

Video: History Will Judge the United States and Its Allies: Prof. John J. Mearsheimer

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The following speech was delivered by John Mearsheimer at the European University (EUI) in Florence on June 16. American political scientist John Mearsheimer in his international lecture states that the United States and NATO bear all the blame for the bloodshed in Ukraine. Here they are trying to defeat Russia and will not stop before the escalation of the conflict. “History will severely condemn the United States for its strikingly insane policy towards Ukraine,” the author concludes.

<https://s4.cdnstatic.space/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/John-J.-Mearsheimer.mp4>

The war in Ukraine is a multifaceted catastrophe that is likely to get worse in the foreseeable future. When a war is successful, little attention is paid to its causes, but when its outcome becomes catastrophic, understanding how it happened becomes paramount. People want to know: how did we get into such a terrible situation?

I have witnessed this phenomenon twice in my life — first during the Vietnam War and then during the Iraq War. In both cases, Americans wanted to know how their country could have miscalculated so badly. Given that the United States and its NATO allies played a decisive role in the events that led to the military conflict in Ukraine, and are now playing a central role in this war, it is appropriate to assess the responsibility of the West for this colossal disaster.

Today I will give two main arguments.

First, the United States bears the main blame for the emergence of the Ukrainian crisis. This does not deny that Putin launched a military special operation in Ukraine, and he is also responsible for the actions that the Russian military is taking there. But this also does not deny that the allies also bear a certain share of the blame for Ukraine, although in the vast majority they simply blindly follow America in this conflict. My main contention is that the United States has pursued and is pursuing a policy towards Ukraine that Putin and other Russian leaders view as an existential threat to Russia. And they have repeatedly stated this over the years. I am especially referring to America's obsession with dragging Ukraine into NATO and turning it into a stronghold of the West on the border with Russia. The Biden administration did not want to eliminate this threat with the help of diplomacy and in fact in 2021 confirmed the commitment of the United States to accept Ukraine into NATO. Putin responded with a military special operation in Ukraine, which began on February 24 this year.

Secondly, the Biden administration reacted to the start of the special operation by practically doubling its anti-Russian efforts. Washington and its Western allies are determined to achieve Russia's defeat in Ukraine and apply all possible sanctions to significantly weaken Russian power. The United States is not seriously interested in finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict, which means that the war is likely to drag on for months, if not years. At the same time, Ukraine, which has already suffered terribly, will be even more damaged. In fact, the United States is helping Ukraine to follow the false path of imaginary "victories", in fact, leading the country to complete collapse. In addition, there is also a danger of further escalation of the Ukrainian conflict, since NATO may be involved in it, and nuclear weapons may be used during hostilities. We live in times full of deadly dangers.

Let me now state my argument in more detail, starting with a description of the generally accepted ideas about the causes of the Ukrainian conflict.

Confused ideas of the West

There is a widespread strong belief in the West that Putin bears full responsibility for the crisis in Ukraine and, of course, for the ongoing hostilities on the territory of this country. They say that he has imperial ambitions, that is, he seeks to conquer Ukraine and other countries — and all this with the aim of creating a great Russia that bears some resemblance to the former Soviet Union. In other words, Ukraine is Putin's first goal, but not his last. As one scientist put it, he "pursues a sinister and long-standing goal: to erase Ukraine from the map of the world." Given these alleged goals of Putin, it is quite logical for Finland and Sweden to join NATO, and for the alliance to increase the number of its forces in Eastern Europe. Imperial Russia, after all, must be contained.

However, it should be noted that although this narrative is repeated over and over again in the mainstream Western media and by virtually every Western leader, there is no evidence to support it. And when supporters of this generally accepted point of view in the West try to represent them, it turns out that they have practically nothing to do with Putin's motives for sending troops to Ukraine. For example, some emphasize Putin's repeated words that Ukraine is an "artificial state" or not a "real state." However, such opaque statements of his say nothing about the reason for his campaign in Ukraine. The same can be said about Putin's statement that he views Russians and Ukrainians as "one people" with a common

history. Others note that he called the collapse of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.” And that Putin also said: “The one who does not remember the Soviet Union has no heart. Whoever wants him back has no brains.” Still others point to a speech in which he stated that “Modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia or, more precisely, by Bolshevik, communist Russia.” But in the same speech, speaking about Ukraine’s independence today, Putin said: “Of course, we cannot change past events, but we must at least acknowledge them openly and honestly.”

