

A Timely Call for Peace in Ukraine by U.S. National Security Experts

By [Medea Benjamin](#) and [Nicolas J. S. Davies](#)

Global Research, May 16, 2023

Region: [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the Translate Website button below the author's name.

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Click the share button above to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

On May 16, 2023, The New York Times [published](#) a full-page advertisement signed by 15 U.S. national security [experts](#) about the war in Ukraine. It was headed "The U.S. Should Be a Force for Peace in the World," and was drafted by the Eisenhower Media Network.

While condemning Russia's invasion, the statement provides a more objective account of the crisis in Ukraine than the U.S. government or *The New York Times* has previously presented to the public, including the disastrous U.S. role in NATO expansion, the warnings ignored by successive U.S. administrations and the escalating tensions that ultimately led to war.

The statement calls the war an "unmitigated disaster," and urges President Biden and Congress "to end the war speedily through diplomacy, especially given the dangers of military escalation that could spiral out of control."

This call for diplomacy by wise, experienced former insiders—U.S. diplomats, military officers and civilian officials—would have been a welcome intervention on any one of the past 442 days of this war. Yet their appeal now comes at an especially critical moment in the war.

On May 10th, President Zelenskyy announced that he is delaying Ukraine's long-awaited "spring offensive" to avoid "[unacceptable](#)" losses to Ukrainian forces. Western policy has repeatedly put Zelenskyy in [near-impossible](#) positions, caught between the need to show signs of progress on the battlefield to justify further Western support and arms deliveries and, on the other hand, the shocking human cost of continued war represented by the fresh graveyards where tens of thousands of Ukrainians now lie buried.

It is not clear how a delay in the planned Ukrainian counter-attack would prevent it leading to unacceptable Ukrainian losses when it finally occurs, unless the delay in fact leads to

scaling back and calling off many of the operations that have been planned. Zelenskyy appears to be reaching a limit in terms of how many more of his people he is willing to sacrifice to satisfy Western demands for signs of military progress to hold together the Western alliance and maintain the flow of weapons and money to Ukraine.

Zelenskyy's predicament is certainly the fault of Russia's invasion, but also of his April 2022 deal with the devil in the shape of then-U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Johnson [promised](#) Zelenskyy that the U.K. and the "collective West" were "in it for the long run" and would back him to recover all of Ukraine's former territory, just as long as Ukraine stopped negotiating with Russia.

Johnson was never in a position to fulfill that promise and, since he was forced to resign as prime minister, he has [endorsed](#) a Russian withdrawal only from the territory it invaded since February 2022, not a return to pre-2014 borders. Yet that compromise was exactly what he talked Zelenskyy out of agreeing to in April 2022, when most of the war's dead were still alive and the framework of a peace agreement was [on the table](#) at diplomatic talks in Turkey.

Zelenskyy has tried desperately to hold his Western backers to Johnson's overblown promise. But short of direct U.S. and NATO military intervention, it seems that no quantity of Western weapons can decisively break the stalemate in what has degenerated into a brutal [war of attrition](#), fought mainly by artillery and trench and urban warfare.

An American general [bragged](#) that the West has supplied Ukraine with 600 different weapons systems, but this itself creates problems. For example, the different [105 mm guns](#) sent by the U.K., France, Germany and the U.S. all use different shells. And each time heavy losses force Ukraine to re-form survivors into new units, many of them have to be retrained on weapons and equipment they've never used before.

Despite U.S. [deliveries](#) of at least six types of anti-aircraft missiles—Stinger, NASAMS, Hawk, Rim-7, Avenger and at least one Patriot missile battery—a leaked Pentagon document [revealed](#) that Ukraine's Russian-built S-300 and Buk anti-aircraft systems still make up almost 90 percent of its main air defenses. NATO countries have searched their weapons stockpiles for all the missiles they can provide for those systems, but Ukraine has nearly exhausted those supplies, leaving its forces newly vulnerable to Russian air strikes just as it prepares to launch its new counter-attack.

Since at least June 2022, President Biden and other U.S. officials have [acknowledged](#) that the war must end in a diplomatic settlement, and have insisted that they are arming Ukraine to put it "in the strongest possible position at the negotiating table." Until now, they have claimed that each new weapons system they have sent and each Ukrainian counter-offensive have contributed to that goal and left Ukraine in a stronger position.

But the leaked Pentagon documents and recent statements by U.S. and Ukrainian officials make it clear that Ukraine's planned spring offensive, already delayed into summer, would lack the previous element of surprise and encounter stronger Russian defenses than the offensives that recovered some of its lost territory last fall.

One leaked Pentagon document warned that "enduring Ukrainian deficiencies in training and munitions supplies probably will strain progress and exacerbate casualties during the offensive," concluding that it would probably make smaller territorial gains than the fall

offensives did.

How can a new offensive with mixed results and higher casualties put Ukraine in a stronger position at a currently non-existent negotiating table? If the offensive reveals that even huge quantities of Western military aid have failed to give Ukraine military superiority or reduce its casualties to a sustainable level, it could very well leave Ukraine in a weaker negotiating position, instead of a stronger one.

Meanwhile, offers to mediate peace talks have been pouring in from countries all over the world, from the Vatican to China to Brazil. It has been six months since the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, [suggested](#) publicly, after Ukraine's military gains last fall, that the moment had come to negotiate from a position of strength. "When there's an opportunity to negotiate, when peace can be achieved, seize it," he said.

It would be doubly or triply tragic if, on top of the diplomatic failures that led to the war in the first place and the U.S. and U.K. [undermining](#) peace negotiations in April 2022, the chance for diplomacy that General Milley wanted to seize is lost in the forlorn hope of attaining an even stronger negotiating position that is not really achievable.

If the United States persists in backing the plan for a Ukrainian offensive, instead of encouraging Zelenskyy to seize the moment for diplomacy, it will share considerable responsibility for the failure to seize the chance for peace, and for the appalling and ever-rising human costs of this war.

The experts who signed *The New York Times* statement recalled that, in 1997, 50 senior U.S. foreign policy experts [warned](#) President Clinton that expanding NATO was a "policy error of historic proportions" and that, unfortunately, Clinton chose to ignore the warning. President Biden, who is now pursuing his own policy error of historic proportions by prolonging this war, would do well to take the advice of today's policy experts by helping to forge a diplomatic settlement and making the United States a force for peace in the world.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share button above. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

Medea Benjamin is the cofounder of [CODEPINK for Peace](#), and the author of several books, including [Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#).

Nicolas J. S. Davies is an independent journalist, a researcher with CODEPINK and the author of [Blood on Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq](#).

Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies are the authors of [War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict](#), published by OR Books in November 2022. They are regular contributors to Global Research.

Featured image: President Zelenskyy meets Pope Francis at the Vatican on May 13, 2023. Photo credit: EFE

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Medea Benjamin](#)
and [Nicolas J. S. Davies](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca