ISSUE 78

STRATEGIKA

Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

APRIL 2022

RIPPLES OF UKRAINE

IN THIS ISSUE

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ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

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Ukraine and the Fate of the West

By Peter R. Mansoor

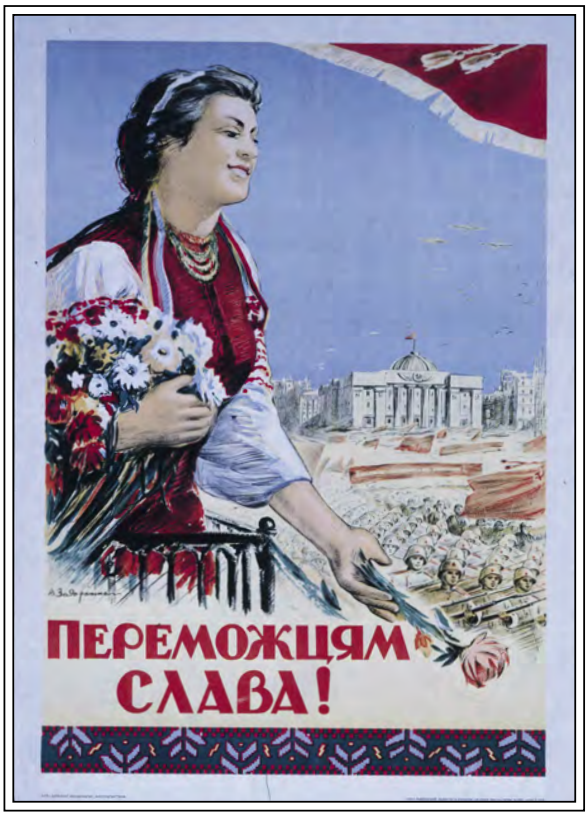

Image credit: Poster Collection, RUSU 2219, Hoover Institution Archives.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reenergized the Trans-Atlantic alliance in a manner unthinkable just two years ago. President Donald Trump entered office in 2017 with a deeply skeptical view of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the role of the United States as the world's policeman and guarantor of European and Pacific security. He deliberately kept vague his administration's commitment to uphold Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which commits member states to treat an attack on any one of them as an attack on all of them and to take appropriate action "to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

President Joe Biden entered office last year intent on reestablishing the credibility of the Trans-Atlantic alliance and reaffirming the U.S. commitment to NATO. Two weeks after taking the oath of office, Biden stated unequivocally that "America is back . . . we will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again, not to meet yesterday's challenges, but today's and tomorrow's. American leadership must meet this new moment of advancing authoritarianism, including the growing ambitions of China to rival the United States and the determination of Russia to damage and disrupt our democracy." At the 31st summit of NATO leaders in June 2021, Biden reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to NATO, while alliance leaders highlighted the challenges posed by a strengthening China and resurging Russia.

Perhaps because they did not believe Russian President Vladimir Putin would go so far as to roll the iron dice and invade Ukraine, alliance leaders did not issue a declaratory statement, or create a "red line," on what would happen if he actually did so. When as many as 200,000 Russian troops massed on Ukraine's borders and then invaded, Biden sent thousands of additional U.S. troops to Eastern Europe but explicitly stated that they would not enter Ukrainian territory to assist in the defense of that country. Biden, along with other NATO leaders, fashioned a set of responses to Russian aggression to include a commitment to "defend every inch of NATO territory," severe economic sanctions (albeit not against Russian export to Europe of badly needed oil and gas), arming Ukraine with defensive weapons such as Javelin anti-tank and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, diplomatically isolating Russia, and going after the assets of Russian oligarchs who benefitted from Putin's rule. The response by Western leaders has been united and forceful, which undoubtedly surprised Putin, who viewed the West as weak and divided. Instead of making Russia great again, Putin's invasion of Ukraine made NATO essential again.

