



Backstopping Ukraine's Long-Term Security: An Alternative to NATO Membership

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Backstopping Ukraine’s Long-Term Security: An Alternative to NATO Membership

Ukraine faces serious immediate challenges on the battlefield today; in-mid May, Putin declared that Russian forces are “improving their positions each day, on all fronts, according to plan.” The Russian wartime economy is gathering steam while Western resolve remains uncertain. Ukrainians will continue to fight fiercely, but Russia’s war machine is taking its toll. Thus, Ukraine’s first order of business is to defend itself and its territory and people.

Yet even so, other big questions loom, and it is not too soon to think about how the war might be ended and Ukraine’s long-term security shored up. NATO’s security could also very well be directly affected by how this war ends. In particular, were Russia to defeat Ukraine comprehensively, it could then be in a position to threaten the Baltic states and beyond (Putin has claimed the right to “protect” Russian speakers in neighboring states and suggested that NATO should be rolled back to its 1997 membership.) These realities are reason enough for deep gratitude to the Ukrainians, who are doing the hard fighting to fend off Russian troops in an imperial-minded conflict that could easily extend further into Europe if not checked in Ukraine first.¹ They are also an argument for increased US agency. After all, security in Europe is very much

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Washington's business, as the United States discovered belatedly—and the hard way—twice in the 20th century.

We need new paradigms for how to think about ending the war and securing the peace in Ukraine. Helping Ukraine “for as long as it takes,” as the Biden administration has often asserted, may not be a compelling line much longer—as this past winter's painful and prolonged, if ultimately successful, attempt to pass a \$61 billion aid package has underscored.² But apart from that, the likelihood that Ukraine can drive Russian troops off all 18 percent of its territory

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currently controlled by Moscow—including the parts seized starting in 2014—seems low at this moment.³ Whether this war formally ends in a one-sided victory, peace treaty, armistice—or just fizzles out over time after additional months and years of hard fighting—is impossible to predict. So is the question of how a possibly reelected Donald Trump—who sports pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian sympathies, and has also claimed an ability to end the war within 24 hours of engaging the parties in a diplomatic process—would

change US policy.⁴ Trump's bark is sometimes worse than his bite on such matters, so all that can really be asserted now is that his election would introduce yet another huge wild card into thinking about both warfighting strategy and war termination.

Whatever happens with territorial control, we also need to think more broadly about future security architectures and institutions. France and Estonia have proposed sending non-combat troops to Ukraine on a bilateral basis. Although propositions such as these move in the right direction, they are insufficient on their own. The overall objective should be to find a reliable mechanism to uphold the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. No borders should be changed by brute force. These principles are the foundation of the current international order.

This paper proposes a new kind of security architecture that may prove helpful in both ending the current war and stabilizing the future peace. It provides a concept to help anchor these efforts within a new security institution, and thereby strongly support Ukraine's security, even without NATO membership. Our proposed Atlantic-Asian Security Community (AASC) would station troops on Ukrainian soil in significant numbers, as trainers but also as thick, strong and credible tripwires. This idea could be implemented either as part of a peace treaty with Russia, or without one. And it would be an institution

that, someday, a post-Putin Russia might eventually join (without placing trainers in Ukraine itself, naturally).

Of course, no one can predict the course of the war in Ukraine. As of this writing in spring 2024, with future US assistance to Ukraine beyond the recent \$61 billion package uncertain, many outcomes are possible—even catastrophic ones for Ukraine. More likely, however, we could see some variant of ongoing stalemate through this year and next, even if the tides of battle ebb and flow, and even if Russia continues to make marginal or modest territorial gains, as it has in the early months of 2024. Our proposal for a future security architecture could be relevant if, faced with such battlefield frustration, both Moscow and Kyiv decide to negotiate over the next year or two. It could also be relevant if some version of stalemate persists but no negotiations prove possible. AASC might even be relevant if Russia appears poised to make major breakthroughs and members are willing to put their own people in the path of possible Russian advances. That latter scenario is clearly the most fraught, and it is not the major focus of this article. But depending on how things go in coming weeks and months, it may demand attention.

In the rest of this paper, we first discuss some of the problems with current Western thinking about war termination and future security architectures, then flesh out the details of our alternative. We conclude by discussing how the new concept could be woven into an eventual strategy for negotiations.

