FY23 SCSS Workshop III Synthesis
**"Alternative Ukrainian Future Trajectories:
Implications for Russia and the West"**

By Graeme P. Herd

Introduction

Russia's multi-axis war of imperial aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, is a *Zeitenwende,* a system transforming event with profound implications for a rules-based global order. Russia's all-out war on Ukraine challenges the utility of existing Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security architecture and arrangements, principles, norms, values and practices. How destabilizing will a protracted war become? Which lessons does China draw when looking to Taiwan? How might "Global South" states (the "hedging middle") shape the evolution of strategic competition?

Workshop I (February 20-24, 2023) identified five alternative future trajectories: two "victory" scenarios (Russian and Ukrainian) and three "intermediate scenarios:" "protracted" and "frozen" conflict leading to an armistice and "negotiated settlement." In Workshop II (May 16, 2023) we focused on these three "intermediate" scenarios and their pathways, exploring the nuanced probable differences in stability and instability generated by possible future Russian nuclear, conventional, and hybrid threats across the Eastern Flank, in the "High North," "Center," and "SE Europe." Our final Workshop III (September 6-7, 2023) identified and stress-tested the assumptions underlying a sustainment theory of Ukrainian victory and a theory of managing a Russia in defeat. This is a synthesis (not summary) of the ideas discussed at Workshop III and should serve as a useful aide-mémoire.

Alternative Ukrainian Future Trajectories: Insights

The first of five scenarios identified at Workshop I was a steady-state or continuity **"protracted conflict**" scenario. In this scenario, Russia and Ukraine achieve limited wins but controlled and manageable losses. Ukrainian civilian suffering massively and disproportionally increases relative to Russia's and the further militarization of both states and societies continues. The effects though are differentiated, reflecting Ukraine's war of necessary defense and whole of society support and Russia's war of imperial aggression, euphemistically characterized as a special military operation. This scenario assumes that Western military-diplomatic and other support is sufficient for Ukraine's defense but not its victory. It also assumes that Russia and

Ukraine will have the ability to sustain the fight into 2024 and perhaps beyond. In other words, it assumes that Ukraine will not capitulate.

The second scenario focused on **"frozen conflict."** This scenario suggests that an attritional stalemate is underway and will over time exhaust the ability of Russia and Ukraine to sustain high-intensity conflict: Russia cannot win and Ukraine cannot lose. Ukraine is more self-reliant but exhausted, engaged in a debilitating protracted conflict and inconclusive outcomes. In place of conflict, irregular warfare and local de-facto ceasefires characterize violence and both Ukraine and Russia take this imagined "time out" to rebuild their respective conventional combat capabilities or seek negotiation. This assumes much. First, that western support is insufficient to **"finish the job."** Second, perhaps, that Russia's sheer quantity (mass) is balanced by Ukrainian quality (intangibles like morale, leadership, and training), and its geography (physical space gives time and room to maneuver to counter mass) and precision capabilities. This balance creates a military quantity vs. quality equilibrium resulting in a stalemate and freezing of the war. Third, given that this alternative future best advantages Russia and disadvantages Ukraine, Russia currently lacks the ability to unilaterally freeze the conflict (as it could have in early-mid 2022).

The third scenario examined the idea of **"negotiated peace,"** with pathways reflecting Arab-Israeli and Korean peninsula realities. Counter-intuitively, this scenario is characterized by simultaneity: an ongoing protracted or frozen conflict necessarily co-exists with negotiations. Both the aggressor Russia and victim Ukraine will "punch to negotiate," that is, fight to improve their bargaining position. There is a strong empirical basis to suggest that negotiations between antagonistic parties occur when there is a "mutually hurting stalemate." Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is mutually hurting but no stalemate exists: Putin's Russia is not hurting enough presently, while Ukraine is sacrificing all for statehood (sovereignty and territorial integrity) because of clearly differentiated societal identity.

This scenario assumes there is international support for "peace" and "peace plans" – which is the case. It also assumes that in the minds of a majority of Ukrainian citizens, the benefits of negotiated peace outweigh the costs of war. This assumption is fundamentally flawed; for Ukrainian society a "forever war" is preferable to a "premature peace." A third assumption is that in any "negotiated peace," two "parties to the conflict" negotiate. From Ukraine's perspective, ICC-indicted Putin is toxic and as the initiator of the war an unacceptable "negotiated peace" actor. Trust in Putin in Ukraine is much less than zero.

