# Russian Appeasement Disadvantage

## File Explanation

This disadvantage argues that trying to cooperate with Russia while they are breaking international law and invading Ukraine appeases (rewards) them, and encourages further aggression. This **only** links to the Science Diplomacy Affirmative and the Russian Natural Gas Affirmative. **You should NOT read it against either the Domain Awareness Affirmative or the Native Renewables Affirmative.**

The **uniqueness** for this disadvantage claims that Russia will eventually lose. This is a tricky argument, because the reality on the ground is that there is a protracted stalemate, and neither side is winning or losing. However, this disadvantage claims that stalemate benefits Ukraine, because the longer the war goes on, the harder it will be for Russia to economically, militarily and politically sustain the war. Instead, they will be forced to negotiate a peace settlement that recognizes most of Ukraine’s goals.

The **link** claims that the plan reverses this situation. Russia will see the plan’s offer of cooperation on the Arctic as weakness, because in 2022, cooperation ended explicitly because of Ukraine. The plan reverses this policy and makes it look like the United States now supports Russia. The link evidence claims that Putin will only agree to the plan if the US reduces its support for Ukraine, thereby giving Russia a military advantage it can use to win.

The **impact** claims that Russian victory in Ukraine would be very dangerous. First, it would encourage additional Russian aggression elsewhere. Second, it sends a signal to other would be aggressors like China (over Taiwan) that war is acceptable, and it would encourage more wars throughout the world.

While the two 2AC blocks here are for different affirmatives, there’s nothing preventing the science diplomacy affirmative from reading the humiliation impact turn. So make sure that you read through BOTH 2AC blocks and look at the appropriate responses.

### 1NC – Russian Appeasement DA (Science Diplomacy)

#### Uniqueness – Stalemate in Ukraine will exhaust Russia and force a settlement on Ukraine’s terms

Maria Snegovaya and Max Bergmann, 2025 – \*Senior Fellow, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at CSIS, and \*\*Director, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and Stuart Center at CSIS “Beyond Appeasement: What is Feasible for Ukraine” Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/beyond-appeasement-what-feasible-ukraine> //DH

However, Ukraine’s position has not collapsed, nor is its situation as helpless as Trump makes it appear. Ukraine faced a full-scale invasion from the second largest army in the world and on paper is weaker than Russia in terms of population size, economic resources, and weapons stockpiles. Still, Ukraine in the last three years has been able to preserve its sovereignty and existence as an independent state, in addition to militarily exhausting and draining Russia, and trapping the Kremlin in a military quagmire. The Ukrainian army has even managed to achieve what was considered as utterly unthinkable a decade ago—it has occupied Russian territory and conducted successful intelligence operations inside Russia. Given these major achievements, accepting Russian conditions highly unfavorable to Ukraine is not justified by the current situation on the ground. Instead, sustained Western assistance to Ukraine has strong prospects of ensuring a stalemate able to both protect European security and enable Ukraine to realize its goal of a future inside the European Union.

Economically, the war has put a significant strain on Russia’s economy. While Russia has qualitatively altered its military potential (ramping up production and introducing new weapons), the adjustment is not sufficient to change the stalemate on the ground. Not even the assistance of Iran and North Korea has been able to radically alter the situation. While it is not at risk of immediate economic crisis, Russia has reached capacity and appears to have reached supply-side constraints that prevent it from significantly boosting its military and industrial base. As economist Alexandra Prokopenko pointed out in her December 2024 report: “The industry, including the military industry, has hit a ceiling in terms of both production capacity, which is 81 [percent] loaded, and labor resources: 73 [percent] of enterprises complain about a shortage of personnel, the economy is almost at full employment—unemployment is 2.3 [percent].” With the record low unemployment rate, labor shortages are particularly pronounced, limiting Russia’s ability to increase production. These shortages have contributed to accelerating inflation despite the Central Bank of Russia spiking its key rate at the unusually high 21 percent per annum. While state-investment driven growth reached 3.6 percent in 2023 and 3.8 percent in 2024, it is now expected to decelerate to around 1 percent in 2025 and 2026. The combination of accelerating inflation and slowing growth is threatening the Russian economy with real risks of stagflation. Along with other factors, such as depleting rainy funds, in the future these trends could combine to create a “perfect storm” in the Russian economy. This is one of the reasons behind Russia’s eagerness to get sanctions lifted after signing a temporary ceasefire deal.

Militarily, while having boosted industrial production and so far maintained the inflow of volunteer recruits (albeit at a constantly growing price tag), Russia is still struggling to operate in the current environment. By the end of 2024, half as many tanks were left at Russian storage bases as there were prior to its 2022 invasion of Ukraine (and most of those left are of inferior quality). If the war continues, by the end of 2025 Russia is likely to run out of stocked tanks suitable for restoration and repair, and its capacity to produce new tanks from scratch remains limited to several dozen per month. While being able to regenerate forces, the Russian military has suffered from heavy losses and limitations in combat capabilities, being unable to break through the front and turn this into a war of maneuver. Instead, it has been slowly grinding Ukraine down with constant assaults: taking several emptied Ukrainian villages at the sky-high cost of about 30,000–45,000 casualties per month. As military analyst Dara Massicot suggests, the current state of the Russian military in Ukraine is that “of a car that has blown its transmission. It cannot get into the higher gears, because of the damages and the casualties and the losses that it has sustained.” While a Russian breakthrough remains possible if Ukraine reaches the point of collapse, it for now remains unlikely.

Altogether, in view of the existing economic and military constraints, Russia’s ability to achieve its maximalist goals in Ukraine through military means alone remains a distant prospect, so long as Western aid to Ukraine continues and sanctions on Russia remain in place. Thus, instead of peace negotiations, both Ukraine and the West should now be focused on sustaining this stalemate.

Ukraine has so far been reluctant to shift to a defensive strategy and had not constructed the same level of fortifications that Russia did in the winter of 2022 and 2023 under the leadership of General Sergey Surovikin. This is in part because Ukraine remained determined to regain the offensive. As such, it prioritized generating new combat brigades, as opposed to filling gaps in the brigades holding its defensive line. Ukraine has recently shifted its approach to using new recruits to plug holes along the front, which is a welcome shift.

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Additionally, Russia’s frozen central bank assets are largely in Europe. The EU and European governments should take steps to unfreeze these assets and transfer them to Ukraine. This will then provide financial support for its economy and additional resources for its defense industrial sector or to make additional procurements. These steps by Europe will at the very least help freeze the conflict and prevent Ukraine from losing the war through Western negligence.

By cutting off Russia’s path to win the war on the battlefield by demonstrating a long-term commitment to Ukraine, Europe will then have created clear incentives for Russia to seek a negotiated settlement to the war, rather than continuing to slam its exhausted military against Ukrainian lines without the hope of a breakthrough. Ukraine will know it can hold its position and has the resources to maintain its defensive position. Furthermore, should Ukraine receive greater quantities of advanced European weaponry, such as long-range missiles and advanced fighter aircraft, it may be able to impose even greater costs on Russia. With Russia’s economy beginning to reach constraints, its military losses building, Russia over time may be forced to drastically climb down from its maximalist position in negotiations. A massive European effort that forecloses the prospects of Russian victory may also crater Russian morale on the front. Such swings can happen in war, particularly wars of attrition. Regardless, a major European effort to support Ukraine and further degrade the Russian military will also buy Europe time to rearm itself and engage in the potentially arduous task of replacing U.S. forces in Europe should there be significant drawdowns.

#### Link - The plan signals to Russia that cooperation in the Arctic is more important than supporting Ukraine

Samu Paukkunen and James Black, 2024 - Samu Paukkunen is the deputy director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. James Black is assistant director of the Defence and Security research group at RAND Europe. “Arctic cooperation with Russia: at what price?”

International Affairs, Volume 100, Issue 6, November 2024, Pages 2637–2648, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiae226>. Oxford Academic Database, accessed via University of Michigan //DH

Conclusion

Resuming cooperation in the Arctic Council, even at the working group level, risks sending an unintended signal to the Russian leadership that it can continue its aggression and war crimes and still keep its position in the key regional body, because it is too important a nation to be cast out and because this cooperation is ‘too big to fail’. It also risks messaging to Russia that, in the Arctic, western countries are so keen to reassure Russia that they are not a threat that they are willing to blur or overlook the values that the West has so vocally promised to support in Ukraine. Even more worrying, if the continuation of Arctic cooperation with Russia seems so important, Arctic 7 countries may continue to self-limit their deterrence and military posture in the region out of fears as to what Russia could do—rather than taking full advantage of the window of opportunity presented by Finnish and Swedish accession to NATO and the Russian military's distraction and depletion—at least in the near term—due to the government's costly miscalculation in invading Ukraine.59

Russia is a master in only a few areas, but especially so in making use of the weaknesses of its opponents, including through coercive and subversive activities in the ‘grey zone’ and exploitation of the norms and structures of international institutions.60 In the Arctic, Russia has been able to exploit the increasingly debunked myth of Arctic exceptionalism and the West's willingness to reassure and engage in diplomacy, seemingly without enduring consequences for Russian aggression, for a long period. While NATO and the Western Arctic states strive to find a careful balance between deterrence, censure, dialogue and reassurance, Russia has promoted its own mix of coercion, subversion, ambiguity, deflection and fear61—of escalation, of arms races, of a new region of conflict or of bringing the Chinese more prominently into Arctic affairs.62 Resuming Arctic Council cooperation with Russia risks proving the effectiveness of the latter's strategy of blackmail. Russia is likely to continue to use the Council as a bargaining tool, as a showcase of its power in the region, and as fodder for propaganda narratives both at home and for international audiences. It is likely also to continue to use the Council to sow discord among its western members.63

Ultimately, while there are legitimate motives for wanting to maintain the worthy ambitions of the Arctic Council, the price is too high to pay. The Arctic is no longer exceptional, if it ever was, and neither should the Council be insulated from the diplomatic fallout of Russia's decision to attack Ukraine. Official contact with Russia should remain suspended, and the Arctic 7 could then adopt the model exemplified by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, which has strengthened practical cooperation measures in Russia's absence.64 Projects involving Russia should remain paused until Moscow is ready to reverse its aggression against Ukraine and to engage in good faith in the polar regions, rather than weaponizing Arctic exceptionalism for its coercive ends.

#### Internal link. Russia will use the plan to force concessions on Ukraine as the price of agreement – that paves the way for a Russian-led international order

Mikhail Komin and Joanna Hosa, 2025 - Mikhail Komin was a visiting fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. He regularly provides analytical comments for media outlets such as TVRain, Forbes, Carnegie, Novaya Gazeta, and Radio Liberty. Joanna Hosa was a policy fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. She has held a range of positions at the European Commission, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the Open Society European Policy Institute, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and the International Federation on Human Rights. “The bear beneath the ice: Russia’s ambitions in the Arctic” European Council on Foreign Relations, 5/27, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-bear-beneath-the-ice-russias-ambitions-in-the-arctic/> //DH

Moscow is increasingly linking its Arctic diplomacy to its broader war-and-peace calculus on Ukraine. Early signs of US attempts to broker a political resolution to the war have reignited the Kremlin’s hopes for a “grand bargain”, in which symbolic Arctic concessions—such as downplaying Chinese involvement or reengaging with Western formats—could be exchanged for more substantive gains in Ukraine and beyond.

Europeans must be ready for this tactic and avoid mistaking performative gestures for real policy shifts. In particular, the Kremlin is likely to court Western—especially American—interest in selective Arctic cooperation, using promises of investment access to seek sanctions relief. Even if Washington engages, European leaders should remain firm and sceptical of such overtures and remind Trump that illusions of Russia’s flexibility in the Arctic could be used to obscure continued intransigence elsewhere.

Even though Europeans have so far had little say in the Ukraine negotiation process compared to the US, they still hold some sway in their own right. Europeans should use this to distinguish between genuine strategic threats and the Kremlin’s performative signals intended to pressure the West into restoring cooperation. Despite its rhetoric, Russia is unlikely to withdraw from multilateral Arctic frameworks or abandon UNCLOS mechanisms—particularly its shelf extension claims—unless Western countries move to politicise these processes, for example by stalling Russia’s submissions due to sanctions.

Moscow’s underlying objective is likely to restore pre-2022 formats of Arctic cooperation, particularly within the Arctic Council, and thus rehabilitate its international standing without altering its behaviour in Ukraine. Europeans must therefore be clear that no return to “business as usual” in Arctic governance is acceptable without a ceasefire or durable settlement to the conflict.

On thin ice

The Kremlin is investing heavily in the Arctic and will continue to do so. In the dreams of Russia’s leaders, they will sit down with the West—mostly with the US—and renegotiate the world order in their favour. They will likely try to sell illusory concessions in the Arctic, among others, while sacrificing nothing of principle in order to gain in Ukraine. Europeans must not underestimate Russia’s continued military build-up in the Arctic, which—despite pressures elsewhere—remains a long-term Kremlin priority. Instead, they must track these developments and prepare a coherent NATO-based response, independent of shifting US leadership and Moscow’s thin veil of concessions.

#### Impact. Ukrainian loss creates global instability, greenlighting revanchism that sparks nuclear war

Victor Liakh, 2025 – CEO of the East Europe Foundation. “Abandoning Ukraine would plunge the entire world into an era of instability” Atlantic Council, 1/9 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/abandoning-ukraine-would-plunge-the-entire-world-into-an-era-of-instability/> //DH

Ever since Donald Trump’s November 2024 election victory, speculation has been mounting over a potential peace deal to end the Russian invasion of Ukraine. With Russian forces currently enjoying the battlefield initiative and amid doubts over continued US support for Kyiv, many observers believe Ukraine may have little choice but to accept highly unfavorable peace terms dictated by the Kremlin. Russia’s conditions would likely include the loss of territory along with wholesale disarmament and the imposition of permanent neutral status.

The implications of such a shameful peace for Ukrainian statehood would be catastrophic. Nor would the damage be contained within Ukraine’s violated borders. On the contrary, the consequences of abandoning Ukraine would reverberate around the world for many years to come, undermining the foundations of international security.

If it happens, the fall of Ukraine may not be immediately apparent. Indeed, it could even be temporarily disguised by face-saving talk of pragmatism and compromise. However, a demilitarized, partitioned, and internationally isolated postwar Ukraine without credible security guarantees would have little chance of surviving for long. Behind the diplomatic platitudes, it would be painfully obvious that Ukraine was now completely at Putin’s mercy. In such circumstances, a new Russian invasion would be merely a matter of time.

The spirit of the 1938 Munich Agreement looms large over prospective US-brokered peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. With pressure mounting on Ukraine to make concessions to the aggressor, it is hardly surprising that many are comparing the current situation to the ugly deal between Western leaders and Nazi Germany that sealed the fate of Czechoslovakia and paved the war for World War II. Just as British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich brandishing Hitler’s worthless signature and declaring “peace for our time,” critics now fear that similar efforts to appease Putin will set the stage for further Russian aggression.

Ukraine’s demise as an independent state would confirm the failure of the existing international security architecture. In its place, we would enter a new era of international affairs dominated by a handful of Great Powers seeking to establish their own spheres of influence, with smaller countries reduced to the role of buffer states. A climate of insecurity would initially take root from the Baltic to the Balkans, and would soon spread to the wider world.

The collapse of the rules-based international order would inevitably undermine the credibility of the West. Meanwhile, authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea would be significantly strengthened. Moscow would almost certainly escalate its ongoing hybrid war against the democratic world, and may seek further territorial gains in Central Asia, the Caucasus, or Eastern Europe. Autocrats in Beijing, Tehran, and beyond would draw the logical conclusions from Putin’s victory in Ukraine and embrace expansionist foreign policies of their own.

With the sanctity of international borders no longer assured, countries around the world would scramble to rearm. Crucially, Russia’s successful use of nuclear blackmail against Ukraine would convince many nations to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. This would lead to a nuclear arms race that would rapidly escalate, undoing decades of non-proliferation efforts. With dozens of countries aspiring to nuclear status, the chances of a nuclear war would rise dramatically, as would the potential for nukes to fall into the hands of rogue actors.

Today’s international security crisis did not arise overnight. The security climate has been steadily deteriorating since 2014, when Russia first seized the Crimean peninsula and invaded eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region. The inadequate international response to these watershed acts of Russian aggression was interpreted in Moscow as a green light to go further, creating the conditions for the full-scale invasion of 2022 and setting the stage for what has become the largest European war since World War II.

If Western leaders now choose to sacrifice Ukraine in a misguided bid to placate Putin, the shift from a rules-based international order to the law of the geopolitical jungle will be complete. This transition will be extremely expensive, with countries around the world forced to dramatically increase defense budgets to levels that dwarf the current cost of military support for Ukraine.

None of this is inevitable, of course. It is still entirely possible to secure a just peace for Ukraine that would deter the Russia-led axis of autocrats and revive faith in a rules-based system of international relations. However, this would require a degree of resolve and political will that few Western leaders have been prepared to demonstrate since the onset of Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022. For almost three years, the Western response has been marked by excessive caution and a crippling fear of escalation that have only served to embolden the Kremlin.

Putin is clearly counting on continued Western weakness as he looks to break Ukrainian resistance in a grinding war of attrition. He is now more confident than ever of victory and has little interest in negotiating anything other than the terms of Ukraine’s surrender. This is the unfavorable reality that will confront Donald Trump when he returns to the White House later this month. Unless he and other Western leaders insist on pursuing peace through strength, Ukraine will have little chance of survival and the wider world will face a Hobbesian future of instability and aggression.

### 1NC – Russian Appeasement DA (Natural Gas)

#### Uniqueness – Stalemate in Ukraine will exhaust Russia and force a settlement on Ukraine’s terms

Maria Snegovaya and Max Bergmann, 2025 – \*Senior Fellow, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at CSIS, and \*\*Director, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and Stuart Center at CSIS “Beyond Appeasement: What is Feasible for Ukraine” Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/beyond-appeasement-what-feasible-ukraine> //DH

However, Ukraine’s position has not collapsed, nor is its situation as helpless as Trump makes it appear. Ukraine faced a full-scale invasion from the second largest army in the world and on paper is weaker than Russia in terms of population size, economic resources, and weapons stockpiles. Still, Ukraine in the last three years has been able to preserve its sovereignty and existence as an independent state, in addition to militarily exhausting and draining Russia, and trapping the Kremlin in a military quagmire. The Ukrainian army has even managed to achieve what was considered as utterly unthinkable a decade ago—it has occupied Russian territory and conducted successful intelligence operations inside Russia. Given these major achievements, accepting Russian conditions highly unfavorable to Ukraine is not justified by the current situation on the ground. Instead, sustained Western assistance to Ukraine has strong prospects of ensuring a stalemate able to both protect European security and enable Ukraine to realize its goal of a future inside the European Union.

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Ukraine has so far been reluctant to shift to a defensive strategy and had not constructed the same level of fortifications that Russia did in the winter of 2022 and 2023 under the leadership of General Sergey Surovikin. This is in part because Ukraine remained determined to regain the offensive. As such, it prioritized generating new combat brigades, as opposed to filling gaps in the brigades holding its defensive line. Ukraine has recently shifted its approach to using new recruits to plug holes along the front, which is a welcome shift.

A key variable for Ukraine is the supply of Western aid. The lapse of U.S. assistance from October 2023 to April 2024 led to a withering of Ukraine’s combat capacity. This represents the main danger for Ukraine. While Europe has provided comparable military aid in total to the United States, the aid from the United States has had greater impact as it is more coordinated and has fewer disparate systems. Europe, however, has the means to fill a gap left by the United States. Should the United States end its military assistance, Europe ought to seek to procure items from the United States that it cannot immediately provide. For instance, European countries through a Foreign Military Sale could buy 155 millimeter ammunition from the U.S. Army, which has dramatically scaled up its production capacity. Additionally, Europeans could seek to procure more air interceptors and other vital munitions for Ukraine. There is discussion of the European Union borrowing up to hundreds of billions of euros for defense, and the European Union could use a portion of that, roughly $10–20 billion, to procure weapons from the United States. Buying what was formerly U.S. foreign assistance to Ukraine will be a tough pill politically for Europeans to swallow. Yet it is a necessary short-term step to ensure Ukraine maintains its robust combat capacity until European production ramps up. Europe therefore must also ramp up production to be able to support Ukraine for the long term and refill their own stockpiles. This means Europe has the capacity to backfill for U.S. security assistance to Kyiv, assuming the willingness of the United States to sell its weapons to Europeans that they can then transfer onwards to Ukraine.

Additionally, Russia’s frozen central bank assets are largely in Europe. The EU and European governments should take steps to unfreeze these assets and transfer them to Ukraine. This will then provide financial support for its economy and additional resources for its defense industrial sector or to make additional procurements. These steps by Europe will at the very least help freeze the conflict and prevent Ukraine from losing the war through Western negligence.

By cutting off Russia’s path to win the war on the battlefield by demonstrating a long-term commitment to Ukraine, Europe will then have created clear incentives for Russia to seek a negotiated settlement to the war, rather than continuing to slam its exhausted military against Ukrainian lines without the hope of a breakthrough. Ukraine will know it can hold its position and has the resources to maintain its defensive position. Furthermore, should Ukraine receive greater quantities of advanced European weaponry, such as long-range missiles and advanced fighter aircraft, it may be able to impose even greater costs on Russia. With Russia’s economy beginning to reach constraints, its military losses building, Russia over time may be forced to drastically climb down from its maximalist position in negotiations. A massive European effort that forecloses the prospects of Russian victory may also crater Russian morale on the front. Such swings can happen in war, particularly wars of attrition. Regardless, a major European effort to support Ukraine and further degrade the Russian military will also buy Europe time to rearm itself and engage in the potentially arduous task of replacing U.S. forces in Europe should there be significant drawdowns.

#### Link – the plan emboldens Russian and international aggression by making the United States seem weak

Charles Lichfield, 2025 – Deputy Director and C. Boyden Gray Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council “Why the US should not lift sanctions against Russia” Atlantic Council, 2/26, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/why-the-us-should-not-lift-sanctions-against-russia/> //DH

While Moscow has found ways to mitigate the impact of these measures, growing deficits, unsustainable subsidies, and the rising cost of debt servicing show that economic pressure is still working. Removing restrictions without significant concessions risks emboldening not only Russia but also other states contemplating economic and military aggression.

The argument now for strategic patience—for keeping sanctions on Russia in place—is not just a convenient excuse for the lack of immediate results. It reflects a deeper reality about how economic pressure works over time.

Russia’s economy has grown each year since its full-scale invasion. But since 2023, this has mainly been because of increased government spending, which is changing the structure of Russia’s economy and making entire sectors more reliant on the war. Once French auto producer Renault left Russia in the aftermath of the full-scale invasion, the plants of firms it partnered with in the country were requisitioned.

Moscow has had several levers at its disposal to manage the fiscal effects of an economy increasingly propped up by the government. Special quarterly and annual taxes on oil-and-gas and non-oil-and-gas income have allowed the Kremlin to capture additional revenue as prices have fluctuated (mainly upwards). War spending has shrunk the share of oil and gas in Russia’s gross domestic product (GDP) and the share of oil-and-gas taxation in the overall tax take. The latter has moved from 35.8 percent before the war to 41.6 percent in the bumper year of 2022, when prices spiked in response to the war, to a predicted 27 percent in 2025. The government still makes regular deposits into Russia’s National Wealth Fund, but these no longer follow a predictable rule with a cutoff oil price above which the income delta is saved. The fund has little visibility into its own future and can merely try to slow the pace of the exhaustion of its holdings.

Growing deficits still represent a risk. Russia is cut off from international lending and can therefore only reach into its rainy-day fund or issue more domestic bonds. As the chart below shows, the government’s withdrawals from the National Wealth Fund do not cover annual deficits entirely. But every year since the full-scale invasion started, Moscow has been forced to withdraw more than the budget law it tends to publish just a few weeks earlier suggests it will. The bills for many Russian public agencies and subsidies accumulate in December, just as economic activity slows down for the holiday season.

In dollar terms, the liquid part of the National Wealth Fund, which was estimated to be worth $112.7 billion out of a total $200 billion before the war, is running out. For most of 2023 and 2024, the weak ruble slowed the fund’s decline because non-ruble assets could be converted more favorably. But the ruble’s recent appreciation on the back of market sentiment around a “deal” means the withdrawals will hit the fund’s dollar value faster. If the 2024 rate of withdrawal from the fund’s current dollar value is used, and if one assumes few liquid assets have been sold so far, then the government can only rely on its liquid savings for another one to two years.

It’s important to note that Russia’s nonliquid assets aren’t all immobilized and can still be sold. This might include its shares in state banks or the national airline, Aeroflot, which needed an emergency capital injection from the fund in 2022. And while they aren’t meant to be used for government spending, the reserves that the Central Bank of Russia still has access to could also be used to plug future deficits. This would be interpreted as a very negative signal for price stability, however, and could result in already high inflation expectations climbing further.

What stands out in early 2025 is that, after a predictably costly December, the Russian government’s spending in January was also markedly above trend, at half a trillion rubles ($5.77 billion) for that month alone. This is the sort of result sanctions policymakers are happy to present, but it is important to look beyond one bad month. In spring 2023, for example, Russia’s year-to-date deficit was already 17 percent above the deficit planned for the whole year. But the government still managed to pull in more oil and gas income later and finish the year with a more manageable deficit, which measured below 2 percent of GDP.

In January, historian Craig Kennedy’s much-publicized research showed that Moscow was also relying heavily on concessionary loans to the military-industrial complex. This allows more funds to be channeled to the war effort without appearing as defense or “classified” items in the state budget—which both increased greatly in 2022. The explosion of credit in the Russian economy, despite a high interest rate environment, is indeed striking, and it is clear that this credit is disproportionately being directed to firms that are supporting the war effort.

However, it is more challenging to identify when the centrally planned credit boom will come back to haunt the government. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the credit market has seen a major shift from short-term loans in favor of long-term loans lasting more than a year. Were the loans not being kicked into the long grass, the low rate of nonperforming loans might already be increasing.

With the limited information available to observers outside Russia, the country’s banks appear well capitalized for now and high interest rates are helping convince Russians to keep their cash in the financial system. But even without deep insight into the liabilities taken on by Russian banks, one can see that the aggressive loan policy is already hampering efforts to cut inflation and even pushing up the deficit.

Why? Since high interest rates are a deterrent from taking on more debt, the government has had to increase its subsidies to help banks keep lending at preferential rates. Russian banks are lending first to households, but heavy industry represents the second, growing category at the expense of farming. These are costing the government more every year and becoming another deficit-driving liability, like inflation. These liabilities not only force the government to increase salaries, pensions, and other social payments, but also pressure the Central Bank to keep interest rates—and therefore government borrowing costs—high.