To prove that Putin seeks to conquer the whole of Ukraine and annex it to Russia, it is necessary to provide evidence that, firstly, he considers it a desirable goal, secondly, that he considers it an achievable goal, and, thirdly, that he intends to pursue this goal. However, there is no evidence in public sources that Putin was going to, and even more so intended to end Ukraine as an independent state and make it part of greater Russia when he launched a special operation in Ukraine on February 24.

In fact, everything is just the opposite. There is strong evidence that Putin recognizes Ukraine as an independent country. In his article on Russian-Ukrainian relations dated July 12, 2021, which supporters of the popular opinion in the West often refer to as evidence of his imperial ambitions, he tells the Ukrainian people: “Do you want to create your own state? We only welcome it!”. And as for how Russia should treat Ukraine, he writes: “There is only one answer: with respect.” And Putin ends this long article with the following words: “And what Ukraine will be like is up to its citizens to decide.” It is difficult to reconcile these statements with statements in the West that he wants to include Ukraine in the “greater Russia”.

In the same article dated July 12, 2021, and again in an important speech delivered by him on February 21 of this year, Putin stressed that Russia accepts “the new geopolitical reality that has developed after the collapse of the USSR.” He repeated this for the third time on February 24, when he announced that Russia was launching its military special operation in Ukraine. In particular, he stated that “the occupation of Ukrainian territory is not part of our plans,” and made it clear that he respects the sovereignty of Ukraine, but only up to a certain point: “Russia cannot feel safe, develop and exist, being under constant threat from the territory of today’s Ukraine.” In fact, this suggests that Putin is not interested in Ukraine becoming part of Russia. He is interested in ensuring that it does not become a “springboard” for Western aggression against Russia, which I will tell you more about later.

One could argue that Putin, they say, is lying about his motives, that he is trying to disguise his imperial ambitions. It just so happened that I once wrote a book about lies in international politics — “Why Leaders Lie: the Truth about Lies in International Politics” — and it is clear to me that Putin is not lying. First of all, one of my main conclusions is that leaders don’t lie to each other often, they lie to their public more often. As for Putin, no matter what people think about him, there is no evidence in history that he ever lied to other leaders. Although some claim that he often lies and cannot be trusted, there is little evidence that he lied to a foreign audience. Moreover, over the past two years, he has repeatedly publicly expressed his thoughts about Ukraine and constantly stressed that his main concern is Ukraine’s relations with the West, especially with NATO. He has never hinted that he wants to make Ukraine part of Russia. If such behavior is part of a giant deception campaign, then it has no precedent in history.

Perhaps the best indicator that Putin is not seeking to conquer and absorb Ukraine is the military strategy that Moscow has used from the very beginning of its special operation. The

Russian army did not try to conquer the whole of Ukraine. This would require a classic blitzkrieg strategy aimed at quickly capturing the entire territory of the country by armored forces with the support of tactical aviation. This strategy, however, was not feasible because the Russian army, which launched the special operation, had only 190,000 soldiers, which is too small to occupy Ukraine, which is not only the largest country between the Atlantic Ocean and Russia, but also has a population of more than 40 million people. Unsurprisingly, the Russians pursued a strategy of limited goals that focused on creating a threat to capture Kiev, but mainly on conquering a significant part of the territory in the east and south of Ukraine. In short, Russia did not have the opportunity to subjugate the whole of Ukraine, not to mention other Eastern European countries.

As noted by Ramzi Mardini (*a well-known American political scientist, senior researcher at the influential American Institute of Peace, professor at the University of Chicago* – Approx. Another indicator of Putin's limited goals is the lack of evidence that Russia was preparing a puppet government for Ukraine, nurtured pro-Russian leaders in Kiev, or took any political measures that would allow it to occupy the entire country and, eventually, integrate it into Russia.