The Problem with the “NATO or Nothing” Dichotomy

If there is to be any hope of someday negotiating an end to this terrible war, NATO may not prove the best means of anchoring Ukraine to the West, as it is an institution designed from its founding to exclude Russia/the USSR. That raises the question of whether there might be ways to make Ukraine just as secure while antagonizing Russia less, thereby improving the prospects for successful negotiations and a stable future peace.

To be clear: we do not blame advocates of Ukrainian membership in NATO for the outbreak of the war. Whatever the wisdom of that advocacy, going back to the NATO Bucharest summit of 2008 when it was first officially decided and announced, the intent was to shape a Europe as whole, free and stable as possible. Vladimir Putin, and other Russians who believe in the justness of violent imperial conquest, own the responsibility for this war, not the West or Ukraine. Moreover, we certainly do not fault Ukrainians for preferring that their country join NATO as soon as possible—as President Volodymyr Zelensky emphatically

argued on the way to NATO's Vilnius summit in July 2023 (and may well do again).⁵

Treating NATO as Ukraine's security anchor could have the perverse incentive of prolonging the war

Yet, treating NATO as the only possibility for Ukraine's future security anchor could have the perverse incentive of prolonging the war beyond when it might otherwise end. Right now, Ukraine would like the alliance's protection—through membership and the North Atlantic Treaty's Article V mutual-defense promise—as soon as possible. But many—if not most—of NATO's 32 members, crucially including the United States, do not want to bring Ukraine into NATO until the war is over.⁶ That is because, taken literally, Article V would likely be interpreted as obliging the alliance to start fighting Russia from the moment ratification were to happen. Because Ukraine is under attack, not only on the frontlines but in its cities (due to Russian drones, glide bombs and missiles), the alliance would quickly find itself at war against a nuclear-armed superpower, with all the risks that might run. As a result, the current received wisdom about the idea of NATO membership for Ukraine—someday, but only after the war is over—gives Vladimir Putin a further reason to keep fighting, so as to preclude that very outcome. His actions in Moldova, Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine were driven by his intent to render those states too problematic to join Western institutions. Debate continues over the degree to which preventing NATO membership for Ukraine is Putin's top goal in this war, but few doubt that it ranks high on his priority list. It is therefore conceivable that the current set of promises to Ukraine—that it can join only when the war is over—combined with Putin's "Novorossiia" fantasies about expanding his holdings of Ukrainian territory in the south and east as well as his broader strategic calculus, could inadvertently prolong the conflict.

Putin despises and resents NATO in part because he suggested early in his Presidency that Russia join but was rebuffed by the organization, while his neighbors were extended invitations.⁷ More fundamentally, NATO was founded on the premise of excluding the USSR from Europe, making it a natural nemesis of Putin and like-minded Russians. After the end of the Cold War, tensions between Russia and NATO gradually ratcheted up for various reasons.⁸ While serving as ambassador to Russia in 2008, CIA Director William Burns emailed Secretary of State Condi Rice that "Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite (not just Putin). I have yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests."⁹

Putin should not have a veto over Ukraine's future sovereign security decisions. But we should weigh likely Russian reactions into our own thinking, and ask if there is a better way to achieve an enduring security outcome through a different and less controversial mechanism—one that may prove more negotiable someday with Moscow, or at least provide a slightly better prognosis for eventual partial recovery of the long-term relationship between Russia and the West. Even if Ukraine becomes a member of the EU, which has a mutual self-defense clause, the central security question still centers on NATO, because the EU is not a military alliance, and it is not backstopped by the United States.

NATO remains important for the security of its current 32 members. There are, however, political conditions under which an alternative to NATO for Ukraine—but something more effective than other ideas tried or proposed to date—may appeal strongly to some key world leaders. To take one plausible hypothetical: suppose Donald Trump returns to the presidency and seeks to impose his “secret plan to end the war” (echoing Nixon in Vietnam) on various parties.¹⁰ He will likely find that task harder than he now seems to expect. Still, for the sake of argument, it would presumably require some kind of compromise, on territory and perhaps on security architecture. Perhaps Trump would propose freezing territorial holdings along whatever frontline exists when he takes office, and offering security commitments to Ukraine that, while substantial, are not made under NATO auspices. If the latter included the long-term stationing of significant numbers of Western military personnel on Ukrainian soil as part of a robust training mission, it could have real teeth and credibility, whether the American president was Trump, Biden, or someone else. To be sure, based on his lack of commitment to NATO and disinterest in European security, Trump might choose simply to end US aid to Ukraine and otherwise ignore the situation—but then again, given his promises of finding a solution within 24 hours, he might look for some form of compromise. President Biden might also wind up doing something similar, if he feels the time is ripe.