The fourth scenario examined the notion of **"Russian victory"** which in early and mid-2022 would have been characterized by a "failed State Ukraine:" military capitulation, imposed "neutrality," and a Quisling-type regime in Kyiv. But as in this war the loser decides it has lost, Ukraine would always have the capacity to continue partisan warfare, raids, and drone and artillery strikes against Russian occupation forces that would highlight the hollowness of "Russian victory." By 2023 Russia's maximalist definition of victory was now minimalist. Russia would maintain territorial (if not political) control of its occupied land, and be able to utilize the **"land corridor"** between Donbas and Crimea. In late 2023, it is fair to assume that if the Special Military Operation (SVO) is re-designated as "war," martial law and full mobilization would occur. This in turn suggests that the *siloviki* persuaded the Presidential Administration that the military risks in Ukraine (defeat) outweigh the domestic risks of backlash against escalation in Russia (revolt). As Putin likely now himself defines "Russian victory" as

his remaining in power, political risks in Russia take precedence over military ones in Ukraine. Putin calculates that, ultimately, in the face of defeat, Russia "declares victory and leaves."

The fifth and last scenario – and the one we stress-test at Workshop III – posits a sustainable **"Ukrainian Victory."** This scenario assumes a combination of military and diplomatic efforts. This can involve either the culmination of the Russian military presence in Ukraine or diplomatic negotiations. Alternatively, it can involve a combination of both approaches, allowing Ukraine's military, law enforcement, and security services to liberate some occupied territory, while the Ukrainian political leadership negotiate the rest with the West for military-political security guarantees. This forms the basis of negotiation with Russia.

A post-conflict Ukraine emerges with restored statehood along 1991 borders and becomes even more collaborative, resilient, and democratic than at present, a security provider in addition to being a security consumer. Ukraine builds a force structure, acquires a capability mix and negotiates "security guarantees" that can defend its territory and deter a defeated nuclear Russia. For the victory to be sustainable, in the process of "victory," NATO cohesion is maintained, allowing for future support to deter Russia. Moreover, it also assumes Putin cannot politically survive a very visible defeat and that this triggers a post-Putin elite managed/curated stable transition. Ukrainian victory does not occur with Ukrainian tanks in Moscow, Moscow Tribunals (akin to Nuremberg or Tokyo), or the disintegration of the Russian Federation but rather a managed intra-elite managed power succession that allows Russia to unwind from its Ukrainian debacle.

Sustaining Ukrainian Victory: Overcoming Challenges, Obstacles, and Dilemmas

If to "win the war" Ukraine's armed forces must defeat Russia's, what are the preconditions for "winning the peace?" Factors that unite Ukraine include a shared desire for 'victory," for economic growth and accelerated reconstruction, mutual aid, EU accession and NATO membership – integration that consolidates Ukraine's societal strategic orientation (in terms of identity, values, and standards), and enhances Ukraine's ability to defend itself and deter Russia from future aggression. But for victory to be sustainable over the longer term, Ukraine will need to overcome innumerable challenges, obstacles, and dilemmas. Though definitions of "Ukrainian victory" will remain fluid, they must *inter alia* include the return of seized territory; the reintegration of Ukrainian people within a political nation, and Ukrainian agency in international relations. How will Kyiv manage the complex reintegration of four provinces and Crimea after military victory? Is it possible to reintegrate Crimea fully into Ukraine after a decade inside Russia without igniting a new conflict? What might be the necessary preconditions and trade-off considerations for Ukraine associated with the "victory" pathway? How can sustainment be ensured?

1. **Foreign and Security Policy**

Assumptions that had informed Ukraine's pragmatic and interest-based foreign policy prior to Russia's multi-axis invasion have been tested by the war itself. China, for example, was Ukraine's largest trading partner in 2021 but this level of economic engagement did not translate into outright political support. Ukraine's staunchest support comes from states that share its values and most importantly, its threat perception of Russia: Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the UK. Initially, Ukraine feared that some "partners" would force Ukraine to "surrender:" that is, act as mediators in a process that would result in compromises which, inevitably, favor

the aggressor – Russia. Such attitudes and approaches appear to reflect an unconscious mindset which perceives two classes of states: first-class states with full sovereign rights and powerful interests that should be considered (Russia); and others that have limited sovereignty (Ukraine), reflecting a perception that perceives the Russian Federation as the inheritor of the power and might of the Soviet Union, not just the legal successor state. This mindset is predisposed to accept Russian violations of International Law and norms, so triggering further malign activity. Lastly, during the war Ukrainian foreign and security policy thinking has evolved. In March 2022, for example, "neutrality" was on the table at the "Istanbul negotiations" but now it is not an option Ukraine considers as viable and a "frozen conflict" is now deemed to be the worst outcome for Ukraine. A non-aligned Ukraine was attacked by Russia in 2014 (after 2019 the NATO membership perspective was included in the Ukrainian Constitution), ostensibly to prevent NATO membership. As a result, a non-aligned Finland joined NATO. Despite fears of an aggressive Russian response, de facto not only was Moscow largely mute, but Russia even redeployed its forces from the Finnish to the Ukrainian border. This confirms that the so-called Russian "red-line" of NATO enlargement was rhetorical camouflage, a narrative advanced to cloak Russian imperial aggression.