The modern idea of a united alliance of great powers intent on deterring conflict is a century old, an outgrowth of the catastrophic Great War that nearly destroyed Europe's faith in Western civilization. In the aftermath of that titanic struggle, the Big Four at the Paris Peace Conference in Versailles—French Premier Georges Clemenceau, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson—agreed to create a League of Nations, an international body that would adjudicate and resolve international disputes, thus preventing a repeat of the seemingly accidental plunge into world war in 1914 and the resulting slaughter of a generation of youth in the trenches. The United States, however, never joined the League, with the U.S. Senate's refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles resulting in the retreat of the United States into isolation in the Western Hemisphere, seemingly protected by two great oceans.

The League of Nations, nevertheless, appeared to hold promise. The Locarno Pact of 1925, which resolved Germany's western borders, led to the inclusion of Germany into the League the following year with a permanent seat on the League Council. Nevertheless, the era of mutual security in Europe was short-lived. Hitler's rise to power in 1933 led to the subversion of the Versailles Treaty, which became a dead letter upon the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 by German forces. In Asia, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933 after a League commission found Japanese forces had illegally occupied Manchuria. An Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 led the League to invoke economic sanctions, but France and Great Britain rescinded their support early the next year and allowed Italy to annex its illegally confiscated African possession. The U.S. Congress, meanwhile, enacted three Neutrality Acts designed to prevent the United States from slipping into war as many believed it had done without much thought in 1917. Lacking widespread support for the hard decisions required to ensure collective security and without the support of the United States, the League withered and died with the onset of World War II.

The victory of the Grand Alliance in that second and even more cataclysmic worldwide conflict led to another and more successful attempt at establishing collective security. The United Nations charter was signed in San Francisco on June 25, 1945, with the United States, Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and China holding permanent seats on the Security Council. The onset of the Cold War and the defeat of Nationalist forces in China, however, made consensus in that body difficult, with the lone exception of the Korean War, when a Soviet boycott of the United Nations in protest against Nationalist China maintaining its seat in the body enabled the United States to sponsor a resolution condemning the North Korean attack on South Korea and authorizing the use of force to repel the invading army. UN forces remain on guard along the 38th Parallel to this day.

Given the inability of the United Nations to maintain collective security, the United States and its European and North American allies established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 to provide for collective defense, to prevent the reemergence of militaristic governments in Western Europe, and to stimulate political integration of member states. Bilateral U.S. defense treaties with Japan, South Korea, and Australia likewise provided a degree of collective security in the Pacific. These defense pacts prevented the outbreak of global hostilities and provided security for the global commons, leading to a new era of globalization and massive economic growth.

NATO is arguably the most successful alliance in history. For forty years it deterred a Soviet attack on Western Europe and provided a defense umbrella under which Europe grew both peaceful and prosperous. Germany was allowed to rearm under NATO auspices, and by the 1980s NATO possessed significant conventional capabilities to accompany its nuclear deterrent forces. It more than achieved its purpose, according to Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General, to "keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, however, led some to question the necessity for or viability of the alliance. The breakup of Yugoslavia and the descent of Bosnia and Herzegovina into civil war eventually led to a NATO-sponsored intervention that halted the fighting and stabilized the Balkans. NATO's purpose, it turned out, was what it had always been—to keep the European continent stable and at peace. After terrorists launched attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty was invoked for the first time ever, and NATO aircraft patrolled the skies over U.S. cities for a short time.

For more ambitious American and European policy makers, NATO was seen not as a relic of the Cold War past, but as an avenue to the future. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO sought a new purpose in expanding the zone of democracy in Europe. Several rounds of enlargement expanded NATO relentlessly to the east, until it ran into the Russian border. Although Russian leaders were powerless to stop the advance, they were as it turns out less than enthralled by the prospect of having the world's most powerful military alliance on their doorstep.

In 2005 Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in a speech to the Duma that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the [20th] century." Putin's desire to make Russia great again by rebuilding its military capabilities, linking the former Soviet Socialist Republics with Moscow, and dominating what Russian leaders refer to as the "near abroad" was clear enough. Putin directed invasions of Chechnya

in 1999 and Georgia in 2008, ordered the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and created puppet governments in the breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine after sparking a Ukrainian civil war in 2014. The purpose of the latter actions was to create "frozen conflicts" that would prevent NATO from admitting Georgia or Ukraine, as the alliance has never before embraced new members that had outstanding border disputes.