Russia has signed five agreements with Ukraine since 1992, and has violated all five: the 1992 agreement at Dagomys¹¹ on dividing the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet and sharing Crimea; the 1994 Budapest Memorandum;¹² the 1997 Treaty on Friendship;¹³ the 2014 Minsk I Protocol,¹⁴ and the 2015 Minsk II Package of Measures.¹⁵ Critically, none of these agreements had an enforcement mechanism; signing another such deal with Russia would be a fool's errand. At the same time, we should also seriously consider measures that would serve to embolden Russian opposition groups, many of which have historically valued Russia's strong ties to and roles in Europe, by pledging to one day bring a post-imperial Russia back into the Western fold. This vision does not imply the end

of the Russian Federation, or the end of Russia as a great power, but it does entail the end of Russian imperial designs on its neighbors (just as all other land-grabbing empires in Europe have ended).

The Atlantic Asian Security Community

Our basic idea for a new security architecture to undergird Ukraine's future safety is designed to be simpler and less bureaucratic, but more robust, than many existing security structures in Europe, thanks to the deployment of a multi-national contingent of trainers and advisors. They would constitute a powerful tripwire.

AASC is not intended to be an organization with a large bureaucracy—in contrast to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). But its actual security promises are intended to be virtually as strong and binding as those of NATO. Its real power is in stationing significant numbers of partnered military personnel on Ukrainian soil. They would be continuously present, in uniform (and with small arms), but not in combat or standard-unit formation. The countries providing these troops would declare their intention, indeed their solemn vow, to come to the aid of their troops already present on Ukrainian soil at the first hint of a future Russian attack—rather than pull them out of the country as happened in the prelude to the February 2022 attack (Western states had never promised to keep them in place in the event of war; things would be different with AASC, and communicated as such). AASC's commitments would hold whether its personnel were initially deployed with the agreement of Moscow or not. Most likely, a deployment would take place in a context where Russia still occupied some Ukrainian land, but the frontlines were largely static or a formal armistice were in place. In a longshot case, it could even happen in the context of a peace treaty.

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AASC would essentially be a coalition of the willing, organized and documented through a written agreement of some sort (not necessarily a formal treaty, but it could be). It would also be supple enough as a security community that it could evolve in the future—including if and when a post-Putin Russia ever joined it. The idea is to create AASC without having any initial trust whatsoever in Russia or its good intentions, yet at the same time to do so without slamming the door shut permanently on Moscow.

It would be important that the AASC presence in Ukraine exceed the size, scale and geopolitical heft of small UN or OSCE peacekeeping or monitoring missions. Whatever the missions and daily tasks of its troops, they should number at least in the low thousands of individuals. These troops would come from the United States, other NATO member states, and perhaps other European and Asian countries, such as India, so as to create a distinctly non-NATO atmosphere to the group. Ideally, not all participants would be formal American allies, though Japan, Korea or Australia could participate, for example. However, it would be crucial that the United States, France, and other major powers in the West send troops to Ukraine. Their presence would be essential both to defend Ukraine and deter Russia—while also leaving the door open to talks with Russia in the future.

What would several thousand AASC personnel do on a daily basis within Ukraine? Given the desire to calm the situation rather than stoke it, some table-top planning should be done with Ukrainian officials about how forces might best be deployed into action in Ukraine. But they surely could perform patrols near the ceasefire line, border crossings, and elsewhere. They could assist with de-mining and post-combat troop reintegration. They could continue to help train Ukrainian police and soldiers—not just at big, centralized academies but in the field as well. Although big exercises on Ukrainian soil would not be among the intended peacetime purposes of the AASC members, those members should share intelligence with each other and otherwise prepare the intellectual machinery that could be needed to coordinate rapid reinforcement of their respective positions within Ukraine, should Russian aggression resurface.

