade and with the West again having to support Ukraine financially and militarily to fight Russia.

Russia's Military Defeat: End the drip-feeding of military assistance and provide Ukraine with all the means necessary to militarily defeat Russia. The half-way house preferred by the Biden administration of providing enough to prevent Ukraine from being defeated but not enough to allow it to win has increased the number of Ukrainian military and civilian casualties, led to greater destruction of Ukraine, and slowed the pace of Ukraine's counter-offensive. A quick end to the war would open the door for the rebuilding of post-war Ukraine with the use of Russian assets frozen by the West which would encourage many refugees to return home.

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