If we develop this argument, it should be noted that Putin and other Russian leaders probably understood from the experience of the Cold War that the occupation of countries in the era of nationalism is invariably a recipe for endless problems. The Soviet experience in Afghanistan is a vivid example of this, but Moscow's relations with its allies in Eastern Europe are more relevant to this issue. The Soviet Union maintained a huge military presence in the region and was involved in the politics of almost every country located there. However, these allies were often a thorn in Moscow's side. The Soviet Union suppressed a major uprising in East Germany in 1953, and then invaded Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 to keep them in its orbit. Serious troubles arose in the USSR and in Poland: in 1956, 1970 and again in 1980-1981. Although the Polish authorities solved these problems themselves, they served as a reminder that Soviet intervention may be necessary at times. Albania, Romania, and Yugoslavia usually caused trouble for Moscow, but Soviet leaders tended to put up with their "bad" behavior because their geographical location made them less important to deter NATO.

And what about modern Ukraine? From Putin's article of July 12, 2021, it is clear that he then understood that Ukrainian nationalism is a powerful force and that the civil war in the Donbas, which has been going on since 2014, has largely poisoned relations between Russia and Ukraine. He, of course, knew that the Russian army would not be welcomed by Ukrainians with open arms and that it would be a "Herculean" task for Russia to subdue Ukraine, even if it had the forces necessary to conquer the whole country, which Moscow did not have.

Finally, it is worth noting that hardly anyone claimed that Putin had imperial ambitions from the moment he took the reins of power in 2000 until the Ukrainian crisis first broke out on February 22, 2014. Moreover, it is worth remembering that the Russian leader was a guest at the NATO summit in April 2008 in Bucharest, where the alliance announced that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually become its members. Putin's criticism of this statement had almost no effect on Washington, because Russia was considered too weak to stop further expansion of NATO, just as it was too weak to stop the waves of expansion of the alliance in 1999 and 2004.

In this regard, it is important to note that the expansion of NATO until February 2014 was not aimed at deterring Russia. Given the deplorable state of Russian military power at that time, Moscow was unable to pursue an “imperial” policy in Eastern Europe. Tellingly, even former US Ambassador to Moscow Michael McFaul notes that Putin’s seizure of Crimea was not planned before the “Maidan” crisis broke out in 2014. It was Putin’s impulsive reaction to the coup that overthrew the pro-Russian leader of Ukraine. In short, the expansion of NATO was not yet intended to contain the Russian threat, but was part of a broader policy of extending the liberal international order to Eastern Europe and turning the entire continent into a “Western” Europe.

It was only when the Maidan crisis broke out in February 2014 that the United States and its allies suddenly began calling Putin a dangerous leader with imperial ambitions, and Russia a serious military threat that must be contained. What caused this shift? This new rhetoric was intended to serve one important purpose: to allow the West to blame Putin for unleashing unrest in Ukraine. And now that that long-standing crisis has turned into a full-scale war, the West needs to make sure that Putin alone is blamed for this catastrophic turn of events. This “blame game” explains why Putin is now widely portrayed in the West as an “imperialist”, although there is practically no evidence to support this point of view.

Let me now turn to the real cause of the Ukrainian crisis.

The real cause of the troubles

The main root of the current crisis in Ukraine is the efforts of the United States aimed at turning this country into a stronghold of the West on the borders of Russia. This strategy has three directions: Ukraine’s integration into the EU, Ukraine’s transformation into a pro-Western liberal democracy and, most importantly, Ukraine’s inclusion in NATO. The strategy was put into action at the annual NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, when the alliance announced that Ukraine and Georgia would “become its members.” Russian leaders immediately reacted with outrage, making it clear that they view this decision as an existential threat and do not intend to allow any country to join NATO. According to a respected Russian journalist, Putin “flew into a rage” and warned that “if Ukraine joins NATO, it will be without Crimea and many of its eastern regions. It’s just going to fall apart.”

William Burns, who is now the head of the CIA, and during the Bucharest NATO summit was the US ambassador to Moscow, wrote a memo to then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in which he succinctly describes Russia’s views on this issue. According to him: “Ukraine’s accession to NATO is the most contrasting of all red lines for the Russian elite (and not just for Putin). In more than two and a half years of conversations with key Russian players, from patriots in the dark corners of the Kremlin to the harshest liberal critics of Putin, I have not found anyone who would consider Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge. interests of Russia”. According to him, NATO “will be considered... as a military structure throwing down a strategic gauntlet to Moscow. And today’s Russia will respond. Russian-Ukrainian relations will simply freeze... This will create fertile ground for Russian interference in the affairs of Crimea and eastern Ukraine.”