As the world discovered just a few weeks ago, these measures were insufficient to assuage Putin's ambitions. He desired not just a neutered Ukraine, but a subservient one. Putin never reconciled himself to the ousting in 2014 of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych and his pro-Moscow government in a struggle over whether Ukraine would join the European Union, headquartered in Brussels, or the Eurasian Economic Union, headquartered in Moscow. Ukrainians overwhelmingly wanted to look west for their future and took to the streets in massive numbers to make their point. To Putin, the Maidan Revolution was a western-inspired coup that severed Ukraine from its rightful place as the largest entity in Russia's orbit.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has smacked Western leaders over the head with a two by four of reality. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has announced an increase in defense spending in his country to more than 2 percent of GDP, a figure that would put Germany ahead of Russia in military spending and which shows how deeply unsettling the Ukraine War has been to one of the most pacifist nations in Europe. President Biden has also earmarked increased funding for the U.S. armed forces, requesting $813B for national defense in FY 2023, with additional increases in the out years. Other NATO countries are likely to follow suit and strengthen their militaries.

Of course, the world has seen this emphasis on defense and deterrence come and go before. After World War II the United States demobilized, only to reverse course and maintain sustained high levels of defense spending from the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 to the Gulf War of 1991. The peace dividend of the 1990s ended in 2001 with the crash of airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Europe's peace dividend lasted longer, but with Russian tanks rolling onto the Ukrainian steppes, the Continent is rearming. The West is united in opposing Russian aggression and is willing to back up that position with substantial resources and diplomatic clout. This posture has its limits, mainly in Asia, where China is taking a muscular stance towards Taiwan and its neighbors in the South China Sea but maintains significant economic leverage over its trading partners to temper their responses. European nations have also yet to wean themselves off of Russian oil and gas, which places limits on their ability to deter Putin's adventurism.

Unless the West can come together economically in a manner that complements their military prowess, the current state of unity might be fleeting. At stake is the future of globalization, the prospect of collective deterrence of state-sponsored aggression, and the fate of the world's democracies. Western policy makers must act decisively to ensure the Free World remains strong and united, even as the iron dice roll across the Eurasian heartland.

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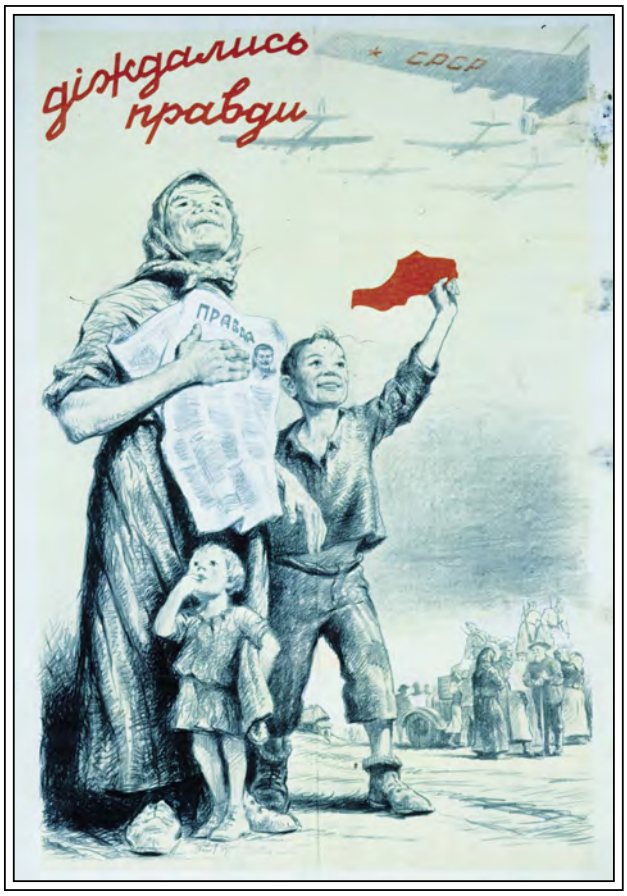

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Biden's Choice: Win or Lose in Ukraine?