In 2025, Russia’s planned federal budget expenditures on debt servicing will amount to 3.2 trillion rubles ($37 billion), which is nearly 40 percent higher than the plan for 2024, and 2.1 times higher than in 2023. Despite this, the actual government debt itself is growing at a much slower pace, with an expected increase of 38 percent by the end of 2025 compared to 2023.

Sanctions are having an unmistakable effect, albeit below the inflated expectations of many in the West in early 2022. Lifting sanctions now would provide relief to a system that is showing clear signs of stress. It would also be a signal to third countries currently on the fence about selling to Russia that they can get away with what they’ve stopped short of doing so far. Since the sanctions were put in place, China has not lent money to the Russian state, and Chinese banks are reticent to enter the Russian market for fear of US secondary sanctions. Will they be so reticent now?

Rather than lifting sanctions prematurely, policymakers should focus on closing loopholes, tightening enforcement, and maintaining coordination among allies. A premature retreat would weaken US leverage and embolden the axis of authoritarian regimes that are already helping each other circumvent Western policies, as my colleague Kim Donovan detailed in her testimony last week before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

#### Internal link. Russia will use the plan to force concessions on Ukraine as the price of agreement – that paves the way for a Russian-led international order

Mikhail Komin and Joanna Hosa, 2025 - Mikhail Komin was a visiting fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. He regularly provides analytical comments for media outlets such as TVRain, Forbes, Carnegie, Novaya Gazeta, and Radio Liberty. Joanna Hosa was a policy fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. She has held a range of positions at the European Commission, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the Open Society European Policy Institute, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and the International Federation on Human Rights. “The bear beneath the ice: Russia’s ambitions in the Arctic” European Council on Foreign Relations, 5/27, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-bear-beneath-the-ice-russias-ambitions-in-the-arctic/> //DH

Moscow is increasingly linking its Arctic diplomacy to its broader war-and-peace calculus on Ukraine. Early signs of US attempts to broker a political resolution to the war have reignited the Kremlin’s hopes for a “grand bargain”, in which symbolic Arctic concessions—such as downplaying Chinese involvement or reengaging with Western formats—could be exchanged for more substantive gains in Ukraine and beyond.

Europeans must be ready for this tactic and avoid mistaking performative gestures for real policy shifts. In particular, the Kremlin is likely to court Western—especially American—interest in selective Arctic cooperation, using promises of investment access to seek sanctions relief. Even if Washington engages, European leaders should remain firm and sceptical of such overtures and remind Trump that illusions of Russia’s flexibility in the Arctic could be used to obscure continued intransigence elsewhere.

Even though Europeans have so far had little say in the Ukraine negotiation process compared to the US, they still hold some sway in their own right. Europeans should use this to distinguish between genuine strategic threats and the Kremlin’s performative signals intended to pressure the West into restoring cooperation. Despite its rhetoric, Russia is unlikely to withdraw from multilateral Arctic frameworks or abandon UNCLOS mechanisms—particularly its shelf extension claims—unless Western countries move to politicise these processes, for example by stalling Russia’s submissions due to sanctions.

Moscow’s underlying objective is likely to restore pre-2022 formats of Arctic cooperation, particularly within the Arctic Council, and thus rehabilitate its international standing without altering its behaviour in Ukraine. Europeans must therefore be clear that no return to “business as usual” in Arctic governance is acceptable without a ceasefire or durable settlement to the conflict.

On thin ice

The Kremlin is investing heavily in the Arctic and will continue to do so. In the dreams of Russia’s leaders, they will sit down with the West—mostly with the US—and renegotiate the world order in their favour. They will likely try to sell illusory concessions in the Arctic, among others, while sacrificing nothing of principle in order to gain in Ukraine. Europeans must not underestimate Russia’s continued military build-up in the Arctic, which—despite pressures elsewhere—remains a long-term Kremlin priority. Instead, they must track these developments and prepare a coherent NATO-based response, independent of shifting US leadership and Moscow’s thin veil of concessions.

#### Impact. Ukrainian loss creates global instability, greenlighting revanchism that sparks nuclear war

Victor Liakh, 2025 – CEO of the East Europe Foundation. “Abandoning Ukraine would plunge the entire world into an era of instability” Atlantic Council, 1/9 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/abandoning-ukraine-would-plunge-the-entire-world-into-an-era-of-instability/> //DH

Ever since Donald Trump’s November 2024 election victory, speculation has been mounting over a potential peace deal to end the Russian invasion of Ukraine. With Russian forces currently enjoying the battlefield initiative and amid doubts over continued US support for Kyiv, many observers believe Ukraine may have little choice but to accept highly unfavorable peace terms dictated by the Kremlin. Russia’s conditions would likely include the loss of territory along with wholesale disarmament and the imposition of permanent neutral status.

The implications of such a shameful peace for Ukrainian statehood would be catastrophic. Nor would the damage be contained within Ukraine’s violated borders. On the contrary, the consequences of abandoning Ukraine would reverberate around the world for many years to come, undermining the foundations of international security.

If it happens, the fall of Ukraine may not be immediately apparent. Indeed, it could even be temporarily disguised by face-saving talk of pragmatism and compromise. However, a demilitarized, partitioned, and internationally isolated postwar Ukraine without credible security guarantees would have little chance of surviving for long. Behind the diplomatic platitudes, it would be painfully obvious that Ukraine was now completely at Putin’s mercy. In such circumstances, a new Russian invasion would be merely a matter of time.

The spirit of the 1938 Munich Agreement looms large over prospective US-brokered peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. With pressure mounting on Ukraine to make concessions to the aggressor, it is hardly surprising that many are comparing the current situation to the ugly deal between Western leaders and Nazi Germany that sealed the fate of Czechoslovakia and paved the war for World War II. Just as British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich brandishing Hitler’s worthless signature and declaring “peace for our time,” critics now fear that similar efforts to appease Putin will set the stage for further Russian aggression.

Ukraine’s demise as an independent state would confirm the failure of the existing international security architecture. In its place, we would enter a new era of international affairs dominated by a handful of Great Powers seeking to establish their own spheres of influence, with smaller countries reduced to the role of buffer states. A climate of insecurity would initially take root from the Baltic to the Balkans, and would soon spread to the wider world.

The collapse of the rules-based international order would inevitably undermine the credibility of the West. Meanwhile, authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea would be significantly strengthened. Moscow would almost certainly escalate its ongoing hybrid war against the democratic world, and may seek further territorial gains in Central Asia, the Caucasus, or Eastern Europe. Autocrats in Beijing, Tehran, and beyond would draw the logical conclusions from Putin’s victory in Ukraine and embrace expansionist foreign policies of their own.

With the sanctity of international borders no longer assured, countries around the world would scramble to rearm. Crucially, Russia’s successful use of nuclear blackmail against Ukraine would convince many nations to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. This would lead to a nuclear arms race that would rapidly escalate, undoing decades of non-proliferation efforts. With dozens of countries aspiring to nuclear status, the chances of a nuclear war would rise dramatically, as would the potential for nukes to fall into the hands of rogue actors.

Today’s international security crisis did not arise overnight. The security climate has been steadily deteriorating since 2014, when Russia first seized the Crimean peninsula and invaded eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region. The inadequate international response to these watershed acts of Russian aggression was interpreted in Moscow as a green light to go further, creating the conditions for the full-scale invasion of 2022 and setting the stage for what has become the largest European war since World War II.

If Western leaders now choose to sacrifice Ukraine in a misguided bid to placate Putin, the shift from a rules-based international order to the law of the geopolitical jungle will be complete. This transition will be extremely expensive, with countries around the world forced to dramatically increase defense budgets to levels that dwarf the current cost of military support for Ukraine.

None of this is inevitable, of course. It is still entirely possible to secure a just peace for Ukraine that would deter the Russia-led axis of autocrats and revive faith in a rules-based system of international relations. However, this would require a degree of resolve and political will that few Western leaders have been prepared to demonstrate since the onset of Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022. For almost three years, the Western response has been marked by excessive caution and a crippling fear of escalation that have only served to embolden the Kremlin.

Putin is clearly counting on continued Western weakness as he looks to break Ukrainian resistance in a grinding war of attrition. He is now more confident than ever of victory and has little interest in negotiating anything other than the terms of Ukraine’s surrender. This is the unfavorable reality that will confront Donald Trump when he returns to the White House later this month. Unless he and other Western leaders insist on pursuing peace through strength, Ukraine will have little chance of survival and the wider world will face a Hobbesian future of instability and aggression.

## 2nc/1nr Blocks

### They Say: “Nonunique – Ukraine is Losing”

#### The current stalemate is destroying Russian political will – it’s likely to lose the war

Michael Kimmage, 2025 - director of the Kennan Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington. “Russia Has Started Losing the War in Ukraine” Foreign Policy, 5/19, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/05/19/russia-military-putin-war-ukraine-nato-europe/> //DH

But for Russia, Ukraine is not Syria, and it is not Georgia. Syria was a far-away adventure where Russia’s retreat can be swept under the carpet. Georgia is stuck in a holding pattern, vacillating between Russia and the West, which is no disaster for Moscow—whereas Ukraine is a disaster for Moscow. In Ukraine, Russia’s military is stalled while deaths and casualties mount. Putin has no way out of the war—other than to admit a version of defeat. The Kremlin can try to hide the war’s misery from Russians but only to the extent that it can tell the war’s story. Putin cannot as effectively erase evidence of a faltering economy. Nor can he offer Russians any coherent political promise other than endless Putinism. Slowly and not yet suddenly, Russia is starting to lose the war.

Long wars demand integrated efforts. Military aims rest on diplomatic capacity and economic heft, which in turn rest on political will. Russia is struggling in each of these domains. The problem for Putin is that the military and diplomatic challenges of the war compound one another, as do the economic and political challenges. Were the war going well or were it an obviously defensive war, diplomacy might be peripheral, uncertainty and economic hardship might be bearable, and political discontent could be put on hold. This was the Soviet Union in World War II. With his massive war against Ukraine, Putin is in almost the opposite position. Nor can he procrastinate by narrating his way out of this strategic cul-de-sac. With an autocrat’s toolkit, he can only postpone the eventual reckoning.

Russia faces two serious military dilemmas. One is its own inability to advance. In some technical sense, momentum is on Russia’s side, as it takes square miles of Ukrainian territory, but this momentum is going nowhere. For months, Russia has tried and failed to take the Ukrainian town of Pokrovsk. Its failure has been accompanied by enormous losses: an estimated 790,000 killed or injured since the beginning of the war (plus 48,000 missing), including more than 100,000 casualties this year alone. By the end of 2025, at this rate, Russia will have over a million casualties, and its strategic situation will not be any better than it was in 2022. Putin has no easy way to alter a trajectory that translates (if unaltered) into stalemate. Mostly war zones, the territories that Russia controls in Ukraine are of no material benefit to Russia.

Russia’s other military dilemma is Ukraine. When Russia failed to deliver a knock-out blow in 2022 and to split Ukraine down the middle, Putin had a choice between a reduced war and a war on civilians across Ukraine. He went with the war against civilians—not to be seen as backtracking and to compel Ukrainians to surrender. This decision also backfired. The brutality of the Russian occupation coupled with countless assaults on civilians and civilian infrastructure convinced most Ukrainians that they had to fight. Ukraine is poorer and smaller than Russia, not ideally suited to a war of attrition, and on the battlefield Ukraine is acting alone. These circumstances matter, of course, though not as much as Ukraine’s morale and its formidable ability to innovate (such as in drone warfare), which among other things is a function of Ukrainians’ morale.

#### Ukraine’s military is more capable of adapting to attrition than Russia’s because of heavy drone reliance

Molly Carlough and Benjamin Harris, 2025 – \*research associate for the Center for Preventive Action at the Council on Foreign Relations AND \*\*research associate for Europe and U.S. foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations “Comparing the Size and Capabilities of the Russian and Ukrainian Militaries” 6/3,

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/comparing-size-and-capabilities-russian-and-ukrainian-militaries> //DH

Russia maintains the military advantage it held prior to the invasion in February 2022, though both militaries have incurred heavy losses over the course of the war. Around 750,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in the war thus far, according to a March 2025 U.S. intelligence report. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a month earlier that Ukraine’s forces had suffered more than 425,000 casualties during the conflict. Still, Russia is estimated to have a total of 1.1 million active-duty soldiers, roughly 600,000 of which are deployed in or near Ukraine. In contrast, Ukraine has roughly 880,000 active-duty personnel, Zelenskyy said earlier this year, though other estimates vary.

The high casualty rates have strained both militaries. To an extent, the Ukrainian military has been able to adapt its tactics to accommodate the manpower shortage, using high-tech military drones, for example, to slow Russian advances and inflict high casualties. Ukraine reports having built 2.2 million drones last year and aims to produce 4.5 million this year. Ukraine is also building ground-based and sea-based drones, which were used last summer to drive the Russian Black Sea Fleet out of Crimea and open up the Black Sea to Ukrainian commerce. In a surprise attack on June 1, Ukraine’s intelligence service conducted a coordinated drone operation that successfully struck five Russian air bases, destroying roughly forty military aircraft, according to Zelenskyy. Drones are now inflicting an estimated 70 percent of the casualties on both sides. Russia, for its part, has turned to other recruitment tactics to boost its manpower, such as relying on foreign fighters. In November, for example, about ten thousand North Korean troops deployed to help the Russians counter Ukraine’s successful offensive in the Kursk region of Russia.

#### Ukraine has enough support to drastically alter Russian morale

Paul Hockenos, 2025 - is a Berlin-based journalist. “Ukraine’s Narrow Path to Victory Without Trump” Foreign Policy, 6/9,

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/06/09/ukraine-victory-intelligence-diplomacy-europe-defense-trump/> //DH

Ukraine’s battlefield prospects against Russia clearly dimmed when the Trump administration took office. Trump has consistently signaled that, at the very least, military aid resembling anything close to that the Biden administration bankrolled would not be forthcoming. Ukraine’s route to a secure and sovereign future thus became much narrower—so much so that a dark pessimism descended on many European observers.

But the excessive gloom is uncalled for—and counterproductive. Ukraine already produces the world’s most advanced front-line weaponry and innovates with cunning on the battlefield. It has already routed Russia in the Black Sea theater and, recently, pulled off another bombastic coup in Operation Spider Web, targeting 41 aircraft with drone strikes deep into Russia and likely destroying at least 10 of them. As long as the Ukrainians’ determination to fight on is undiminished, there are strategies available to help them win—even without U.S. support at the levels to which they have become accustomed.

Many attendees at last week’s Black Sea Security Forum in Odesa, Ukraine, were engaged in the wishful thinking that U.S. President Donald Trump will eventually come around on Ukraine and embrace the country as an ally deserving of tens of billions of dollars of continued support once he grasps that Russian President Vladimir Putin has been playing him all along, betraying his duplicity in several rounds of cease-fire talks.

But a far more likely outcome is that Trump blames both Moscow and Kyiv for failing to do as he instructs and withdraws from active involvement in diplomacy while also discontinuing U.S. arms supplies to Kyiv.

But crucially, the Trump administration will not abandon Ukraine completely. U.S. policymakers—among them a majority of Republicans—realize that there is too much for Washington to lose from a potential Ukrainian collapse. The United States can, and probably will, extend offers similar to previous support where it doesn’t cost Washington excessively.

Washington insiders who deal with the Trump administration on Ukraine say that it will not suspend Ukraine’s access to the U.S. satellite intelligence, which has been crucial for Ukraine’s battlefield targeting. This advanced satellite imagery is absolutely key for Ukraine: It is its eyes and ears.

Since Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022, the U.S. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency has lent Ukraine access to a commercial satellite imagery platform that uses high-resolution radar imagery to track Russian troop movements, which the Ukrainian military uses to plan counteroffensives. As the New York Times reported, the Ukrainian military depends overwhelmingly on coordinates from U.S. intelligence for most of its operations involving long-range strikes.

Critically, this is one of the few pieces of technology that neither the Ukrainians nor their European allies can substitute. Without it, as Ukraine was for about a week in March—when the Trump administration was roughing up Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky—Kyiv would find itself at an ominous disadvantage. But this won’t happen, because continued Ukrainian access enables the United States to have a finger in the war rather than stand on the sidelines as a useless observer—and, since it’s already in place, costs very little.

Intelligence sharing aside, Ukraine’s victory now hinges on Europe stepping up as its dominant ally and benefactor—and there is every sign that it is doing just that, if slowly. Europe’s leading powers—France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Poland—are in the process of asserting leadership in the Russia-Ukraine war, and to that end, together with EU institutions, they have made prodigious sums available to weaponize Ukraine and cover its bills. The European Union already has a package of stiffer sanctions against Russia in progress.

The Europeans’ pledges of support are more than just lip service: They understand the centrality of this war to long-term European security, so much so that it is now their top priority. There has been a flurry of diplomatic activity since Friedrich Merz took the Germany chancellery on May 6, and that activity amounts to more than mere words. With an economy nine times greater than Russia’s, the European Union is already in the process of replacing—and it has the potential to surpass—the United States as Ukraine’s chief supplier of armaments and financial aid.

From 2021 to 2024, EU members’ defense budgets jumped from 218 billion euros ($248 billion) to 326 billion euros ($372 billion), and a further increase of at least 100 billion euros ($114 billion) is projected by 2027. The EU institutions are now involved on an entirely new level: The European Commission is bolstering the European Defense Union, which will help build out the bloc’s defense industry and stimulate ammunition production.

In March, the program that was originally titled ReArm Europe was recast as European Readiness 2030, with the aspiration to leverage 800 billion euros ($912 billion) for defense spending over five years. So, too, have individual countries reached deeply into their pockets, well aware that they are on their own now.

In March, for example, Merz—then the incoming German chancellor—created a 500 billion euro ($570 billion) debt pool for defense expenditures and German infrastructure. This year, two non-EU members—the U.K. and Norway, both part of the “coalition of the willing” that was launched by France and the U.K. after the Munich Security Conference in February—pledged an additional 450 million British pounds (about $600 million) of military support to Kyiv.

Germany’s IWF Kiel calculates that in order to offset U.S. aid to Ukraine—both military and fiscal—Europe needs to double its expenditures. The recently announced new monies are more than enough to do this: Since February 2022, U.S. aid has totaled about $66.9 billion in military assistance to as well as more than $50 billion in nonmilitary financial aid. (Nota bene: The Center for Strategic and International Studies estimates that 90 percent of that military aid is paid out within the United States to contractors to build new weapons or to replenish arms sent to Ukraine from American stockpiles.)

Certainly, Europe will be at pains to replace some of the U.S. hardware—in particular, air defenses. Currently, Washington provides the lion’s share of rocket launchers such as HIMARS systems and ATACMS missiles, howitzer ammunition, and long-range anti-aircraft systems such as Patriots. (Europe already does the heavy lifting in terms of howitzers and battle tanks.)

“European missile defense systems can help defend Ukraine against Russian cruise missile strikes,” researchers argued in a May Center for Strategic and International Studies report, “but the U.S. Patriot is the only NATO system that can defend against Russian ballistic missile attacks.” In addition to the investment in their own arms industries to manufacture this until-now-donated U.S. hardware, the Europeans can simply purchase these systems from the United States. That’s a deal that Trump has said interests him. And there are other potential sellers, too, such as South Korea and Isreal.

The new ace in the hole is Ukraine’s superlative defense sector, which has blossomed into one of Europe’s most ingenuous and advanced arms industries—and produces much of what its military requires (including roughly 40 percent of all weaponry) at a fraction of the cost and twice as fast. For every billion that the United States has paid out to its own industry, the Europeans can get several times as much from the Ukrainians—and without the same transfer headaches and costs. In addition to its hailed drone production, Ukraine reports that it produces more howitzers and artillery systems than all of Europe combined. The Ukrainians know exactly what they need and are constantly tweaking their hardware to conditions on the battlefield.

The Danes have paved the way in purchasing weapons for the Armed Forces of Ukraine directly from Ukrainian manufacturers. The so-called Danish model appears to be a hit: This year, Denmark, Sweden, Canada, Norway, and Iceland will fork out a combined 1.3 billion euros for Ukrainian artillery, strike drones, missiles, and anti-tank weapons that were created in Ukraine. About 830 million euros of this sum stems from the EU, which is drawing on the windfall profits of frozen Russian assets—an overdue and highly fortuitous move.

Ukrainians are understandably worn down from the war and eager for a return to normalcy. But Putin’s strategy to destroy morale by bombing civilians is not working. It is the Russians who have to worry about morale as ever more troops die and sanctions choke the country’s economy. The Ukrainians—and Europe can thank them for it—are showing a resourcefulness and resilience that earns them the West’s support. If the United States is not going to be there for them, then Europe must—and it can. In fact, it’s in the process of happening now.

#### Ukraine’s superior logistics and defense production means it will win a war of attrition

Alina Frolova, 2025 - is Deputy Chairman the Centre for Defence Strategies in Kyiv. “Is Ukraine Losing the War?” 1/17, Centre for European Policy Analysis,

<https://cepa.org/article/is-ukraine-losing-the-war/> //DH

Who Has the Upper Hand?

In a war of attrition, logistical sustainability is decisive. Russia’s logistics have been weak from the start, and rely heavily on railways. While a well-developed railway network in occupied Ukrainian Donbas has favored a Russian advance, this will be a dwindling asset as its forces move further away from the railheads.

Supply routes inside Russia have been targeted by long-range strikes on hubs, munition depots, and production sites. Russia’s inability to protect its territory — a consequence of its offensive-oriented military doctrine — further exacerbates these vulnerabilities.

In contrast, defense production for Ukraine is mainly safe from Russian attacks because most factories are located abroad; Ukraine’s logistics and supply are bolstered by international partnerships and decentralized domestic production. High-tech defense manufacturing has surged, supported by private initiatives and Western investment. Ukraine’s air defense generally outperforms Russia’s, protecting key assets and production lines.

Defense Production Trends

Despite numerous statements that Russia spends about 8% of GDP on defense, the Kremlin could provide tanks, armored vehicles, and artillery by withdrawing and restoring equipment manufactured in the Soviet era. Its defense production has been hard hit and Russian output numbers, for example of tanks, are highly suspect. Its ability to sustain its military is dwindling.

Tanks, artillery, and other critical equipment are being depleted faster than they can be replaced. OSINT data suggests that Russia’s stockpiles of tanks and infantry fighting vehicles may be exhausted by 2027, with artillery and rocket launchers running out in 2025-2026. Sanctions and a lack of innovation hinder Russia’s capacity to modernize its arsenal. Add in the analytical prognoses on Russia’s economic stagflation in the second half of 2025, and even with supplies from Iran and North Korea, its situation doesn’t look good.

Ukraine, on the other hand, has dramatically increased its defense production (from 1.3 billion hryvnia in 2022 to 20 billion hryvnia ($474m) in 2024), supported by EU investments. Moreover, Ukraine’s economy, despite severe losses, demonstrates resilience, with forecasts predicting GDP growth of 2.5%—7% in 2025, combined with quite a limited inflation, a high level of National Bank reserves, and stable banking system. Western financial support ensures a stable fiscal foundation, contrasting sharply with Russia’s economic fragility and declining defense production capacity.

#### Protracted stalemate will cause Russia to genuinely negotiate – it’s not economically sustainable in the long term

Lawrence D. Freedman, 2025 - is Emeritus Professor of War Studies at King’s College London. “Why Putin Still Fights: The Kremlin Will End Its War in Ukraine Only When It Knows That Victory Is Impossible” Foreign Affairs, 6/18, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/why-putin-still-fights> //DH

What might make the difference? Moscow must be concerned by the increasing tempo of Ukrainian attacks against an array of military and economic targets on Russian territory. The most spectacular—such as the early June Operation Spider’s Web, using low-tech, short-range drones to destroy more than a dozen Russian strategic bombers at air bases far from the border—were a testament to Ukrainian audacity, operational ingenuity, and technical prowess. Such strikes are embarrassing and disruptive to Russia but still unlikely by themselves to force Moscow to reappraise its war strategy. They also have not fundamentally changed the basic dynamics on the frontlines, although attacks on logistic hubs, arms depots, and command centers certainly help.

Since early in the war, analysts have attempted to work out at what point one side or the other would run out of vital supplies—armored vehicles, artillery pieces, shells, missiles, air defenses, and so on. In some areas, stocks have been seriously depleted. Ammunition is currently less of a problem for Ukraine, but its air defenses are a significant concern. Russia now appears to lack the capacity for maneuver warfare. Yet both sides keep going with help from their friends, and they have relied increasingly on capabilities, notably drones, when domestic mass production is possible and relatively affordable so that expendability is far less of a worry.

The most perplexing issue is manpower. This has been and remains a serious matter for Ukraine. Although numbers are now up (Zelensky claims to be mobilizing 27,000 a month), there is still resistance in Kyiv to conscripting 18-to-24-year-olds. On the Russian side, Moscow accepts heavy casualties for small gains and continues to find troops to send to the front despite the high risk of death and injury. Several Western analyses have concluded that the war has already cost Russia a million casualties.

Russia appears to have a Soviet-style readiness, which arguably goes back to imperial times, to throw troops at enemy defenses in the hope that some will get through. Current Russian strategy, for example, relies on small groups of troops on buggies, bikes, and foot advancing in the knowledge that most will not reach Ukrainian lines but that enough might to occupy some new ground.

Thus far, the Kremlin has found troops without resorting to a full-scale mobilization. This is because of a bounty system that uses hefty—and ever-increasing—payments to recruits. Since recruits largely come from the poorer parts of the country, the war also has a redistributive effect. Russia’s war machine is a bit like an extractive industry, in which as long as there is material that can be mined, it is good business. Still, in the end, the supplies will be limited. There are already doubts about how much more manpower the state can buy and at what price. The question remains whether at some point the Kremlin will have to resort to more coercive methods.

This cost relates to Putin’s wider problem of whether the Russian economy can continue to sustain this level of military effort. Moscow has confounded Western expectations that severe sanctions would wreck the country’s economy and has instead enjoyed a couple of years of high growth. This is the result of a combination of shrewd macroeconomic management, high energy prices, the support of China and other Russian energy clients in circumventing sanctions, and the war boom triggered by enormous defense production. But beginning in late 2024, there were signs that Russia’s militarized economy was beginning to severely overheat, with labor shortages, high inflation, and high interest rates discouraging investment. For the first months of 2025, the Trump-induced downturn in international trade pushed down oil prices, putting further pressure on Russian coffers.

BEYOND DEADLOCK

Ukraine began 2023 hoping that it could win the war with a counteroffensive. When that failed, and with the U.S. Congress refusing to vote for more assistance to Kyiv, Russia was optimistic that it would be able to pull ahead in 2024. Moscow now insists that it can prevail over the long haul. It certainly does not want its enemy to think otherwise. Putin likely still thinks that Ukraine will buckle first, but he has always underestimated Ukraine’s resilience and determination. Perhaps a tipping point will come when Moscow begins to recognize the utter futility of this war and the long-term economic damage to Russia starts to outweigh the costs of acknowledging that the war’s political objective cannot be met. Maybe some future Ukrainian operation will trigger the necessary reappraisal.