In 2021 Ukraine adopted a National Resilience Concept that is based on NATO's seven principles, with two additional principles that Ukraine has added: information and financial. In wartime one cannot predict each and every threat and attack, therefore, building resilient institutions and society allows for quicker renewal, restoration, and adaption to changing conditions. The single source of strategic vulnerability for Ukraine is its reliance on Western weapons. In an effort to reduce dependence on partners and allies and overcome a legacy of underinvestment in Research and Development, Ukraine seeks to boost its own domestic arms production capacity. It seeks where it can to innovate in the military sphere and relocate defense industrial enterprises from eastern to western Ukraine or abroad. Ukraine produces 1- 22 mm and 1-52 mm types of ammunition and has developed over 100 new types of drones for use by its armed forces, with sometimes just a 3-month time span between conception and battle-field use. It also cooperates with foreign arms companies: Turkish Bayraktar will start production in Ukraine and the UK's BAE has opened an office in Kyiv, as has Germany's Rheinmetall.

Ukrainian's foreign and security policy is very orientated towards supporting the defense of the state and its citizens and, to that end, Ukraine engages across a wide spectrum of issues, from securing weapons supplies and promoting a national narrative to counter Russian propaganda to addressing corruption. Ukraine also moves beyond NATO and engages the "Global South" to mitigate this risk. However, as a few decades were lost due to the weak diplomatic presence, the progress is slow. Ukraine can emphasize that Russia's distinction between the liberal international order and UN rules-based order are largely one and the same: both reject colonization and the use of nuclear weapons as threats and non-interference in domestic affairs. The geostrategic interests of Western partners and Ukraine overlap on the issue of Russia as a clear and present danger, but they are not synonymous. The United States leads on balancing against China, France on North Africa/Sahel, and in all states domestic priorities usually trump foreign affairs.

2. Crimea and the Black Sea

The importance of Crimea in this conflict cannot be overstated. The seizure of Crimea in 2014 was symbolic of Russia's aggressive imperial expansion and ability to escalate. Russian physical control of Crimea enabled power projection and enhanced Russia's ability to control the Black Sea. Russia's invasion in both 2014 and 2022 highlighted the West/NATO's inability to deter Russia from attacking. Weak Western reaction to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 fueled Russia's ambition. Russia's imperial appetite was not satiated by the November 2018 Kerch Strait maritime blockade which gave Russia veto power to Sea of Azov access, as the full-scale multi-axis attack then occurred in 2002, with the threat of amphibious assault against Odesa.

The economic importance of the Black Sea to Ukraine is self-evident. Russia's goals are not intuitive: rather than territorial conquest, Russia seeks through spoiler actions to compel and coerce Ukraine to become dependent on Russian arbitrary decision-making. If successful, Ukraine will then have to bargain and negotiate any possible autonomy. The seized seaports of Mariupol, Berdyansk, and Crimea serviced 75% of Ukraine's exports. For Ukraine, protection of the north-west Black Sea humanitarian corridor and its sea-based territory is critical to its ability to have a sustainable economy. To counter Russian blackmail and forced dependence efforts over Ukraine's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the transit of its natural resources, and the integrity of its logistical supply chains, Ukraine uses energy platforms and Snake Island, air defense and support, coastal defense, anti-ship drones and other disruptive technologies to great effect. But without the return of Crimea, Ukraine cannot reconstruct and rebuild itself: there will be neither stability in Ukraine nor security in Europe. This has repercussions for global power competition. The failure to restore Ukrainian statehood, including in the Black Sea maritime domain, will question U.S. control, weaken the West, and strengthen the Russian-Chinese nexus.