Burns, of course, was not the only politician who understood that Ukraine’s accession to NATO was fraught with danger. Indeed, at the Bucharest summit, both German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy opposed the promotion of Ukraine’s membership in NATO, because they understood that this would cause alarm and anger of Russia. Merkel recently explained her disagreement at the time as follows: “I was absolutely

sure... that Putin just won't allow it. From his point of view, it would be a declaration of war."

The Bush administration, however, cared little about Moscow's "most contrasting red lines," and pressured the leaders of France and Germany to agree to make a public statement that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually join the alliance.

Unsurprisingly, US-led efforts to integrate Georgia into NATO led to a war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 – four months after the Bucharest summit. Nevertheless, the United States and its allies continued to advance their plans to turn Ukraine into a bastion of the West on the borders of Russia. These efforts eventually triggered a major crisis in February 2014, after a U.S.-backed coup in Kiev forced Ukraine's pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich to flee the country. He was replaced by pro-American Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. In response, Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine and helped ignite a civil war between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian government in the Donbas in eastern Ukraine.

One can often hear the argument that in the eight years between the beginning of the crisis in February 2014 and the beginning of the war in February 2022, the United States and its allies paid little attention to Ukraine's entry into NATO. They say that de facto this issue was removed from discussion, and, thus, the expansion of NATO could not be a serious reason for the escalation of the crisis in 2021 and the subsequent start of the Russian special operation at the beginning of this year. This argument is false. In fact, the West's reaction to the events of 2014 was to redouble its efforts in the current strategy and bring Ukraine even closer to NATO. The Alliance began training the Ukrainian military in 2014, annually training 10,000 AFU servicemen over the next eight years. In December 2017, the Trump administration decided to provide Kiev with "defensive weapons". Soon other NATO countries joined in, supplying Ukraine with even more weapons.

The Ukrainian military began participating in joint military exercises with NATO forces. In July 2021, Kiev and Washington jointly conducted Operation Sea Breeze, a naval exercise in the Black Sea in which the naval forces of 31 countries participated and which were directly targeted at Russia. Two months later, in September 2021, the Ukrainian army led Rapid Trident 21 exercises, which the US Army described as "annual exercises aimed at improving interoperability between allied and partner countries to demonstrate the readiness of units to respond to any crisis." NATO's efforts to arm and train the Ukrainian armed forces largely explain why the Ukrainian Armed Forces put up such strong resistance to the Russian armed forces at the initial stages of the special operation. As the headline of *The Wall Street Journal* read at the beginning of the special operation: "The Secret of Ukraine's Military Success: Years of training in NATO" (the *article appeared in The WSJ on April 13, 2022, The Wall Street Journal "The Secret of Ukraine's Military Success: Years of NATO Training", followed by the crushing defeat of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Mariupol, Kherson and Severodonetsk — Approx. InoSMI*).

In addition to NATO's ongoing efforts to transform the Ukrainian armed forces into a more formidable fighting force, the policy related to Ukraine's membership in NATO and its integration into the West has changed in 2021. Both in Kiev and in Washington, enthusiasm for achieving these goals has been revived. President Zelensky, who has never shown much zeal for Ukraine's accession to NATO and was elected in March 2019 on a platform calling for cooperation with Russia to resolve the ongoing crisis, changed course in early 2021 and not only decided to expand NATO, but also took a tough stance towards Moscow. He has taken a number of actions, including shutting down pro-Russian TV channels and accusing a

close friend of Putin of treason, which must have angered Moscow.

President Biden, who moved to the White House in January 2021, has long been committed to Ukraine's accession to NATO, and has also been very aggressive towards Russia. It is not surprising that on June 14, 2021, at its annual summit in Brussels, NATO issued the following communique:

"We confirm the decision taken at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance with the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as an integral part of the process. We confirm all elements of this decision, as well as subsequent decisions, including that each partner will be evaluated on its own merits. We firmly support Ukraine's right to independently determine its future and the course of foreign policy without outside interference."

