

THP (This House prefers) that Ukraine pursue a negotiated peace with Russia.

The West Needs a New Strategy in Ukraine

Foreign Affairs, By Richard Haass and Charles Kupchan, April 13, 2023

A Plan for Getting From the Battlefield to the Negotiating Table

Note: This article has been abridged.

After just over a year, the war in Ukraine has turned out far better for Ukraine than most predicted. Russia's effort to subjugate its neighbor has failed. Ukraine remains an independent, sovereign, functioning democracy, holding on to roughly 85 percent of the territory it controlled before Russia's 2014 invasion. At the same time, it is difficult to feel sanguine about where the war is headed. The human and economic costs, already enormous, are poised to climb as both Moscow and Kyiv ready their next moves on the battlefield. The Russian military's numerical superiority likely gives it the ability to counter Ukraine's greater operational skill and morale, as well as its access to Western support. Accordingly, the most likely outcome of the conflict is not a complete Ukrainian victory but a bloody stalemate. Against this backdrop, calls for a diplomatic end to the conflict are understandably growing. But with Moscow and Kyiv both vowing to keep up the fight, conditions are not yet ripe for a negotiated settlement. Russia seems determined to occupy a larger chunk of the Donbas. Ukraine appears to be preparing an assault to break the land bridge between the Donbas and Crimea, clearing the way, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky often asserts, for Ukraine to fully expel Russian forces and restore its territorial integrity.

The West needs an approach that recognizes these realities without sacrificing its principles. The best path forward is a sequenced two-pronged strategy aimed at first bolstering Ukraine's military capability and then, when the fighting season winds down late this year, ushering Moscow and Kyiv from the battlefield to the negotiating table. The West should start by immediately expediting the flow of weapons to Ukraine and increasing their quantity and quality. The goal should be to bolster Ukraine's defenses while making its coming offensive as successful as possible, imposing heavy losses on Russia, foreclosing Moscow's military options, and increasing its willingness to contemplate a diplomatic settlement. By the time Ukraine's anticipated offensive is over, Kyiv may also warm up to the idea of a negotiated settlement, having given its best shot on the battlefield and facing growing constraints on both its own manpower and help from abroad.

The second prong of the West's strategy should be to roll out later this year a plan for brokering a cease-fire and a follow-on peace process aimed at permanently ending the conflict. This diplomatic gambit may well fail. Even if Russia and Ukraine continue to take significant losses, one or both of them may prefer to keep fighting. But as the war's costs mount and the prospect of a military stalemate looms, it is worth pressing for a durable truce, one that could prevent renewed conflict and, even better, set the stage for a lasting peace.

THE WAR THAT WILL NOT END

For now, a diplomatic resolution to the conflict is out of reach. Russian President Vladimir Putin likely worries that if he stops fighting now, Russians will fault him for launching a costly, futile war. After all, Russian forces do not completely control any of the four oblasts that Moscow unilaterally annexed last September, NATO has grown bigger and stronger, and Ukraine is more alienated than ever from Russia. Putin seems to believe that time is on his side, calculating that he can ride out economic sanctions, which have failed to strangle the Russian economy, and maintain popular support for the war, an operation that, according to polls from the Levada Center, more than 70 percent of Russians still back. Putin doubts the staying power of Ukraine and its Western supporters, expecting that their resolve will wane. And he surely calculates that as his new conscripts enter the fight, Russia should be able to expand its territorial gains, allowing him to declare that he has substantially expanded Russia's borders when the fighting stops.

Ukraine is also in no mood to settle. The country's leadership and public alike understandably seek to regain control of all the territory Russia has occupied since 2014, including Crimea. Ukrainians also want to hold Moscow accountable for Russian forces' war crimes and make it pay for the immense costs of reconstruction. Besides, Kyiv has good reason to doubt whether Putin can be trusted to abide by any peace deal. Rather than looking to the West for diplomatic intervention, then, Ukrainian leaders are asking for more military and economic help. The United States and Europe have provided considerable intelligence, training, and hardware, but they have held off providing military systems of even greater capability, such as long-range missiles and advanced aircraft, for fear that doing so would provoke Russia to escalate, whether by using a nuclear weapon in Ukraine or deliberately attacking the troops

or territory of a NATO member.

...For all the good that greater Western military help would do, it is unlikely to change the fundamental reality that this war is headed for stalemate. It is of course possible that Ukraine's coming offensive proves stunningly successful and allows the country to reclaim all occupied territory, including Crimea, resulting in a complete Russian defeat. But such an outcome is improbable. Even if the West steps up its military assistance, Ukraine is poised to fall well short of vanquishing Russian forces. It is running out of soldiers and ammunition, and its economy continues to deteriorate. Russian troops are dug in, and fresh recruits are heading to the front.