3. Negotiation with Russia

Ukraine's desired end state is "victory" over Russia. "Victory" is a journey and not a destination. Negotiations will be ongoing, not an end-stop, and the challenges of the peace must not hinder the winning of the war. Cornerstone issues in any negotiation with Russia include restoration of territory, justice and punishment of war crimes perpetrators, and Russian compensatory reparations for war damage. In the March 2022 "Ankara negotiations," "security guarantees" (legally binding commitments) in return for "neutrality" (understood also as "demilitarization" and "non-alignment with NATO") had been part of the discussion, but now neutrality is not an option and the notion of Russia as a "guarantor" is dismissed. There is a nation-wide consensus in Ukraine that it is premature to enter into formal negotiations with Russia, particularly because Ukraine's counter-offensive is still ongoing.

Societal opinion in Ukraine will be very critical to any potential attempt (if there will be one) by President Zelensky to negotiate peace terms with Russia; public opinion shapes (even limits) President Zelensky's room for maneuver (but not Putin's). Ultimately, a final peace settlement can only be achieved through negotiations and the conversation about it needs to start.

Ukraine likely, in its negotiation thinking, pursues three lines of effort. First, Ukraine negotiates bilaterally and multilaterally with partner countries to secure security guarantees. Second, Ukraine builds an international consensus about Zelensky's peace formula. Through diplomacy, Ukraine hopes to persuade countries in the "Global South" to align with Ukraine's 10-point

Peace Plan. Ukraine encourages work through international diplomatic forums such as in Copenhagen and Jeddah, even if not all of participating countries entirely share the whole "peace package." Putin's ability to alienate Russia's "silent" or "neutral supporters" benefits Ukraine. Third, Ukraine backchannel communications with Moscow by third parties is still ongoing and will also shape the context in which formal negotiations occur.

Though battlefield realities set by Ukraine's current counter-offensive will be the ultimate arbitrator shaping the context of negotiations and the bargaining leverage of the negotiators, military victory is not enough. It is difficult to map out negotiation other than as Russian "surrender:" what credible pressure can Ukraine place on Russia to bring it to negotiations on Ukrainian terms, given that the lifting of export, credit, and technology controls and the ICC arrest warrants are not in Ukraine's gift? It is also challenging to identify the role of intangibles, such as respect, honor, prestige/status, and especially resentment and humiliation (the logic of appropriateness) play in Putin's calculus and the role of tangible materials costs and benefits (the logic of consequences). According to the Kremlin's negotiation matrix, Ukraine will not be viewed as an equal negotiating partner; however, any other possible negotiations with more respected partners like the United States will be also viewed by Russia through zero-sum and win-lose approaches. Ukraine must adopt the same harsh negotiating strategy and tactical approach as Russia applies, if it is to prevail.

4. Political, Economic, and Societal/Humanitarian Dimensions of Victory

A legitimate political order is the *sine qua non* of victory. Unlike Russia, Ukraine looks to legitimize its political authority by legal-rational rather than historical-charismatic means. Legal-rational legitimation rests on free and fair democratic elections (parliamentary, presidential, and local) in which all Ukrainians have the opportunity to both vote and stand themselves for election. To overcome the danger of a democratic deficit, challenges need to be addressed. There are an estimated 5.5 to 6.7 million Ukrainians living abroad (asylum, refugees, and permanent residents) and physical voting stations will need to be constructed to engage this segment of Ukraine's voter base. Within Ukraine itself, many citizens are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Which regions should they represent electorally: their region of origin prior to displacement or their current one? The answer to this question will influence regional voting weights in parliament. To be elected to the Supreme Rada one must reside in Ukraine for the last five years before an election. This disproportionately discriminates against women with children who have moved abroad for safety. The legislative ability of the new parliament will be affected by the quality of the new parliamentarians, the effects of banning pro-Russian parties, and the heavy representation of veterans and other military groups who will have high representation.

Decision-making determines financial allocations for recovery, reconstruction, and rehabilitation in Ukraine – the costs are currently estimated in the range of Euro 400 bn. Will decisions around resource allocation be centralized or delegated? The answer will shape funding priorities: reconstruct destroyed cities or build new ones? Should Ukraine invest in the re-industrialization of Donbas, though former markets for its old products are declining and only 5 of the 114 mines operating before February 2022 are in use? Some territory may have to be repurposed. The destruction of the Kakhovka dam, for example, rendered valuable agricultural land no longer fit for this purpose.

The challenges and costs of capacity building and restoration of Ukrainian administration in territory that has been occupied by Russia since 2014 (Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk) will be much higher than territory seized after February 24, 2022 (Zaporozhzhia and Kherson). But it is expected that many pro-Russian elements in society will leave for Russia, a process already underway as family members are "evacuated," so lessening the challenge. Ukrainian civil servants living in occupied Russian territory since 2014 will at the very least need to be vetted. Administrative documents issued and authorized by the occupation authorities - birth certificates, property deeds, and marriage licenses – will need to be checked. It is estimated that Crimea itself will need 50,000 public servants to undertake the necessary bureaucratic and administrative order, including approximately 7,200 police officers, 3,000 migration service workers, 550 prosecutors and 12,500 National Guard officers. A well-functioning bureaucracy is the "rational" part of the "legal-rational" legitimation of political authority.

Cognitive de-occupation and reintegration will be a slow process, demanding a necessary balance between public administration and military service, between decentralization and the militarization of society. Failed "de-occupation" has the power to tarnish "victory," feed Russian propaganda, and even derail the post-war Ukrainian order. How to effect reintegration without alienation (consider France's treatment of Alsace after World War I)? In terms of reintegrating people, what of those who fled Ukraine in February 2022? The challenges of reintegrating Ukrainian veterans back into society, rejoining the labor market, and reinventing their lives will be compounded by the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). An estimated 15% of Ukraine's population has been exposed to repeated trauma, such as physical injuries from kinetic blasts.

Who is considered a collaborator? Who should be punished and what is an appropriate punishment for collaboration? As it would be devastating for Ukraine to punish all collaborators, might a truth and reconciliation approach allow only the worst cases to face trial and imprisonment? Ukraine's government is unwilling to be definitive and clarify its complex military, administrative, and political strategy to "de-occupy" territories seized and annexed by Russia.

An "arsenal of anarchy" in the shape of demobilized soldiers, small arms proliferation, illicit markets, and organized crime will have to be addressed. Regional inequality, populism, lack of transparency, and potential exclusion of civil society from reconstruction, as well as the sheer scale and effort required to address the humanitarian burden, suggest the gap between raised expectations and reality will be real. The experience of citizens of Kherson in November 2022 was instructive: immediate emotions of relief, happiness, and a sense of belonging were replaced by a sense that Kherson was no longer the focus of Kyiv's attention and support. If the war is protracted then it may give rise to a "stab-in-the back" populist narrative in Ukraine: "The West gave too little too late support as it preferred dead Ukrainian heroes to live partners." This is a line that Russian disinformation currently peddles.

Societal cleavages generated by the war itself include a split between the military and non-combatants, between the disproportionately Russian-speaking Ukrainians under Russian occupation and those not, and between the provincial populations in the regions and elites in Kyiv. Multiple potential lines of social, regional, and cultural division are starting to emerge and

could become difficult to manage, as will reintegration of some of those who went abroad, including to Russia. The war massively distorts Ukraine's demographic pyramid and at the war's termination, young Ukrainian males will still be required to service a large standing army to defend and deter, but will also be needed for the reconstruction of Ukraine's infrastructure, restructuring of its economy, and civil development. Ukrainian civil society is strong, with an ability to draft proposals and gain access to Western assistance but due to military service and recruitment of civil society actors into international organizations, this "brain drain" weakens its capacity. Efforts will be needed to attract back human capital to Ukraine but not all Ukrainian refugees abroad will return, and the status of the 2.8 million Ukrainians in Russia has to be determined. In essence, Ukraine must balance the shorter-term demands of justice in the face of trauma with the longer-term necessity of rebuilding a unified Ukraine.

Managing a Defeated Russia?
The West considers its ability to predict strategic change in Russia and to influence Russian strategic behavior to be limited. By contrast, Russian strategic psychology is fixated on a Western ("Anglo-Saxon") "producers' hand" able to run postmodern coup d'état attempts at will, responsible for triggering "Color Revolutions" in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and responsible for the "Moscow Maidan" of 2011-2012. This disparity in expectation hinders future engagement. It is also striking how Russia's aggression in Ukraine appears to have hardened mindsets in Russia. Fyodor Lukyanov, Dmitry Trenin, and Sergei Karaganov, leading lights in Russia's strategic community who were hitherto considered "Europeanist," wrote that Russia should look to deport up to 2 million Ukrainian "nationalists" (i.e. those that assert a separate identity) to Siberia and use Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons (NSNW) on Ukrainian cities and Warsaw.

What is clear is that the flip-side to "Ukrainian victory" is "Putin's failure" (a euphemism for "Russia's defeat.") For Russia, defeat may be experienced in two-stages: first, the culmination of Russian military power in Ukraine and second, managed power transition to a post-Putin Russia. The sooner Russia is defeated, the greater the chance of a controlled or "soft-landing" post-Putin power transition in Russia—one that avoids the possibility of military mutiny, an intra-*siloviki* war of all-against-all, rebellion, coup, fragmentation, a collapsing violent Russia that exports strategic dysfunctionality. At this point the West needs to develop a theory of managing a defeated, weak, but not-yet-collapsed Russia. Such a strategy will need to consider how a post-Putin regime frames national interests and the operational code of its decision-makers to understand their own risk calculus, and thus the likely courses of action and strategic behavior.