On September 1, 2021, Zelensky visited the White House, where Biden made it clear that the United States was "firmly committed" to Ukraine's "Euro-Atlantic aspirations." Then, on November 10, 2021, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and his Ukrainian counterpart Dmitry Kuleba signed an important document — the Charter on Strategic Partnership between the United States and Ukraine. The goal of both sides, the document says, is to "emphasize... Ukraine's commitment to carrying out deep and comprehensive reforms necessary for full integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions." This document is clearly based not only on the "commitments to strengthen the relations of strategic partnership between Ukraine and the United States, proclaimed by Presidents Zelensky and Biden," but also confirms the commitment of the United States to the "Declaration of the Bucharest Summit of 2008."

In short, few doubt that since the beginning of 2021, Ukraine has begun to move rapidly towards joining NATO. Nevertheless, some defenders of this policy argue that Moscow should not have worried, since "NATO is a defensive alliance and does not pose a threat to Russia." But that's not how Putin and other Russian leaders think about NATO, and what matters is exactly what they think. There is no doubt that Ukraine's accession to NATO remained for Moscow "the most contrasting and dangerous red line."

To counter this growing threat, Putin deployed an increasing number of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine between February 2021 and February 2022. His goal was to force Biden and Zelensky to change course and stop their efforts to integrate Ukraine into the West. On December 17, 2021, Moscow sent separate letters to the Biden administration and NATO demanding written guarantees that: 1) Ukraine will not join NATO, 2) offensive weapons will not be deployed near Russia's borders, 3) NATO troops and military equipment moved to Eastern Europe since 1997 will be returned to Western Europe.

During this period, Putin made numerous public statements that left no doubt that he viewed NATO's expansion into Ukraine as an existential threat. Speaking at the board of the Ministry of Defense on December 21, 2021, he said: "What they are doing, trying or planning to do in Ukraine does not happen thousands of kilometers from our national border. This is happening on our doorstep. They need to understand that we simply have nowhere to retreat further. Do they really think we don't see these threats? Or do they think that we will just stand idly by, watching the growing threats to Russia?" Two months later, at a press conference on February 22, 2022, just a few days before the start of the special operation, Putin said: "We are categorically against Ukraine joining NATO, because it poses a threat to us, and we have arguments in support of this. I have repeatedly said this in this

Hall.” Then he made it clear that he believes that Ukraine is already becoming a de facto member of NATO. According to Putin, the United States and its allies “continue to pump the current Kiev authorities with modern types of weapons.” He further said that if this is not stopped, Moscow “will be left alone with an Anti-Russia armed to the teeth.” This is completely unacceptable.”

Putin’s logic should be perfectly clear to Americans, who have long been committed to the Monroe doctrine, according to which no even distant great power is allowed to deploy any of its armed forces in the Western Hemisphere.

I could point out that in all of Putin’s public statements during the months preceding the special operation, there is not the slightest evidence that he was going to seize Ukraine and make it part of Russia, not to mention attacking other countries in Eastern Europe. Other Russian leaders, including the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Russian Ambassador to Washington, also stressed the key role of NATO expansion in the emergence of the Ukrainian crisis. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov put it succinctly at a press conference on January 14, 2022, when he said: “The key to everything is to guarantee that NATO will not expand to the east.”

Nevertheless, attempts by Lavrov and Putin to force the United States and its allies to abandon attempts to turn Ukraine into a stronghold of the West on the border with Russia have completely failed. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken responded to Russia’s demands in mid-December by simply saying, “No change. There will be no changes.” Then Putin launched a special operation in Ukraine to eliminate the threat he saw from NATO.

Where are we now and where are we going?

Military operations in Ukraine have been raging for almost four months. Now I would like to offer some observations about what has happened so far and where the war may go. I will focus on three specific issues: 1) the consequences of the war for Ukraine, 2) prospects for escalation — including nuclear escalation, 3) prospects for the end of the war in the foreseeable future.

This war is a real catastrophe for Ukraine. As I noted earlier, Putin made it clear in 2008 that Russia would destroy Ukraine to prevent it from joining NATO. He fulfills that promise. Russian troops have captured 20% of Ukrainian territory and destroyed or severely damaged many Ukrainian cities and towns. More than 6.5 million Ukrainians have left the country, and more than 8 million have become internally displaced persons. Many thousands of Ukrainians, including innocent civilians, have been killed or seriously injured, and the Ukrainian economy is in deep crisis. According to World Bank estimates, Ukraine’s economy will shrink by almost 50% during 2022. According to experts, Ukraine has been damaged by about \$ 100 billion, and it will take about a trillion dollars to restore the economy. country. Now Kiev needs about \$5 billion in aid every month just to keep the government working.