Moreover, if Moscow's military position were to become precarious, it is quite possible that China would provide arms to Russia, whether directly or through third countries. Chinese President Xi Jinping has made a big, long-term wager on Putin and will not stand idly by as Russia suffers a decisive loss. Xi's visit to Moscow in March strongly suggests that he is doubling down on his partnership with Putin, not backing away from it. Xi might also calculate that the risks of providing military assistance to Russia are modest. After all, his country is already decoupling from the West, and U.S. policy toward China seems destined to get tougher regardless of how much Beijing supports Moscow...

AFTER STALEMATE

More of the same makes little sense. Even from Ukraine's perspective, it would be unwise to keep doggedly pursuing a full military victory that could prove Pyrrhic. Ukrainian forces have already suffered over 100,000 casualties and lost many of their best troops. The Ukrainian economy has shrunk by some 30 percent, the poverty rate is spiking, and Russia continues to bombard the country's critical infrastructure. Around eight million Ukrainians have fled the country, with millions more internally displaced. Ukraine should not risk destroying itself in pursuit of goals that are likely out of reach.

In Ukraine, Peace Now Means War Later

The Bulwark, By David J. Kramer, John Herbst, and William Taylor, November 28, 2023

Note: This article has been abridged.

[...]In Foreign Affairs, Richard Haass and Charles Kupchan repeated their previous calls for Ukraine to make concessions and strike a deal with Russia to end the war... In their latest misfire, Haass and Kupchan fail to understand that an aggressive Kremlin has its sights set on not just Ukraine but other countries in the region. If not stopped in Ukraine, Moldova or NATO member states might be next...

We know from two world wars in the past century that when aggression in Europe goes unanswered, the crisis does not burn itself out. It draws America in directly. That's why our commitment to Ukraine today is an investment in our own security. It prevents a broader conflict tomorrow.

The only way to prevent that broader conflict is to provide Ukraine with everything it needs to win. "Win"—as distinct from 'not lose'—means driving every Russian occupying and invading force from Ukrainian territory, forcing Russia to pay compensation for the damage it has done, and holding Putin and others responsible for the atrocities they have committed. Doing that will prevent Putin's war from widening and will deter other would-be Putins.

Haass and Kupchan acknowledge that their own proposal is unlikely to work. Putin is "much more likely" to "spurn a cease-fire proposal," they acknowledge. If so, why bother to press Ukraine to chase this fool's errand? Doing so would damage Ukrainian morale, signal to Putin our lack of commitment to Ukraine, and signal to our enemies everywhere that we cannot be trusted. It would give Putin the impression that he can wait out the West.

Moreover, under the Haass-Kupchan proposal, millions of Ukrainians would be condemned to life under Russian occupation, complete with oppression and war crimes. Yet somehow they write that "what began as a war of necessity for Ukraine—a fight for its very survival—has morphed into a war of choice, a fight to recapture Crimea and much of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine." Tell that to the Ukrainians living in those regions, or those in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson under Russian occupation now. If the Ukrainians reach a point where they decide they have had enough, that will be their call to make. Haass and Kupchan would have the United States force that decision on Ukraine—even though they acknowledge that Putin wants more.

Even in the unlikely event that Putin were to agree to a ceasefire, he would use the interlude to rebuild his military and launch yet another invasion of Ukraine. He's looking for a rest stop, not an off ramp.

Had the United States provided the weapons Ukraine has been asking for sooner, the war would look a lot different from how it does now. According to what a top Ukrainian official told us, since the launch of the counteroffensive in June, Ukraine has regained 483 square kilometers of territory. Top Ukrainian officials believe regaining control over all occupied Ukrainian territory is possible with the right level of Western support.

Ukraine has achieved great victories without any air support; the F-16s the United States promised won't arrive in Ukraine until next year, and even then, not in large numbers. Only recently has Ukraine acquired the long-range

missiles it has needed from day one, and only in limited supplies and with reduced range. Ammunition supplies on the Ukrainian side are running low, and supporters of Ukraine have done a poor job of ramping up their domestic production. The longer we take to deliver what Ukraine needs, the longer it will take Ukraine to reach victory. With the arrival of these new weapons, together with new electronic warfare technology and advanced drones and air defense, the Ukrainians tell us they can achieve a real breakthrough. Indeed, had we provided Ukraine in adequate numbers weapons like the 190-mile range ATACMs, F-16's, and electronic warfare equipment this year's land offensive would likely have achieved more than modest success.

And yet Haass and Kupchan assume Russia will prevail no matter what. Not only does this run counter to the facts on the ground and to major draft dodging in Russia during last year's "partial mobilization," but it is a disservice to the brave men and women of Ukraine, who have not only held back Russian forces but have gone on the offensive. Despite all the suffering on the Ukrainian side—indeed, paradoxically, maybe because of it—Ukraine has morale on its side.