The experience of this war, however, underlines the difficulty of getting political leaders to acknowledge failure when their forces have yet to be defeated in the field and when there is no obvious compromise deal waiting to be negotiated. Neither side has a clear-cut route to victory. That is what it means to be in a forever war. It is not evident how it will end, or even if an apparent peace will be no more than an opportunity for Russia to rebuild its forces under the guise of an uneasy cease-fire. This will depend on decisions yet to be made. Ukraine’s Western allies, therefore, must be realistic about the potentially long-term demands entailed in keeping Ukraine in the war. Continuing to deny Russia victory is a form of pressure on Putin, who has so little to show for such a long and calamitous campaign. Although it may be hard to imagine a military defeat for Russia, it is possible to imagine a shift in Ukraine’s favor. If Moscow becomes convinced, contrary to its current expectations, that time is not on its side, perhaps that might yet cause it to wonder whether the moment has come to cut its losses.

### They Say: “Nonunique – Appeasement Now”

#### Trump statements about Ukraine are hot air – actual policy towards Ukraine hasn’t changed much. Intelligence sharing, sanctions, and weapons will last at least through 2028

Joshua Keating, 2025 - is a senior correspondent at Vox covering foreign policy and world news with a focus on the future of international conflict. “Ukraine hasn’t won over Trump. But it might not need to.” Vox, 5/30, <https://www.vox.com/world-politics/414948/ukraine-hasnt-won-over-trump-but-it-might-not-need-to> //DH

President Donald Trump’s seemingly infinite patience with Russian President Vladimir Putin may, in fact, have limits.

“Something has happened to him. He has gone absolutely CRAZY!” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform this week, citing the massive recent airstrikes on Ukrainian cities and Putin’s desire to conquer “ALL of Ukraine, not just a piece of it.”

Trump also took a vague shot at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (“everything out of his mouth causes problems”), and one could point out that Russia has been striking civilian targets in Ukraine and expressing a desire to snuff out Ukraine’s political independence since the very beginning of the war.

Trump followed up by telling reporters he is considering imposing new sanctions on Russia and posted, “if it weren’t for me, lots of really bad things would have already happened to Russia,” but told reporters at the White House on Wednesday that he is holding off on new sanctions for now.

So it’s not as if Trump has had a full and sudden change of heart overnight. But consider that, at the end of February, Trump was publicly dressing down Zelenskyy in the Oval Office, blaming Ukraine for starting the war, and halting all US assistance to the Ukrainian war effort. By that standard, Trump’s new tone is still one of several developments that add up to a welcome change of pace for Kyiv.

Even if there are no new measures taken to either support Ukraine or punish Russia, and even if the US “walks away” from efforts to negotiate a ceasefire, as Vice President JD Vance recently threatened, the events since February still amount to a remarkable diplomatic change of fortune for Ukraine — and probably about as good an outcome as Kyiv could reasonably expect from this administration.

What hasn’t changed: Sanctions, intelligence, and (so far) weapons

For Ukraine, where cities are still reeling from some of the largest airstrikes since the beginning of the war, and where supplies of much-needed air defense ammunition are running dangerously low, there’s obviously no cause for celebration. Hanna Shelest, a Kyiv-based defense analyst with the Center for European Policy Analysis, told Vox that despite Trump’s changing tone on Putin, his ongoing attacks on Zelenskyy (it’s unclear exactly what remarks triggered Trump’s ire) indicate that “we are still in a transactional situation. We have still not been able to dramatically change the approach of the US president.”

Trump, for all his current frustration, clearly still views the conflict in a way that is much more sympathetic to Russia’s interests than Joe Biden or many members of his own party. But in terms of actual material support, not much has actually changed since Trump took office.

He has frequently suggested he’d be willing to lift sanctions on Russia as part of a ceasefire agreement, but he has not done so, and in fact, has signed executive orders extending the sanctions that Biden imposed. Many of these sanctions could not be lifted without congressional approval. As Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently put it, “When Vladimir Putin woke up this morning, he had the same set of sanctions on him that he’s always had since the beginning of this conflict.”

Aside from a week-long pause following the contentious Oval Office meeting, US weapons shipments to Ukraine have continued. In fact, the rate of weapons deliveries actually increased in the early weeks of the Trump administration because of moves the Biden team made to rush aid out the door before leaving office.

The intelligence sharing vital to Ukraine’s targeting systems has also continued, as has — despite Elon Musk’s threats — the Ukrainian military’s access to SpaceX’s Starlink satellite network.

Congress has allocated two types of funding for aid to Ukraine: The first pays for weapons to be transferred to Ukraine for US military stocks. That aid has been almost exhausted, experts say. The second provides funds for Ukraine to buy its own weapons from American manufacturers. Because of the time it takes for those contracts to be negotiated and fulfilled, weapons that were ordered in 2022 are only being delivered now. The last items from contracts signed in 2024 might not be delivered until 2028.

The upshot, as Mark Cancian, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, puts it, is that “the overall military aid being delivered is relatively high and will stay there for quite a while.”

#### The US still backs Ukraine in intelligence sharing – which is the vital internal link to maintaining a stalemate

Paul Hockenos, 2025 - is a Berlin-based journalist. “Ukraine’s Narrow Path to Victory Without Trump” Foreign Policy, 6/9,

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/06/09/ukraine-victory-intelligence-diplomacy-europe-defense-trump/> //DH

But crucially, the Trump administration will not abandon Ukraine completely. U.S. policymakers—among them a majority of Republicans—realize that there is too much for Washington to lose from a potential Ukrainian collapse. The United States can, and probably will, extend offers similar to previous support where it doesn’t cost Washington excessively.

Washington insiders who deal with the Trump administration on Ukraine say that it will not suspend Ukraine’s access to the U.S. satellite intelligence, which has been crucial for Ukraine’s battlefield targeting. This advanced satellite imagery is absolutely key for Ukraine: It is its eyes and ears.

Since Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022, the U.S. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency has lent Ukraine access to a commercial satellite imagery platform that uses high-resolution radar imagery to track Russian troop movements, which the Ukrainian military uses to plan counteroffensives. As the New York Times reported, the Ukrainian military depends overwhelmingly on coordinates from U.S. intelligence for most of its operations involving long-range strikes.

Critically, this is one of the few pieces of technology that neither the Ukrainians nor their European allies can substitute. Without it, as Ukraine was for about a week in March—when the Trump administration was roughing up Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky—Kyiv would find itself at an ominous disadvantage. But this won’t happen, because continued Ukrainian access enables the United States to have a finger in the war rather than stand on the sidelines as a useless observer—and, since it’s already in place, costs very little.

#### Trump is ratcheting up pressure on Russia now

John Lyons, 2025 – “A very Trumpian deal means Russia now faces a much more formidable Ukraine” ABC News (Australia), 7/15, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-15/donald-trump-ukraine-nato-deal-john-lyons/105532234 //DH

Russia is set to face a much more formidable enemy on the battlefield in Ukraine.

In coming weeks — if US President Donald Trump's new plan is implemented — Ukraine will be armed with more powerful weaponry and much more of it.

The deal is very Trumpian. Trump the commander-in-chief has decided that Russia is about to face a much more heavily armed Ukraine, while Trump the businessman has decided that NATO — Europe and Canada — should pick up the bill.

The significance of what is now happening is that Trump has clearly lost patience with Vladimir Putin and has decided to put the Russian leader in a pincer movement.

The first part of that pincer is to impose a new regime of sanctions against Russia in 50 days if Moscow does not come to the negotiating table. Trump often sets long deadlines — with tariffs he set 60-day deadlines — which often are extended to the point where they lose meaning.

The second part — more important — is that the US will open its vast vault of arms for Ukraine in a dramatic increase to Ukraine's military capability.

Sitting alongside Trump as the deal was announced, NATO secretary-general Mark Rutte said: "It will mean that Ukraine can get its hands on really massive numbers of military equipment, both for air defence, but also missiles, ammunition, et cetera."

Intriguing words

The most intriguing word in the NATO chief's sentence was "missiles". While Patriots are defensive systems — designed to hit and destroy any incoming missiles — "missiles" suggests more offensive weapons.

Reports have been emerging from the White House in recent days that Trump is so angry with Putin that he is prepared to authorise long-range missiles.

What appears to be happening is that the US is empowering Ukraine to use US weapons deep inside Russia despite long-held fears such attacks could lead to a dramatic escalation.

### They Say: “No link – Science Diplomacy Not Appeasement”

#### Russia views Arctic cooperation as weakness and they’ll escalate the war in response

Sergey Sukhankin, 2024 – Fellow, Jamestown Foundation; and Fellow at the North American Arctic Defence and Security Network “A Long Journey Ahead: Fulfilling (Pre)conditions for Re-establishing Dialogue with Russia in the Arctic” COOPERATION, STABILITY, AND SECURITY IN THE ARCTIC? Strategies for Moving Forward, January, <https://www.masseycollege.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Arctic-Conference-Report.pdf> //DH

Some experts argue that certain areas of cooperation with Russia—such as, for instance, the Arctic region—should not be severed due to their strategic importance. In my view, however, this is a dangerous way of thinking and a path that must not be followed. My knowledge of Russian history and understanding of the Russian identity suggest that a policy of appeasement will never change the behavior of Moscow. Conversely, Russia’s military-political leadership will view continued cooperation in the Arctic as a sign of weakness and hesitation on the part of the West, which is most likely to result in a larger war in Europe in the next several years. I firmly believe that re-launching cooperation with Russia in the Arctic with the incumbent political regime will be utterly counterproductive. Instead, the process should be incremental and conditional. To avoid mistakes that the West has committed after 1991 in dealing with Russia— which have led to the emergence of an aggressive and anti-Western Russia—a (partial) reinitiation of cooperation with the Russian Federation should go through three major stages.

First, it is necessary to prepare Russia for a constructive dialogue. At this stage, the key goal is to make sure that Russia loses the war in Ukraine and its economy is devastated. This dual result should facilitate the creation of favorable conditions inside Russia, prompting Russia’s political leadership (whoever might be in power) to engage in a constructive dialogue with the West. It is imperative to note that this can only be achieved by military means and economic pressure, and not by diplomacy. Additionally, the Western alliance needs to transform its new Northern Flank into an impregnable bastion and the Russian side should clearly understand that this change is levelled against Russia for the criminal recklessness of its military-political regime and multiple violations of international law both in Ukraine and beyond.

Second, Russia’s regime needs to fulfill key conditions. The main goal of this stage is to create a configuration that could provide a set of guarantees against the re-emergence of Russia’s assertive militarism and neo-imperial ambitions. In this context, the role of the Arctic region is critical. Russia will have to agree on and fulfill three crucial conditions:

(a) Demilitarization of Russia’s Arctic and High North, translated into the disabling of existing (para)military infrastructure and preventing the re-deployment of means of warfare currently present in the macro-region.

(b) The Northern Sea Route (NSR) should be demilitarized and turned into an international transportation artery. Ideally, an intergovernmental monitoring agency consisting of the Arctic nations should be established. Given the growing importance of the NSR (which is to increase exponentially with climactic changes) Russia must not be allowed to exert uncontrollable sway over such a strategic—from a geo-economic point of view—sector of the Arctic. In case this condition is not met over time, the West needs to avoid repeating the same mistake in relations to Russia’s commitment to energy security (which was one of the key factors that prompted Russia to start the war against Ukraine).

(c) Establishing an international monitoring agency that will be responsible for tracking Russia`s compliance with the main principles of environmental sustainability in the Arctic to avoid continuing environmental nihilism on the part of Russia in this macro-region with an extremely brittle ecosystem.

Fulfillment of these three steps should result in emergence of a new, less one-state centered configuration of international relations in the Arctic and, most crucially, contribute to the defeat of the ideology of Russia’s exceptionalism in the Arctic region.

#### Russia will only agree to cooperation in exchange for tangible concessions in Ukraine

Mikhail Komin and Joanna Hosa, 2025 - Mikhail Komin was a visiting fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. He regularly provides analytical comments for media outlets such as TVRain, Forbes, Carnegie, Novaya Gazeta, and Radio Liberty. Joanna Hosa was a policy fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. She has held a range of positions at the European Commission, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the Open Society European Policy Institute, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and the International Federation on Human Rights. “The bear beneath the ice: Russia’s ambitions in the Arctic” European Council on Foreign Relations, 5/27, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-bear-beneath-the-ice-russias-ambitions-in-the-arctic/> //DH

The Kremlin’s foreign policy in the Arctic walks a clumsy tightrope. It uses international law when convenient, courts China and India as symbolic partners, and flirts with building “alternative” institutions, all while fearing Beijing and quietly hoping for the West to resume cooperation. Unlike its more coherent economic and military Arctic strategies, its diplomatic approach is piecemeal and opportunistic—less a roadmap and more a toolkit for tactical improvisation.

Still, it serves a purpose: to keep the door ajar for reintegration into international cooperation on the Arctic, while building leverage to demand it on Moscow’s terms. At the same time, its ambiguity on issues such as China allows Russia to remain open to unexpected opportunities for a full reset of Arctic geopolitics. Should negotiations with the US succeed Russia could leverage a commitment to reducing its (exaggerated) cooperation with China and India, for example, for tangible gains elsewhere—most notably in Ukraine.

#### Those concessions will shatter Ukrainian morale, and mean that Russia will win

Riley McCabe, 2025 - is an associate fellow for the Warfare, Irregular Threats and Terrorism Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “Russia says it’s winning. The data says otherwise.” Washington Post, 6/12, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/interactive/2025/russia-losing-casualties-ukraine-war/> //DH

Russia, by contrast, has spent the past 17 months attempting to grind forward in Ukraine with brute force — and according to new data, it has little to show for its efforts.

These efforts have yielded fewer than 1,800 square miles of new territory seized since January 2024, an outcome that decisively falls short of Moscow’s objective to greatly expand its control of Ukrainian territory. Russian advances in some areas have been slower than Allied forces during the grueling World War I offensive in the Somme, a battle which became a byword for costly and futile military operations.

For these marginal gains, Russia has paid an extraordinary price in blood and equipment. Russian fatalities in Ukraine now exceed the total number of Soviet and Russian soldiers killed in every war since World War II combined. By this summer, Russia will likely pass 1 million total military casualties.

Russia has also consistently lost 2 to 5 times more fighting vehicles than Ukraine on the battlefield, including roughly 1,200 armored fighting vehicles, 3,200 infantry fighting vehicles and 1,900 tanks since January 2024.

This brutal reality challenges the narrative that Russia is dictating the terms of the conflict. Yes, Russian forces have been on the offensive since early 2024 (with a limited number of exceptions). But initiative alone is not victory. What matters is not just what Russia has gained, but also what it has lost in exchange.

Russian troops continue to face an extensively fortified front line consisting of minefields, trenches, anti-armor obstacles and artillery positions that shred assaults. Ukraine has also saturated the battlefield with drones, which now account for the majority of battlefield deaths. Ukraine’s defense-in-depth strategy, bolstered by U.S. and European support, has transformed the battlefield into a war of attrition that favors defenders and punishes attackers. Although the Kremlin appears willing to absorb this punishment in a bid to outlast Kyiv, it does not seem to be able to do more than slowly attempt to grind forward.

Indeed, the Kremlin’s path to victory is not through battlefield brilliance. It is through Western abandonment. Without U.S. support, Ukraine could quickly run short of critical munitions, fighting vehicles, air defenses and precision strike capabilities, giving Russian forces an advantage on the battlefield. The psychological blow of U.S. withdrawal could also shatter Ukrainian morale, accelerating collapse not through conquest, but through exhaustion, as happened to Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire in World War I.

Putin is betting that political fatigue in Washington will deliver him what his military cannot. That bet extends to the negotiating table. Despite Russia’s limited gains and mounting losses, Moscow has shown little interest in serious diplomacy, insisting on maximalist terms while launching new attacks. But beneath the bluster lies a far weaker hand than many in the West assume.

### They Say: “No link – Working Group Cooperation disproves”

#### Climate data is unique – Russia views it as a bargaining chip to gain concessions

Samu Paukkunen and James Black, 2024 - Samu Paukkunen is the deputy director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. James Black is assistant director of the Defence and Security research group at RAND Europe. “Arctic cooperation with Russia: at what price?”

International Affairs, Volume 100, Issue 6, November 2024, Pages 2637–2648, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiae226>. Oxford Academic Database, accessed via University of Michigan //DH

Similarly, having access to Arctic climate data is important, but not at any cost.46 This data is extremely significant to the wider world as the Arctic plays a special and outsized role in combating—or accelerating—global climate change.47 This stems from the essential contribution that Arctic ice, snow and permafrost make to reflecting solar radiation (the ‘albedo effect’), thus cooling overall planetary temperatures.48 Conversely, when permafrost melts, it can release greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere, causing a feedback loop of more warming, more loss of permafrost, and so on. (Receding permafrost also releases anthrax and other frozen pathogens into the local environment.49) Similar runaway climatological effects are associated with melting Arctic sea ice. This not only causes coastal erosion but also releases fresh water into the sea, disrupting the halocline and global ocean currents, in turn making it harder for sea ice to reform—another vicious cycle.50

However, Russia's emissions have not declined, nor has it been forthcoming in providing the necessary information regarding climatological and environmental issues, even as working group cooperation has nominally resumed.51 As such, Russia continues to accrue the political and propaganda benefits of working within the Arctic Council, without delivering on that body's stated collective goals. Furthermore, one could argue that Russia's withholding of climate data—which is so important for the climate modelling work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—should not be a problem for the Arctic Council alone. Russia's actions on this matter have global consequences; if the climate data is not shared, it is the global South that stands to suffer the most from the resultant disruption to scientists' ability to model—and thus mitigate—global warming. Should it not then be the responsibility of the global community to demand this data, rather than of the Western Arctic countries who already share all their findings and research?

The situation also begs the question of wider information-sharing. Russia continues to share weather data through the World Meteorological Organization, mainly because it is dependent on that mechanism. (Aerial operations against Ukraine would be less efficient and precise, for example, without accurate weather information for the Russian forces.52) Climate information, by contrast, is of much lesser concern to Russia. And the broader issue of tackling climate change is far from a priority for the Russian state and economy. Even in the wake of western sanctions, the economy remains heavily dependent on exporting oil, gas and petrochemicals—including from major projects and terminals in the Russian Arctic.53 Russia thus seems to be specifically withholding climate information to use it as a bargaining chip against other Arctic countries, even as its wider policies undermine the global effort to combat climate change.

### They Say: “No Impact on International Order”

#### Russian victory will embolden Putin to create a Russian-led global through global wars of conquest

Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Michael Kofman, 2025 - \*Senior Fellow and Director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. From 2015 to 2018, she was Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council AND \*\*Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “Putin’s Point of No Return: How an Unchecked Russia Will Challenge the West” Foreign Affairs, January/February, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russia/putins-point-no-return //DH

Moscow’s actions underscore how, after almost three years since Russia’s full-scale invasion of its neighbor, Putin is now more committed than ever to the war with Ukraine and his broader confrontation with the West. Although the conflict is first and foremost an imperial pursuit to end Ukraine’s independence, Putin’s ultimate objectives are to relitigate the post–Cold War order in Europe, weaken the United States, and usher in a new international system that affords Russia the status and influence Putin believes it deserves.

These goals are not new. But the war has hardened Putin’s resolve and narrowed his options. There is no turning back: Putin has already transformed Russia’s society, economy, and foreign policy to better position the Kremlin to take on the West. Having accepted the mantle of a rogue regime, Russia is now even less likely to see a need for constraint.

The stage is set for the confrontation with Russia to intensify, despite the incoming Trump administration’s apparent interest in normalizing relations with Moscow. The war is not going well for Ukraine, in part because the limited assistance the West has sent to Kyiv does not match the deep stake it claims to have in the conflict. As a result, Russia is likely to walk away from the war emboldened and, once it has reconstituted its military capacity, spoiling for another fight to revise the security order in Europe. What’s more, the Kremlin will look to pocket any concessions from the Trump administration for ending the current war, such as sanctions relief, to strengthen its hand for the next one. Russia is already preparing the ground through the sabotage and other special operations it has unleashed across Europe and through its alignment with other rogue actors, including Iran and North Korea. European countries are only slightly more prepared to handle the Russian challenge on their own than they were three years ago. And depending on how the war in Ukraine ends, the possibility of another war with Russia looms.

The question is not whether Russia will pose a threat to the United States and its allies but how to assess the magnitude of the danger and the effort required to contain it. China will remain the United States’ primary competitor. But even with much of its attention called to Asia, Washington cannot ignore a recalcitrant and revanchist adversary in Europe, especially not one that will pose a direct military threat to NATO members.

The Russian problem is also a global one. Putin’s willingness to invade a neighbor, assault democratic societies, and generally violate accepted norms—and his seeming ability to get away with it—paves the way for others to do the same.The Kremlin’s provision of military equipment and know-how to current and aspiring U.S. adversaries will amplify these threats, multiplying the challenges that Washington will face from China, Iran, North Korea, and any other country that Russia backs.

#### Russian victory causes global nuclear wars and prevents cooperating on existential threats

Yuval Noah Harari, 2024 - is a historian, philosopher and author of "Sapiens", "Homo Deus" and the children's series "Unstoppable Us". He is a lecturer in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's history department and co-founder of Sapienship, a social-impact company. “Yuval Noah Harari on how to prevent a new age of imperialism.” The Economist, 6/3, Gale OneFile, accessed via University of Michigan //DH

Whenever international rules become meaningless, countries naturally seek safety in armaments and military alliances. Given events in Ukraine, can anyone blame Poland for almost doubling its army and military budget, Finland for joining NATO or Saudi Arabia for pursuing a defence treaty with the United States?

Unfortunately, the increase in military budgets comes at the expense of society's weakest members, as money is diverted from schools and clinics to tanks and missiles. Military alliances, too, tend to widen inequality. Weak states left outside their protective shield become easy prey. As militarised blocs spread around the world, trade routes become strained and commerce declines, with the poor paying the highest price. And as tensions between the militarised blocs increase, chances grow that a small spark in a remote corner of the world will ignite a global conflagration. Since alliances rely on credibility, even a minor challenge in an insignificant location can become a casus belli for a third world war.

Humanity has seen it all before. More than 2,000 years ago Sun Tzu, Kautilya and Thucydides exposed how in a lawless world the quest for security makes everyone less secure. And past experiences like the second world war and the cold war have repeatedly taught us that in a global conflict it is the weak who suffer disproportionately.

During the second world war, for example, one of the highest casualty rates was in the Dutch East Indies—today's Indonesia. When the war broke out in eastern Europe in 1939, it seemed a world away from the rice farmers of Java, but events in Poland ignited a chain reaction that killed about 3.5m-4m Indonesians, mostly through starvation or forced labour at the hands of Japanese occupiers. This constituted 5% of the Indonesian population, a higher casualty rate than among many major belligerents, including the United States (0.3%), Britain (0.9%) and Japan (3.9%). Twenty years later Indonesia again paid a particularly heavy price. The cold war may have been cold in Berlin, but it was a scorching inferno in Jakarta. In 1965-66 between 500,000 and 1m Indonesians were killed in massacres caused by tensions between communists and anti-communists.

The situation now is potentially worse than it was in 1939 or 1965. It's not only that a nuclear war would endanger hundreds of millions of people in neutral countries. Humanity also faces the additional existential threats of climate change and out-of-control artificial intelligence (AI).

As military budgets rise, so money that could have helped solve global warming fuels a global arms race instead. And as military competition intensifies, so the goodwill necessary for agreements on climate change evaporates. Rising tensions also ruin the chance of reaching agreements on limiting an AI arms race. Drone warfare in particular is advancing rapidly, and the world may soon see swarms of fully autonomous drones fighting each other in Ukraine's sky, and killing thousands of people on the ground. The killer robots are coming, but humans are paralysed by disagreement. If peace isn't brought to Ukraine soon, everyone is likely to suffer, even if they live thousands of kilometres from Kyiv and think the battle there has nothing to do with them.

Breaking the biggest taboo

Making peace is never easy. It has been said that nations march into war through a barn door, but the only exit is through a mousehole. In the face of conflicting claims and interests, it is difficult to assign blame and find a reasonable compromise. Nevertheless, as wars go, the Russo-Ukrainian war is exceptionally simple.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine's independence and borders were universally recognised. The country felt so secure that it agreed to give up the nuclear arsenal it had inherited from the Soviet Union, without demanding that Russia or other powers do the same. In exchange, in 1994 Russia (as well as the United States and Britain) signed the Budapest Memorandum, promising to "refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence" of Ukraine. It was one of the biggest acts of unilateral disarmament in history. Swapping nuclear bombs for paper promises seemed to Ukrainians like a wise move in 1994, when trust in international rules and agreements ran high.

Twenty years later, in 2014, the Russo-Ukrainian war began when Russian forces occupied Crimea and fomented separatist movements in eastern Ukraine. The war ebbed and flowed for the following eight years, until in February 2022 Russia mounted an onslaught aimed at conquering all of Ukraine.

Russia has given various excuses for its actions, most notably that it was pre-empting a Western attack on Russia. However, neither in 2014 nor in 2022 was there any imminent threat of such an armed invasion. Vague talk about "Western imperialism" or "cultural Coca-Colonialism" may be good enough to fuel debates in ivory towers, but it cannot legitimate massacring the inhabitants of Bucha or bombing Mariupol to rubble.

For most of history the term "imperialism" referred to cases when a powerful state such as Rome, Britain or tsarist Russia conquered foreign lands and turned them into provinces. This kind of imperialism gradually became taboo after 1945. While there has been no shortage of wars in the late 20th and early 21st centuries—with horrendous conflicts ongoing in Palestine and Israel, and in Sudan, Myanmar and elsewhere—there have so far been no cases when an internationally recognised country was simply wiped off the map owing to annexation by a powerful conqueror. When Iraq tried to do that to Kuwait in 1990-91, an international coalition restored Kuwaiti independence and territorial integrity. And when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, there was never a question of annexing the country or any part of it.

Russia has already annexed not just Crimea but also all the territories its armies are currently occupying in Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin is following the imperial principle that any territory conquered by the Russian army is annexed by the Russian state. Indeed, Russia went as far as annexing several regions that its armies merely intend to conquer, such as the unoccupied parts of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk oblasts.

Mr Putin has not bothered to hide his imperial intentions. He has repeatedly argued since at least 2005 that the collapse of the Soviet empire was "the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century", and has promised to rebuild this empire. He has further argued that the Ukrainian nation doesn't really exist, and that Russia has a historical right to the entire territory of Ukraine.