By Bing West

In 1940, President Roosevelt, faced with a reluctant public and Congress, employed bold stratagems to deliver military aid to beleaguered England. Today, President Biden, faced with a pro-military aid public and Congress, resists giving heavy arms to Ukraine. Ukraine is requesting those weapons (MiGs, artillery, armored vehicles) to retake territory. Biden refuses to deliver them. This must change.

"What is NATO doing? Is it being run by Russia?" a frustrated President Zelenskyy asked on 26 March, "Ukraine needs tanks, planes, anti-aircraft-defense and anti-ship missiles. Our allies have these resources, but they prefer to allow them collect dust in their warehouses. We are only asking for 1 per cent of what NATO has, nothing more."

In early March, Poland offered thirty MiG 29s. Secretary of State Blinken gave the request a "green light." In response, Putin off-handedly threatened nuclear retaliation. President Biden then vetoed the MiG 29s. His timidity is cast into sharp release when compared to Russia during the Vietnam war. In 1966, America's nuclear superiority was overwhelming: the US possessed 5,000 nuclear warheads versus 550 in the Soviet Union. The Soviets felt the only stable nuclear situation was one in which one side had clear superiority over the other. They knew they were on the losing side in any escalation, but they were unfazed. They supplied North Vietnam with the heavy arms to kill thousands of American soldiers and secure a victory for North Vietnam.

Unlike President Biden, the Soviets didn't flinch. They provided hundreds of Russian-made MiGs, which engaged our jets in air-to-air combat; Biden won't green light thirty MiGs for Ukraine. About 3,000 Soviet advisers were stationed inside North Vietnam, with many operating its air defense systems. Bizarrely, our military brags that it is not training Ukrainians, not even inside Poland. The Soviet Union provided North Vietnam with 2,000 tanks and 7,000 artillery pieces. Our troops on muddy outposts like Khe Sanh and Con Thien were shelled day and night by Russian artillery. Today, Russian artillery is hammering Ukrainian cities, but the White House will not transfer artillery to Ukrainians. Similarly, anti-ship missiles have been withheld, because sinking Russian ships would inflict too high a cost.

The nuclear balance of terror has shifted since the Vietnam War. Such is the specter of the nuclear threat that no nation will fight alongside Ukraine. Unfortunately, the refusal to provide Ukraine with heavy arms to defend its own territory is setting a terrible precedent. It provides a persuasive rationale for many nations to acquire nuclear weapons. An aggressor with nuclear weapons can invade another country without fear of a conventional counter-offensive into his homeland. Conversely, a defender armed with nuclear weapons is less apt to be invaded in the first place.

"NATO doesn't want to admit us," Zelenskyy said. "I think it's a mistake because if we join NATO, we make NATO much stronger."

But that is not going to happen, precisely due to Russia's nuclear arsenal. So where does this leave Ukraine? Two months ago, Biden believed his threat of economic sanctions would deter Putin. When his threat failed and Putin invaded, Biden later contradicted himself, claiming sanctions cannot deter an aggressor. It's hard not to conclude that Biden and his advisers had expected a swift Russian victory, with the West indulging in rhetorical outrage while quickly returning to post-war trade and relationships. But Ukraine did not crack.

Retired U.S. Army General Jack Keane claims the White House is now encouraging Ukraine to quickly "make a deal" with Moscow. After talking with Biden for many hours over the past month, Zelenskyy is now publicly skeptical about the resolve of the American president.

"I don't know if President Biden is fearing President Putin. . . . I cross my fingers that this will never happen," Zelenskyy said, "If this process continues to be delayed, people will begin to ask the question. Maybe there is some game behind it."

Zelenskyy distrusts the White House, suspicious that behind his back the White House is playing a devious "game." Without heavy arms, Ukraine cannot retake territory. A ceasefire in place in the immediate future would reward Putin with Ukraine's energy resources in the east.

President Biden is leaking credibility. His offer to admit 100,000, or three percent, of the more than three million Ukrainian refugees will be viewed in Ukraine and Poland as an empty gesture. Since Kabul fell eight months ago, not one of the tens of thousands of Afghans awaiting clearance has been admitted to the U.S. Yet each month 100,000 illegal immigrants enter via our non-existent southern "border." Poland and Ukraine will soon grow cynical about refugee aid, with America resented as the prototypical rich uncle who expects praise for parsimonious aid.

At no point has President Biden declared that his objective is a fully independent, democratic Ukraine. He has never uttered the word victory. Biden should take two steps forward as a leader. First, declare he no longer is vetoing MiGs, artillery, and anti-ship missiles. He should say, "America will provide Ukraine weapons to fight offensively as well as defensively. NATO warships will also insure the safe passage of Ukrainian grain exports from Odesa."

With the proper arms, Ukraine can seize back territory lost, while battering Russian forces and increasing its leverage for negotiations. But military support for Ukraine won't end in a year and perhaps not for a decade. As Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan have shown, wars sputter on much longer than its initiators envision.

Second, escape from the trap set by Secretary of State Blinken. "This is already a strategic defeat for Vladimir Putin," Blinken has said. "If it (Ukraine) concludes that it can bring this war to an end . . . and that requires the lifting of sanctions, we're going to look at that. The purpose of the sanctions is not to be there indefinitely. It's to change Russia's conduct. And if, as a result of negotiations . . . we achieve that, then at some point the sanctions will go away."

It is time for Blinken to go away. His position is that sanctions will cease as soon as there is an iron-clad guarantee Putin will not again invade. Putin will offer such guarantees in triplicate, as would any tyrant. "For God's sake," Biden has said, "this man cannot remain in power." Biden cannot remove Putin; he should remove Blinken. Like Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1938, our Secretary of State today is pursuing a humiliating defeat for the West. Blinken in effect has assured Putin that he cannot lose. Having destroyed Ukraine, Putin eventually will agree to a ceasefire that includes some agreements he will display as a victory trophy to the Russian people. With the sanctions lifted, money will flow in to replenish his military treasure chest. Once rearmed, a smoldering Putin will be empowered to lash out again, choosing the time and venue.

Having correctly called Putin a war criminal and butcher, Biden cannot return to the status quo ante proposed by his Secretary of State. Blinken is offering Putin a strategic victory by promising that "at some point the sanctions will go away." Instead, Russia must be expelled from the ranks of nations that believe in secure borders and the dignity of man. The credibility of the West is at stake.

Poll: What has been the effect of the Ukrainian invasion on Europe and the United States?

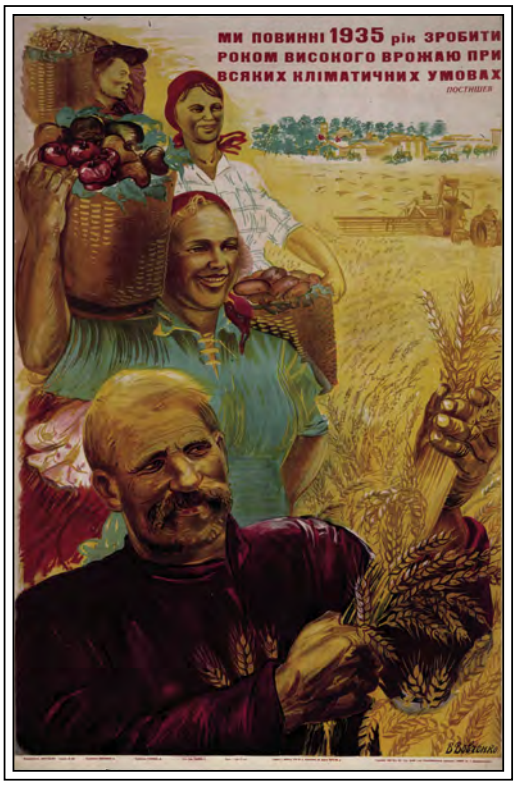
- ☐ Putin's invasion will permanently terrify Westerners as they seek to mollify him with more appeasement.
- ☐ No effect. A year from now the West will be buying Russian energy again and pursuing anti-carbon agendas.
- ☐ Ukraine's proximity to Europe has spurred NATO members to meet their 2% defense spending benchmark.
- ☐ There is now an entirely reborn West, becoming energy independent, rearming, and strengthening NATO.
- ☐ World opinion will isolate Russia and China, as the West returns to its historical global dominance.