Which alternative Russian future trajectories are compatible with Ukrainian "victory?" Russia is unlikely to acknowledge defeat and the loser gets to decide when and if it has "lost." Irrespective of its leadership, structural realities ensure that Russia will have the ability to reconstitute its armed forces and still disrupt and undermine Ukraine's stability and can continue to weaponize interdependence. In the 1940s the strategy of choice was one of containment. In a globalized world of the mid-2020s this is not viable. How then to manage Russia beyond looking to mitigate the risk of worst-case scenarios of future Russian aggression?

What are the likely contours of a post-war and possibly post-Putin Russia? History does not repeat but rhymes. A core "lesson" from Russian historical experience is that status quo elites seek to manage power transition by removing a leader when the leader's decision-making threatens individual and collective elite interests: individuals within the elite calculate that they lose more than gain with the current leader and that, perhaps, the system itself is in danger, threating much more pervasive instability. At this point elites move to replace the existing leader. Examples abound:

- **1917:** loyalist elites persuade tsar/commander-in-chief to stand down – managed elite power transition then hijacked by "Bolshevik Revolution" and civil war ensues;
- **Post-Stalin 1953:** managed power succession is stable and transition occurs to preempt the emergence of a new Stalin who will continue purges and gulags;
- **Post-Khrushchev 1964:** removed by managed transition as perceived to be a danger to the system (Cuban missile crisis, 1962); if not elite;
- **1982:** Brezhnev's *zastoi*/decay threatened the position and capacity of the Soviet Union to wage a Cold War (Afghanistan, 1979) and a managed transition leads to Gorbachev;
- **Post-Gorbachev 1991:** fear of collapse drives the August coup attempt by hardliners but this delegitimizes the CCCP and USSR and brings Yeltsin to power;
- **Post-Yeltsin-1999:** Putin as lowest common denominator non-ideological, managerial- technocrat backed by "Family" and acceptable to Saint Petersburg and *siloviki* groupings. Appears willing to forge new relations with the West and disavow past mistakes.
- **Transition-2024:** does Putin manage his own succession (operation successor), or is the succession managed by the elite and may include "Putinism" but is without Putin?

The implications of Russian defeat are harder to fathom. "Ukrainian victory" in any shape or form should signify Russian geopolitical loss of prestige, status and the destruction of the "eternal Russia" myth. However, Putin has over 23 years crafted a "limited access order" regime in which an enclosed elite profit from rent-seeking activity. This elite seeks to remain "insiders" to this power circle and this need to avoid expulsion drives loyalty to Putin and so ensures regime stability, though the June 24, 2023 uprising demonstrates that Prigozhin's desire to force entry is a source of instability. Putin's arbitration/referee function (Prigozhin paid the penalty on August 24, 2023) creates and sustains a regulated order.

Within this Putinite order we can identify two drivers of behavior: "money" (greed) and the tangible logic of consequences and "mission" (a set of ideas/ideology) and the intangible logic of appropriateness. Rational-acting Russian economic elites prioritize sanctions relief efforts in Russian foreign policy, whereas discursive elites, who have some traction with society, prioritize "mission," vaguely defined as "fighting evil in the world" and reject a "civilizational U-turn." Kim Jong-un captures best this emotion: "I'm sure we'll fight together against imperialism." Putin has managed to depoliticize politics in Russia while mobilizing society around a set of conservative, imperialistic ("unity of the Slavic core") military-patriotic ideas which target "the West" and "liberal international order."

Russia's new leader inherits and endorses these "rules of the club." New leaders coming from this "limited access order" regime seek to maintain it. This elite inherits a coup proof system and

removes Putin at the point he becomes a threat to that system/a danger to themselves (February 1917, 1953, 1964, 1991), if only to preclude the possibility of a systems changing October 1917 event occurring in 2024. It is also unclear how a new regime will choose to weigh in its calculus tangible and intangible costs and benefits, though presumably discursive elites will favor the latter, while economic elites ("show me the money") while favor the former. Russia's new leadership adopts a "Liberal Dictatorship" scenario, in which a stable, even cooperative IR coexists alongside greater domestic repression and forced modernization. Alternatively, a post-Putin order might be characterized by "regulated federalism," with Russia's constituent parts being given or taking greater autonomy setting new center-periphery power relations, a drive to quasi-reform and pseudo-liberalization and even the curtailment of Russian imperial ambition. "Putinism without Putin" is a probable outcome.