Russian forces, by comparison, are deeply demoralized, as evidenced by reports of defections and executions of those who try to flee the fighting. Major breakthroughs by the Ukrainians could lead to mass defections among the Russian forces, leaving Putin without the troops to carry out his orders. Some one million Russians fled Russia when the war started and after Putin announced a mobilization last September. Russia has become a junior partner to China and relies on Iran and North Korea for materiel. Putin is limited in where he can travel abroad—nowhere where the host nation recognizes the International Criminal Court, which has indicted the Russian leader for war crimes. It's doubtful he could be entirely sure of his security if he were to take an impromptu stroll through central Moscow. And over the weekend, the wives of Russian soldiers published an extraordinary appeal on Telegram calling for their husbands' return home...

[...]

Counteroffensive 'did not achieve desired results,' Zelensky says

Kyiv Independent, By Nate Ostiller, December 1, 2023

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine is in a "new phase," President Volodymyr Zelensky said in an interview with the Associated Press published on Dec. 1.

"We have a new phase of war, and that is a fact...winter as a whole is a new phase of war," he said.

When asked about the counteroffensive, he acknowledged it had not gone as Ukraine had hoped, admitting that it "did not achieve the desired results."

A report by The New York Times on Sept. 28 found that Ukraine had gained about 230 square kilometers since the beginning of the year.

Ukraine is gearing itself for a likely uptick in Russian strikes on its energy infrastructure in what would be a repeat of its tactics the previous winter.

From fall 2022 to winter 2023, Russia launched a series of mass strikes across the country, targeting critical infrastructure sites and causing widespread power outages. Local authorities were forced to install power cut schedules to preserve electricity.

Russia launched a record number of drones against Ukraine on Nov. 25, with the primary target being Kyiv.

"That is why a winter war is difficult," Zelensky said.

Despite the setbacks, Zelensky highlighted that Ukraine had managed to make some territorial gains and has successfully attacked Russia's Black Sea Fleet to the point that its strength has been weakened.

"Look, we are not backing down, I am satisfied. We are fighting with the second (best) army in the world, I am satisfied," he said, but at the same emphasized that "We are losing people, I'm not satisfied. We didn't get all the weapons we wanted, I can't be satisfied, but I also can't complain too much."

Zelensky also acknowledged concerns that global attention was shifting toward the conflict between Israel and Hamas, saying that Ukrainians "also need to fight for attention for the full-scale war."

"You see, attention equals help. No attention will mean no help."

Despite this new phase of war, and the difficulties associated with winter, Zelensky said that Ukraine would not give up.

Civilian death toll in Ukraine tops 10,000 - U.N. Human Rights Office

Reuters, November 21, 2023

Note: This article has been abridged.

GENEVA, Nov 21 (Reuters) - More than 10,000 civilians have been killed in Ukraine since Russia invaded in February 2022, with about half of recent deaths occurring far behind the front lines, the U.N. Human Rights Office said on Tuesday.

The U.N. human rights mission in Ukraine, which has dozens of monitors in the country, said it expects the real toll to be "significantly higher" than the official tally since corroboration work is ongoing. Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians.

Ukraine cannot win against Russia now, but victory by 2025 is possible

Financial Times, by Richard Barrons, September 3, 2023

The writer is a former general in the British Army and was previously commander of Joint Forces Command

Ukraine's current counteroffensive will not throw Russia out — not that anyone expected it to. Nor is it likely to cut the occupation in half before the winter, which might have been one of the more optimistic aims. It has, however, shown how the Russian army can be beaten. Not in 2023, but in 2024 or 2025. Thus the refrain among western allies of supporting Kyiv "for as long as it takes".

The modest progress achieved this summer shows that, while overcoming a well-prepared conventional battlefield defence may be one of the hardest operations in war, it can be done. The Ukrainian military has only breached the first line of trenches to take Robotyne in the south, having battled for weeks through minefields to get there.

Progress is about eight miles with another 55 miles to go (through three lines of defences) before reaching the sea. The aim is to cut the land bridge to Crimea. To the north and south of Bakhmut, advances amount to about five miles with 10 miles to the Russian main defensive line and 60 miles to the border.

The presumed assassination of Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin and the top leadership of his mercenary group has had no effect on the fighting, save perhaps for stiffening the troops' loyalty to Vladimir Putin. Russian forces are stretched, worn out and short of reserves but unless they simply give up, this will still be a long haul.

Ukraine has enough air defence to cover about a third of the country. Shortages of artillery ammunition were resolved only temporarily by the US providing cluster shells. Ukraine will take until mid-2024 to reconstitute a sufficiently powerful air force and is very short of the key equipment needed to clear mines. Fixing all this will take the war into next year at the least.

It would be catastrophic to allow what is left of 10th Corps, Ukraine's uncommitted reserve, to be smashed to pieces on Russian defences because of a hasty timetable. Big wars — and this is a war for national survival along nearly 1,000km of front line — are fought at the scale and pace they evolve into. Defeating the Russian invasion relies on five crucial steps.

First, Kyiv must not press for substantial battlefield success before the means exist to deliver it. War is never best conducted as a close-run thing: Ukraine must be made stronger and Russia weaker or there will be stalemate. Second, relentless pressure must be maintained on the Russian occupation throughout the winter. This means sustaining the successful "bite and hold" operations (advancing in short bounds to reduce casualties and stay within artillery and air defence cover), within the limits of sustainable manpower and ammunition supply. Pinning Russian forces to the front will steadily erode strength, will and reserves. If the Red Army's morale is already poor, make it poorer.

Third, Ukraine must systemically weaken Russia's military grip on its territories into 2024 and beyond. Smashing the artillery arm is important, and so too are attacks on deeper targets across occupied Ukraine. The objective is to destroy Russian military capability faster than it can be replaced, rendering it unable to withstand a stronger future Ukrainian offensive. Kyiv is constrained by the western bar on use of its equipment and munitions in Russia itself — but it must still apply its own ingenuity and courage to strike hard beyond its borders.

Fourth, the Russian Black Sea Fleet must be neutralised as an engine for Moscow's devastating cruise missile strikes and a key constraint on the export of grain. Ukraine's own missile strikes and rapidly expanding maritime drone capability can damage Russian ships faster than they are replaced. By spring 2024, the Black Sea Fleet should be playing no major part in this war.

The fifth and most important aspect is to accept that this war turns on the defence industrial capacity of the west and Ukraine as the determining factor in military success. More could be provided from stocks, but Ukraine's campaign now relies on allies ramping up their defence industries. Ammunition from newly expanded production lines will take until at least mid-2024 to arrive in quantity; this should enable a major turning point in Kyiv's offensive capability.

Ukraine must win on the battlefield to survive as a state. Not only is this victory vital to Nato's security and its ongoing relationship with Russia, it will also influence China's appetite for military adventure. The current counteroffensive shows Putin's occupation can be beaten. It will take longer and cost more than we hoped, but hope isn't enough. The west must now commit to the harder campaign ahead or condemn Ukraine to fighting without the prospect of winning.

Kissinger Calls To Cede To Russia Akin to 1930s Appeasement, Zelensky

Says

Newsweek, May 26, 2022 at 4:03 AM EDT

Former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger's calls for Ukraine to give up part of its territory to reach a peace deal with Russia is akin to attempts to appease Nazi Germany in the 1930s, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

In a video address late on Wednesday, the Ukrainian leader shut down suggestions made by Kissinger on Monday that Ukraine should concede to Russia and give up two eastern regions occupied by Russian forces.

Kissinger, 98, who served as the 56th Secretary of State until 1977, suggested at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland this week that Ukraine and Russia should begin peace talks in the coming months, and that Zelensky should cede territory to Russian President Vladimir Putin to put an end to the war that began in February. Responding to the former secretary of state's remarks, Zelensky said Kissinger "emerges from the deep past and says that a piece of Ukraine should be given to Russia."

"Those who advise Ukraine to give something to Russia, these 'great geopolitical figures,' never see ordinary people, ordinary Ukrainians, millions living on the territory they are proposing to exchange for an illusory peace. You must always see people," he said.

Zelensky has repeatedly asserted that he will not give up territory to end the war with Russia, now in its third month. Ukraine has laid out key conditions, including that Ukraine would only consider the conflict over when the country regains control over land currently occupied by Russian troops.

"We want everything back," Zelensky said in an interview with a Ukrainian news channel on May 21. "Russia does not want to give anything away."

Newsweek has reached out to a Kissinger spokesperson for comment.

Putin Has Staked Russia's Resources on Victory in Ukraine. Can the West Match Him?

Wall Street Journal, By Marcus Walker, November 27, 2023

KYIV, Ukraine—As Russia's war against Ukraine approaches its third year, Moscow holds the advantage on the military, political and economic fronts.

Russia has far more men to replenish its battered army than the Ukrainians, who are running short of well-trained infantry. President Vladimir Putin is militarizing the Russian economy, using strong oil revenues to pay for rising weapons production. Meanwhile, political paralysis in the U.S. and Europe is threatening the supply of arms and money that Ukrainian survival depends on.

Western disarray and Russia's growing commitment of its human and industrial resources to the war point to a bitter year on the defensive for Ukraine. But the Russian army's limitations on the offensive—on display in the grueling fight for the city of Avdiivka—suggest it is more likely to grind out small gains than to achieve a breakthrough. Putin is still a long way from conquering the Ukrainian regions Russia has claimed—let alone from achieving his bigger goal of subjugating Ukraine, whose existence as an independent nation-state he has called a historical anomaly.

"The material advantages in 2024 are principally on Russia's side, but they don't appear decisive enough that Russia will be able to achieve its political aims," said Michael Kofman, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

"It's inaccurate to suggest that Russia is winning the war," Kofman said. "However, if the right choices are not made next year on Ukraine's approach and Western resourcing, then Ukraine's prospects for success look dim."