Pundits have proclaimed that the reinvigoration of Europe in solidarity with America marks a new epochal beginning. The passage of time should not alter the constancy of NATO. The first Cold War persisted for four decades and did not impede the growth of wealth and freedom in the West. The second Cold War will persist for decades to come. But like Stalin, Mao, and Castro, Putin may die of natural causes while still in power. Sanctions must remain imposed without surcease to punish Russian aggression and restrict its military resurgence. Resolve is the long-term test facing the West.

BING WEST is a military historian who has written a dozen best-selling books about the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. His most recent books are *The Last Platoon: A Novel of the Afghanistan War*, and with co-author General Jim Mattis, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*. A graduate of Georgetown and Princeton Universities, where he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, he served in the Marine infantry in Vietnam and later as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Among other awards, he is the recipient of the Defense Distinguished Public Service Medal, the Marine Corps Heritage Award, Tunisia's Medaille de Liberté, the Colby Military History Award, the Goodpaster Prize for Military Scholarship, the Marine Corps Foundation Award for Leadership, the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Media Medal, and the Free Press Award.

A Reawakened West?

By Barry Strauss



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In 355 B.C., Athens stood down. The previous thirteen years of war in the Aegean were the latest episode in a long struggle to regain the lost empire of Pericles, and a failed episode at that. The Gallipoli peninsula, the strategic northern-Greek city of Amphipolis, and various Aegean islands all defied Athenian conquest. Exhausted and bankrupt, Athenians turned inward. Under the leadership of Eubulus, they focused on trade, infrastructure, and the welfare state. The premiere new entitlement was the theoric fund—literally, the "spectacle fund," which paid citizens to take time off from work and attend the theater on festival days. The military wasn't completely neglected but the emphasis was on defense, e.g., repairing Athens' border fortifications.

This was the society that faced the rise of Philip II of Macedon. Rich and pacific, the Athens of Eubulus was in no shape to stop one of the greatest conquerors in European history. It took all the eloquence of Demosthenes to wrest political control from Eubulus and his party, and to send Athenian armies in the field against Macedon: that is, it took one of the West's greatest strategists and orators. And despite his efforts, Demosthenes was too late. He himself fought in the decisive battle, but that didn't stop the Macedonian phalanx. At Chaeronea in 338 B.C., Philip crushed an allied Greek army and ended the independence of the Greek city-states.

I've thought of this ancient history often lately in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Vladimir Putin, fortunately, is no Philip, and the Russian army, hollow and incompetent as it is, is no match for Philip's Macedonians. But do we have a Demosthenes? The closest is surely Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with his courage and communication skills, but he doesn't lead a major power like fourth-century B.C. Athens.

Eubulus, on the other hand, well, we have no shortage of leaders like him. Since 1945 they have given Europe its greatest period of peace and prosperity, but they have also neglected defenses. To them and to like-minded Americans, a European war, in which one country invaded another, has seemed unthinkable, with the Cold War long over, and with the violent breakup of Yugoslavia able to be written off as just a civil war. The modern Eubulus attitude was summed up in 2014 by then U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's response to Russia's seizure of the Crimea from Ukraine: "It's really 19th century behavior in the twenty-first century. You just don't invade another country on phony pretexts in order to assert your interests."