It seems that there is little hope now that Ukraine will be able to restore the use of ports on the Azov and Black Seas in the near future. Before the war, approximately 70% of all Ukrainian exports and imports and 98% of grain exports passed through these ports. This is the current situation after less than 4 months of fighting. It’s scary to even imagine what Ukraine will be like if this war drags on for several more years.

So, what are the prospects for concluding a peace agreement and ending the war in the next few months? Unfortunately, I personally do not see the possibility that this war will end in the near future. And this view is shared by prominent politicians such as General Mark Milley, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. The main reason for my pessimism is that both Russia and the United States are deeply committed to the goal of winning the war, and it is impossible to achieve an agreement in which both sides would win now. More specifically, the key to the settlement from Russia's point of view is the transformation of Ukraine into a neutral state, which will put an end to the prospect of Kiev's integration with the West. But such an outcome is unacceptable for the Biden administration and a significant part of the American foreign policy establishment, because it would mean a victory for Russia.

The Ukrainian leaders, of course, have a certain freedom of action, and one can hope that they could adopt neutrality in order to save their country from further destruction. Indeed, Zelensky briefly mentioned this possibility in the first days of the special operation, but he never seriously developed this idea. However, it is unlikely that Kiev will be able to accept neutrality, because the ultranationalists in Ukraine, who have significant political power, are not interested in yielding to at least any Russian demand, especially one that dictates Ukraine's political orientation in relations with the outside world. The Biden administration and countries on the eastern flank of NATO, such as Poland and the Baltic states, are likely to support Ukrainian ultranationalists on this issue.

Significantly complicating the situation is the question of what to do with large areas of Ukrainian territory that Russia has conquered since the beginning of the war, as well as what to do with Crimea? It is difficult to imagine that Moscow would voluntarily give up any of the Ukrainian territories that it now occupies, and even more so from the entire conquered part of Ukraine, since Putin's current territorial goals are probably different from those he pursued before the start of the special operation. At the same time, it is equally difficult to imagine that any Ukrainian leader would agree to a deal allowing Russia to retain any Ukrainian territory, with the possible exception of Crimea. I hope I am wrong, but it is precisely for these reasons that I do not see an end to this destructive military conflict.

Now let me turn to the question of its possible escalation. It is widely recognized among international scholars that there is a strong tendency to escalate protracted wars. Over time, other countries are usually involved in the struggle, and the level of violence increases. The probability that this will happen in the war in Ukraine is real. There is a danger that the United States and its NATO allies will be drawn into hostilities, which they have so far managed to avoid, although in fact they are already waging an indirect proxy war against Russia. There is also the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used in Ukraine, which could even lead to an exchange of nuclear strikes between Russia and the United States. The main reason why this can happen is that the stakes in the Ukrainian conflict in its global refraction have turned out to be so high for both sides that neither of them can afford to lose.

As I have already stressed, Putin and his aides believe that Ukraine's accession to the West represents an existential threat to Russia that needs to be eliminated. In practice, this means that Russia must win the war in Ukraine. Defeat is unacceptable for Moscow. The Biden administration, on the other hand, stressed that its goal is not only to inflict a decisive defeat on Russia in Ukraine, but also to inflict enormous damage to the Russian economy with the help of sanctions. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin stressed that the West's goal is to weaken Russia to such an extent that it cannot re—enter Ukraine. In fact, the Biden

administration is trying to knock Russia out of the great powers. President Biden himself called Russia's war in Ukraine "genocide" and accused Putin of being a "war criminal" who, after the war, should be tried for "war crimes." Such rhetoric is hardly suitable for negotiations on ending the war. After all, how to negotiate with a State that is carrying out genocide?

American policy has two important consequences. First, it significantly increases the existential threat that Moscow faces in this war, and makes its victory in Ukraine more important than ever. At the same time, this US policy means that the United States is deeply committed to Russia losing. The Biden administration has now invested so much in its proxy war in Ukraine - both materially and rhetorically - that a Russian victory would mean a crushing defeat for Washington.