Economies at war

The U.S., European Union and U.K. have a combined annual economic output of about \$45 trillion—20 times the size of Russia's economy—and superior technology. On paper, Ukraine's backers are much stronger than its attacker. But Russia is making far more effort.

The Russian government's budget plan for 2024-26, approved earlier this month, shows the country devoting an ever-larger share of resources to the war. Military spending is set to rise to more than \$100 billion next year, the highest level since Soviet times. Factories are switching production from civilian goods to tanks and drones. Civilian sectors are paying the price, with shortages of capacity and workers pushing up inflation. But the stimulus from massive military spending is propping up the Russian economy, offsetting the effect of Western sanctions.

Moscow is using trade with third countries to import the sanctioned Western technologies that its arms producers need. It has also found a way to circumvent the West's price cap on its oil exports, by building up its own fleet of oil tankers that aren't subject to Western regulations.

Mass production has allowed Russia to catch up with Ukraine in making small battlefield drones, an area where

Ukrainian innovation previously gave it an edge, but where Ukraine's reliance on small workshops and volunteers is showing its limits.

The West has implemented only limited steps to boost military production. The U.S. is increasing its output of artillery shells, but EU countries are failing to coordinate to place orders and motivate investment in new defense production. The EU promised Ukraine a million artillery shells by next March, but officials say the bloc will fall far short. In contrast, North Korea provided Russia with a million shells in a short time this fall, according to South Korean intelligence.

European countries are running out of stockpiled arms and ammunition they can give Ukraine. Political divisions in Washington have already slowed U.S. deliveries. Shells from South Korea helped Ukrainian artillery to achieve parity with Russian forces for a part of this year. Now Ukrainian troops say they are at a disadvantage again. Ukraine's economy has withstood the Russian onslaught better than expected, even growing slightly this year after a deep crash when Russia invaded in early 2022. But Ukraine relies on Western money to cover civilian budget costs such as education and healthcare, allowing Kyiv to use its tax revenues to pay for the war.

"Military and financial assistance are critical for Ukraine to be successful, but we also need to become more self-reliant in weapons production and in economic resilience," said Pavlo Klimkin, a former Ukrainian foreign minister.

Political confusion

Putin's regime was shaken in June when paramilitary group Wagner revolted against the Russian government. But the revolt fizzled and Wagner's leaders were killed when their plane exploded. No one has dared to mount a serious challenge to Putin's authority since.

Instead, political tremors are currently stronger in the West and Ukraine.

The bipartisan consensus in Washington for supporting Ukraine has gradually unraveled as the U.S. presidential election cycle approaches, with objections to further aid growing among Republicans in the House of Representatives.

The EU is likewise struggling to approve funding. The bloc had promised to provide Kyiv with 50 billion euros, equivalent to around \$55 billion, over the coming years, but that pledge is now in doubt. Germany's self-imposed fiscal shackles have thrown EU spending plans into confusion, while Hungary's leader Viktor Orban, who has long had warm relations with Russia, is threatening to veto aid for Ukraine.

"It makes the whole EU look pretty weak. It's a big problem for us, but also for the EU," said Klimkin. The bloc risks exhibiting "a basic inability to deliver," he said.

In Kyiv, the failure of this summer's counteroffensive to retake Russian-occupied regions has exacerbated frictions between military and political leaders. Armed-forces chief Valeriy Zaluzhnyi's assessment that the war is going through a phase of stalemate drew a rebuke from President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is anxious to show public opinion and Western allies that Ukraine can advance. Zelensky's war aim of fully restoring Ukraine's international borders is seen as unrealistic by the West.

The military deadlock is reinforcing the view in Germany, Kyiv's most important European backer, that a cease-fire and negotiations with Moscow would be in Ukraine's interests. Berlin doesn't want to pressure Zelensky, however. The problem for cease-fire hopes remains that Putin has little reason to stop his invasion at a time when Western cohesion is weakening.

Even if Putin accepted a cease-fire, Kyiv fears he would exploit it to strengthen his forces and attack again. The Russian leader has a long record of renegeing on deals.

Many Western officials believe Putin is waiting to see who wins the U.S. presidential election in a year's time. If it is Donald Trump, European governments fear he could pull the plug on U.S. military support for Ukraine and even on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, leaving a militarily weak Europe scrambling to contain Russian expansionism.

A generation of EU politicians who for years underestimated Putin's challenge to the continent's post-Cold War order is struggling to adapt to the return of large-scale war between European states.

"I fear that we have not yet taken the measure of the adversary: It is not that strategic, not that intelligent, but it is very, very determined," said Constanze Stelzenmüller, a director at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

The battlefield balance

Some European officials even fear Ukraine's position on the battlefield could unravel this winter. The Ukrainian army is short of infantry after suffering heavy casualties in its summer counteroffensive and in the bloody defense of the city of Bakhmut last winter. Thanks to a dysfunctional draft system plagued by corruption, many of the replacements are men in their 40s and are often sent to the trenches with too little training.