It would, as noted, be highly desirable that India and others be part of the effort as well. Indeed, while the nature of the force would not require intensive coordination, we like the idea of having an Indian officer as overall commander of the mission, largely for the diplomatic benefit of having AASC aspire to normalize relations with Russia one day. India has an experienced and well-trained military, with strong ties to Russia, Ukraine and the United States. Other Asian states could be welcomed as possible troop-providers as well. Even if other participants could not be recruited, the simple fact that AASC was not NATO would avoid invoking historical baggage and strategic rivalry in the relationship with Moscow.

The idea of foreign military personnel on Ukrainian soil is not without precedent. For eight years, from 2014 until 2022, both Russia and Ukraine accepted an unarmed OSCE monitoring mission in Ukraine (in addition to Western military trainers). Thus, both sides are already accustomed to international monitors. Clearly, however, the situation is much different now. A future foreign military presence should be neither unarmed nor contingent on the continued blessing and permission of Moscow. AASC would not necessarily receive Russian

assent at the outset; it certainly would not leave based on future Russian objections.

At the level of formal status and administration, two approaches to forming such a force might be considered. One could involve the United Nations in an overarching, legitimating way under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, with the actual mission outsourced to the AASC. With this option, the UN General Assembly rather than the Security Council could authorize a peace implementation force, as was the case with the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) in the Suez Canal.¹⁶ In 1956, the UK, France and Israel seized the Suez Canal in an imperial maneuver. France and the UK used their veto power on the UN Security Council to preclude UN action against the move. However, in a creative twist, the Eisenhower administration sought to shift the debate to the UN General Assembly under the “Uniting for Peace” provision. The General Assembly authorized the deployment of the first lightly armed, blue-hatted UN Peacekeeping mission, which successfully oversaw the demobilization and departure of foreign troops from Egypt and remained to monitor the border with Israel. Thus, whether it agreed to the idea at the outset or not, with the UN General Assembly as the oversight body, Moscow could neither formally veto nor stonewall going forward.

Indeed, it is possible the UN might deploy a separate peacekeeping contingent to complement AASC. Such a contingent could be given a multi-year mandate to observe the Russian-Ukrainian border. It could also be given the task of monitoring the fair treatment of various populations on both sides of the eventual ceasefire line (assuming that Ukraine would likely not have liberated all its pre-war territory before the deployment of such a force).

One additional task of the deployed troops, whether AASC personnel or an accompanying UN mission, would be to enable some type of DDR operation—demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration. Obviously, both Russia and Ukraine will retain strong military forces in almost any plausible armistice arrangement to stop the fighting. But there would still be many individual citizens returning to normal life who might possess weapons they no longer needed. Indeed, the region will be awash in weapons, many unregulated, after the hot war ends, and it will be strewn with land mines as well as military fortifications. As history shows, a third party can often provide crucial help in such processes.¹⁷ The two societies might also benefit from externally-funded reintegration and retraining programs for former combatants.

Eventually, AASC might do things outside of Ukraine. Whether that happened or not in the near term, it would be desirable that such a purpose be communicated clearly early on. For instance, the AASC might help provide the military muscle (or at least eyes and ears) to help secure a future peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan, should one be hammered out in other

forums such as the United Nations or the OSCE. But these kinds of missions should not be considered in the near future, as they could complicate the core purpose of AASC and add more tension into Western relations with Russia. In the short term, the focus would need to be clearly on Ukraine.

In the creation of new international structures, precise form should always follow function and purpose. Fundamentally, again, the purpose of AASC is to create a thick tripwire, tied to major and powerful Western countries including the United States, but also including some non-NATO states, to help ensure future Ukrainian security and deter any Russian aggression.

Additionally, the AASC concept is intended to embody a vision for European reintegration at some point in the future. That may feel and seem unthinkable now. But every war must end. And when wars do end, history has shown that the most stable peace arrangements require some degree of third-party effort to move onward with a positive vision for the future relations of previous belligerents. Numerous quantitative studies have demonstrated that war is less likely to return when there is a third party that can monitor the implementation of promises made in peace accords and provide credible security assurances to enable belligerents to step back from the brink.¹⁸ The European Union demonstrates that institutions can help secure the peace and promote prosperous ties between former enemies.