Obviously, both sides cannot win at the same time. Moreover, there is a serious possibility that one of the parties will soon start losing heavily. If the American policy succeeds and the Russians lose to the Ukrainians on the battlefield, Putin may resort to nuclear weapons to save the situation. In May, US Director of National Intelligence Evril Haines told the Senate Armed Services Committee that this is one of two situations that could lead to Putin using nuclear weapons in Ukraine. For those of you who think this is unlikely, remember that NATO planned to use nuclear weapons in similar circumstances during the Cold War. It is impossible to predict now how the Biden administration would react if Russia used nuclear weapons in Ukraine. But one thing is for sure: Washington will be under great pressure and tempted to reciprocate with Russia, which will increase the likelihood of a nuclear war between the two great powers. There is a perverse paradox here: the more successful the United States and its allies are in achieving their goals, the more likely it will be that the war will become nuclear.

Let's turn the playing table and ask what happens if it turns out that the United States and its NATO allies are heading for defeat, what happens if the Russians defeat the Ukrainian army, and the government in Kiev negotiates a peace agreement designed to save as much of the remaining part of Ukraine as possible. In this case, the United States and its allies will be tempted to take an even more active part in the fighting. It is unlikely, but it is quite possible that American or maybe Polish troops will be involved in hostilities, which means that NATO will be at war with Russia in the literal sense of the word. According to Evril Haines, this is another scenario in which the Russians can turn to nuclear weapons. It is difficult to say exactly how events will develop if this scenario is implemented, but there is no doubt that there is a serious potential for escalation, including nuclear escalation. The very possibility of such an outcome should give us all goosebumps.

This war is likely to have other disastrous consequences, which I cannot discuss in detail due to lack of time. For example, there is reason to believe that the war will lead to a global food crisis in which many millions of people will die. World Bank President David Malpass claims that if the war in Ukraine continues, we will face a global food crisis that will become a "humanitarian catastrophe."

In addition, relations between Russia and the West are so badly poisoned that it will take years to restore them. And this deep hostility will fuel instability around the world, but especially in Europe. Someone will say that there is a silver lining: relations between countries in the West have improved markedly due to the conflict in Ukraine. But this is only true for the moment. Even now, there are deep cracks under the surface of the external Western unity, and over time they will very urgently and painfully declare themselves. For

example, relations between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe are likely to deteriorate as the war drags on, since their interests and views on the conflict do not coincide.

Finally, the conflict is already causing serious damage to the global economy, and over time this situation is likely to seriously worsen. Jamie Diamond, CEO of JPMorgan Chase, says we should prepare for an economic “hurricane.” If he is right, then the current economic turmoil will affect the politics of every Western country, undermine liberal democracy and strengthen its opponents both on the left and on the right. The economic consequences of the Ukrainian conflict will affect the countries of the whole planet, not just the West. According to a UN report published last week, “the consequences of the conflict will spread human suffering far beyond its borders. The war in all its aspects has exacerbated a global crisis unprecedented at least for the current generation, endangering lives, livelihoods and our aspirations for a better world in the 2030s.”

Conclusion

Simply put, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine is a colossal catastrophe, which, as I noted at the beginning of my speech, will force people all over the world to look for its causes. Those who believe in facts and logic will quickly discover that the United States and its allies are primarily responsible for this derailment of our common train. The decision taken in April 2008 on the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO was destined to lead to a conflict with Russia. The Bush administration was the main architect of this fateful choice, but the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations intensified and aggravated this policy at every turn, and America’s allies obediently followed Washington. Despite the fact that Russian leaders made it abundantly clear that Ukraine’s accession to NATO would mean crossing Russia’s “most contrasting of red lines,” the United States refused to come to terms with Russia’s deep security concerns and instead moved tirelessly to turn Ukraine into a western bastion on the border with Russia.

The tragic truth is that if the West had not sought to expand NATO into Ukraine, it is unlikely that a war would have raged in Ukraine today, and Crimea would most likely still be part of Ukraine. In fact, Washington has played a central role in leading Ukraine down the path of destruction. History will severely condemn the United States and its allies for their strikingly stupid policy towards Ukraine.

Thanks.

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