Shortages of ammunition also mean Ukraine is unlikely to be able to mount another major offensive for some time. Ukrainian troops' establishment of a bridgehead on the east bank of the Dnipro River in the Kherson region is a rare bright spot, albeit small in scale.

But the Russian army is also struggling to achieve any notable breakthroughs, despite its numerical advantages in troops and equipment. Its infantry and vehicles are often older and of lower quality than the force it began the invasion with.

Both sides are finding it hard to advance across open, heavily mined terrain beneath skies buzzing with drones, which can attack troops and vehicles or direct accurate artillery fire.

Russia has massed its available reserves in eastern Ukraine, where it is trying to break through at several points, with little success. Even at Avdiivka, Russia's main target this fall, its forces are inching forward at a huge cost in men and materiel.

Ukraine's weary forces can still mount an effective defense along the 600-mile front if they husband their resources, limiting Russia to local gains only, say Ukrainian officers and Western experts. The defense ministry in Kyiv is planning to build new defensive fortifications, having seen how effective Russia's entrenched defenses in southern Ukraine were this summer.

"Next year can be put to good use as a build year to reconstitute the Ukrainian military," said Kofman. Kyiv needs to improve troop mobilization and training, forgo major offensives and fortify its lines, he said. "If that doesn't happen, then next year can become a turning point, after which Ukraine will increasingly become disadvantaged."

The War in Ukraine Was Provoked—and Why That Matters to Achieve Peace

Common Dreams, By Jeffrey D. Sachs, May 23, 2023

By recognizing that the question of NATO enlargement is at the center of this war, we understand why U.S. weaponry will not end this war. Only diplomatic efforts can do that.

George Orwell wrote in 1984 that "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." Governments work relentlessly to distort public perceptions of the past. Regarding the Ukraine War, the Biden administration has repeatedly and falsely claimed that the Ukraine War started with an unprovoked attack by Russia on Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In fact, the war was provoked by the U.S. in ways that leading U.S. diplomats anticipated for decades in the lead-up to the war, meaning that the war could have been avoided and should now be stopped through negotiations.

Recognizing that the war was provoked helps us to understand how to stop it. It doesn't justify Russia's invasion. A far better approach for Russia might have been to step up diplomacy with Europe and with the non-Western world to explain and oppose U.S. militarism and unilateralism. In fact, the relentless U.S. push to expand NATO is widely opposed throughout the world, so Russian diplomacy rather than war would likely have been effective.

The Biden team uses the word "unprovoked" incessantly, most recently in Biden's major speech on the first-year anniversary of the war, in a recent NATO statement, and in the most recent G7 statement. Mainstream media friendly to Biden simply parrot the White House. The New York Times is the lead culprit, describing the invasion as "unprovoked" no fewer than 26 times, in five editorials, 14 opinion columns by NYT writers, and seven guest op-eds!

There were in fact two main U.S. provocations. The first was the U.S. intention to expand NATO to Ukraine and Georgia in order to surround Russia in the Black Sea region by NATO countries (Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Georgia, in counterclockwise order). The second was the U.S. role in installing a Russophobic regime in Ukraine by the violent overthrow of Ukraine's pro-Russian President, Viktor Yanukovich, in February 2014. The shooting war in Ukraine began with Yanukovich's overthrow nine years ago, not in February 2022 as the U.S. government, NATO, and the G7 leaders would have us believe.

The key to peace in Ukraine is through negotiations based on Ukraine's neutrality and NATO non-enlargement. Biden and his foreign policy team refuse to discuss these roots of the war. To recognize them would undermine the administration in three ways. First, it would expose the fact that the war could have been avoided, or stopped early, sparing Ukraine its current devastation and the U.S. more than \$100 billion in outlays to date. Second, it would expose President Biden's personal role in the war as a participant in the overthrow of Yanukovich, and before that as a staunch backer of the military-industrial complex and very early advocate of NATO enlargement. Third, it would push Biden to the negotiating table, undermining the administration's continued push for NATO expansion. The archives show irrefutably that the U.S. and German governments repeatedly promised to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not move "one inch eastward" when the Soviet Union disbanded the Warsaw Pact military alliance. Nonetheless, U.S. planning for NATO expansion began early in the 1990s, well before Vladimir Putin was Russia's president. In 1997, national security expert Zbigniew Brzezinski spelled out the NATO expansion timeline with remarkable precision.