If Mr Putin is allowed to win in Ukraine, this kind of imperialism will make a comeback all over the world. What will then restrain Venezuela, for example, from conquering Guyana, or Iran from conquering the United Arab Emirates? What will restrain Russia itself from conquering Estonia or Kazakhstan? No border and no state could find safety in anything except armaments and alliances. If the taboo on imperial conquests is broken, then even states whose independence and borders won international recognition long ago will face a growing risk of invasion, and even of again becoming imperial provinces.

This danger is not lost on observers in former imperial colonies. In a speech in February 2022 the Kenyan ambassador to the UN, Martin Kimani, explained that after the collapse of the European empires newly liberated people in Africa and elsewhere treated international borders as sacrosanct, for they understood that the alternative was waging endless wars. African countries have inherited many potentially disputed borders from the imperial past, yet, as Mr Kimani explained, "we agreed that we would settle for the borders that we inherited…Rather than form nations that looked ever backward into history with a dangerous nostalgia, we chose to look forward to a greatness none of our many nations and peoples had ever known." Referring to Mr Putin's attempt to rebuild the Soviet empire, Mr Kimani said that although imperial collapse typically leaves many unfulfilled yearnings, these should never be pursued by force. "We must complete our recovery from the embers of dead empires in a way that does not plunge us back into new forms of domination and oppression."

As Mr Kimani hinted, the driving force behind Russia's invasion of Ukraine is imperial nostalgia. Russia's territorial demands in Ukraine have no basis in international law. Of course, like every country, Russia does have legitimate security concerns, and any peace agreement must take them into account. During the past century Russia has suffered repeated invasions that cost the lives of many millions of its citizens. Russians deserve to feel secure and respected. But no Russian security concerns can justify destroying Ukrainian nationhood. Nor should they cause us to forget that Ukraine too has legitimate security concerns. Given events of the past decade, Ukraine clearly needs guarantees against future Russian aggression more robust than the Budapest Memorandum or the Minsk Agreements of 2014-15.

Empires have always justified themselves by prioritising their own security concerns, but the larger they became the more security concerns they acquired. Ancient Rome first embarked on its imperial project because of security concerns in central Italy, and eventually found itself fighting brutal wars thousands of kilometres from Italy because of its security concerns on the Danube and Euphrates. If Russia's security concerns are acknowledged as a legitimate basis for making conquests on the Dnieper, they too may soon be used to justify conquests on the Danube and Euphrates.

#### Negotiated settlement is inevitable – but if Putin thinks he’s winning, he’ll start new wars

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Every war ultimately ends in a negotiated settlement. Still, if Putin goes into the talks with leverage over Ukraine, the outcome will only lay the foundation for a more significant future conflict. If anyone doubts that Russia’s goals go beyond Ukraine, they only need to recall that Putin himself made the war about the West when he said it was the West that started the war in Ukraine. Further proof comes to light in what former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev described Russia’s goal in Ukraine as “the creation of an open Eurasia from Lisbon to Vladivostok.”

Russia has lost wars in the past. The 1905 war with Japan is a prime example. This loss, followed by a failed internal revolution, resulted in crucial reforms. Chief among them, perhaps, is that for the first time, Russia developed a semblance of a parliament, a nascent step towards democratization.

Sometimes only a shattering loss can force internal self-reflection, leading to a positive change. The only way to push Russia in that direction is by helping Ukraine win. But Russia’s victory will shatter American credibility and lead to the war the West sought to avoid. This year is crucial, and the stakes could not be higher.

#### Russian adventurism will collapse the international order – causes world war

Dr. Evelyn N. Farkas, 22 - served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia in the Obama administration, and as former senior advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander, NATO. “The US Must Prepare for War Against Russia Over Ukraine” Defense One, 1/11, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2022/01/us-must-prepare-war-against-russia-over-ukraine/360639/> //DH

President Vladimir Putin is more likely than not to invade Ukraine again in the coming weeks. As someone who helped President Barack Obama manage the U.S. and international response to Russia’s initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and our effort to keep Moscow from occupying the whole country into 2015, I am distressingly convinced of it.

Why? I see the scale and type of force arrayed by the Russian military, the ultimatums issued by Putin and his officials, the warlike rhetoric that has until recently saturated Russian airwaves, and the impatience with talks expressed by his foreign minister. Add to that the likely anxiety produced in Putin by the demonstrations last week in Kazakhstan—and Moscow’s success in tamping them down.

But the basic reason I think talks with Russia will fail is that the United States and its allies have nothing they can immediately offer Moscow in exchange for a de-escalation.

The United States must do more than issue ultimatums about sanctions and economic penalties. U.S. leaders should be marshalling an international coalition of the willing, readying military forces to deter Putin and, if necessary, prepare for war.

If Russia prevails again, we will remain stuck in a crisis not just over Ukraine but about the future of the global order far beyond that country’s borders. Left unrestrained, Putin will move swiftly, grab some land, consolidate his gains, and set his sights on the next satellite state in his long game to restore all the pre-1991 borders: the sphere of geographical influence he deems was unjustly stripped from Great Russia.

The world will watch our response. Any subsequent acceptance of Russian gains will spell the beginning of the end of the international order. If Europe, NATO, and its allies in Asia and elsewhere fail to defend the foundational United Nations principles of sanctity of borders and state sovereignty, no one will. Any appeasement will only beget future land grabs not only from Putin, but also from China in Taiwan and elsewhere. And if the world’s democracies lack the political will to stop them, the rules-based international order will collapse. The United Nations will go the way of the League of Nations. We will revert to spheres of global influence, unbridled military and economic competition, and ultimately, world war.

#### Russia will reconstitute its military if it wins in Ukraine

Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Michael Kofman, 2025 - \*Senior Fellow and Director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. From 2015 to 2018, she was Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council AND \*\*Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “Putin’s Point of No Return: How an Unchecked Russia Will Challenge the West” Foreign Affairs, January/February, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russia/putins-point-no-return //DH

Russia’s military threat is not going away, either. The question of Russian military reconstitution is not an if but a when. Even if Russia cannot sustain its current wartime spending, the defense budget is likely to remain substantially above prewar levels for some time to come. The Russian military, too, is unlikely to shrink back to the relatively small army Russia fielded before the war. One lesson that Russia’s military brass took from Ukraine is that the Russian army was not “Soviet” enough in that it lacked mass and the capacity to replace losses. In reality, the Russian military was stuck in a halfway state, having acquired some advanced or modernized capabilities but also retaining some Soviet-era characteristics, including conscription and a culture of centralized command that discouraged initiative. Now, Russia is likely to maintain a large overall force with an expanded structure and greater manpower allocation, although it will still depend on mobilization in the event of war to reduce the cost of its standing army.

Reconstitution is about not just materiel but also the capacity to conduct large-scale combat operations. The Russian military has shown that it can learn as an organization; it is capable of scaling the deployment of new technology such as drones and electronic warfare systems onto the battlefield, and it will be a changed force after its experience in Ukraine. Despite its initial poor showing, the Russian military has demonstrated staying power and the ability to withstand high levels of attrition.

### They Say: “Turn – Polar Council”

#### Russia’s not about to walk away from the Arctic Council

Serafima Andreeva, 2024 - is a socio-political researcher at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute. “Cooperation and scientific diplomacy are fundamental values of the Arctic Council” Interview by Camille Lin, The Polar Journal, 5/7, https://polarjournal.net/cooperation-and-scientific-diplomacy-are-fundamental-values-of-the-arctic-council/ //DH

Has an alternative forum emerged in the Arctic?

he discussions outside of the Council have occasionally proposed BRICS as an organisation that might take a larger role in Russian Arctic cooperation if the Arctic Council were to be significantly weakened. However, the survival and functioning of the Arctic Council is in the interest of all Arctic states, and hence BRICS is not really an alternative in that sense, and it is still far from something that could replace the Arctic Council or offer an alternative to Russia. For this country the most important thing is to check whether the forums for international cooperation serve its interests in the region, and whether it can express its priorities there.

According to Morten Hoglund, the current two-year chair of the AC, discussions are progressing slowly, but there is no immediate and pressing initiative from Russia to leave the platform. Other types of bilateral cooperation could exist, but nothing equivalent to the AC, which is very unique both in terms of its influence and its longstanding scientific work. So I don’t see any challengers for this forum.

#### The Polar Council assumes Russia gains cooperation support from other BRICS members. But there’s no support for an anti-Western agenda in BRICS

Fyodor Lukyanov, 2024 – Chair, Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (Russia) at the Council on Foreign Relations “BRICS as Diversification of the World Order” 11/7, https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global-memos/brics-summit-2024-expanding-alternative //DH

But this is not the main significance of the summit. The BRICS (whose membership has grown from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa to also include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates) is an unusual community that does not bear the hallmarks of a traditional international institution. So far, it is a rather amorphous club with a single unifying principle: creating a space for interaction that bypasses Western states and institutions. An overtly anti-Western policy will not prevail in the BRICS, as the overwhelming majority of states there are not interested in aggravating relations with the West. But they are eager to have different options for building political and economic ties, free of U.S. and EU guidance and mechanisms.

#### Russia lacks the diplomatic clout to control BRICS

Gustavo de Carvalho, 2024 - Senior Researcher, African Governance and Diplomacy Programme, South African Institute of International Affairs (South Africa) “The BRICS Summit 2024: An Expanding Alternative” 11/7, <https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global-memos/brics-summit-2024-expanding-alternative> //DH

It is crucial to distinguish between the BRICS as a collective and Russia’s individual goals. Decisions within the BRICS are based on consensus, which often moderates the positions of individual members. While Russia pushed for a more assertive agenda, it faced scepticism from other members, leading to a more balanced outcome.

Moreover, viewing the BRICS through an “anti-Western” lens overlooks the broader motivations of its Global South constituents. For many, like South Africa, the BRICS is not about moving away from the West but about diversification, especially in finance and trade. In the Kazan declaration, the BRICS positioned itself as a complementary entity to existing institutions like the Group of Twenty (G20), emphasising greater coordination led by India, Brazil, and South Africa, which currently hold consecutive G20 presidencies.

#### No impact - BRICS is too diverse to pose a threat to the global order

Stewart Patrick, 2024 – Senior Fellow and Director, Global Order and Institutions Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace “BRICS Expansion, the G20, and the Future of World Order” 10/9, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/10/brics-summit-emerging-middle-powers-g7-g20?lang=en> //DH

The 2023 decision by the BRICS coalition to open its doors to five new members has raised anxieties in the West that global fragmentation is accelerating and could get worse, especially as another three dozen countries are purportedly waiting in the wings. Such fears are understandable, but they should not be overblown, in part because BRICS expansion will only increase the coalition’s heterogeneity—and potential cacophony. On its face, BRICS+ is a formidable economic bloc, comprising half of the world’s population, 40 percent of its trade, and 40 percent of crude oil production and exports. The coalition can use this leverage not only to demand a more equitable international order but also to act on those ambitions, for instance by establishing a parallel energy trading system, deepening commercial links among members, creating an alternative system of development finance, reducing dollar dependence in foreign exchange transactions, and deepening technology cooperation in fields from AI to outer space. Expect BRICS+ to seek opportunities in each area.

At the same time, the body’s increasing diversity may make it even harder for BRICS+ to formulate, adopt, and pursue unified policy positions, including within the framework of the G20. To date, BRICS has been more effective at signaling what it is against—namely, continued Western domination of the architecture of global governance—than what it stands for. Developing a coherent, positive agenda for reforming world order and advancing international cooperation is likely to become even harder as the coalition adds more countries with very different political institutions, economic models, cultural systems, and national interests. The initial composition of BRICS+ will also complicate its aspirations to speak for the Global South, further blunting its impact on global order.

### They Say: “Humiliation Turn”

#### The humiliation thesis is bankrupt. Emotional reasons for war are overwhelmed by other factors

Raamy Majeed, 2025 – lecturer in philosophy at the University of Manchester, who works on the philosophy of mind and cognitive science. “Does national humiliation explain why wars break out?” 3/27 <https://psyche.co/ideas/does-national-humiliation-explain-why-wars-break-out> //DH

Proponents of humiliation-based explanations for war tend to take the concept literally: real people experience humiliation, and this emotional response fuels war. It’s not taken as a metaphor, and it’s not applied only to leaders, but to the population at large. The problem is that humiliation is an underexplored emotion in psychology, and it is unclear whether it can sustain the kind of long-term influence required to drive international conflicts.

Humiliation, at its core, is the experience of degradation at the hands of others. It is distinct from shame; while shame arises when we believe we have done something wrong, humiliation occurs when we believe someone else has wronged us. In its national form, humiliation is the collective feeling that a country has been degraded or disrespected on the world stage. There are, however, two major challenges to this explanation.

First, psychological research complicates the idea that humiliation can be a sustained emotional force. Psychologists cited in the international relations literature, such as Paul Ekman and Nico Frijda, argue that emotions are short-lived episodes rather than enduring states. If this is true, how can we say that national humiliation lasts for decades or centuries, as some claim about China’s ‘century of humiliation’ or Russia’s post-Soviet resentment? One possible counterargument is that national humiliation is a group emotion rather than an individual one. While individual emotions fade, collective emotions might persist because they are continually experienced by new members of the group. This could explain how China’s ‘century of humiliation’ maintained its significance across generations.

However, even if we accept that national humiliation could, in theory, persist for long periods of time, there remains a second challenge: what is the actual evidence for this? In other words, where is the proof that ordinary citizens, as a matter of fact, feel humiliated in this way? Do we have data showing, for instance, that large numbers of Russians have experienced brief but repeated bursts of humiliation in response to perceived slights from other nations over the past few decades? Or, in the case of China, that millions of citizens have felt humiliation over a century? Such claims are difficult to substantiate.

More importantly, reducing war to a matter of emotional response risks oversimplifying complex political realities. If we assume that humiliation inevitably leads to war, we risk caricaturing entire populations, treating them as monolithic entities governed by a single emotional impulse. In reality, nations are composed of diverse individuals with varied perspectives, and emotions alone do not dictate foreign policy.

#### Appeasement is a more likely path to war than humiliation

Natia Seskuria, 2022 - is an associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and was previously a fellow with MEI's Frontier Europe Initiative “Trying to save Russia from humiliation is not the right way to end the war in Ukraine” Middle East Institute, 5/31, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/trying-save-russia-humiliation-not-right-way-end-war-ukraine> //DH

Although the allies have provided continuous support for Ukraine, as Russia threatens more dangerous escalation, some of them may seek to shield Putin from humiliation and softly advocate for Russian interests to be accommodated. Those who are tempted to pursue such an approach keep forgetting that this is a tried and tested strategy — and one where the West will always lose. Putin is hoping that eventually Western unity will crumble and sanctions will be softened, and in the meantime he will try to grab as much Ukrainian territory as he can and declare victory. The leaders who have appeased Putin in the past are directly responsible for the bloodshed in Ukraine today. Appeasement has only further emboldened Putin to pursue his maximalist goals in the post-Soviet space.

In fact, there is no need to read between the lines. Russian Gen. Rustam Minnekayev has already threatened Moldova by claiming that Russia plans to expand its offensive to provide land corridors to Crimea and Moldova. In Georgia’s occupied South Ossetia region, a “referendum” on joining Russia was initially announced and later suspended pending further consultations with Moscow. Both countries “host” Russian troops on their territory and have recently applied for EU membership alongside Ukraine. Providing Putin an off-ramp in Ukraine will increase his appetite to look for relatively easy victories in states like Georgia and Moldova by further destabilizing them and violating their territorial integrity. Moreover, setting the precedent that an aggressor can achieve territorial gains through a peace deal after pursuing unjustified military action would only encourage other malign actors as well.

Even if peace talks continue, it is naive to hope that Russia will suddenly become an honest broker. Russia has violated the Minsk Accords and the 2008 six-point cease-fire agreement with Georgia. There is no reason to believe that an even more aggressive Moscow will fulfil its obligations now. France and Germany have been tirelessly pushing for diplomacy since the beginning of the war. President Macron’s endless phone calls to Moscow have made it clear that Putin is unwilling to make any concessions. Such regular interactions with Putin are counterproductive and suggest that the West is not serious about isolating the Russian president.

France and Germany should really know better by now, as they have been directly involved in the Minsk process that was supposed to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine. According to sources in the Ukrainian government, both countries have tried to push Ukraine to implement the Russian interpretation of the Minsk Agreement, which would have granted a special status and more autonomy to the Donbas region — and thus give Russia a de facto veto on Ukraine's foreign policy decisions. Recently, President Zelenskyy has mentioned that his French counterpart has tried to convince him to accept concessions to help Putin to save face.

It is time for Western leaders to deal with Russia as it is and not as they want it to be. Russia under Putin cannot be treated as a rational actor, nor it is possible to ever return to business as usual with Putin’s Russia. Unless the West is willing to offer immediate security guarantees to Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia — which seems unlikely — the only way to deter further Russian aggression is by humiliating Russia in this war. Ukraine has already been doing its part through its immense sacrifices. There is no room now for Western leaders to back down, as it will simply increase Putin's appetite. The cost of providing a face-saving exit to Putin is much higher than of his ultimate humiliation on the battlefield.

#### Humiliation doesn’t increase the risk of war; their argument is ahistorical

Jacek Rostowski, 2022 – former minister of finance and deputy prime minister of Poland. “Russia Must Be Humbled” Project Syndicate, 10/25

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/russia-putin-humiliation-in-war-often-drives-progress-by-jacek-rostowski-2022-10> //DH

With Russian forces retreating in eastern and southern Ukraine in the face of a masterful Ukrainian counteroffensive, some commentators in the West have argued that the war the Kremlin launched in February must not end with the “humiliation” of President Vladimir Putin or Russia. In fact, the opposite is true: Putin’s appalling aggression must leave Russia thoroughly chastened on the world stage.

Leaving aside the immorality of this one-sided appeal to give Putin a face-saving exit (no one seems to be appealing for Ukraine not to be humiliated by an eventual peace settlement), can the argument be justified by history or the cold logic of dealing with a nuclear superpower (even one that has been demonstrated to be super-powerful only in this dimension)?

To answer that question, we must start with the fact that any defeat in war will always be deeply humiliating for the losing side – regardless of whether it is the aggressor or the victim. War always entails humiliation for at least one side, and sometimes for both. Those arguing against humiliating Russia typically point primarily to the aftermath of World War I. The Treaty of Versailles, they claim, imposed such humiliating terms on Germany that it led to the rise of Hitler a decade later, and then to World War II.

In fact, Germany suffered only moderate territorial losses at Versailles. It was obliged to return Alsace-Lorraine (taken from France in 1871) and lands seized from Poland during the partitions of the eighteenth century. Others – including the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires – lost far more territory than Germany did.

It was the Versailles treaty’s reparations provisions, not the territorial settlement, that may have contributed to Hitler’s rise. The reparations were certainly just, in the sense that they were proportional to French war losses and to the French reparations paid to Germany after the war of 1870. But, as John Maynard Keynes (and, later many historians) argued, Germany’s reparations payments may have contributed to the hardship suffered by its population during the hyperinflation of the early 1920s and the Great Depression of the early 1930s.

This point about the economic impact of the Versailles treaty is driven home by the events following WWII, when Germany once again ceded Alsace (again to France) and lost one-quarter of its territory to Poland and to the Russian puppet state of East Germany. If anything, its sense of humiliation should have been far greater than after WWI. Instead, the Nazis’ defeat turned out to be massively beneficial for both Germany and its neighbors. The aid received from the United States under the Marshall Plan far outweighed the reparations that West Germany had to pay, and the German economy has boomed ever since. It reunified peacefully with East Germany when communism fell, and it has never again pursued a revanchist foreign policy.

Nor is Germany the only example of a country that has benefited from defeat and humiliation in war. Japan, too, renounced imperialism and militarism after its surrender in WWII. France came out better off for having lost the Algerian War, because that defeat enabled Charles de Gaulle to put his country on the path to becoming a modern, economically dynamic nation that is deeply integrated with the rest of Europe. Likewise, after its defeat and humiliation in Vietnam, the US under Ronald Reagan reinvented itself economically and technologically to become the undisputed victor of the Cold War.

Russia, too, is no stranger to this type of experience. Its defeat and humiliation in the Crimean War led to the abolition of serfdom in 1861, when 23 million people were freed (almost six times the number freed in the US following the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863). Forty years of rapid economic development followed. Then, Russia’s defeat and humiliation in the Russo-Japanese War led, in 1905, to a revolution the same year and the establishment (albeit temporary) of a constitutional monarchy.

In 1916, Russia’s losses to Germany precipitated the fall of the czar and the establishment of the liberal provisional government under Aleksandr Kerensky in February 1917. Unfortunately, Kerensky was unwilling to accept humiliation and continued the war effort, leading to further losses and the catastrophic Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. But then, the Soviets’ defeat and humiliation in the Polish War in 1921 prompted Vladimir Lenin to introduce the partly market-based New Economic Policy. The NEP ended mass starvation, and could have given Russia a sustainable path to economic development, had the subsequent rise of Joseph Stalin not closed it off.

Finally, defeat and humiliation in the Afghanistan War led to the fall of the Soviet Union and an all too brief period of democratization, during which Russia at last showed respect for its neighbors. Again, as in the case of Germany after WWI, return of Russian revanchism was caused not by the loss of territory or great-power status, but rather by the hardship that followed the collapse of the Soviet economic system.

#### Putin won’t escalate to the nuclear level

Dan Reiter, 2022 - is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Political Science at Emory University “Don’t Panic About Putin: Even Desperate Leaders Tend to Avoid Catastrophe” Foreign Affairs, 11/7, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/dont-panic-about-putin> //DH

Even more concerning to many observers is Putin’s repeated mention of nuclear weapons. As a nuclear-armed state, Russia could conceivably use a tactical nuclear bomb in an all-out effort to shift the course of the war. Although the reprisals for such an attack would likely be devastating, observers may wonder if Putin could decide he has nothing to lose. On October 27, Putin declared, “There is no point in [using nuclear weapons], neither political nor military,” but his previous comments have been none too reassuring. Will he stay away from the nuclear option even if he gets more desperate?

The good news is that history suggests that Putin is unlikely to fulfill the West’s worst fears. Some leaders in losing wars have taken dramatic actions to stave off defeat. But often they have decided against the most drastic options, for either political or strategic reasons. Putin, like other leaders before him, will take into account whether his actions might actually help him win, and he may be reluctant to contemplate moves that could expose Russia to even greater losses or, worse, undermine his rule at home. Of course, there are still reasons to worry about a desperate Putin. But by examining how leaders tend to behave in these situations, the United States and its partners and allies can arrive at a more considered assessment of Putin’s threats and frame their own policies accordingly.

DESPERATE, NOT FOOLHARDY

The situation that Putin now finds himself in is hardly new. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many leaders fighting losing wars have attempted to somehow snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Occasionally these risky moves succeed, such as the United States’ wild gamble during the Korean War to undertake the Inchon amphibious landing, in which, after weeks of North Korean advances, General Douglas MacArthur launched a surprise attack on a fortified site behind enemy lines, achieving a decisive victory. Often, however, these moves fail: consider Germany’s decision to begin unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic in January 1917, which ended up drawing the United States into World War I and ensuring Germany’s ultimate defeat.

Two things are clear about these military gambles. First, they are usually built on a theory of victory. States will engage in such a move only if there is a logic by which it might actually turn the war around. In ordering Germany’s last-gasp offensive in the Ardennes region of Belgium in December 1944, Adolf Hitler hoped to shatter the American line and force U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt to consider peace talks. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s SCUD missile attacks on Israeli cities during the 1990–1991 Gulf War were intended to split off Arab states from the UN coalition. Neither of these leaders, of course, obtained their desired objective, but in both cases, there was at least a larger plan in play.

Second, just because a war is going badly does not mean that everything is on the table. Despite being backed into a corner, leaders may rule out some options. They may be wary of a move that might incur outsize strategic costs, even if it might turn the tide on the battlefield. In the Korean War, for example, China’s November 1950 intervention posed grave risks to the U.S. military position there. Yet the Truman administration ruled out direct attacks on Chinese territory because the risks of escalation with a nuclear-armed Soviet Union were too high.

In other cases, a leader may dismiss some options for fear of political backlash. Even a ruthless autocrat may recognize the diplomatic costs of some military measures. This does not mean that leaders stay away from all nasty behavior, but there are some places they are unwilling to go, even in desperate times. Take nuclear weapons. Since 1945, there have been a number of cases in which nuclear-armed belligerents have found themselves in losing or stalled conventional wars against nonnuclear adversaries. Yet they have invariably elected to keep their nuclear weapons holstered. The United States in Vietnam and Afghanistan, France in its insurgency war in Algeria, China in its wars with Vietnam in the late 1970s and 1980s, and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s: all failed to accomplish their military goals with conventional means, yet none of them resorted to nuclear weapons.

Even heinous regimes are sometimes constrained by moral considerations. Consider imperial Japan during World War II, one of history’s most genocidal regimes. In 1945, as defeat appeared inevitable, the Japanese considered launching an extraordinary biological weapons attack against San Diego, dispersing fleas infected with bubonic plague and other diseases from seaplanes. The operation was eventually called off by the Japanese chief of general staff—in part, he said, because although Japan had used biological weapons against China earlier in the war, by using them against the United States, “Japan will earn the derision of the world.”

PUTIN’S PREDICAMENT

Given this general pattern of restraint, what factors might shape Putin’s thinking should Russian military setbacks continue to pile up? The Russian leader’s calculations are framed by the fact that he has staked so much on the war. It is clear that he fears the absence of victory, meaning, the absence of significant concessions by the Ukrainian government. He has gone all in, describing the “special operation” as essential to protect Russia from NATO and neutralize the “Nazi” threat posed by Ukraine, as well as for Russia to realize its true Novorossiya identity and borders. And like most dictators, he has also made concerted efforts to solidify his grip on power even as the war has unfolded.

Despite these steps, however, the Russian war effort is floundering, and the Russian population has begun to question the war. Some have publicly expressed outrage over the mismanagement of the war, including pro-Russian bloggers, the head of the defense committee in Russia’s lower house of parliament, local political leaders within Russia, and members of the Russian media. Within Russian society, discontent seems to be growing, as shown by the decision of nearly 300,000 Russian men to flee the country to evade the recent expanded draft. Antiwar protests continue to occur, including from the difficult-to-silence families of dead Russian soldiers, despite widespread arrests and crackdowns. And the Internet is flooded with stories of new conscripts being sent into battle without proper training or equipment.

If Russia fails in Ukraine, it could pose a real threat to Putin’s hold on power. A 1917-style mass revolution is unlikely, as is a violent military coup. But it is plausible to imagine a more bloodless removal from power, in the mode of Nikita Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964 or that of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991. In this situation, elites would privately approach Putin and tell him it is time for him to go, without public protest or his arrest—although Putin’s narcissism and megalomania might cause him to view even this kind of managed exit to be unacceptable. With the future of his own power at stake, Putin might have additional incentives to pursue greater pain and destruction in Ukraine. For example, by escalating the level of civilian suffering, as Russia has done in recent weeks, Putin may hope to push Kyiv to make concessions. Nevertheless, a desperate Putin, much like his counterparts in earlier losing wars, is unlikely to pursue the most drastic options.