The war impacts the balance of power between power structures in Russia: The Russian armed forces are depleted, akin to the Red Army 1941, while *Rosgvardiya*, FSO, and FSB are relatively stronger, exacerbating competitive impulses. Tension is also evident in the Russian military, between "fighting generals," many of whom are exiled in Syria and "parade generals" in the General Staff and MoD who occupy the so-called "Arbat Military District" in Moscow. New military formations have proliferated: LNR and DNR militias are now integrated formally into the Russian armed forces but informally remain autonomous; Storm Z detachments consisting of criminals; Chechen (K-clan) troops are formally subordinated to *Rosgvardiya* but operate independently; different types of PMCs including mobilized forces of territorial defense, volunteer forces (backed by political movements and corporate structures). These changes are destabilizing in that they: question Russia's ability to maintain a monopoly of violence; blur lines of control and loyalty; and bring societal stresses more directly into the Russian military. When the war terminates Russia will have 2 million veterans with combat experience, some with PTSD, vulnerable to extremist ideologies and a "Stab-in-the-back" anti-elite narrative, creating the preconditions for civil unrest and criminality.

The February 4, 2022 "unlimited friendship" meeting between President Putin and President Xi of China highlighted the importance of this nexus. Russian-Chinese military cooperation has expanded rapidly in the last decade in particular. A losing Russia will be a more isolated Russia and its dependency on China will likely increase. Although Putin has stated that "technological sovereignty" is the cornerstone of strategic autonomy, China may play a much larger role in helping Russia to modernize its Defense Industrial Complex as Russia seeks to rebuild it conventional combat capability. Russia appears set to become an even more subordinate player within a Sino-centric trade, economic, and technological bloc. China may mediate between Russia and Ukraine, pushing for 1991 statehood – "one Ukraine" policy. Ukraine gains territorial victory. China's status is enhanced globally. Moscow perhaps gains also in that the price of withdrawal is Chinese help to "build back better" Russia's conventional military combat capability. Conveniently, Russia can also advance a face-saving offramp narrative:
Russia did not fight Ukraine in Ukraine but the combined efforts of the West/United States, that Russia "regroups" to fight the "colonial West" on behalf of the "Global South" and create an anti-western alternative international order. The battle for "multipolarity" and the end to U.S. global hegemony becomes Russia's civilizational mission and the real "prize." Such will likely be Russia's alibi.

Reflections: "Towards a Ukrainian Shared and Sustainable Victory"

As a matter of absolute priority, Ukraine needs a war-fighting military strategy of liberation to expel Russian military forces from its territory and end direct conflict with Russia. Ukraine also needs a non-kinetic domestic political strategy to allow for graduated de-occupation and reintegration. A diplomatic strategy must secure external security commitments/"guarantees" that sustain victory through effective future defense and deterrence. An economic strategy must rebuild and restructure Ukraine so that it is viable. While battlefield successes impose realities on Russia, a raft of issues including nuclear, food, energy, reconstruction, and economic reconstruction, are currently being developed. These strategies are deployed in parallel, highlighting that victory may demand a linear sequential military concept but a non-linear or multi-geometry political, economic, and societal approach.

Linear and non-linear theories of victory need to be in balance for Ukraine to "win the war" and avoid "losing the peace." The necessary balance is not just between the military and the political tracks and their respective priorities but between end-state maximization (full statehood restoration, justice, reparations, and security commitments) and optimization (achieving these goals in a sustainable way). There are degrees of victory – from "best" to "good enough." The degree of military and political victory will be subject to tradeoffs: Ukraine secures strategically important Crimea but not Donetsk and Luhansk, or trades territory for people? Security commitments will determine the necessary Ukrainian force structure, size, and capabilities mix and set the balance between the need for self-sufficiency and the need for partners and allies. With regards to sustainment, there is also a necessary transatlantic balance to be struck between the military and economic roles and responsibilities of U.S. and European states concerning security arrangements, commitments, and guarantees for Ukraine.

