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## CBGA ISSUE BRIEF

### Is Europe Prepared for the Long War in Ukraine?

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Russia's military attacks on Ukraine have transformed everything for Europe, and it will have far-reaching implications for the region's security and civilization in the future. After 30 years of peace, the attack of Ukraine has disturbed many Europeans' complacency as they experience conflict on the continent in a way that many thought was only seen in history. This is not a fight comparable to the different Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. The wars in the former Yugoslavia, as horrific and deadly as they were, did not pose a danger to the Western hegemony or Europe's post-Cold War security guarantees. The situation in Ukraine is very dissimilar. Ukraine is a sovereign state that has been invaded by one of the world's most powerful armed forces, commanded by an increasingly nationalist leader with a nuclear arsenal numbering in the thousands. The Ukrainians are resisting with all-out support from the West, and the battle will certainly intensify and become more severe.

The EU has already moved quickly to adopt harsh penalties and has agreed to fund the purchase and supply of weapons to a country outside the bloc for the first time in its history. Germany has also stated that it will now commit to spending more than 2% of its GDP on defense, reversing its post-World War II and post-Cold War defense policies. Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany has promised to overhaul the country's armed forces. "It's apparent we need to invest much more in the security of our country, in order to safeguard our liberty

and democracy," he said in an address to the parliament. The unique economic, trade, and political connection between Germany and Russia, which lasted through the 2008 Georgia crisis and the 2014 Crimea crisis, is now finished. European countries seem to be more unified and focused on securing and protecting their eastern borders. Bordering nations will likely become staging locations for resistance fighters flocking to what they, and their governments, perceive as a legitimate battle as a fresh surge of refugees and asylum seekers sweeps over the continent.

These nations will need greater military and security resources, and demands on Poland, Hungary, and Estonia will be felt in Paris, Rome, and Berlin more than ever before. Russian banks are shut off from the Swift payments system, which would impede Russian business from obtaining foreign cash and Russian people from conducting individual credit card purchases. Blocking Russian foreign exchange reserves is expected to cause a recession in Russia, which will have an influence on the European economy as a whole. Although the EU continues to rely on Russian gas, serious efforts must now be made to discover alternatives. Europe has already received record LNG supply from other sources, and talks with alternative suppliers are ongoing.

Putin has showed no signs of backing down, and there appears to be no way for him to do so without risking his face. Despite the fact that some Russians do not consider Ukraine to be a distinct sovereign country, many have familial ties to the country. Russians and Ukrainians share a strong relationship. The war will not be popular, and the longer it continues, the more internal criticism and opposition will rise. There will also be tremendous pressure to resolve Ukraine's ambition to join the EU as soon as possible. The signing of Ukraine's EU application by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy from his underground bunker was not ridiculed as a publicity ploy as it has been in the past. "Ukraine is one of us, and we want them in," stated European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen earlier.

The economic and humanitarian ramifications for Europe and Russia will be substantial. Russians will persevere in the face of adversity, as they have in the past, but are Europeans prepared for the next round of economic and humanitarian shocks? Such a timescale is neither unrealistic nor pessimistic, as Russia's conflict against Ukraine continues to grow. Instead, it is the most likely method for Ukraine to defeat Russia in a protracted fight, and that victory will only be feasible with NATO's continued backing in resisting Russian domination.

NATO countries continue to arm Ukraine, bolster its people to fight back. They have been maintaining functioning Ukrainian government with financial — and military — backing, as well as a comprehensive set of measures displaying NATO's solidarity and commitment. Zelensky's defiance and repeated warnings to Russia are part and parcel of West's desire to resist Russian forces in Ukraine. It is a decision in favour of war. Diplomacy is totally sidelined in this crisis of humanity and civilization. Putin has been using all possible means to deter NATO backing for Ukraine, and cyber tactics have recently been his weapon of choice. The sinking of Russian warship Moskva is a major loss for Putin to reinforce its strength to fight in Ukraine.

This raises the possibility of a lengthy conflict, which NATO has not prepared for or even believes is important to prepare for. NATO would be well to assume that it is already at war with Russia, rather than viewing the invasion as a one-off event in which it serves as a helpful spectator. To the West the war is viewed as a sequence of events in which Russia rips off additional pieces of nations, resulting in a series of crises, engagements, and limited-duration hostilities interspersed with periods of peace, negotiated agreements, and even reconciliation. NATO may now concentrate on its exposed boundaries, as well as its sources of strength and vulnerability, if it is to survive in such a battle.

Once a war has started, it rarely follows a script. More often than not, they take both combatants

and non-combatants down unexpected paths, with occasionally world-changing consequences. The attacks of Ukraine by Russia look to be sowing the seeds of such a battle. It remains to be seen what the conclusion will signify for Ukraine and the rest of the globe. NATO may opt to escalate its engagement in Ukraine by seeking to impose a no-fly zone or other sort of direct action, for example. For the time being, the US and other NATO partners have ruled out adopting a no-fly zone, but this might change if Russia continues to gain its footing in Ukraine. Russia would have to choose between backings down or engaging armed troops head-on.

If it opts for the latter, the chances of a growing military war between NATO and Russia skyrocket. Russia may hit a NATO member's territory accidentally, for example, through imprecise aiming or erroneous identification of friend and foe, causing the alliance to respond with countermeasures. As the Russian military's arsenal of precision-guided weapons depletes, the potential of an accident resulting in an unintentional escalation with NATO grows. In this scenario, direct warfare, maybe air-to-air or air-to-ground, would erupt in Ukraine's border areas. As a result, a tit-for-tat cycle of attack and counter-strike might erupt, escalating to outright conflicts.

The neglect of diplomacy by the West, Ukraine and Russia at the cost of lives of the Ukrainians is horrific to the rest of the world. Being part of the most developed and civilized part of the world, the world expects common sense to prevail among the strategists of War. One has to keep in mind that NATO expansion is the key to instability and insecurity in the eastern part of Europe stretching the border of Russia.

The continuation of war would harm the present European security order immensely, if not irreparably. Europeans would suddenly find themselves living in a world where Russia might interfere anywhere in its immediate vicinity, or even further afield, whenever it believed crucial interests were at issue. Russian television stated on live that the present issue is not about Ukraine: "The scope is far larger." As Chomsky suggests Ukraine heavily armed by the West must choose to establish peace with Russia for saving their citizens as well as those of Europe and Russia. The supercontinent of Eurasia is reshaping itself right before our eyes. The unprecedented economic sanctions of the West may have an impact on how the Kremlin plans to act in the coming months and years, but they will have no effect on the underlying dynamics. The current order is beginning to collapse, and international community must figure out how to effectively replace it with new arrangements.



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