The darkest nightmare of Ukraine and its Western allies, of course, is a Russian decision to launch nuclear attacks. But consider the factors that Putin would need to weigh in making this choice. First, it is crucial to note how completely out-of-bounds such a move would be. Since 1945, states have engaged in an array of horrifying tactics, using chemical and biological weapons, massacring civilians, and engaging in mass sexual assault. Yet they have never used nuclear weapons. U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO allies have repeatedly stated that this is a bright redline that Moscow must not cross.

Putin’s growing isolation and hardening autocracy do not mean that he views using nuclear weapons as acceptable. It is true that in recent years, Putin has taken large steps to sever his ties with the West and has loudly declared his indifference to Western disapproval of his tightening grip on Russian society, his backing of the Assad government in Syria, his meddling in Western elections, his invasion of Ukraine, and everything else. But nuclear first use would be an action of a different order. It is the one thing that might cause the entire world, including important Russian allies such as Saudi Arabia and China, to back away from Russia and withdraw support for Moscow. There would likely be backlash within Russia, too, especially if Russian nuclear first use occurred without direct NATO involvement in the war. One June poll by the independent Levada Center in Moscow found that 38 percent of Russians are “very frightened” over Russia’s possible use of nuclear weapons.

### Impact: Turns Arctic War

#### Russia uses cooperation as cover for hybrid threats – the mere intention to cooperate encourages provocation

Samu Paukkunen and James Black, 2024 - Samu Paukkunen is the deputy director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. James Black is assistant director of the Defence and Security research group at RAND Europe. “Arctic cooperation with Russia: at what price?”

International Affairs, Volume 100, Issue 6, November 2024, Pages 2637–2648, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiae226>. Oxford Academic Database, accessed via University of Michigan //DH

However successful it has been in the past as a regional platform, the Arctic should not be seen as an exemption, let alone as a region of peace and cooperation, when the reality is that Russian actions have long been aimed at leveraging the Arctic as part of hybrid threats against the West.40 Russia is waging a brutal war of aggression against its neighbour on the European continent, including with troops and equipment drawn from the Russian Arctic garrisons. President Vladimir Putin has stated publicly that the Arctic 7 countries are officially labelled as ‘unfriendly’, meaning that they are seen as actors hostile to the Russian state. This must be taken into consideration with the Arctic Council, despite entrenched hesitancy to disturb the existing diplomatic status quo.

For Russia, Arctic cooperation is of secondary importance, being more of a tool for coercive diplomacy and support to its hybrid threats.41 This includes weaponizing the diplomatic norm that Arctic issues should be resolved first through the Arctic Council—which explicitly excludes consideration of military matters—and pressuring other Arctic states to block the consensus-based NATO from taking a more formal institutional interest in the region.42

Western countries, on the other hand, are supporting Ukraine in accordance with the UN Charter and international law. Hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of civilian aid and military equipment has flowed into Ukraine.43 In an unexpected repercussion, in terms of Russian ambitions in the European Arctic, Finland and Sweden have joined NATO, driven by fear of Russia's unpredictable leadership and its aspirations as a great power.44 Western cooperation with Russia in other bodies such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council has been suspended, with the other member countries using Russia's exclusion as a chance to push forward with initiatives that Russia might otherwise have blocked or sought to manipulate and subvert for its own ends.

The continued cooperation within the framework of the Arctic Council is therefore an anomaly that is difficult to explain or justify. By investing so much political and moral capital in the continuation of Arctic cooperation, western countries risk signalling to Russia and other international audiences that stability in this region is of such importance to them that they will continue working with Russia even when the latter is violating the rules-based order and committing apparent war crimes in Ukraine.45 This invites further Russian provocations and threats against the Council, seeking to test and stretch the limits of western accommodation in the polar regions.

# Affirmative Answers

### 2AC – Appeasement DA (Science Diplomacy)

#### 1. Nonunique. Ukraine will lose the war

Elkhan Nuriyev, 2025 - is a senior fellow with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He is a global energy associate at the Brussels Energy Club and a senior expert on Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia at LM Political Risk and Strategy Advisory in Vienna.”West can’t help Ukraine win the war — but it could help end it” Politico, 6/17, <https://www.politico.eu/article/west-ukraine-war-military-victory-stalemate-kyiv-russia/> //DH

Rather, the war is hardening into a grinding stalemate — one that threatens to exhaust Ukraine, fracture Western unity and empower the very regime it was meant to weaken. The question Western policymakers must now confront is not whether Ukraine deserves support, but whether the current strategy is helping it win, or simply helping it survive long enough to lose more slowly.

This doesn’t mean Ukraine should surrender, nor does it mean abandoning Western support. It does, however, demand an honest reckoning: There is no pathway to total Ukrainian victory — and pretending otherwise is no substitute for strategy.

Where we are today, preserving Ukraine’s sovereignty and stabilizing Europe may depend less on weapons than on diplomacy.

On paper, the West is still backing Ukraine robustly. The latest $61 billion U.S. aid package passed after months of political gridlock; European countries are slowly scaling up defense production; and NATO continues to signal resolve. But the military reality is more sobering than many Western headlines suggest.

Firstly, Ukraine faces a demographic cliff: According to its own defense ministry, over 30 percent of conscripts are failing to report for duty. New mobilization laws are lowering the draft age to 25, but recruitment shortfalls persist. And the country’s population is shrinking due to emigration and war casualties.

Additionally, the economy has suffered a severe contraction from the war, greatly impacting infrastructure, industry and livelihoods. With emergency powers wearing thin and frustration mounting over corruption and mismanagement, political tensions are rising in Kyiv.

Russia, meanwhile, has adapted. Its economy is now on a war footing; its defense industry is outproducing the West in artillery shells; and its military — though inefficient and brutal — maintains the advantage in manpower and strategic depth. Its political leadership has also internalized long-term costs in pursuit of minimal territorial gains.

#### 2. Nonunique. Trump is appeasing Russia now

Mark MacKinnon, 2025 – journalist “When Ukraine lost a seat at its own table” The Globe and Mail, 2/21 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-zelensky-loses-a-seat-at-his-own-table-as-trump-and-putin-decide/> //DH

Three years after Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine – declaring he wanted to alter the country’s borders, change the government in Kyiv and drive back the frontiers of the NATO alliance – U.S. President Donald Trump appears to be pushing for a peace deal that would give the Russian leader almost everything he’s been seeking.

The defenestration of previous U.S. policies toward Russia and Ukraine was swift and chaotic. First, it was U.S. Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, telling what was supposed to be a gathering of Ukraine’s allies in Brussels on Feb. 12 that Kyiv’s main goals in any peace settlement – restoring the country’s territorial integrity and securing North Atlantic Treaty Organization protection against a future Russian attack – were “unrealistic.” This one speech from Mr. Hegseth, less than three weeks into his job, upended more than a decade of Western promises and support for Ukraine.

Next it was Mr. Trump himself launching a stunning broadside against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, saying the leader had only 4 per cent support (even as a poll taken this week found 57 per cent of Ukrainians trusted their President). When Mr. Zelensky pushed back by suggesting Mr. Trump must have gotten his numbers from a made-in-Moscow “disinformation sphere,” Mr. Trump escalated to falsely calling Mr. Zelensky “a dictator without elections.”

Mr. Trump’s suggestion that Mr. Zelensky – who won election in 2019 with 75 per cent of the vote, but postponed a scheduled 2024 election because of the Russian invasion – was somehow an illegitimate leader could have been written by the Kremlin, which has been pushing the same theme through its propaganda outlets since Mr. Zelensky’s official term expired last April. Tellingly, Mr. Trump had no qualms dealing with Mr. Putin, despite the Kremlin not having allowed anything like a competitive election for more than two decades.

Suddenly, Ukraine, a country that for the past three years has been the largest recipient of U.S. military and economic assistance, is at odds with its biggest patron. Mr. Trump appears to want Ukraine to accept a peace deal that it will have no hand in negotiating. And the heavy suggestion is that if Mr. Zelensky doesn’t play along, Ukraine may be forced to fight on without U.S. help.

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One supposed version of the deal being contemplated, published on social media by Fox News journalists travelling with Mr. Rubio, envisions a three-stage plan that calls for an immediate ceasefire, followed by elections in Ukraine. Only then would negotiations begin toward a longer-term peace deal.

It’s the second phase – Ukrainian elections, called for not by President Zelensky, but by Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin – that had jaws dropping in Kyiv, and among Ukraine’s remaining allies in the West. Such a vote would require Ukraine to suspend martial law before the war was over, imperilling the country’s mobilization drive and igniting political infighting the Kremlin could take advantage of.

Mr. Trump’s willingness to bully Kyiv while making nice with Moscow has shocked long-standing U.S. allies, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, all of whom pushed back at Mr. Trump’s suggestion that Mr. Zelensky was anything other than Ukraine’s legitimately elected leader.

Supporters of Ukraine wonder why Mr. Trump – who claims to be a master negotiator – has already given Mr. Putin a major concession by ending three years of U.S.-led efforts to isolate Moscow, while getting nothing in return so far.

“So far, we’re seeing some sort of discussion, bilateral negotiations of some kind, playing out entirely on the terms of an autocratic state that is the main aggressor in a war of aggression against a European neighbour,” said Olga Onuch, professor of Ukrainian politics at the University of Manchester. “I would think the Kremlin is saying, ‘This new administration in the United States is a great deal weaker than we thought, they are doing exactly what we would like to see happen.’ But peace, the Russians aren’t interested in peace.”

#### 3. No link. Scientific cooperation isn’t appeasement, and it can pressure Russian decisions

Rasmus Gjedssø BERTELSEN, 2024 - Department of Social Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Troms og Finnmark, 9037, Norway “Social theory and science diplomacy” Open Research Europe, 1/8, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10882199/> //DH

Science diplomacy, perception and misperception in international politics

Robert Jervis defined much of the political psychology research agenda in international politics in his classic 1976 book, Perception and Misperception in International Politics ( Jervis, 1976). Jervis discusses two possible disastrous misperceptions in international politics: overreacting to an enemy with the outbreak of World War I as example, or not reacting sufficiently to an enemy, where pre-World War II appeasement of Nazi-Germany is the example forming an overly influential analogy.

Broadly speaking, science diplomacy in its main practices should be expected to mitigate these dangers. More science diplomacy in all three practices discussed here should familiarize states and their foreign policy-makers with their counterparts making for more accurate perception and judgment. Especially “science FOR diplomacy” with dense transnational epistemic communities between potential enemies should make for improved decision-making. However, key political psychology concepts caution against unfounded optimism.

Science diplomacy, learning and socialization

The standard neo-classical assumption in social science is rational decision-makers with Bayesian updating of perceptions in view of new information contradicting previous beliefs. However, research shows this assumption to be unfounded, and individuals’ perceptions are disproportionately shaped by previous learning and socialization ( Levy, 2013). Science diplomacy can affect such previous learning and socialization and therefore later perception and judgment.

There is a long foreign policy tradition of using education of other societies’ elites as a strategic tool. Education of foreign decision-makers can be a way to influence their worldviews, or it can simply be a way to build access and networks. Missionary education illustrates this approach, and state support shows how it has been and remains a foreign policy instrument. Most recently the soft power thinking post-9/11 in War on Terror and US support for American-style higher education in the Middle East reflected such thinking.

“Science FOR diplomacy” with transnational epistemic communities socializes and shapes participants’ views. These views may well be unruly and frustrating for national foreign policy systems and funders; for instance, members of US Congress have been frustrated about overt anti-US and anti-Israel views among students at American universities in the Middle East receiving US federal support ( Newsweek, 1970). However, the ability to socialize and shape and direct worldviews is likely to be a long-term function of material and intellectual resources, where the US and the West in general is at significant advance.

A homogenous group socialized into a certain perspective is likely to be biased and overly shaped by previous experiences, which points to the foreign-policy decision-making pitfall of groupthink.

Science diplomacy to counter groupthink

Another social psychology term of relevance for science diplomacy is groupthink, the tendency of poor analysis in too homogenous groups because of lacking diversity of perspectives and dissenting views with potential disastrous foreign policy outcomes ( Janis, 1972). “Science FOR diplomacy” can probably mitigate groupthink by bringing together academics from divergent backgrounds and views. Intellectual boycotts and sanctions of a political opponent, as is seen currently concerning Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, risks increasing groupthink on both sides with poorer analysis and decision-making. The US 2001 invasion of Afghanistan or 2003 invasion of Iraq, both failing to achieve their objectives, illustrate the perils of discouraging dissent and basing policy on invalid analysis and assumptions.

#### 4. No link. Current working group cooperation with Russia empirically disproves appeasement.

Gwladys Fouche, 2024 – “West, Russia manage limited cooperation in Arctic despite chill in ties” Reuters, 5/14, <https://www.reuters.com/world/west-russia-manage-limited-cooperation-arctic-despite-chill-ties-2024-05-14/> //DH

However, the Arctic Council's secretariat said in February it would resume working group meetings on environmental and safety issues in a virtual format, with Russia at the table, and some analysts saw grounds for hope.

"What we're seeing during Norway's chairship shows that cooperation is still possible," said Pavel Devyatkin, a Moscow-based researcher with the U.S. think tank the Arctic Institute.

The Council working group dedicated to monitoring the region's climate and environment will soon publish three reports — on changes to the Arctic climate, microplastic pollution and radioactivity — that had been delayed by the Ukraine war.

The radioactivity report required significant input from Moscow as it has a Russian co-lead author and includes extensive Russian data, said Rolf Roedven, executive secretary of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme working group.

Norway and Russia share an Arctic border, and collaborate on practical issues such as managing fisheries in the Barents Sea — work which has continued since the invasion of Ukraine.

Pragmatic cooperation at the technical or scientific level may be the way to go, but contacts at the political level on the Council are unthinkable while the war continues, officials said.

"We have to adapt to a new reality," Hoeglund said. "We have to accept ... that this is a different reality than it was four years ago. It is certainly not going to be anything resembling what it was back then".

#### 5. No impact – the war will be contained, other countries won’t model and expand wars

John Mueller, 22 - Professor Emeritus at Ohio State University “The Upside of Putin’s Delusions: Moscow’s Disastrous Invasion of Ukraine Will Reinforce the Norm Against War” 8/2, Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/upside-putins-delusions> //DH

But five months into the current phase of the war in Ukraine, it seems more likely that Putin’s venture will reinforce and revitalize the aversion to and disdain for international war. The key objective is not so much about winning as making sure that the country that started the war is far worse off than if it had not done so. That has already been substantially achieved.

GLOBAL CONDEMNATION

The world has responded to Putin’s invasion of Ukraine with nearly universal revulsion, much as it responded to Saddam Hussein’s seizure of Kuwait in 1990: as Fazal notes, “the outrage has been swift and broad.” Although some policymakers have expressed concern that China might find inspiration for an invasion of Taiwan, there doesn’t seem to be a groundswell of prospective imitators. Any would-be aggressors cannot help but notice the high costs the war has imposed on Russia in terms of casualties, economic losses, and international isolation. The kleptocratic Russian economy had already been on the skids for most of a decade, and Putin’s war, even if it is somehow settled, will likely alienate prospective buyers and investors for at least as long as he is in charge—and probably a lot longer.

Would-be aggressors may also note that even if Putin can hang on to his territorial gains in Ukraine, he will have to rebuild, subsidize, and rule them. In areas that Russian forces have occupied since the war began, they have struggled to govern: the Russians, it seems, are not very good at occupation and civil administration, and Russian forces seem inclined to commit the kinds of brutal acts that increase hostility toward foreign occupiers.

Without a durable and reliable cease-fire, Russia will have to defend its new acquisitions, possibly for years or decades. Putin has repeatedly expressed outrage that Ukrainian forces have for seven years harassed and bombed the small Donbas enclaves that seceded from Ukraine in 2014 and then embraced Russian protection. The lands Russian now seeks to conquer and control—including the entire provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk—would present an even richer target for increasingly better armed and much more intensely hostile Ukrainian forces. There is also the prospect of having to defend the newly captured areas against years of partisan urban warfare from Ukrainian insurgents. To a degree, this has already started. For example, a Ukrainian man whom Russian forces had appointed as the new head of the Department of Youth and Sports in the city of Kherson was recently killed in a car bombing.

DELUDED HUBRIS

In his speech announcing the invasion, Putin stressed that “Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist while facing a permanent threat from the territory of today’s Ukraine,” which he analogized to the one presented by Nazi Germany before World War II. He argued that a showdown was inevitable, claiming even that Ukraine was seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Putin is scarcely unique among world leaders in allowing himself to be consumed by such delusions. U.S. Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton absurdly insisted that a coup in Haiti presented “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States,” and their predecessors, U.S. Presidents Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson believed that a U.S. failure to intervene in civil wars in Korea and Vietnam would lead to world war. But Russia’s war against Ukraine has backfired and proved to be counterproductive in ways that will likely give pause to any would-be imitators.

Putin noted in his war kickoff speech that “with NATO’s eastward expansion, the situation for Russia has been becoming worse and more dangerous by the year.” Whether his war was to push NATO away from Russia’s borders, to create disunity within the alliance, to provide a stepping stone for further advances, or somehow to enhance Russia’s status (except as a pariah), it has been a massive failure. It has even inspired Russia’s long-neutral neighbors, Sweden and Finland, to seek admission. Thus, NATO enlargement has scarcely been stopped. The alliance has become far more hostile, united, and better armed, and it has effectively moved closer.

Putin’s war has also failed at another of his pronounced goals: keeping Ukraine from embracing the West and moving toward joining the European Union and NATO. But his efforts over the last decade have driven Ukrainians to look more to the West. In December 2012, according to a poll conducted by the Kyiv-based Democratic Initiatives Foundation, a scant 15 percent of Ukrainians favored joining NATO. By January 2022, on the eve of war, that figure had risen to 64 percent, according to a survey conducted by the Ukrainian Institute of the Future. It has surely risen far higher since the invasion. In addition, under the impetus of the war, Ukraine has now been allowed to enter the formal process of joining the EU. And it is possible that the war, by enhancing Kyiv’s desperation to be admitted, might even cause it to finally deal with its endemic corruption problem, which had previously hampered its embrace by the West.

Putin has also said his goal in the war was “to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine.” Demilitarization has obviously failed as arms pour into the country. And if de-Nazification means establishing a compliant regime, projecting a sphere of influence, or, as some suggest, destroying democracy in Ukraine, the Russian failure has been total. Hatred for, and hostility toward, Russia may well last for decades.

Putin has also declared that he wanted to rescue and protect Russian speakers in Ukraine. “It’s essentially impossible,” one insider told Newsweek, “to convince the people around power in Moscow that Russian speakers in Ukraine are not being discriminated against” and that “people can have a national identity that is separate from their linguistic identity.” Some Russian speakers in Ukraine have welcomed the Russian invasion. But the overwhelming majority have taken Ukraine’s side—something the government in Kyiv should be doing more to celebrate. As such, Russian-speaking Ukrainians will continue to be productive contributors to their country—although it is possible that the use of Russian, the language of the hated invader, will continue to slide as the country looks increasingly to the West.

During the crisis with Ukraine in 2014, Putin bragged that he had “1.2 million soldiers armed with the world’s most sophisticated weaponry” and that, if he wanted them to do so, “they could be in Kyiv in two days.” Over the ensuing years, he built up his army even more. If one goal of the current war was to display the might and effectiveness of the Russian military, the result could be chalked up as yet another failure. Corrupt, poorly led, and undermotivated, the Russian military was repelled from Kyiv by defenders with far less training and equipment. Any Russian gains in Ukraine’s southeast have been accomplished by pulverizing the territory from a distance and then taking charge of the substantially depopulated rubble.

For all these reasons, it seems unlikely that other countries will find much inspiration in Putin’s “self-inflicted debacle,” as Steve Chapman of the Chicago Tribune puts it. Putin admires the Russian leader Peter the Great and apparently wishes to emulate a version of his imperial rule. But Russia’s current tsar will likely go down in history not as Vladimir the Great but as Vladimir the Fool. And his failed and spectacularly counterproductive war seems unlikely to augur a new era of interstate war—rather, his folly will likely make other rulers even more trigger shy, and the decline of international war will continue.

#### 6. Turn – the Polar Council. Plan stops a US-Moscow bilateral track and a new Polar Council that fractures the Western Arctic strategy and creates Russian gains

Mikhail Komin and Joanna Hosa, 2025 - Mikhail Komin was a visiting fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. He regularly provides analytical comments for media outlets such as TVRain, Forbes, Carnegie, Novaya Gazeta, and Radio Liberty. Joanna Hosa was a policy fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. She has held a range of positions at the European Commission, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the Open Society European Policy Institute, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and the International Federation on Human Rights. “The bear beneath the ice: Russia’s ambitions in the Arctic” European Council on Foreign Relations, 5/27, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-bear-beneath-the-ice-russias-ambitions-in-the-arctic/> //DH

Maintain limited and structured engagement with Russia in the Arctic Council

Despite the rupture in relations following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, including the near collapse of the Arctic Council, it remains in Europeans’ interest to preserve a functional channel of communication with Russia through the council to help prevent its withdrawal. With the Kingdom of Denmark taking over the chairship in May 2025, it should aim to replicate Norway’s cautious strategy: keeping Russia engaged in selected formats without full normalisation until the war in Ukraine is over. And, given Moscow’s appointment of Nikolai Korchunov as its ambassador in Oslo, Norway is well placed to play an intermediary role between Russia and Europe on Arctic policy.

More importantly, some engagement with Russia in the Arctic Council may dissuade Washington from establishing a parallel bilateral Arctic track with Moscow or allowing a temporary US-Russia thaw under Trump to take institutional form. If such a channel materialised, it could strengthen Moscow’s efforts to build a real “Polar Council” that includes non-Western states and the US and excludes European countries and Canada, turning a Potemkin construct into a viable alternative. Such a deal—driven by the imperial ambitions of both Washington and Moscow—would further erode Europe’s influence in the region and undermine the cohesion of Western Arctic strategy.

### 2AC – Appeasement DA (Natural Gas)

#### 1. Nonunique. Ukraine will lose the war

Elkhan Nuriyev, 2025 - is a senior fellow with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He is a global energy associate at the Brussels Energy Club and a senior expert on Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia at LM Political Risk and Strategy Advisory in Vienna.”West can’t help Ukraine win the war — but it could help end it” Politico, 6/17, <https://www.politico.eu/article/west-ukraine-war-military-victory-stalemate-kyiv-russia/> //DH

Rather, the war is hardening into a grinding stalemate — one that threatens to exhaust Ukraine, fracture Western unity and empower the very regime it was meant to weaken. The question Western policymakers must now confront is not whether Ukraine deserves support, but whether the current strategy is helping it win, or simply helping it survive long enough to lose more slowly.

This doesn’t mean Ukraine should surrender, nor does it mean abandoning Western support. It does, however, demand an honest reckoning: There is no pathway to total Ukrainian victory — and pretending otherwise is no substitute for strategy.

Where we are today, preserving Ukraine’s sovereignty and stabilizing Europe may depend less on weapons than on diplomacy.

On paper, the West is still backing Ukraine robustly. The latest $61 billion U.S. aid package passed after months of political gridlock; European countries are slowly scaling up defense production; and NATO continues to signal resolve. But the military reality is more sobering than many Western headlines suggest.

Firstly, Ukraine faces a demographic cliff: According to its own defense ministry, over 30 percent of conscripts are failing to report for duty. New mobilization laws are lowering the draft age to 25, but recruitment shortfalls persist. And the country’s population is shrinking due to emigration and war casualties.

Additionally, the economy has suffered a severe contraction from the war, greatly impacting infrastructure, industry and livelihoods. With emergency powers wearing thin and frustration mounting over corruption and mismanagement, political tensions are rising in Kyiv.

Russia, meanwhile, has adapted. Its economy is now on a war footing; its defense industry is outproducing the West in artillery shells; and its military — though inefficient and brutal — maintains the advantage in manpower and strategic depth. Its political leadership has also internalized long-term costs in pursuit of minimal territorial gains.

#### 2. Nonunique. Trump is appeasing Russia now

Mark MacKinnon, 2025 – journalist “When Ukraine lost a seat at its own table” The Globe and Mail, 2/21 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-zelensky-loses-a-seat-at-his-own-table-as-trump-and-putin-decide/> //DH

Three years after Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine – declaring he wanted to alter the country’s borders, change the government in Kyiv and drive back the frontiers of the NATO alliance – U.S. President Donald Trump appears to be pushing for a peace deal that would give the Russian leader almost everything he’s been seeking.

The defenestration of previous U.S. policies toward Russia and Ukraine was swift and chaotic. First, it was U.S. Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, telling what was supposed to be a gathering of Ukraine’s allies in Brussels on Feb. 12 that Kyiv’s main goals in any peace settlement – restoring the country’s territorial integrity and securing North Atlantic Treaty Organization protection against a future Russian attack – were “unrealistic.” This one speech from Mr. Hegseth, less than three weeks into his job, upended more than a decade of Western promises and support for Ukraine.

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Mr. Trump’s suggestion that Mr. Zelensky – who won election in 2019 with 75 per cent of the vote, but postponed a scheduled 2024 election because of the Russian invasion – was somehow an illegitimate leader could have been written by the Kremlin, which has been pushing the same theme through its propaganda outlets since Mr. Zelensky’s official term expired last April. Tellingly, Mr. Trump had no qualms dealing with Mr. Putin, despite the Kremlin not having allowed anything like a competitive election for more than two decades.

Suddenly, Ukraine, a country that for the past three years has been the largest recipient of U.S. military and economic assistance, is at odds with its biggest patron. Mr. Trump appears to want Ukraine to accept a peace deal that it will have no hand in negotiating. And the heavy suggestion is that if Mr. Zelensky doesn’t play along, Ukraine may be forced to fight on without U.S. help.

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#### 3. Humiliation turn:

#### A. Losing Ukraine humiliates Putin and causes him to lash out with nuclear weapons. This risks extinction

Charles B. Strozier and David M. Terman, 2022 – “Putin’s psychology and nuclear weapons: the fundamentalist mindset” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 11/9

<https://thebulletin.org/premium/2022-11/putins-psychology-and-nuclear-weapons-the-fundamentalist-mindset/> //DH

Since the beginning of his war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons. Those around him have also begun making nuclear threats. Such threats take us all into an unfamiliar political and psychological realm. The danger is not just large-scale destruction but the total collapse of human civilization. The possibility of using nuclear weapons introduces into what is an old-fashioned ground war in eastern Europe an apocalyptic image of the end of life as we know it.