With its economies, its manpower, and its weaponry, the West could easily crush Putin's bid for empire. But it lacks the will, or so Putin thought when he launched his war in Ukraine on February 24. He underestimated the West: its unity, its willingness to impose sanctions on Russia, funnel weapons to Ukraine, send more American troops to eastern Europe, or to step up intelligence operations. He surely didn't expect Germany, led by a Socialist premier and a Green-Party foreign minister, of all people, to announce a doubling of its military budget.

Putin also underestimated Ukrainian resistance and overestimated the efficiency of the Russian military, which has proven hollow. And yet, it would be a mistake to overestimate the West's resolve. It is impressive

by the debased standards of the day, but it wouldn't have moved the needle in the era of Genghis Khan or Napoleon.

Despite sanctions, Russia is, as of this writing, still earning $1.8 billion a day in energy sales. Led by the United States, NATO and allied countries have supplied billions of dollars' worth of weapons to Ukraine. And yet they have not furnished the heavy artillery, heavy armor, air defense systems, attack aircraft, and anti-ship missiles that the Ukrainians say they need. Without such arms, Ukraine will be unable to defeat Russia in the battle that is now looming in southern and eastern Ukraine.

Still, the news of the massacres at Bucha and other Russian atrocities seems to have stiffened Western resistance a little. The European Commission has proposed banning Russian coal. Leading French and German politicians have called for ramping up sanctions. Germany is squeezing a Russian energy company, but Germany is still far from ending its dependence on Russian energy. And sanctions may do more harm to ordinary Russians than to Putin's regime.

In the end, the most important theater is the battlefield. If the West lets Putin win the war, then Russia will attempt to dominate all of Europe and to break NATO. That result would be an indirect but serious threat to American freedom and prosperity. The only strategy is to stop it, by giving the Ukrainians the arms they need to push the Russians back and by exercising deterrence against Russian nuclear threats.

The West is like an old man waking up and discovering, to his surprise, that he still has some youthful vigor left. But it's not stirring fast enough. The Biden Administration's proposed 2023 military budget, for example, includes a 4 percent increase in defense spending, but that doesn't keep up with the rate of inflation, nor does it address the Navy's shortfall of ships. The increase has been criticized nonetheless by American progressives, who oppose any rise in military spending. Eubulus lives.

What will the future bring? I asked a friend whether he thinks the West will maintain its sanctions and promises of rearmament after the war in Ukraine is over. He is a retired foreign correspondent, who was stationed in Europe and the Middle East. "Fade to black," he answered. I hope not.

BARRY STRAUSS (Bryce and Edith M. Bowmar Professor in Humanistic Studies, Cornell University) is a military historian with a focus on ancient Greece and Rome. His books have been translated into sixteen languages. In March 2022 he will publish *The War that Made the Roman Empire: Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavian at Actium*. His *Ten Caesars: Roman Emperors from Augustus to Constantine* (2018) has been hailed as a "superb summation of four centuries of Roman history, a masterpiece of compression" (*Wall Street Journal*). His *Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece—and Western Civilization* was named one of the best books of 2004 by the *Washington Post*. His *Masters of Command: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, and the Genius of Leadership* was named one of the best books of 2012 by Bloomberg. He is the Corliss Page Dean Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is an honorary citizen of Salamis, Greece.

Related Commentary

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Discussion Questions

1. Has war in Ukraine permanently or merely temporarily aroused the West to grow unity, to rearm, and to reestablish deterrence?
2. What are Russia's arguments for denying Ukrainian independence?
3. Was it a good or bad idea to expand NATO to 30 nations, some near the Russian border?
4. Does Ukraine belong in NATO?
5. Why does Russia criticize Western military aid to Ukraine, when it rearmed during wartime the North Koreans, North Vietnamese, Afghans, and Iraqis who were fighting the United States?
6. What are the chances that Putin will be removed from power if he gets bogged down or loses in Ukraine?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Border Security

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of "War, Revolution, and Peace." Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: "The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man's endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life." From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the "Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict" has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution's dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

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