U.S. diplomats and Ukraine's own leaders knew well that NATO enlargement could lead to war. The great US scholar-statesman George Kennan called NATO enlargement a "fateful error," writing in the New York Times that,

“Such a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations, and to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking.” President Bill Clinton’s Secretary of Defense William Perry considered resigning in protest against NATO enlargement. In reminiscing about this crucial moment in the mid-1990s, Perry said the following in 2016: “Our first action that really set us off in a bad direction was when NATO started to expand, bringing in eastern European nations, some of them bordering Russia. At that time, we were working closely with Russia and they were beginning to get used to the idea that NATO could be a friend rather than an enemy ... but they were very uncomfortable about having NATO right up on their border and they made a strong appeal for us not to go ahead with that.” In 2008, then U.S. Ambassador to Russia, and now CIA Director, William Burns, sent a cable to Washington warning at length of grave risks of NATO enlargement: “Ukraine and Georgia's NATO aspirations not only touch a raw nerve in Russia, they engender serious concerns about the consequences for stability in the region. Not only does Russia perceive encirclement, and efforts to undermine Russia's influence in the region, but it also fears unpredictable and uncontrolled consequences which would seriously affect Russian security interests. Experts tell us that Russia is particularly worried that the strong divisions in Ukraine over NATO membership, with much of the ethnic-Russian community against membership, could lead to a major split, involving violence or at worst, civil war. In that eventuality, Russia would have to decide whether to intervene; a decision Russia does not want to have to face.”

Ukraine’s leaders knew clearly that pressing for NATO enlargement to Ukraine would mean war. Former Zelensky advisor Oleksiy Arestovych declared in a 2019 interview “that our price for joining NATO is a big war with Russia.”

During 2010-2013, Yanukovich pushed neutrality, in line with Ukrainian public opinion. The U.S. worked covertly to overthrow Yanukovich, as captured vividly in the tape of then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt planning the post-Yanukovich government weeks before the violent overthrow of Yanukovich. Nuland makes clear on the call that she was coordinating closely with then Vice President Biden and his national security advisor Jake Sullivan, the same Biden-Nuland-Sullivan team now at the center of U.S. policy vis-à-vis Ukraine.

After Yanukovich’s overthrow, the war broke out in the Donbas, while Russia claimed Crimea. The new Ukrainian government appealed for NATO membership, and the U.S. armed and helped restructure the Ukrainian army to make it interoperable with NATO. In 2021, NATO and the Biden Administration strongly recommitted to Ukraine’s future in NATO.

In the immediate lead-up to Russia’s invasion, NATO enlargement was center stage. Putin’s draft US-Russia Treaty (December 17, 2021) called for a halt to NATO enlargement. Russia’s leaders put NATO enlargement as the cause of war in Russia’s National Security Council meeting on February 21, 2022. In his address to the nation that day, Putin declared NATO enlargement to be a central reason for the invasion.

Historian Geoffrey Roberts recently wrote: “Could war have been prevented by a Russian-Western deal that halted NATO expansion and neutralised Ukraine in return for solid guarantees of Ukrainian independence and sovereignty? Quite possibly.” In March 2022, Russia and Ukraine reported progress towards a quick negotiated end to the war based on Ukraine’s neutrality. According to Naftali Bennett, former Prime Minister of Israel, who was a mediator, an agreement was close to being reached before the U.S., U.K., and France blocked it.

While the Biden administration declares Russia’s invasion to be unprovoked, Russia pursued diplomatic options in 2021 to avoid war, while Biden rejected diplomacy, insisting that Russia had no say whatsoever on the question of NATO enlargement. And Russia pushed diplomacy in March 2022, while the Biden team again blocked a diplomatic end to the war.

By recognizing that the question of NATO enlargement is at the center of this war, we understand why U.S. weaponry will not end this war. Russia will escalate as necessary to prevent NATO enlargement to Ukraine. The key to peace in Ukraine is through negotiations based on Ukraine’s neutrality and NATO non-enlargement. The Biden administration’s insistence on NATO enlargement to Ukraine has made Ukraine a victim of misconceived and unachievable U.S. military aspirations. It’s time for the provocations to stop, and for negotiations to restore peace to Ukraine.

Putin ally: West increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction being used

Reuters, By Guy Faulconbridge November 8, 2023

MOSCOW, Nov 8 (Reuters) - Nikolai Patrushev, a powerful ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, said on Wednesday that the "destructive" policies of the United States and its allies were increasing the risk that nuclear, chemical or biological weapons would be used.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to the most serious confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, and the post-Cold War arms control architecture has crumbled. The West says the war in Ukraine is a Russian imperial-style land grab. The Kremlin says the conflict is part of a broader struggle with a declining West which it accuses of sowing chaos around the world to try to maintain its dominance.

Patrushev said the post-Cold War order, including the dominance of the United States, was waning.

"The natural consequence of the United States' destructive policies is the deterioration in global security," Patrushev was quoted by state news agency TASS as telling colleagues from a grouping of post-Soviet republics.

"The risk that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will be used is increasing," he said. "The international arms control regime has been undermined."

Patrushev gave no specific details of where weapons of mass destruction might be used, but accused Washington of failing to bring peace to the Middle East and of escalating the war in Ukraine by supporting Kyiv.

Patrushev, 72, is a former KGB officer who has known Putin since the 1970s when they worked together in the Soviet security service. His remarks offer an insight into the thinking at the very top of the Kremlin elite.