Even at a regional level, Russian threats pose great dangers. Keep in mind that a bomb the size of the one dropped on Hiroshima would today be considered “small” and “tactical.” If dropped on Kyiv, a city of nearly 3 million people, the suffering would be enormous. Nuclear weapons also bring with them the contamination of radiation that lasts for generations. The dread of radiation, furthermore, has assumed new meaning in the age of COVID-19: Both are tasteless, invisible, and potentially lethal. The environment of fear created by a multi-year pandemic has arguably amplified fears of radiation. In both cases, the dread is real for policy makers, but the wider population largely experiences it as an unconscious fear of invisible malignant penetration.

Putin has taken maximum strategic advantage of both fears. As authors Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk have argued (1982), repeated threats to use nuclear weapons are themselves a form of weapons use, because such threats distort democratic institutions in fundamental ways. Given his autocratic power in Russia, Putin’s talk must be taken seriously. His threats are not loose rhetoric. They have stymied Western responses to his wanton aggression in Ukraine. He has had his army kill civilians as it seizes territory in the Donbas region and beyond. The West doesn’t dare impose a no-fly zone, or provide all the sophisticated weapons systems that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has desperately requested.

The West has provided palpable support for Ukraine but necessarily stopped short of a military response that would defeat Russian forces. The dread is that the actual defeat of the Russian forces would humiliate Putin personally. Backed into a corner, he could well unleash nuclear weapons. That is not an idle fear.

Putin’s paranoid personality

As experts on psychology, we are especially concerned by Putin’s paranoia and its relationship to what the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut called the group self (Kohut 1985, 83, 175-176, 206-207, 241-247). The group self is a psychological structure shared by members of a group. It consists of common goals and ideals born of historical experience. The group self can describe the psychological relationship that develops between a paranoid, charismatic leader and his followers in moments of historical crisis.

We know something about Putin’s psychology from his frequent speeches and press conferences since his rise to power in the 1990s. Putin seems to believe his propaganda that NATO was about to attack Russia and that its war was an act of defensive survival. He talks constantly of enemies surrounding his country. The West encroaches.

Putin’s behavior fits logically into what appears to be an enactment of his personality structure that is centered on a paranoid gestalt. Always grandiose to a fault, Putin appears in recent years to have surrounded himself with yes-men who applaud his vision for a recovery of Russia’s imagined greatness and feed his fantasies of American and Western conspiratorial intentions. He has throttled the press and cut off dissent, which limits the marketplace of alternate ideas. He is the new Leader, the great one who alone possesses the ability to carve out an exalted history for Russia.

He also may have been affected by the pandemic. He seems to have responded with fear and dread to COVID. Those huge tables at which he interviews foreign visitors, and the extreme distance between him and even his own advisers, suggest his need for an exaggerated isolation from potentially contaminated others. Death anxiety appears to have amplified his psychological distress.

Putin’s reading of Russian history

To help us understand Putin’s worldview, Timothy Snyder, a noted Russian historian, has brought to our attention the significance of Ivan Ilyin’s thought and work. Ilyin was a mid-20th century White Russian émigré who wrote numerous books describing a fascist political order in which Russia is historically innocent and surrounded by evil. In Ilyin’s view, it is Russia’s mission to safeguard civilization and the “good” by producing a great Leader who will save Russia and vanquish the evil other—the West.

This framework informs Putin’s understanding of, and reaction to, his experience of Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union as one of being caught up in unrelenting and ongoing humiliation. His read of history is that the West has gloated over winning the Cold War and has successively plucked off many of the former Soviet republics as Western puppets. NATO has extended its reach to the border of Russia, while the United States has arrogantly and intolerably grabbed the world’s wealth.

This discourse of aggrievement roams into wild fantasies of Russia’s right to its imperial ambitions in Ukraine. A profound humiliation set in at the sudden loss of the empire, aggravating the economic and social chaos of the 1990s. In time Russia recovered economically, but the humiliation lingered and became a deep wound that Putin has inflamed to his own political advantage. He regards Ukraine as a fake state that historically remains an integral part of the sacred “Mother Russia.” As the Russian scholar Tatiana Stanovaya argued recently in the New York Times, Putin considers the Ukrainian language a mere dialect of Russian and imagines in the near future a “Russification” of the country that would include a purge of its elites, dethroning its national heroes, renaming the streets, and rewriting the history books (Stanovaya 2022). Putin lays out such ideas with an absolute certainty that is the coinage of paranoia.

Putin’s demonization of the West connects with a deep strain in Russian history. His grandiose vision for a great Russian civilization obliterates Ukrainian identity on the way to vanquishing the decadent and evil West. It is an open question whether such views represent most Russians. In a psychological sense, it may not matter. Putin’s vision perhaps speaks to unconscious aspirations that are more elusive. Historically, Russians have been content to be ruled autocratically by paranoid leaders as the empire has expanded steadily over the centuries—until its power and prestige suddenly collapsed at the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Putin’s grievances and the group self

Our concern is the relationship between the paranoid certainty of Putin and the dangerous comfort he provides for the tormented and confused group self of Russia. Putin calls forth an imagined vision of a great past that is projected forward as millennialism—the yearning for an apocalyptic renewal. Putin’s paranoid style of cognitive organization occurs in response to injuries to the pride, power, and ideals held by the group. His individual psychology responds perfectly to the sense of injury in a group yearning for firm answers during chaos. His own injured self-esteem matches the injured pride and honor of the group. Putin’s grievances and those of a troubled Russia in the last few decades have become synergistic and have generated enormous rage.

There is an interesting and important symmetry or congruence between the individual and the group in this regard. The leader of groups that develop this psychological organization is usually paranoid. His (and most such leaders are men) individual development has been marked by childhood experiences of deep shame, humiliation, and often neglect. Such treatment leaves him prone to boundless narcissistic rage and a need to see any failure or weakness as the work of a malevolent other. It also results in a personality structure in which normal childhood grandiosity becomes exaggerated in adulthood: He is perfect and all-powerful. However, such a structure is fragile and easily threatened with collapse and dissolution with the experience of failure, frustration, or defeat.

The fundamentalist mindset

Paranoia and millennialism, in other words, share a common psychological basis in what we have written about as the “fundamentalist mindset” (Strozier et al. 2010). Too often scholars think of fundamentalism as restricted to certain types of attitudes within religion.

Fundamentalists are thus rigid and literal in their interpretation of sacred texts, insist on imposing traditional values, and hold absolute beliefs about the truths of their God.

Our concern is to examine the phenomenon of fundamentalism psychologically and in the political and historical realm. Such a mindset involves thinking in rigid dualistic categories. A sense of the evil other lies at the heart of fundamentalism. The world is a dangerous place that is devoid of empathy. We are not all in it together. The evil can take a variety of forms to fit the historical moment. For Putin the West embodies degradation, corruption, and lustful impulses that threaten traditional Russian values, even though in holding these views he is out of sync with many Russians who are yearning for the very freedoms he disdains.

Putin’s belief is that his true Russia represents the good that must deal with evil. Such a Manichean distinction reduces the struggle to a binary choice between an idealized good Russia and the bad West. It is in the nature of the fundamentalist mindset to totalize the difference between good and evil. Totalism, as Robert Jay Lifton has written, is the crucial psychological process of making something relatively manageable in the public space by creating great rivalries that spawn paranoia and violence and keep hatreds burning bright (Lifton 1961). Rage becomes chronic and ingrained. The “other,” deemed evil in what emerges as a radical fundamentalist mindset, comes to embody the taint of sin. That other must be dispensed with, and in fact his elimination assumes something of an ethical obligation to achieve perfection in the world. To kill therefore is to heal, and in this context one could even say that killing makes one a savior. Violence becomes a moral imperative, lending what is typically an apocalyptic cause a profoundly important and powerful ethical dimension.

The fundamentalist mindset requires an apocalyptic mission of the group.[1]

The perfect world will be reborn in an imagined future created by the select few: the “remnant” in the Book of Revelation, the Nazis in Germany, the true Muslims for ISIS. The evil other must be exterminated to initiate the violent process of renewal. Injury to the group’s sense of self—in the form of a loss of power, discrediting of its ideology, or economic or political deterioration—results in shame, humiliation, and rage in the group. The humiliation is intolerable. When an individual has this type of cognitive organization, he wreaks disturbing violence in the name of offended pride. Such reactions are typical of a cuckolded husband, a gang defending its territory, or a nation feeling encircled. The most dangerous form of paranoid violence, however, is the response to a feeling of heightened victimization by the “other.” Feeling shamed and fearful that one’s very essence is about to be destroyed, the paranoid leader attacks to ward off the imagined danger posed by the other and restore the integrity of the damaged self.

The paranoid leader is exquisitely sensitive to what he experiences as an injury or humiliation. That attitude lies at the heart of the violent potential within paranoia. In Putin’s case, it seems to have motivated him to start a war without any apparent provocation.

#### B. Humiliation best explains Putin’s motives. Appeasement that recognizes Russian status stabilizes Russian behavior

Hanna Samir Kassab, 2024 - Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at Northern Michigan University, USA “PRESTIGE, HUMILIATION AND SAVING FACE: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND GREAT POWER POLITICS” Contemporary Military Challenges, 2024 – 26/No. 1, <https://tinyurl.com/3pff3wkd> //DH

National humiliation may stem from an event such as a major defeat so intense that it led to a lowering of state status (Barnhart, 2017, p 536). In other words, the loss or insult harms prestige. Examples of national humiliation could be an embarrassing loss to a weaker state or non-state actor (the United States in Vietnam/Afghanistan), loss of influence (loss of Russian influence and NATO expansion into Eastern Europe), or loss of sovereignty (China’s Century of Humiliation). One seeks to humiliate to gain prestige, which is associated with revenge attempts. Thus, states seek to avoid humiliation by increasing prestige and, in a zero-sum world, humiliating others. Research suggests that humiliation may drive conflict. For instance, Barnhart (2017) argues that “states—and great powers in particular—are more likely to engage in status-seeking acts, such as territorial aggression against weaker states, when they have experienced a humiliating event in which they fail to live up to international expectations” (p 533).

From this, we can borrow from Robert Gilpin’s definition of prestige, which has everything to do with power and feeling powerful. It has to do with a specific “reputation for power and military power in particular. Whereas power refers to the economic, military, and related capabilities of a state, prestige refers primarily to the perceptions of other states concerning a state’s capacities and its ability and willingness to exercise its power … prestige involves the credibility of a state’s power to achieve its objectives” (1981, p 31). While Gilpin may distinguish between power and prestige, it is important to note the reciprocal relationship between the two due to the notion of credibility. Credibility is the recognition of power by others, enhancing deterrence and thus security capabilities (Ibid., p 31). Powerful states with status are more likely to succeed without using force as “the bargaining among states and the outcomes of negotiations are determined principally by the relative prestige of the parties involved” (Ibid.). If a state’s power is recognized, it is more likely to succeed in diplomatic negotiation due to the threat of force (which comes from power). Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between the two, because power feeds recognition and credibility, and recognition and credibility feed power. Power and credibility are thus tied together in terms of reputation, and therefore status.

National humiliation is a negative emotion that states seek to avoid. Humiliation from weakness brings reductions in status and further perceptions of weakness. At the opposite end of this emotional spectrum is the feeling of prestige. Prestige is primarily about high status within the international system. A great power, for instance, demands respect from others. To treat a great power like any other entity is insulting and may elicit responses, including a show of force, to garner that respect. Barnhart (2017) argues that states seeking prestige, or seeking to win back prestige from humiliation, may conduct an aggressive foreign policy (Wirth, 2020). The prestige-humiliation dynamic may also explain imperial overstretch (Kennedy, 1987), because a state may over-extend itself regardless of whether or not it has the material means to defend newly acquired territory; the state prefers to avoid being humiliated and will do whatever it takes.

States suffer from a deadly fear of losing status, so much so that they would rather continue a losing conflict, regardless of the cost, just to avoid losing (Renshon, 2015). As a consequence, great powers want to remain great powers and to be recognized as such. This is important not only for a state’s self-esteem, but also for how the state believes it should be treated by other states, “collective beliefs about a given state’s ranking on valued attributes”, which may be manifested in international politics either as membership in a “defined club of actors” or as “relative standing within such a club” (Larson et al., 2014, p 7). Without prestige, a state accepts a demotion of status. This is equated with humiliation, taking a backseat in the global order, becoming a follower, and accepting the leadership of a competitor, possibly the very state which humiliated it. In other words, prestige is about the relative position of states in the international system (Wirth, 2020). Specifically, it has to do with recognition, power, and admiration in the international system. To observe these processes, three cases will be analyzed: Nazi Germany, China, and Russia.

In summary, this paper discusses the psychological mechanisms governing humiliation and prestige as part of the competitive, self-help, anarchic international system described by structural realism (Waltz, 2010). Consequently, this study argues that cognitively preparing for the humiliation-prestige dynamic is essential to avoiding war. This contribution is particularly important because it offers a cognitive explanation of state conflict. The proposed dynamic is often ignored by scholars seeking to address state conflict, with the psychological impetus for choosing war remaining unexplained. Adapting to this systemic component must be on the agenda, especially given specific prestige-seeking behaviors. Without respect for another state’s status, the chances of war become more and more real.

States that have been humiliated in the past are likely to violently strike out against others. This dynamic must be understood if the international system is to change. By understanding the centrality of the humiliation-prestige dynamic, the paper makes a recommendation: allow face-saving behavior. Allowing a competitor to preserve prestige and avoid humiliation is a way to deescalate tension and avoid conflict. Hence, the system must be able to adapt to the behavior of Russia and China. Saving face is an essential contribution which fits into the cognitive explanation provided. Thus, the importance of this study follows that understanding the impact humiliation and prestige have on state behavior could help to predict and ultimately prevent conflict.

#### 4. No impact – the war will be contained, other countries won’t model and expand wars

John Mueller, 22 - Professor Emeritus at Ohio State University “The Upside of Putin’s Delusions: Moscow’s Disastrous Invasion of Ukraine Will Reinforce the Norm Against War” 8/2, Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/upside-putins-delusions> //DH

But five months into the current phase of the war in Ukraine, it seems more likely that Putin’s venture will reinforce and revitalize the aversion to and disdain for international war. The key objective is not so much about winning as making sure that the country that started the war is far worse off than if it had not done so. That has already been substantially achieved.

GLOBAL CONDEMNATION

The world has responded to Putin’s invasion of Ukraine with nearly universal revulsion, much as it responded to Saddam Hussein’s seizure of Kuwait in 1990: as Fazal notes, “the outrage has been swift and broad.” Although some policymakers have expressed concern that China might find inspiration for an invasion of Taiwan, there doesn’t seem to be a groundswell of prospective imitators. Any would-be aggressors cannot help but notice the high costs the war has imposed on Russia in terms of casualties, economic losses, and international isolation. The kleptocratic Russian economy had already been on the skids for most of a decade, and Putin’s war, even if it is somehow settled, will likely alienate prospective buyers and investors for at least as long as he is in charge—and probably a lot longer.

Would-be aggressors may also note that even if Putin can hang on to his territorial gains in Ukraine, he will have to rebuild, subsidize, and rule them. In areas that Russian forces have occupied since the war began, they have struggled to govern: the Russians, it seems, are not very good at occupation and civil administration, and Russian forces seem inclined to commit the kinds of brutal acts that increase hostility toward foreign occupiers.

Without a durable and reliable cease-fire, Russia will have to defend its new acquisitions, possibly for years or decades. Putin has repeatedly expressed outrage that Ukrainian forces have for seven years harassed and bombed the small Donbas enclaves that seceded from Ukraine in 2014 and then embraced Russian protection. The lands Russian now seeks to conquer and control—including the entire provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk—would present an even richer target for increasingly better armed and much more intensely hostile Ukrainian forces. There is also the prospect of having to defend the newly captured areas against years of partisan urban warfare from Ukrainian insurgents. To a degree, this has already started. For example, a Ukrainian man whom Russian forces had appointed as the new head of the Department of Youth and Sports in the city of Kherson was recently killed in a car bombing.

DELUDED HUBRIS

In his speech announcing the invasion, Putin stressed that “Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist while facing a permanent threat from the territory of today’s Ukraine,” which he analogized to the one presented by Nazi Germany before World War II. He argued that a showdown was inevitable, claiming even that Ukraine was seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Putin is scarcely unique among world leaders in allowing himself to be consumed by such delusions. U.S. Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton absurdly insisted that a coup in Haiti presented “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States,” and their predecessors, U.S. Presidents Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson believed that a U.S. failure to intervene in civil wars in Korea and Vietnam would lead to world war. But Russia’s war against Ukraine has backfired and proved to be counterproductive in ways that will likely give pause to any would-be imitators.

Putin noted in his war kickoff speech that “with NATO’s eastward expansion, the situation for Russia has been becoming worse and more dangerous by the year.” Whether his war was to push NATO away from Russia’s borders, to create disunity within the alliance, to provide a stepping stone for further advances, or somehow to enhance Russia’s status (except as a pariah), it has been a massive failure. It has even inspired Russia’s long-neutral neighbors, Sweden and Finland, to seek admission. Thus, NATO enlargement has scarcely been stopped. The alliance has become far more hostile, united, and better armed, and it has effectively moved closer.

Putin’s war has also failed at another of his pronounced goals: keeping Ukraine from embracing the West and moving toward joining the European Union and NATO. But his efforts over the last decade have driven Ukrainians to look more to the West. In December 2012, according to a poll conducted by the Kyiv-based Democratic Initiatives Foundation, a scant 15 percent of Ukrainians favored joining NATO. By January 2022, on the eve of war, that figure had risen to 64 percent, according to a survey conducted by the Ukrainian Institute of the Future. It has surely risen far higher since the invasion. In addition, under the impetus of the war, Ukraine has now been allowed to enter the formal process of joining the EU. And it is possible that the war, by enhancing Kyiv’s desperation to be admitted, might even cause it to finally deal with its endemic corruption problem, which had previously hampered its embrace by the West.

Putin has also said his goal in the war was “to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine.” Demilitarization has obviously failed as arms pour into the country. And if de-Nazification means establishing a compliant regime, projecting a sphere of influence, or, as some suggest, destroying democracy in Ukraine, the Russian failure has been total. Hatred for, and hostility toward, Russia may well last for decades.

Putin has also declared that he wanted to rescue and protect Russian speakers in Ukraine. “It’s essentially impossible,” one insider told Newsweek, “to convince the people around power in Moscow that Russian speakers in Ukraine are not being discriminated against” and that “people can have a national identity that is separate from their linguistic identity.” Some Russian speakers in Ukraine have welcomed the Russian invasion. But the overwhelming majority have taken Ukraine’s side—something the government in Kyiv should be doing more to celebrate. As such, Russian-speaking Ukrainians will continue to be productive contributors to their country—although it is possible that the use of Russian, the language of the hated invader, will continue to slide as the country looks increasingly to the West.

During the crisis with Ukraine in 2014, Putin bragged that he had “1.2 million soldiers armed with the world’s most sophisticated weaponry” and that, if he wanted them to do so, “they could be in Kyiv in two days.” Over the ensuing years, he built up his army even more. If one goal of the current war was to display the might and effectiveness of the Russian military, the result could be chalked up as yet another failure. Corrupt, poorly led, and undermotivated, the Russian military was repelled from Kyiv by defenders with far less training and equipment. Any Russian gains in Ukraine’s southeast have been accomplished by pulverizing the territory from a distance and then taking charge of the substantially depopulated rubble.

For all these reasons, it seems unlikely that other countries will find much inspiration in Putin’s “self-inflicted debacle,” as Steve Chapman of the Chicago Tribune puts it. Putin admires the Russian leader Peter the Great and apparently wishes to emulate a version of his imperial rule. But Russia’s current tsar will likely go down in history not as Vladimir the Great but as Vladimir the Fool. And his failed and spectacularly counterproductive war seems unlikely to augur a new era of interstate war—rather, his folly will likely make other rulers even more trigger shy, and the decline of international war will continue.

### 1AR: Nonunique - Ukraine will lose

#### Ukraine is losing badly – mismatched aid and troop shortages

Andrew Latham, 2025 – non-resident fellow at Defense Priorities and a professor of international relations and political theory at Macalester College “Russia Has Won the Ukraine War and ‘Defeated’ NATO” National Security Journal, 6/11, <https://nationalsecurityjournal.org/russia-has-won-the-ukraine-war-and-defeated-nato/> //DH

The idea that Russia might still lose the war in Ukraine has become a kind of security blanket for Western elites – a comforting illusion clutched in think tanks, editorial pages, and official briefings long after the battlefield realities have changed. We are now well past the phase where optimism could be excused as ignorance. The facts are in. Ukraine is exhausted. The West is demoralized. And Russia, despite its many internal challenges, is grinding toward its war aims with brutal consistency.

Let’s be clear: if by “lose” we mean military defeat on the battlefield, collapse of the Russian economy, or regime implosion in Moscow, then no – Russia is not going to lose. Not this year, and not under the current trajectory. All the major structural forces – military, economic, political—are now moving in Russia’s favor. The war is not over, but the outcome is no longer up for grabs.

Start with the military situation, because that’s the foundation of everything else. On the ground, Ukraine’s strategic position is deteriorating by the month. Mobilization efforts have stalled. Recruitment has collapsed. The average age of a frontline soldier is now nearing 45. Desertion and draft-dodging are spreading, and Western aid – though still flowing – is increasingly mismatched to Ukraine’s real needs. You can send as many artillery shells and drone kits as you like, but you cannot manufacture trained infantry out of nothing. And that’s what Ukraine is short of: not resolve, not hardware, but men.

Meanwhile, Russia’s army has evolved. It’s no longer the chaotic, overstretched force that stumbled out into Ukraine in February 2022. It has absorbed its losses, adapted to the terrain, and reverted to what it does best: attritional warfare, backed by overwhelming firepower and deep reserves of manpower. Russia doesn’t need to stage flashy counter-offensives or overrun all of Ukraine. It only needs to advance slowly, dig in, and bleed Ukraine white – while maintaining pressure long enough to outlast Western political will. And that’s exactly what it’s doing.

#### Russia has reoriented its economy so it can sustain a long war

Andrew Latham, 2025 – non-resident fellow at Defense Priorities and a professor of international relations and political theory at Macalester College “Russia Has Won the Ukraine War and ‘Defeated’ NATO” National Security Journal, 6/11, <https://nationalsecurityjournal.org/russia-has-won-the-ukraine-war-and-defeated-nato/> //DH

Which brings us to the economic front. There’s a persistent myth in Western capitals that Russia is teetering under the weight of sanctions –that the ruble is crumbling, the oligarchs are restless, and the economy is one shock away from implosion. This is wishful thinking. Sanctions have hurt, yes, but they have also catalyzed a strategic decoupling from the West that was probably inevitable anyway. Russia has reoriented its economy toward Asia. It’s selling oil to India, natural gas to China, and arms to anyone willing to pay in non-Western currencies. The parallel financial system is crude but functional. And the state is compensating for consumer losses with heavy military-industrial spending – spending that, unlike in the West, is tied directly to battlefield outcomes and regime survival.

The IMF projects modest growth for Russia in 2025. Inflation is high, but not catastrophic. Unemployment is low. And industrial output – especially in arms production – is booming. Yes, living standards have declined. But the state has managed the pain selectively, shielding key groups – soldiers, pensioners, the security apparatus – while letting the rest of society absorb the shock. It’s crude economic triage. But it works. And it buys time.

#### Russia can outlast Ukraine in a stalemate

George Beebe, 2025 - is a former director of Russia analysis at the Central Intelligence Agency and a former staff advisor to Vice President Cheney on Russia and on intelligence matters. He is Director of Grand Strategy at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. “Why Trump Must Not Walk Away from Ukraine War Talks” The American Conservative, 5/30, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/why-trump-must-not-walk-away-from-ukraine-war-talks/> //DH

Opting to sustain or even increase current levels of U.S. military and intelligence aid to Ukraine would delay defeat, but not prevent it. Many point to the slow pace of Russia’s advance along the front line as a sign that Ukraine can sustain a stalemate with sufficient Western political will. But gauging Ukraine’s fortunes by tracking Russia’s progress on the map is misleading. In a war of attrition, progress is measured not by battlefield breakthroughs, but by how many well-trained and well-equipped troops each side can put in the field.

By this metric, Ukraine is in big trouble. Russia’s defense industry is greatly outproducing U.S. and European military factories in such critical munitions as artillery shells, and it is assembling attack missiles at a faster rate than the West can produce air defense missiles. At least a million Ukrainians have been killed or wounded on the battlefield; many millions more have fled the fighting for Europe, Russia, and beyond.

Although Russia has also suffered great casualties, it has five times Ukraine’s current population and has employed sound approaches to training and replenishing its forces. These trends point not to a long-term stalemate, but to a World War I-style Ukrainian implosion sooner or later, probably during Trump’s term in office.

#### It’s not a stalemate, Ukraine will lose now

Daniel Davis, 2025 – Senior Fellow for Defense Priorities and a former Lt. Col. in the U.S. Army “Ukraine Faces A Growing Risk of Outright Military Collapse If No Deal Struck” 19FortyFive,5/21, <https://www.19fortyfive.com/2025/05/ukraine-faces-a-growing-risk-of-outright-military-collapse-if-no-deal-struck/> //DH

In a stalemate? No, the war is not in a stalemate, but the Russians continue winning on the ground. Last week the New York Times revealed that in the previous 16 months, the Russians had captured 1,826 square miles of Ukrainian territory. The article conceded that the Ukrainian casualties could have a catastrophic consequence, noting that in “wars of attrition, incremental gains can presage a breakthrough, if the losing side runs out of troops and ammunition and its defensive lines finally collapse.”

This is on top of the October 2024 New York Times story that reported that Russia had been seizing Ukrainian territory every month since November 2022. In recent days, the commander of the elite 47th Mechanized Brigade in Ukraine had quit his post because “the stupid loss of people, trembling in front of a stupid generals, leads to nothing but failures.” while the Ukrainian leadership fired the commander of the 59th Brigade.

If Zelensky and his European backers believe that the beleaguered Ukrainian Army can continue to fight, indefinitely, losing thousands of troops every month, and there will never be a break in the lines – or a revolt from the troops – they are playing, pardon the pun, Russian Roulette. No one can suffer those kinds of losses and fight like robots forever.

Consider also that the fact that after Biden’s $61 billion aid package from May 2024 runs out, there is no more American aid coming. Europe clearly cannot make up the absence of American military aid on its own. Therefore, potentially within months, battlefield math will start to increasingly weigh against the Ukraine side, while Russia will only continue getting stronger and bigger militarily.