In envisaging possible "Ukraine victory" end states in military-security terms, it is prudent for Ukraine to consider a "just in case" necessary force structure size and capabilities mix that could defend Ukraine and deter Russia from future attack, without meaningful external security guarantees. In this "worst case victory" scenario, at war termination Ukraine looks to maintain a powerful standing military of 500,000 (60 plus brigades), maintain martial law, and turn Crimea into a militarized Ukrainian fortress. Ukraine emerges with the largest conventional military in Europe. In reality, this end state has drawbacks. First, it is financially unsustainable without Western support. Poland, for example, aspires to build an army of 300,000 and this places great demands on the state in terms of manpower and finance, even though Poland's GDP was three times that of Ukraine in 2021. Second, in the aftermath of the war Ukrainian public opinion will likely support a strong military, but not a highly militarized society with low economic growth. Youth labor migration to Europe would increase and options for Ukraine's future civil and economic development would be limited.

For both Ukraine and NATO, and with the passing of day 570 of Russia's invasion, certain military warfare realities become apparent. **First**, the sheer scale of the conflict is hard to fathom, though we can identify three aspects: the pivotal role of armor, infantry, and artillery (mass); its protracted nature (time) and Ukraine's ability to absorb Russian attack and then respond (space). Space gave Ukraine time to respond to Russia's aggression and with support from partners build mass to counterattack. **Second**, though Russian attrition rates are high, and its capabilities are diminished, this is largely consigned to ground forces. Less evident is Russia's ability to

reconstitute its military capabilities. To give an example: Russia has lost ten times as many major battle tanks as NATO allies currently possess (2,100 of the 4000 are destroyed), but Russia can replenish, repair, and build the number of tanks every year equal to the number that NATO European states currently possess. Another example: Russia even after restrictions, fires 10,000 artillery shells a day; the United States produces 18,000 a month; Russia looks to an annual production of two million. **Third**, NATO is not Ukraine. NATO's current force structure, capability mix, and strategy are based on having space and time to respond to aggression, but Warsaw is 200 kilometers from Belarus. In the case of Russia as a future aggressor, NATO member states cannot trade space for time. Without space and so time to respond and with Russia able to reconstitute its "good enough" conventional combat capability, the question then is: can existing high technology, precision, and very professional NATO forces prevail against Russia's likely future ability to produce huge quantities of simple, cheap military force capable of fighting a protracted conflict?

To mitigate that risk NATO itself needs to look at the optimal balance between building "mass" (to the extent its industrial base can manage mass production and societal support and political will/leadership allows) and then enhancing security assurances cooperation, commitments, and guarantees to Ukraine to cover the deficit. Ukraine's starting point in the negotiation is to lay out maximalist goals regarding its just-in-case capabilities/force structure mix and invite the West to offer security commitments that allow a smaller more affordable military. Intensive discussions aim to achieve an equilibrium in three spheres. First, a "sustainable Ukraine" that can balance the need for battleships and bread, the need for military security and economic development, and growth. Second, a "balanced NATO," that can build future force structure and capabilities that both retain maneuver and increase mass. Third, a balance between the United States and Europe in terms of transatlantic burden sharing and a division of labor based on the sequence of threats: the greater and more credible the European role in addressing residual and potential future Russian threat, the more the United States can focus on China as its near-peer competitor and real global revisionist power.

In reality, informed choices are made by leaders who can first identify and then determine the appropriate, acceptable, and affordable balance of risk before making strategic decisions. In 2022 the notion of a "negotiated settlement" that included a demilitarized Crimea, Sea of Azov, and border zones, and with Ukraine accepting a version of Finnish "Total Defense" was on the table. In late 2023, the calculus in Kyiv is likely informed by new realities. First, Ukraine's NATO membership provides NATO with space, time, and (Ukrainian) mass to respond to potential horizontal proliferation of the conflict with Russia. Ukraine is a security consumer but also for NATO a front-line security provider, at great cost in terms of state development. Second, meaningless Western security bilateral or mini-(regional) lateral security assurances will certainly promote nuclear proliferation. Third, NATO membership for Ukraine will be both positive and constraining: Ukraine will not by itself decide to attack Russia if a NATO member. The role of civilian leadership in Ukraine and the West is crucial to Ukraine's end state. Leaders must first close the gap between the conceptual (Ukraine as free) and concrete (restored territory), manage the transition from wartime leadership to peace and then negotiate the three equilibriums – this is the political West's new contract – and bring their populations with them.

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About the Author

Dr. Graeme P. Herd is a Professor of Transnational Security Studies in the Research and Policy Analysis Department at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. His latest books include *Understanding Russia's Strategic Behavior: Imperial Strategic Culture and Putin's Operational Code* (London and New York, Routledge, 2022) and *Russia's Global Reach: A Security and Statecraft Assessment*, ed. Graeme P. Herd (Garmisch-Partenkirchen: George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2021).

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