Thus, a key facet of the AASC is that it would be explicitly designed, from the outset, to offer Russia membership in it, if and when conditions are appropriate. Unlike the brief window in the 1990s when possible Russian membership in NATO was discussed in fleeting fashion, the idea of eventual Russian membership would be inherent and central to the idea of AASC, and communicated as such. To be sure, Moscow should not have an open invitation to join the community and then sow mischief. Initial AASC members would have to decide if and when Russia could join. Most likely, that would not be for some time—once not only Putin, but much of Putinism, might have been replaced in Russia. And even if Russia were ultimately part of AASC, it would not be allowed to neuter NATO or veto the ongoing presence of Western military personnel on Ukrainian soil.

The AASC concept is intended to embody a vision for European reintegration at some future point

Toward a Negotiating Strategy: Presenting Moscow with a Choice

Negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv, with or without some role for the United States and other outside actors, are a long way off. Ukraine remains rightfully determined to reclaim its 1991 internationally-recognized borders and the freedom of the Ukrainians who live on that land. Putin believes that the resolve of Ukraine's Western backers will break before Russia's, depriving Kyiv of the resources it needs to continue to defend itself. As of this writing, Moscow can also point to some real if modest battlefield momentum in the country's east. The fighting is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Yet, after another year or so of possible military frustration, and with the outcome of America's election settled later this year in a way that begins to clarify the war's prognosis further, things could change. At such a juncture, the concept of AASC could be woven into a broader negotiating strategy that Washington develops with Kyiv, and that creates incentives for Russia to negotiate the fairest peace possible on a rapid timeline.

Given that in all post-USSR agreements with Ukraine, Russia has repeatedly made formal written promises to uphold Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, only to go back on those promises, any settlement must include an enforcement mechanism. We believe that AASC might be part of the answer, not only on its own merits, but as part of a broader carrot-and-stick strategy. If Ukrainian leadership agreed to this idea, the AASC could be proposed to Moscow as an explicit alternative to NATO. Were Moscow to refuse to engage diplomatically, however, NATO members might then decide to bring Ukraine into NATO on

The AASC could be proposed to Moscow as an explicit alternative to NATO

the grounds that it was clearly no longer useful to try to reach any kind of common ground with Russia on the matter. Telegraphing this set of options to Moscow early on—AASC if it can be negotiated in 2025, perhaps, but NATO membership for Ukraine if the situation fails to progress by 2026—might create the kind of leverage that would motivate Moscow to negotiate sooner rather than later, and to comply with any deal that

might be struck. Of course, getting to that point would require that NATO members agree with the strategy; right now, many would not. But if the United States and several other major NATO countries could agree on the approach, there is a good chance they could persuade the others.

In the latter situation, with little left to salvage in the relationship, NATO could bring Ukraine into the alliance while stating that it would not consider Article V obligations to apply to the attempted liberation of Russian-occupied

parts of Ukraine. Alternatively, a new article could be added to the Washington/NATO Charter that addressed Ukraine's specific circumstances. That provision might, for example, explicitly note that NATO would defend the part of Ukraine under Kyiv's control as of date X, and that it will also help Ukraine defend its cities against air and missile attack (or other aggression by outside parties). Although NATO would not recognize Moscow's illegal seizure of Ukrainian lands, it would also not seek to liberate them via military force. That article could be Ukraine-specific and could be made either temporary or permanent. (Any individual NATO member always has options about how to interpret Article V anyway; no specific military response to a given aggression is dictated by the treaty.)¹⁹

NATO does have options. And Putin should be made to understand that.

Incentives for Moscow to reach a deal more quickly could be further buttressed by how Russia's frozen assets now held in Western (mostly European) banks are treated. We do not attempt to enter into this complex subject here in any detail. But if it were possible to tap into even a fraction of Russia's frozen assets each year, Moscow would start to see the sand running through the hourglass—the cash running out of its bank accounts—with each month that it dithered at the negotiating table. There is also the possibility of NATO's Baltic states and Poland no longer allowing land passage of Russian goods and people to Russia's farthest western outpost in Kaliningrad to consider, should Moscow stonewall.

Getting Inside Putin's Head

So, how might these choices look to Vladimir Putin, as well as to other Russian elites who may either have influence on Putin or some chance of replacing or succeeding him?

To be sure, any hopes for an easy outcome here would be misplaced. The Russia-Ukraine War has by now become one of the defining events of Putin's long hold on the Kremlin. After elections this year, he has set his sights on staying in power into the 2030s. He will not relent or even compromise easily. And it will be hard to change his mind; to quote William Burns, Putin appears to have "hardened" in his core views over the years. Right now, he sees multiple paths to winning this war outright—especially if "winning" is defined to mean fully controlling all four of the Ukrainian provinces (Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk), plus the autonomous republic of Crimea, that he has "annexed" to date—about a quarter of the country, in contrast to the 18 percent he holds now.