### 1AR: Nonunique – Trump Appeasing Russia

#### Trump’s appeasing Russia now over Ukraine

Alexander Smith, 2025 – reporter “ Trump backs off meeting with Putin, calls for direct Ukraine-Russia talks” NBC, 5/19, <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/russia/trump-set-implore-putin-end-bloodbath-ukraine-high-stakes-phone-call-rcna207612> //DH

Trump has been widely criticized for appearing to offer concessions to Russia while demanding sacrifices from Ukraine. Those voices were joined last week by former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink, who gave details of why she stepped down last month.

“The policy since the beginning of the Trump administration has been to put pressure on the victim, Ukraine, rather than on the aggressor, Russia,” she wrote in an opinion piece Friday for the Detroit Free Press.

“Peace at any price is not peace at all ― it is appeasement,” she said, adding that “we must show leadership in the face of aggression, not weakness or complicity.”

#### Trump is threatening Ukraine and making concessions to Russia just to get them to the table

Célia Belin et al, 2025 - Head, ECFR Paris Senior Policy Fellow “The art of the peace deal: What the Trump administration wants from the Russia-Ukraine negotiations” European Council on Foreign Relations, 4/3, <https://ecfr.eu/article/the-art-of-the-peace-deal-what-the-trump-administration-wants-from-the-russia-ukraine-negotiations/> //DH

Beyond the aura of peace, the administration has another goal in mind for these talks. In their first meeting with the Russians in Riyadh in February, US secretary of state Marco Rubio and national security advisor Mike Waltz began laying the groundwork for a larger geopolitical deal that would go beyond the war in Ukraine. The Trump administration seems to want to trade Ukraine—and even the US role in European security—for Russian cooperation on a variety of extra-European issues, including Arctic resources, nuclear weapons negotiations, Iran, North Korea and Syria. Some in the administration even dream of the fabled “reverse Kissinger” in which a new US relationship with Russia could eventually drive a wedge between Russia and China.

This potential future relationship with Russia is an additional factor in Trump’s desire to end the war quickly. There is a faction within Trump’s political base who view Russia not just as a geopolitical partner, but as a culturally conservative ally that serves as a bastion of anti-woke, “Christian” values. This domestic ideological influence helps explain the administration’s herculean efforts to blame Ukraine for starting this war and the reluctance to hold Russia or Putin accountable for their crimes.

The new generation in the room

Unlike in the first term, the people in Trump’s administration are unlikely to moderate his views on either Ukraine or European security. On the contrary, a new generation of policymakers surrounding the vice president, J.D. Vance, and the secretary of defence, Pete Hegseth, believe in urgently shifting resources away from Ukraine and Europe to Asia—or back to the Western hemisphere. They argue that America is not ready for a war with China, has a massive security problem on its own southern border, and cannot continue shouldering the burden of Europe’s defence, let alone Ukraine’s.

The US government will likely withdraw some of its troops from Europe and ship away weapons systems or offload them to allies. There is even appetite to hand over the role of NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe to Europeans. To deter China from invading Taiwan or even just push back on China’s ambitions, the US would need to shift key assets to the Asian theatre: submarines; air and missile defences; heavy bombers; fighter, patrol, and early warning aircraft; certain ground-based long-range fires; and critical munitions for air, naval, and ground platforms. It will also need critical enablers, such as airlift, sealift, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets. The administration seems even ready to “assume risk on other theatres” for the overall goal of reorienting these assets to Asia.

A new emphasis on defending the southern US border and talk of military intervention against cartels in Mexico may create separate demands on the US army. It may need to provide forces for broad-area surveillance, direct action against high-value targets, and even armoured vehicles such as Strykers for more sustained incursions. These forces and equipment would likely come from Europe, perhaps including the light infantry deployed to Romania.

Sticks for Ukraine, carrots for Russia

Ultimately, the tactics used by the Trump administration towards the Ukrainians and the Russians—in essence, sticks for Ukraine and carrots for Russia—clearly illustrate the preference given to ending the war and offering a reset to Russia. In the week after the public argument between Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky and Trump in February, the US paused all shipments of military aid and halted intelligence sharing with Ukraine. This retaliatory move, motivated by Zelensky’s supposed ingratitude, had immediate negative consequences for Ukraine on the battlefield. This stick drove the Ukrainians to the table. To regain US assistance, the Ukrainian government not only verbally agreed to a mercenary critical mineral deal but also announced its acceptance of a 30-day ceasefire.

Following Ukraine’s concession, the Americans are working on bringing Russia to the table, but the method for exercising leverage appears totally different than with the Ukrainians. Trump increased the rhetorical pressure on Russia, saying “if Russia and I are unable to make a deal on stopping the bloodshed in Ukraine, and if I think it was Russia’s fault—which it might not be—but if I think it was Russia’s fault, I am going to put secondary tariffs on oil, on all oil coming out of Russia”. However, the Trump administration has shown little willingness to actually coerce Russia into negotiations. Worse still, the most salient threat—increased military aid and support for Ukraine—remains strikingly absent.

Instead, they have consistently chosen flattery. Trump himself often uses positive language when discussing Russia’s participation in the war, suggesting it “may be easier dealing with Russia” than Ukraine and repeatedly stating his belief that Vladimir Putin wants peace. Even the administration’s lead negotiator, US special envoy Steve Witkoff, told political commentator Tucker Carlson, “I don’t regard Putin as a bad guy.” Trump’s conciliatory tone implies he prefers to entice Putin to the table with the carrot instead of the stick.

The US kneecapped Ukraine’s military and intelligence capabilities to bring them to the table but offered Russia sanctions relief and economic incentives in exchange for a temporary ceasefire. It remains to be seen whether the carrot approach will work with Russia; regardless, it says a lot about what the US is trying to achieve. America is not looking to make the world safe for democracy, protect Ukrainian sovereignty or seek a new transatlantic balance in providing for European security. It is pursuing an aura of peace and a new deal with Russia.

#### Current appeasement threatens the rules-based international order

Michael Bociurkiw, 2025 - is a global affairs analyst and senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. “What will ‘peace’ even mean for Ukraine?” The Globe and Mail, 2/18, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-what-will-peace-even-mean-for-ukraine/> //DH

Donald Trump and his circle continue to paint Vladimir Putin as a man yearning for peace, gifting the Russian President the geopolitical optics of the first high-level bilateral meeting since 2021 on Tuesday. But it is also a door-opening for Mr. Putin to press for a smorgasbord of concessions that would have been unthinkable just a few weeks ago; already, Moscow appears to have been granted its wish for restrictions to be lifted on its diplomatic mission in the United States.

The Kremlin’s conditions for ending its so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine include a freeze of current borders, allowing Russia to retain two partly occupied oblasts; the lifting of Western sanctions; a block on Ukraine’s NATO bid; and recognition of Crimea as Russian. His asks could even extend to unfreezing more than US$300-billion of Russian central bank assets and the withdrawal of NATO forces from front line countries.

So far little has come out of Tuesday’s summit, led by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. (Putin aide Yuri Ushakov summed up the 4.5 hours of talks in Riyadh as “not bad, not bad.”) But the U.S. delegation confirmed that territory and security guarantees will be on the table in future negotiations.

Meanwhile, as talks proceed without Kyiv’s participation, Ukraine sees no sign that the man that Mr. Trump is making out to be a peacemaker will halt his daily missile and drone attacks in the bloodiest European conflict since 1945. Mykolaiv Oblast, near Odesa, was hit by drones over the weekend, cutting off power and heating for 100,000 people amid a brutal cold snap.

Ukrainians are well aware that a transactional Mr. Trump is eager for a big win around Ukraine. After all, this is an image-obsessed man – he promised to end the war in 24 hours, though he later extended that timeline by several months – who racked up failures in North Korea, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

The question is: What price will Ukraine ultimately pay for Mr. Trump’s schoolyard-bully diplomacy?

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country would not recognize any agreements made without its involvement. “We want everything to be fair and so that nobody decides anything behind our back,” he said on Tuesday. However, if the U.S. and Russia decide on a truce and Kyiv refuses to accept it, Ukraine has little leverage. Mr. Trump, who has said Ukraine “may be Russian some day,” could cut off Kyiv’s access to vital intelligence and targeting information, or even disable the Patriot missile defence systems protecting Ukrainian cities. Mr. Trump’s approach to Ukraine resembles that of a slumlord: he is reportedly demanding repayment (up to half a trillion U.S. dollars for U.S. aid) without offering any security guarantees, which Mr. Zelensky has already rejected. One source described Mr. Trump’s approach as “pay us first, then feed your children.”

Looming over Washington’s outsized influence to decide Ukraine’s fate is the negligence of leaders in Britain, Canada and Europe to up their defence spending to this point and wean themselves off American largesse. If the U.S. were to abandon Ukraine tomorrow, European allies would be in no position to pick up the slack. It now appears Russia would face few headwinds should it decide to expand its conflict westward.

Even if Britain raised its defence spending to 2.5 per cent of its GDP, it would cost the country billions. Sending a credible peacekeeping force to Ukraine would require at least 30,000 soldiers, with 10,000 stationed on an enduring basis, according to British military analyst Sean Bell.

There are many questions ahead, including whether European leaders will follow British Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s recent pledge to send peacekeepers to Ukraine, a proposal that has already been met with resistance in Berlin and Warsaw. Will Mr. Putin, who launched the war, in part, because he alleged that NATO was expanding unchecked, tolerate NATO troops on Ukrainian soil? (Unlikely.) And can NATO countries even field the tens of thousands of soldiers required to staff an effective peacekeeping force?

In the three-plus years I’ve spent on the ground in Ukraine, the mood has never been darker. Fatigue, deep wounds from spilled blood and a sense of betrayal are weighing heavily on citizens and soldiers alike. From the beginning, they’ve seen themselves not just as defending their homeland, but also protecting the West from further Russian advances.

Even in the best-case scenario, Ukrainians may have to sacrifice significant portions of their land. Europe hasn’t been this vulnerable to a leader’s expansionist ambitions since the Second World War.

This is an enormous tragedy, playing out in slow motion – not just for Ukraine, but for the entire rules-based international order.

### 1AR: No Link – Not Appeasement

#### Science diplomacy is a form of pressure on Russia - empirically

Luk Van Langenhove et al, 2022 - is a Professor at the Brussels School of Governance of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Professorial Fellow at the United Nations University's Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies “Science diplomacy in the age of war” 5/5, <https://policylabs.frontiersin.org/content/science-diplomacy-in-the-age-of-war> //DH

Breaking ties with all Russian scientists also overlooks the role of science diplomacy in resolving conflicts. Some countries, like Slovenia, have said they would “suspend [scientific] cooperation until a peace agreement in Ukraine is achieved”. Given the increasing geopolitical bifurcation, even prior to the start of the war, there is no guaranteed Russian appetite for scientific cooperation with the West once peace is achieved.

Nevertheless, maintaining certain forms of scientific cooperation with Russia throughout this war could provide a channel for eventual reconciliation. Remember how, at the height of the Cold War, American and Soviet scientists worked together in fields like space exploration, vaccine development, and nuclear fusion, which helped set the mood for détente. Similarly, US and Cuban meteorologists were integral in normalizing relations between their countries in 2014, thanks to their longstanding collaboration amidst a cold political climate. Thus, severing ties with Russia’s scientific community may destroy a channel that could one day aid the peace process, especially if embassies continue to downsize diplomatic staff and former president Medvedev’s comments about the pointlessness of traditional diplomatic relations with the West come to fruition.

As Russian bombs and rockets continue to wreak havoc on Ukrainian cities, the need to keep scientific relations alive may seem a very low priority. However, traditional diplomatic channels remain open in the interest of finding a solution. If science diplomacy is the pursuit of foreign-policy objectives through science, then scientific channels should also remain as open as possible, in pursuit of mutual trust and understanding that will be vital once the war comes to an end.

The Scientists Themselves

Russian scientists are overwhelmingly horrified by the monstrous actions undertaken by their government, as can be seen in a letter condemning the war which, at the time of this writing, was signed by nearly 8,000 individuals in the Russian scientific community. Russian cosmonauts onboard the International Space Station dressed in the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag, in symbolic defiance. These scientists act in great peril to themselves, in light of the Duma’s law threatening up to 15 years in jail for those who refute the Kremlin’s “special military operation” propaganda. Cutting ties with these scientists thus leaves them in the cold, at the mercy of a regime that seems increasingly bent on crushing the freedom of inquiry that underpins their work.

For that reason, cooperation should continue as much as possible as a sign of solidarity, as long as it does not jeopardize the safety of the scientists or assist the Kremlin’s objectives. This sentiment has been echoed by many voices in the Western academic community, as seen in a letter from US and Canadian researchers, urging their governments to resist “shunning all Russian scientists for the actions of the Russian government”. They argue that doing so “would be a serious setback to a variety of Western and global interests and values”. Indeed, cutting Russian researchers out of the global science community completely, because they reside in a country ruled by a despicable dictator, disregards the Enlightenment principals of progress and toleration upon which Western societies are based.

There is also the question of the goal of Western sanctions. Sanctions seek to apply pressure on Putin and his siloviki, in hopes that they cease this horrendous war. The Russian public, which includes the scientific community, is one channel through which to deliver the intended pressure. However, the Kremlin has viciously cracked down on instances of public dissent, crippling the public’s effectiveness in applying pressure on its government. Arguably, those opposed to the war do not feel emboldened to risk humiliation, beatings, arrest, and 15 years in prison—especially in the absence of Western support for the pressure they could apply. Retaining bridges with the Russians who stand against their government helps to maintain an effective channel for exerting anti-war pressure.

The situation of Russian scientists should be closely monitored. If it becomes impossible for these scientists to conduct collaborative work, the West should open its doors to them. The noble initiative by the European Research Council (ERC) to provide jobs for Ukrainian researchers fleeing the war could be emulated for Russian researchers facing persecution for their Western ties. Although an extreme example, we should remember the lessons from Operation Paperclip, the secret operation that relocated scientists living under the Third Reich to America.

Conclusions

War is an extremely polarizing phenomenon that divides nuances into black and white. As Russian forces rolled into Ukraine, the Western response was to shut Russia out of virtually all partnerships and areas of cooperation. It seemed a justified reaction to a country seeking to reintroduce war into Europe after decades of peace. But, as inexcusable as the actions of the Putin regime are, we risk being blind to the nuances of the situation as we respond. It is difficult to employ rationality in times of war, when emotion takes the driver’s seat, but it is nonetheless crucial to ask the following questions in assessing our response: Do these actions stifle the Kremlin’s war objectives? Do they help Ukraine? What is the impact on humanity at large? Cutting ties with the Russian scientific community, when the respective answers to those questions are “no”, “no”, and “negative”, makes one think that scientific cooperation is just another victim of a pointless war.

A true science diplomacy approach to the situation in Ukraine and Russia is well illustrated by the statement issued by the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS). This organization expresses strong support of Ukraine and condemns Russia’s invasion. The statement also stresses that both countries are important contributors to polar research and that APECS will do everything in its power to “limit the isolation of polar early career researchers behind political borders, and encourage the continued participation of our Russian members, who may feel trapped in a situation imposed upon them”. That is indeed the way forward: we must realize that we live in the Anthropocene, and that humanity faces severe global crises that require scientific knowledge and international collaboration. Polar research is one of these areas. The current challenge for science diplomacy is to ensure that even warring countries keep working together on common threats. This can be done by supporting international cooperation at an individual level, and by ensuring support in the post-war period, to strengthen cooperation. The bonus is that scientific cooperation, even between states in conflict, can contribute to the development of mutual trust. After all, whatever the reasons for war, the reality is that all the world’s states face common problems. It is urgent that we mobilize scientists from all over the planet to combat climate change, for example.

#### The plan’s cooperation spills over to facilitate peace in Ukraine

Dr. Andreas Raspotnik, et al, 2025 - Director High North Center for Business and Governance, Nord University Business School. Romain Chuffart, Managing Director of The Arctic Institute. Pavel Devyatkin, Senior Associate at The Arctic Institute “The Evolving Concept of Arctic Exceptionalism: From Isolation to Geopolitical Leverage” High North News, 6/24,

<https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/evolving-concept-arctic-exceptionalism-isolation-geopolitical-leverage> //DH

In the case of East-West relations, it is no longer a matter of whether the Arctic will be drawn into the Ukraine conflict, but how it might play a pivotal role in its resolution.

This raises two fundamental questions: how might we rearticulate an Arctic exceptionalism – a new notion of a (re-)negotiated regional order – that reflects present realities rather than idealised fictions?

And how might such a reimagined exceptionalism be mobilised, not to deny conflict, but to disarm it, and to position the Arctic as a vector for peace rather than as a theatre of renewed confrontation?

What is the United States’ role?

This new Arctic exceptionalism requires all hands-on deck. And the United States should play a role in leading this effort.

If a stable USA is important for NATO as much as for China and Russia, the United States has a strong interest in promoting the Arctic as a strategic space for renewed cooperation between this triumvirate of global powers.

The United States’ role as an Arctic power is rooted in a historical shift catalysed by the Russian Empire’s financial needs. In the mid-19th century, following the Crimean War, Russia found itself in need of funds and agreed to sell Alaska to the United States.

This acquisition marked the beginning of America's deepening engagement with the Arctic, but certainly not the end.

Given this history, the U.S. has a vested interest in the Arctic for economic reasons as much as strategic ones. During the Cold War, the Arctic became a frontline in the nuclear standoff between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Today, the melting ice and the growing presence of Russia/China in the region could once again position the Arctic as a critical zone for both conflict and cooperation. Could the Arctic once again be a key to peace, particularly with regard to the war in Ukraine?

A potential answer may lie in leveraging Arctic security to help broker a peaceful resolution to the conflict. For instance, the Arctic could provide a neutral ground for dialogue between Russia and Western powers, particularly the U.S. and NATO.

Given Russia’s strategic interest in maintaining stability in the Arctic, it may be willing to engage in discussions over Ukraine in exchange for security guarantees regarding the region.

This would require a bottom-up approach, one that focuses on shared interests (between the U.S. and Russia, and preferably the other six Arctic states, including its Indigenous population), such as nuclear disarmament, securing Arctic shipping lanes, and addressing climate change, that transcend national borders.

The End of Exceptionalism? Or Just a New Perspective?

If the Arctic is brought into discussions surrounding Ukraine, does this mark the end of its exceptionalism, or simply a new perspective on its role in global politics? It could be both.

On one hand, the idea that the Arctic is an isolated, exceptional space will be permanently upended by the region’s integration into larger geopolitical debates.

On the other hand, Arctic exceptionalism may persist in a new form, one in which the region’s significance is no longer defined by isolation and its peripheral location/geography, but by its interconnectedness with global security, climate policy, and the broader balance of power.

At the heart of this transformation lies the question of how to balance regional stability with broader geopolitical ambitions. The Arctic’s changing strategic importance suggests that its exceptionalism is no longer a question of geography, but of the evolving geopolitical environment.

As (non-Arctic) nations increasingly look northwards, the challenge will be to ensure that the Arctic does not become a flashpoint for conflict, but rather a space for cooperation and dialogue, particularly in light of the war in Ukraine.

The Arctic as a Key to Global Stability?

The way in which states have interacted with and within the region has indeed been exceptional. Yet, as the region becomes increasingly accessible, it has become central to global security (climate and military) concerns; again.

Today, the nature of its exceptionalism is changing. The war in Ukraine, Russia’s strategic interests, and the realities of climate change, among others, have redefined the region’s role in global geopolitics.

It is now clear that the Arctic’s economic and strategic significance cannot be separated from broader global conflicts, particularly the current war in Ukraine or any potential disputes, conflicts of the (near) future.

By recognising Arctic governance as a key space in these discussions, there is an opportunity to use the region as a platform for diplomacy, collaboration, and conflict resolution.

The Arctic is undeniably exceptional in the new geopolitical landscape that is emerging, and this landscape requires new narratives, new perspectives, and new approaches to diplomacy.

#### Science diplomacy pressures Putin by countering regime propaganda

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Breaking ties with all Russian scientists also overlooks the role of science diplomacy in resolving conflicts. As Olšáková and Robinson put it, maintaining certain forms of scientific cooperation with Russia throughout this war might at first seem like a naïve historical reading of science diplomacy mythologised during the Cold War, when American and Soviet scientists helped set the mood for détente by working together in fields like space exploration, demographics, vaccine development, and nuclear fusion. Today, however, science diplomacy illustrates the global nature of science and technological progress in our highly interdependent world. Scientific progress cannot afford to be nationalistic when cross-border collaboration is needed to face global challenges. These challenges need the input of all scientists.

If science diplomacy is the pursuit of foreign-policy objectives through science, then the open scientific channels developed over the last few decades should be cherished and kept as open as possible. Such channels should be used to pursue mutual trust and understanding among scientists as an antidote for, as Sergey Guriev and Daniel Treisman put it, the new generation of “spin dictators”, like Vladimir Putin, who will use information to control citizens. “Like spin doctors in democracies, they spin the news to engineer support.” Scientists will rarely fall for such distorted information. Cutting ties is the wrong policy: it leaves scientists in the cold, at the mercy of a regime that is bent on crushing the freedom of inquiry that underpins their work.

For these reasons, cooperation should continue as much as possible, as long as it does not jeopardize the safety of Russian scientists or assist the Kremlin’s objectives. This sentiment has been echoed by many voices in the western academic community, as seen in a letter from US and Canadian researchers, urging their governments to resist “shunning all Russian scientists for the actions of the Russian government”. Cutting Russian researchers out of the global science community because they reside in a country ruled by a despicable dictator disregards the Enlightenment principals of progress and toleration upon which western societies are based.

#### History disproves that Russia will pocket concessions

Wissal Werfelliis, 2024 - a dedicated researcher and lecturer specializing in International Relations. “The Arctic: A Risk of Escalating Conflicts” 10/14,

<https://trendsresearch.org/insight/the-arctic-a-risk-of-escalating-conflicts/?srsltid=AfmBOooXJm90-9xFLCHQBN19Fg3V_fIR2vHL-A9Pps1RuRpl4Yj5TX9x>

There is no doubt that the war in Ukraine has made cooperation and diplomacy in the Arctic more difficult. However, the U.S. can expect Russia to remain open to peaceful discussions. Even at the height of the Cold War, the Soviet Union cooperated with the West on Arctic issues, including initiatives such as the 1973 Convention on the Conservation of Polar Bears [28] and the 1987 Murmansk Initiative toward regional cooperation, recognizing the special responsibilities and special interests of the States of the Arctic Region in relation to the protection of the fauna and flora of the Arctic Region and recognizing that the polar bear is a significant resource of the Arctic Region that requires additional protection.

### 1AR: No Impact – Won’t Escalate

#### Ukraine won’t escalate or cause further Russian aggression

Paul D. Miller, 2023 - professor of the practice of international affairs at Georgetown University “Ukraine Is Not World War III” The Dispatch, <https://thedispatch.com/article/ukraine-is-not-world-war-iii/?s=r> //DH

The war in Ukraine is not yet World War III. To act as if it were by proactively escalating or expanding the war is both strategically unnecessary and immoral. It would be to trigger the very war we should most want to avoid. The war in Ukraine is an extremely dangerous development for world order, the only thing more dangerous than which would be to overreact and recklessly expand the war.

Prelude to a conflict.

Treating the war as if it were already World War III, and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine a prelude to general European conflict, is unnecessary because Russia cannot and will not expand the war beyond Ukraine. The historical analogy—Putin as Hitler hellbent on continental conquest—is flawed. While Putin may have boundless ambition, his actual capabilities are severely bounded by reality.

The German military in 1940, as its blitzkrieg swept across Europe, numbered some 6 million soldiers in all branches. Over the course of the war, some 18 million Germans served in uniform, approaching one-third of its total population. Germany was the economic powerhouse of Europe in 1940 and could outproduce any European competitor in military equipment and supplies.

At the start of the war, the Germans arguably had the best tank (the Panzer) and the best fighter plane (the Messerschmitt). The German scientific and industrial base was among the best in Europe and had a head start in its focus on military technology. German military scientists invented the jet, rocket, cruise missile, and helicopter before any of the Allies. And the German military was infamous—again, at the beginning of the war—for its extraordinary training, discipline, and cohesion.

None of that is true of Russia or the Russian military today. The Russian military has about 1 million active-duty soldiers, a fraction of what Germany had at the beginning of its conquests. Russia could call up vast reserves, but it would take years to turn them into a trained and capable fighting force. Russian tanks and jets are better than Germany’s of 1940—but not better than NATO’s in 2022. Over the past week, the Russian military has proven inadequate in basic tasks like vehicle maintenance, let alone operational planning, combined arms operations, air assault, and air defense.

The 21s century Russian military overwhelmed smaller opponents in Chechnya and Syria through sheer force of numbers and utter disregard for the laws of armed conflict. But it has clearly struggled when faced with a moderately larger and more challenging opponent in Ukraine. The Russian army is hardly ready to invade the next country over, or the one after that. No Russian blitzkrieg is in the offing. It is materially incapable of doing so. Hitler spent the better part of a decade rearming and preparing for his war (and still lost).

### 1AR: Polar Council Turn

#### The turn ends the Arctic Council and the liberal world order. Failure to engage Russia causes widespread defections from BRICS and the establishment of alternate Arctic institutions

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In 2022, the West again led the dismantling of cooperation. On 3 and 4 March 2022, Western countries suspended interaction with Russia in the Arctic Council (USDS, 2022) and BEAC (BEAC, 2022). Russia tried to carry on its duties as chair of the Arctic Council (Zhuravel and Timoshenko, 2023) and officially withdrew from the BEAC only when Finland refused to transfer chairmanship to Moscow as scheduled.

Russia was not interested in reforming Arctic institutions because, until 2022, it held an important position in them. This reflected the reality that half of Arctic land, and half of the Arctic’s population, are Russian. Regardless of the state of Russia’s economy or international politics, Russia’s role in the Arctic is key.

The Arctic generates approximately 10% of Russian GDP, 20% of Russian exports (Karaganov, 2021), 80% of Russian gas, and 90% of Russian nickel and cobalt, as well as other resources of key significance for the Russian and global economies (Likhacheva and Stepanov, 2021). The enormous importance of the Arctic for Russia made it a prime target for the West: it seized the opportunity to “punish” Russia for revisionist behavior, seeking to uphold the international status quo at the expense of the Arctic status quo.

Timo Koivurova and Akiho Shibata (2023) note that binding-treaty-based Arctic institutions have proven more stable than soft-law-based regimes. The reason is that the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which relates only to the first group of regimes, permits the termination of an international agreement with regard to one of its parties only if such party has violated some provisions of the agreement. Russia did not violate any Arctic norms, for which reason the Western countries had no formal grounds to terminate interaction with it within these institutions.

At the same time, the Arctic Council and BEAC based on ‘soft law’ turned out to be seriously deformed by the Western countries’ actions. For example, Western countries decided to suspend cooperation with Russia in the Arctic Council and the BEAC. Although some activities within the Arctic Council resumed in 2023-2024, seven Western countries refused to resume full cooperation (Arctic Council, 2023). And even before Russia left the BEAC, Western officials had started speaking about a renaissance of cooperation within the BEAC framework without Russia (Edvardsen, 2023).