His comments followed U.S. criticism of a Russian decision on Tuesday to withdraw from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a post-Cold War security agreement. Washington said the decision showed Moscow's disregard for arms control, and U.S. officials have warned that Russia could use a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine, a suggestion that Putin has played down.

PUTIN HAWK

The war in Ukraine has boosted the influence of hawks in the Kremlin such as Patrushev, who view the Soviet collapse as a disaster and the U.S. as a malign influence.

As secretary of Russia's Security Council, Patrushev is at the heart of foreign and security policy decision making.

"The Anglo-Saxons and the collective West as a whole are losing influence," Patrushev said, accusing the West of trying to destabilise the situation in countries that steered an independent course.

The U.S. casts China as its biggest competitor and Russia as its biggest nation-state threat. President Joe Biden has said this century will be defined by an existential contest between democracies and autocracies.

Patrushev said the West had for years been preparing Ukraine for war with Russia, and that Ukraine had tried to attack Russian nuclear power stations, including the Leningrad, Kalinin and Kursk plants.

"On October 26, a Ukrainian UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) hit a nuclear waste warehouse on the territory of the Kursk Nuclear Power Station," Patrushev was shown saying on state television.

Reuters could not verify his assertions, for which he offered no specific evidence. Ukraine did not immediately comment.

U.S. Deliberation During Hungary's 1956 Uprising Offers Lessons on Restraint

Current Affairs, by Branko Marcetic, June 1, 2022

NOTE: This article has been abridged.

After decades of relative peace, the world suddenly finds itself on the edge of global war and nuclear conflict...

As we find ourselves grappling again with dilemmas and risks we thought we'd left behind in the Cold War, it pays to look at what we can learn from how U.S. leadership responded to similar events at the height of that conflict. In 1956, when the world was barely more than a decade removed from the devastation of World War Two and the atomic bombing of Japan, Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower was faced with not one, but three international crises—and in the middle of a re-election campaign no less. Declassification and hindsight means we now have an unprecedented understanding of the administration's thinking as the crisis unfolded.

In a world where global war and nuclear destruction weren't abstract concepts, but very real and recent calamities, Western policymakers responded to the Soviet invasion of Hungary with a caution (some would say excessive) that seems unthinkable today.

Avoiding World War III

Today, concerns about direct conflict between the two nuclear superpowers go almost entirely unmentioned, or are even explicitly waved away. In 1956, worries about military, and potentially nuclear, escalation were central.

By 1956, the Cold War was in full swing, and Europe was divided by an Iron Curtain. NATO and its allies stood ready in the West to defend against any future Soviet incursion into their sphere, while the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw Pact did the same in the east. Under Eisenhower, a former general who had led the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe, U.S. policy aimed at "keeping the pot boiling" in Eastern Europe—by covertly encouraging unrest and even underground resistance—but not to let it "boil over" into outright war.

But the temperature was raised when two of the Soviet Union's satellites rebelled. First, Poland saw a mass worker

uprising from June onward that year over political and economic conditions, which, after a standoff that nearly resulted in Soviet military intervention, ultimately ended in compromise and concessions.

Come October 23, thousands of protesters poured into the streets of Hungary, demanding democratic freedoms and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from their country. Days of fierce fighting brought reformist communist Imre Nagy to power. He secured the removal of Soviet forces, freed political prisoners, and pledged the establishment of free elections and political freedoms. When Nagy acceded to popular sentiment and announced Hungary's exit from the Warsaw Pact as well, Soviet leadership, after days of dithering, this time redeployed its military on November 4 and crushed the revolution.

We now know, thanks to a 2012 draft study prepared for the historical office of the secretary of defense, that the decision-making of U.S. and other Western officials throughout these crises was driven by the desire to avoid another world war. Eisenhower, thinking of Adolf Hitler's actions in the face of defeat in an earlier era, feared that Soviet leadership, "in view of the serious deterioration of their position in the satellites, might ... resort to very serious measures and even to precipitate global war."

Other officials were similarly cautious. The Joint Chiefs discussed the risk that "serious defeat by the Soviets could conceivably result in precipitous action on their part." Defense Secretary Charles Wilson similarly ruled out military intervention to the press, expressing the hope that things would be solved, as "many times they are, by men of good will ... work[ing] something out that is just and fair..."

The outcome was not pretty for Hungary. Twenty-six-hundred Hungarians were killed and 200,000 would flee the country, while Nagy and the other leaders of the revolution were arrested and executed. We'll never know if a bolder set of diplomatic offers might have averted this outcome because they were never tried; as a result, the Hungarian revolt ended in a bloody clampdown instead.

What the Eisenhower administration did do was avoid a wider war, in line with both the president's concerns and the wider mood among NATO allies. "Its cautious response, in part because of the Suez crisis, managed to avert an East-West military clash whose consequences would likely have represented a far greater disaster than the snuffing out of a nascent Hungarian democracy," states the 2012 study...