Not all hope is lost, however. Historically, Russia has thus far transformed itself mainly through radical regime change, as in 1917 and 1991; or upon

It's important to play the long game when crafting grand strategy

military defeat, as in Crimea in 1856 and to Japan in 1905. But it has also sometimes changed in important ways without revolution or outright military defeat, as when Khrushchev assumed power after Stalin in 1953, or during Gorbachev's rise to power in the mid-1980s. Just as military frustration in Afghani-

stan gave Gorbachev tailwinds in promoting glasnost and perestroika, Russia's difficulties in its war of choice in Ukraine could lead a future Russian leader to reassess the conflict. To be sure, no such Russian spring is imminent. But it's important to play the long game when crafting grand strategy.

Russia could benefit in numerous ways if a compromise negotiated settlement could be reached. Yes, Ukraine would be a member of a new security architecture—but not one that is reviled in Russia as NATO is. That architecture might someday even be built out to include Russia, much as NATO was to include Germany and other Axis powers after WWII. Ukraine and its Western friends could further promise that Ukraine would not join NATO in the future, not unlike understandings reached between Western capitals and Moscow about Austria in 1955, leading to a decision by all occupying powers to pull their troops out of Austria (albeit at a different time and in a different way).²⁰ Remaining Russian assets would be unfrozen and returned to Moscow; at most a modest fraction would have been confiscated by that point. Russia would regain its standing in various international organizations from which it has been suspended, such as the G8 and the UN Human Rights Council. Some sanctions designed primarily for economic punishment would be lifted, and most prohibitions on investment in Russia could be removed too—though restrictions relating to weaponry and other sensitive technology might remain.

By contrast, a failure on Russia's part to seek compromise would produce a much worse outcome for Moscow. After many more months or even years of war, NATO would conclude that Russia was beyond hope. Even though this is not where several key NATO members are in their thinking today, at such a point NATO might see little downside to inviting Ukraine to join the alliance. NATO would thus come right up to the edge of Russia's heartland. Given that NATO has been reinvigorated by this war, and that it has already endured for 75 years (nearly half of them since the Cold War ended), any such decision would be quite likely to endure for decades at a minimum. The alliance does not appear to be going anywhere, and it does not kick out members once they are in. Russia would continue to see its access to Western technology and trade sharply curtailed. It would run the risk of having its financial assets in Europe completely drained in the service of Ukrainian reconstruction. Russians

would have to hope that their relationships with China and a few other nations proved durable enough that they would not someday find themselves completely isolated on the world stage—not only in terms of where they can vacation and travel, but even *vis-à-vis* strategic depth and potential political isolation. It is a starkly different world from the partial recovery and rehabilitation that Russia might otherwise realistically aspire to, especially (but not exclusively) once Putin is gone from power.

Crucially, as long as Putin thinks he can win the current war outright, the choice above will hold little interest for him, and the difference between scenario 1 and scenario 2 sketched out here will matter to him less than permanently seizing as much of Ukraine as he can. Thus, again, the first order of business must be to ensure that Ukraine can, at a minimum, hold the line and defend itself, even as new security architectures are proposed and debated.

A New Anchor for Ukraine—and the Region

We offer one proposal here for how to protect Ukraine—while also improving the odds that Russia can someday again become a responsible part of the new regional security order, or at least reducing the odds that it will continue to go rogue across a range of issues. Our concept centers on the idea of deploying a substantial, armed training and monitoring mission of at least several thousand Western and Eastern military personnel, including Americans, to Ukraine under the auspices of a new security architecture that we call the Atlantic-Asian Security Community, an alternative to NATO for Ukraine. Most likely, AASC would be created and personnel stationed in Ukraine as part of an armistice or peace accord with Moscow at some point in the future. However, under certain circumstances, it could be initiated even as fighting dragged on. That is not our main premise as we attempt to develop the AASC proposal, but things can change with time.

It is too soon to know when or how the Ukraine war might end. But if there is to be any hope of long-term security in the region, we need to reconsider the notion that NATO is the only viable institutional anchor for Ukraine and think afresh about new possibilities that involve more than just hollow promises made on scraps of paper.

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