Koivurova and Shibata examine the reasons for the stability of some regimes and the vulnerability of others, proceeding from purely legal considerations and emphasizing the importance of the Vienna Convention for international treaties. In our view, the Western Arctic countries opted to leave some key regimes intact in order to preserve the general system of international relations.

Western dismantling of Arctic cooperation has created two contradictions.

Firstly, Western countries already have numerous channels for cooperation amongst themselves, outside the Arctic Council and the BEAC; those institutions were designed specifically for dialogue with Russia, and are thus rendered pointless if Russia is squeezed out of them.

Secondly, by dismantling the Arctic order in defense of the liberal world order, the West has actually only accelerated the collapse of the latter.

The South: Keeping a Low Profile

Historically, the Arctic countries formed a club with exclusive right to govern the region, based on two factors:

Firstly, the specific history of the Arctic’s exploration and development have formed a special attitude towards it among the peoples and leaders of the Arctic countries. Unlike outer space, Antarctica, or the world’s oceans, the Arctic and the North have become an important part of the cultures, national identities, and national myths of Russia, Canada, and the Nordic countries.

Secondly, the Arctic has an extremely vulnerable and fragile ecosystem, and any man-made environmental disasters could take a heavy toll on the local population and nature. As a result, the Arctic countries were skeptical of outsiders unaware of the complexity of local problems.

Club-type institutions, such as the Arctic Council, the BEAC or the Arctic Five, did not endow their members with any special status, they have made the international community view them as indisputable “masters” of the region, and non-Arctic countries could hope only for observer status. Granting such a status required members’ consensus, and before 2014, the Arctic countries might even align with one another rather than with members of their own blocs. For example, Canada once joined Russia in opposing observer status for the EU (Kirgizov-Barsky, 2021).

The first steps to engage non-Arctic countries in regional affairs were taken long before 2022, but not at the governmental level. For example, Russian and Chinese companies began mining minerals together in the Russian Arctic in 2013 (Leksyutina and Zhou, 2022), and Russian universities and research centers cooperate with scientists and experts from China and other non-Arctic countries (Gutenev et al., 2023a; Gutenev et al., 2023b).

However, in 2022, the Arctic powers could no longer stand together, and the bloc solidarity of Western countries began to outweigh their purely Arctic interests. The Arctic club collapsed, seeming to create favorable conditions for extra-regional countries interested in enlarging their role in the Arctic.

Yet there is no sign of their increased activity in the region’s institutions, as those institutions’ legitimacy and usefulness have collapsed due to Russia’s exclusion. For example, in the fall of 2022, amidst discussions of unilaterally transferring chairmanship of the Arctic Council to Norway, China warned it would not recognize the institution if Russia were excluded from it (The High North News, 2022).

Moreover, the East and South, increasingly dissatisfied with the West’s liberal world order, which does not permit them to realize their development goals, are themselves becoming increasingly revisionist and thus aligned with Russia.

Global dynamics are drawing leading BRICS members—Russia, India, and China—together, making them natural partners in the Arctic. These countries seek to strengthen their positions in the region and have a similar vision of global processes. The events of the last few years and the countries’ current plans with regard to the Arctic confirm this assumption. Specifically, BRICS countries are planning to open a joint scientific center in Svalbard (Interfax, 2024); Russia and China are strengthening cooperation in sea management (RIA Novosti, 2023); Russia and India are strengthening cooperation on the Northern Sea Route (Korabel, 2023; Arguments and Facts, 2023). Russia’s 2023 Foreign Policy Concept calls for cooperation in the Arctic with friendly extra-regional countries. Nevertheless, China and India are not motivated by an anti-Western ideology and remain open to cooperation with the West when it is in their national interests. Both China and India remain present at major Western expert conferences on the Arctic, such as the Arctic Circle Forums (Pedersen and Steinveg, 2024); in 2023, India and the U.S. held joint military exercises in Alaska (Bye, 2023).

#### A refusal to engage Russia means it will form a Polar Council for BRICS+ countries

Mikhail Komin and Joanna Hosa, 2025 - Mikhail Komin was a visiting fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. He regularly provides analytical comments for media outlets such as TVRain, Forbes, Carnegie, Novaya Gazeta, and Radio Liberty. Joanna Hosa was a policy fellow at ECFR’s Wider Europe programme. She has held a range of positions at the European Commission, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the Open Society European Policy Institute, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and the International Federation on Human Rights. “The bear beneath the ice: Russia’s ambitions in the Arctic” European Council on Foreign Relations, 5/27, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-bear-beneath-the-ice-russias-ambitions-in-the-arctic/> //DH

The second pillar of Russia’s Arctic foreign policy is its creation of alternative international cooperation platforms—notably with BRICS+ countries— aimed at pressuring the West into restoring Russia’s participation in existing Arctic institutions, according to two Russian official respondents.[7]

Russia’s chairship of the Arctic Council, which began in 2021 with high hopes, came to an abrupt halt after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In 2022, the seven Western member states suspended cooperation with Russia over which Moscow has expressed repeated frustration. Nonetheless, in 2023, Russia peacefully handed the chairship over to Norway, which resumed minimal, technical-level engagement with Moscow. In early 2024, however, Russia suspended its financial contributions to the Arctic Council and hinted at a possible withdrawal, if the council “become an unfriendly structure”, referring to Moscow’s list of “unfriendly states”.

According to several Russian officials interviewed for this brief, such gestures stemmed from internal discussions starting in 2022 about forming an alternative international Arctic institution led by the Kremlin.[8] In April 2023, state-affiliated think-tanks started publicly promoting this idea, which was also non-publicly discussed in government bodies, including the ministry of emergency situations and the presidential administration. The proposed format involved announcing, during the 2024 BRICS+ summit in Kazan, a “group for closer cooperation” on Arctic climate, resource and scientific issues, which could eventually evolve into a “Polar Council” with formal membership.

The term “polar” was deliberately chosen to broaden the scope beyond the Arctic to include the Antarctic. This allowed Russia to pitch participation to countries like Brazil and South Africa, in addition to China and India, while avoiding direct competition and deflecting procedural challenges from the Arctic Council.

Despite Moscow’s public emphasis on BRICS+ interest in Arctic cooperation between 2023 and 2024, neither the Polar Council nor the smaller coordination group appeared in the final outcome documents of the Kazan summit. The final declaration made no mention of the Arctic and the newly established platforms on climate issues were framed in the most neutral terms possible. The only initiative that continued to develop was the “BRICS+ Working Group on Cooperation in the Oceanic and Polar Research Zones”, which had been created prior to 2022.

One Russian official interviewed for this brief attributed the lack of progress to a “refusal” of support from the Russian ministry of foreign affairs.[9] According to him, ministry officials feared that the announcement of a new institution “could trigger a broader unravelling of key Arctic cooperation frameworks”. Another respondent, Andrey Todorov, formerly of the ministry’s legal department, explained[10] that Russia benefits from multilateral agreements brokered within the Arctic Council, including the 2011 search-and-rescue accord and the 2013 agreement on oil-spill response. These frameworks, he noted, Russia would really hate to lose.

For now, the Kremlin appears to have shelved the “Potemkin-style” idea of a new Polar Council. Instead, it is using symbolic acts of disengagement—such as withholding dues and threatening to withdraw from the Arctic Council—as leverage, while publicly exaggerating its bilateral Arctic cooperation with BRICS+ states. But if this strategy proves insufficient to pressure Western actors into re-engagement, a new Polar Council may well return, especially as some Russian actors remain keen.

#### Russia’s building a BRICs alliance now because it’s shut out

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Global dynamics are drawing leading BRICS members—Russia, India, and China—together, making them natural partners in the Arctic. These countries seek to strengthen their positions in the region and have a similar vision of global processes. The events of the last few years and the countries’ current plans with regard to the Arctic confirm this assumption. Specifically, BRICS countries are planning to open a joint scientific center in Svalbard (Interfax, 2024); Russia and China are strengthening cooperation in sea management (RIA Novosti, 2023); Russia and India are strengthening cooperation on the Northern Sea Route (Korabel, 2023; Arguments and Facts, 2023). Russia’s 2023 Foreign Policy Concept calls for cooperation in the Arctic with friendly extra-regional countries. Nevertheless, China and India are not motivated by an anti-Western ideology and remain open to cooperation with the West when it is in their national interests. Both China and India remain present at major Western expert conferences on the Arctic, such as the Arctic Circle Forums (Pedersen and Steinveg, 2024); in 2023, India and the U.S. held joint military exercises in Alaska (Bye, 2023).

Thus, amid the Ukraine crisis, the leading countries of the East and the South eschew participation in Russia-excluding Arctic institutions, and are increasing their own cooperation with Russia in the region, while also maintaining cooperation with the West.

#### Russia is promoting scientific cooperation through BRICs

Florian Vidal and Louna Saas, 2025 – \*Department of Social Sciences, UiT the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway AND \*\*School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences, Paris, France “Fragmented Arctic science: Permafrost as a salient feature in the divergence between geopolitical and chronopolitical perspectives” Polar Science, 4/24, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1873965225000441> //DH

While the annexation of Crimea and the pandemic had already had an impact on scientific cooperation in the Arctic, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine represented an unprecedented geopolitical situation since the Cold War. As Konyshev (2023) describes, February 2022 marked “a spillover effect of enmity in the Arctic”, which resulted in extraordinary reactions from most of the regional organizations responsible for ensuring scientific cooperation. In March 2022, the Arctic Council, which had been scheduled to be chaired by the Russian Federation from 2021 to 2023, suspended its activities by decision of the seven other Arctic countries. The Council’s projects started to progressively resume under the Norwegian chairship, but Russia remains excluded. At the level of academic and scientific organizations, the University of the Arctic (Uarctic) suspended its exchanges with its Russian counterparts, while the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) scaled back its projects with Russia. In response, Russia is promoting the BRICS alliance as an alternative means of fostering scientific cooperation in the polar region. The current institutional crisis between Western Arctic states and Russia creates opportunities for the non-Arctic states to assume a more prominent role in the region, particularly countries belonging to the BRICS, such as China, which is heavily involved in the Arctic Council (Argüello and Rafaly, 2023).

### 1AR: Humiliation Impact Turn

#### Putin won’t compromise under any circumstances. He either wins or starts a nuclear war

Charles B. Strozier and David M. Terman, 2022 – “Putin’s psychology and nuclear weapons: the fundamentalist mindset” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 11/9

<https://thebulletin.org/premium/2022-11/putins-psychology-and-nuclear-weapons-the-fundamentalist-mindset/> //DH

Humiliation is at the heart of this intersection of paranoia and millennialism. The nature of Putin’s apocalyptic vision, and of the war he has unleashed to realize it, makes defeat unacceptable. It would represent massive humiliation. His fundamentalist worldview is so extreme that it doesn’t allow for compromise. The very goodness of the world, of himself, and, most significantly, of Russia are at stake. Defeat would shatter the foundations of his elaborate belief system, not to mention his self-structure. There is nothing more absolute for the fundamentalist leader than not retreating from a field of battle that has assumed apocalyptic meaning. Suicide is the only option, as Hitler came to feel while watching his dreams of the thousand-year Reich evaporate.

Putin has given himself a choice Hitler lacked. He need not accept defeat on the battlefield. This reversal contradicts the conventions of war long established in the West. Cornwallis admitted defeat when he found himself surrounded by Washington’s army; Napoleon met his Waterloo; Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox; and the Japanese accepted the inevitable after the United States dropped two atomic bombs in August 1945. Surrender of defeated armies in the field has always been the nature of warfare, often reversing and undoing the apocalyptic fantasies of charismatic and paranoid leaders. But nuclear weapons radically change that calculation.

An awareness of the psychological vulnerabilities of Putin in the Ukraine war could help offset the possibility that he would actually use nuclear weapons. His aggression needs to be stopped, but Russia can’t be humiliated or backed into a corner in the process. There may be hope, however, in the very grandiosity of Putin’s imperial dreams. He imagines hegemony over a vast territory and influence on a geopolitical scale. Ukraine is only one piece of that larger vision. Russia must feel it has preserved a respected role in any final settlement, including the shared need to preserve human civilization.

#### Appeasement solves by reducing humiliation and recognizing Russia’s great power status

Hanna Samir Kassab, 2024 - Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at Northern Michigan University, USA “PRESTIGE, HUMILIATION AND SAVING FACE: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND GREAT POWER POLITICS” Contemporary Military Challenges, 2024 – 26/No. 1, <https://tinyurl.com/3pff3wkd> //DH

The humiliation-prestige dynamic is fundamental when examining the international system. There is a human, psychological and emotional element that impacts state behavior. Connecting this systems-level force to the state, and studying the behavior of Nazi Germany, China, and Russia described here, helps us observe the centrality of status. The aggressive action by these actors is caused by their need to overturn humiliation and gain prestige. By identifying these as motivating factors, international relations theory must try to incorporate these psychological factors into the analysis. Knowing these factors could assist the state to develop better foreign policy as they interact with others and shape their own foreign policy choices.

The next section tries to break the cycle by offering up a suggestion already forwarded by Hans Morgenthau: allowing a humiliated state to save face. Saving face is a term we use to describe social settings to allow an embarrassed person or state the courtesy of retaining respect and honor. A classic example of saving face in international relations is during the Cuban Missile Crisis, where the United States and the Soviets both compromised in secret to de-escalate the situation (see Graham and Zelikow, 1999). While the problem of status reassertion is the core of the article, the author finds it necessary to provide a solution. The next section explores the term ‘saving face’ as an attempt to problematize or understand the central importance of psychological factors in international politics.

3 SAVING FACE: AVOIDING HUMILIATION, DEFENDING PRESTIGE

The distribution of power (and status) across states tends to ebb and flow with time. Why are states so resistant to changes in power distributions? E.H. Carr wrote on the eve of World War II: “…we cannot return to the pre-1939 world any more than we could return to the pre-war world of 1919” (2001, p 238). Carr here calls for some accommodation: if status quo powers do not appease revisionist powers, the two forces will come to blows. Applying this to the prestige-humiliation dynamic, states are less likely to back down. Backing down may bring humiliation for one and prestige for another (Wirth, 2020). States do seek to defend their interests, defined in terms of power and security; however, this is complicated by cognitive variables. It could be argued that it was not in the interests of either party (Great Britain and France and Nazi Germany) to go to war as neither side was ready (Martel, 1986). Forcing an opponent to back down in the international system might be construed as a sign of weakness. Appeasement is also dangerous to maintaining deterrence, that is, remaining credible and capable (Mearsheimer, 2001). It is thus important for great powers to avoid humiliating others. The challenge is in allowing states to save face.

Saving face is the ability to maintain dignity and status in the light of losing power and prestige. It is about avoiding embarrassment, which may lead to a violent response and attempts to embarrass the initial humiliator (Barnhart, 2017). One historical example is when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain appeased Hitler in the annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain saved face by showing the world that he was responsible for establishing world peace by getting Hitler to sign a treaty that would effectively stop its expansion. By allowing Chamberlain the ability to proclaim responsibility for the peace accord, Hitler allowed Great Britain to save face. In other words, an actor must give a challenger the ability to show that there were some gains allowed in the light of appeasement.

#### Quantitative studies show that humiliation significantly increases the chance of war

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Past national humiliation drives prestige-seeking behavior, creating the psychological mechanisms driving international systemic change. Joslyn Barnhart’s article “Humiliation and Third-Party Aggression” describes increased French imperialism in Tunisia as a response to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. She asks the question: “Why would a state respond to territorial loss with such acts of aggression?” (p 532). She finds that states seeking to recover from humiliation are 84% more likely to become aggressive on the world stage (Ibid.). Her article is a large-n, quantitative study of the past. What of today? In a competitive international system, is it likely that state efforts to overturn past humiliation and increase national prestige serve as a central guiding principle of great power behavior? Will this be at the expense of others’ prestige? This paper suggests studying the changing structure of the international system order through the psychological-motivational lens of a prestige-humiliation dynamic.

There are psychological issues which must be understood as part of states’ motivations determined by systems-level forces (Hymens, 2010). The prestige-humiliation dynamic is one of these systems-level forces. This article incorporates the prestige-humiliation dynamic into structural realism, a theory of international relations that posits a systemic, rational explanation of state behavior (Waltz, 2010). To this end, we should observe the following: the more powerful a state becomes, the more it seeks to overturn past humiliation through aggressive prestige-seeking acts. This is done to reassert its power and status to achieve this prestige even at the expense of others. Hence, revisionist states seek prestige at the humiliation of status quo powers as an inherent part of state interests. Similarly, status quo states seek to protect their prestige at the humiliation of revisionist or subdued powers. Hence, building on the world of Robert Gilpin (1981), this paper submits a psychological framework simplifying the causes of systemic war.

To further observe and understand the proposed psychological dynamic, three historical examples will be discussed: the rise of Nazi Germany, China’s Century of Humiliation, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s expansion into Eastern Europe against Russia (Wang, 2020; Sharafutdinova, 2020). To justify the choice, Nazi Germany’s prestige-pursuing foreign policy culminated in World War II. This serves as a benchmark to describe a humiliated state’s resurgence resulting in a push to eradicate past misdeeds in an international system. As Nazi Germany grew in power (and Great Britain and the west declined), it demanded to be recognized as a great power, tossing aside the source of its humiliation: the Treaty of Versailles. This case serves as a standard to compare challenger behavior (China and Russia) within the contemporary international system.

China and Russia provide more contemporaneous examples, showing that similar patterns of the behavior that defined Nazi Germany’s experience are being repeated. As China and Russia increase in power, they will attempt to overturn past humiliation through prestige-seeking acts. China is pursuing this strategy as it attempts to push for dominance in the South China Sea and regain Taiwan, overturning its “Century of Humiliation” and regaining its rightful place in the world (Wang, 2020; Hussaini, 2020; Mayer, 2018). Russia has successfully annexed Crimea in an attempt to stop further encroachment into its sphere of influence by the Europeans and the United States (Sharafutdinova, 2020). Scholars must then try to reconceive international relations theory by underscoring psychological components that are explicitly tied to the systems level of analysis.

#### Deterrence fails. Putin’s more than willing to risk nuclear use over the possibility of defeat

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But the growing complacency among U.S. officials is based on a misunderstanding of Putin’s rhetoric and the dynamics that keep Moscow from using nuclear weapons. When Putin invokes his arsenal, he is not trying to warn that Russia could use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Rather, his rhetoric is designed to threaten NATO itself. It is a blinking red light, a warning to American decision-makers that Moscow is willing to create a nuclear confrontation with Washington if needed to win in Ukraine.

To see why, consider, first, the state of the battlefield. Tactical nuclear weapons would do little to help Russia break the stalemate. Ukrainian forces are well entrenched along a frontline that extends for roughly 600 miles, and so even dozens of tactical weapons would not be enough to let Russia push through. Even if they were, Russia does not have the maneuverable reserve forces needed to exploit any opening created by these weapons. A nuclear attack would, of course, be a terrifying event for Ukrainians to witness, but it would still not break the will of the Ukrainian people or compel Kyiv to surrender. Ukrainians have fought with tremendous courage through all kinds of atrocities, and a tactical nuclear attack would only be another entry in the register of Russian brutality. Ukrainians have said as much when responding to polls. According to surveys by the Munich Security Conference and Ukrainian think tanks, the country’s public is unwilling to surrender to Moscow and stop fighting even in the face of nuclear threats.

If anything, tactical nuclear strikes would hurt Russia’s war effort. Such attacks would likely strengthen the West’s desire to help Ukraine, just as it was starting to ebb. (Western politicians of all stripes have a strong incentive to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used in war.) A nuclear strike might also prompt China and India—the Kremlin’s two most important international partners—to abandon Russia. Both Beijing and New Delhi have already made public statements designed to dissuade Moscow from using nuclear weapons. They would not be happy if Putin ignored them.

For Putin, there is little to gain from using nuclear weapons in Ukraine, and much to lose. In fact, right now he believes that there is little to gain from using nuclear weapons anywhere. Putin thinks that Russia can win in Ukraine by conventional means. “Almost along the entire frontline, our armed forces, let’s put it modestly, are improving their position,” he said in a December 14 press conference. He also noted that Western support for Kyiv appears to be in decline, declaring that soon, the “freebies” afforded to Ukraine would “run out.” So long as Putin remains optimistic about Russia’s odds, he is unlikely to rock the boat by engaging in escalation.

But Putin may not always feel this way. If the West makes a strong, renewed commitment to support Kyiv as it tries to retake all occupied territory and provides Ukraine with long-term financing support and a bolstered defense industry, Putin might decide that he may not be able to grind Ukraine down through attritional warfare. If, in addition, Western economic sanctions finally start to significantly disrupt the Russian economy, Putin may conclude that time is not on his side. Russia’s president might decide to double down instead of waiting Ukraine out. The real escalation risks would then start.

ZERO TO SIXTY

For the United States and its allies, the first set of escalatory risks might seem like more bluster. The Kremlin, for example, could begin by moving its big, long-range nuclear weapons carriers into deployed and dispersed positions, beyond their normal bases, which are vulnerable to U.S. attacks. It could, for example, send the bulk of its ballistic missile submarines out to sea, move large numbers of its strategic missile forces into the vast Russian forests, and load nuclear weapons onto strategic bombers. Such actions fall well short of actually using nuclear bombs, but they would still be deeply alarming. They would undoubtedly catch Washington’s attention, dramatically heighten tensions, and immediately force Western leaders to account for the risk of nuclear war in their calculus.

From there, Moscow might actually begin using force against NATO. It could down a NATO aircraft over an allied country or international airspace. It could attack a NATO ship in the Black Sea. Or it could attack what it claimed were arms convoys bound for Ukraine while they were moving through a country in NATO’s eastern flank. Such steps would quickly expand the scope of the conflict, bringing NATO into the fight. Moscow might augment this step by detonating a nuclear weapon in the open ocean, in what is called a demonstration strike.

Finally, in a worst-case scenario—one where the Kremlin sought to shock the world into ending the war in Ukraine quickly and on Putin’s terms—Russia could actually launch a nuclear weapon directly at NATO territory. Although Putin seemed to pour cold water on the idea at an annual forum in October, saying that Russia did not need to lower the threshold for nuclear use, it might look necessary if the war were clearly trending against Russia. Eighty percent of military aid to Ukraine flows through one airbase in eastern Poland, and so that base would probably be a prime target. The United States might then retaliate with a nuclear strike of its own, bringing the world to the edge of destruction.

It may not take long, from the time he begins escalating, for Putin to move from sharp nuclear signaling and conventional attack to ordering a nuclear strike. If Putin were to escalate slowly, launching smaller attacks and seeing how NATO reacts, he would risk inciting a conventional conflict—probably with NATO forces intervening directly into Ukraine and possibly within Russia itself—in which the West has a clear advantage. NATO’s conventional forces are superior to Russia’s, and so Putin will not want to give Washington time and space to react, allowing it to bring its capabilities to bear. He will therefore want to reach the nuclear level—where Russia is a peer of the United States—as quickly as possible.

U.S. officials, of course, do not want Moscow to resort to nuclear weapons, even though they seem unconvinced that he will. As a result, they have attempted to scare Russia away from escalating by threatening “catastrophic consequences,” as the White House put it in September 2022, should Putin use his arsenal. But such warnings are unlikely to deter Russia’s president. Putin will see this threat as a bluff; he knows that, ultimately, Washington does not want to risk a nuclear conflict over Ukraine. He is also profoundly committed to winning in Ukraine, to the point where he might decide to rapidly escalate even if he thought the United States was serious about responding with force. He would probably doubt the severity of any U.S. threat and calculate that, in the end, Washington would choose to compromise rather than launch nuclear strikes against Russia itself, which could entail a nuclear response against the U.S. homeland.

The unfortunate truth is that Washington cannot deter Putin from escalating to the point where he uses nuclear weapons because of the war in Ukraine. Although he would not take such escalation lightly or dismiss the serious risks for Russia, Putin would anticipate that he could win the war of wills in a nuclear crisis. If it wants to avoid a nuclear standoff, Washington must therefore take a different tack. U.S. policymakers should instead pursue policies aimed at subverting Russia’s decision-making, so that if Putin orders escalatory steps he faces internal pushback. That means they need to try empowering Russian officials who want to obstruct any effort by Putin to go nuclear. Doing so will not be easy, given that U.S.-Russian relations are about as poor as can be. But Washington can start by engaging more with Moscow, odious as that may seem. The only way for U.S. officials, including in the intelligence community, to cultivate dissent among Russian officials is to forge more direct contacts.

#### Russian revisionism is inevitable unless the US accommodates Russian status

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Indeed, quite the opposite. Inflicting a comprehensive and humiliating defeat on Russia would be far more likely to set the stage for further discord, conflict and war on Europe’s eastern marches than to usher in an era of regional peace and tranquility. To put it bluntly, indulging fantasies of inflicting near-total defeat on Russia would be a terrible mistake — one that we can, and must, avoid making.

To understand why inflicting a devastating defeat on Russia would be such a terrible mistake, it is necessary to pay attention to a motivating factor that is often overlooked or minimized in conventional accounts of foreign policy and grand strategy: humiliation. Most theories of international relations, of course, tend to assume rational actors, either anthropomorphized states or actual state officials seeking to rationally advance or defend the state’s national interest. While not entirely blind to “non-rational” factors in individual or collective decisionmaking, these approaches tend to systematically downplay or ignore the role of emotion in shaping the foreign policies of states.

But, as Clausewitz cautioned us long ago, emotions in general (or the passions, as he called them) can and do play an important role in foreign policy, especially when it comes to war. And as Joslyn Barnhart argues in her recent book “The Consequences of Humiliation: Anger and Status in World Politics,” historically, the specific emotion of “humiliation” has proven to be a major driver of foreign policy – especially the kind of revanchist and revisionist foreign policy that all too often leads to war.

Barnhart’s compelling argument begins with a definition: Humiliation “is a complex and negative self-conscious emotion, which combines the sense that one has been mistreated with a painful sense of self-doubt and helplessness in the face of this injustice.” It is the substrate for “national humiliation,” which “arises when individuals who identify as members of the state experience humiliation as the overwhelming emotional response to an international event.”

National humiliation occurs, Barnhart further argues, either when a state suffers “rapid defeat to a state with lesser military capability” or when it has “been unfairly undermined by ill-intended others.” Either way, such humiliation involves a “loss of status or prestige which they [policy makers] believe has undeservedly threatened the state’s image on the world stage.”

Finally, Barnhart shows how humiliated states have historically attempted to overcome their humiliation and restore their status and prestige by engaging in “the use of force against the state responsible for one’s humiliation or against third-party states that were not involved in the original humiliating event.”