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WEBINAR

DOES RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE MARK THE END OF THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WRIGHT: Good morning. My name is Tom Wright. I'm a senior fellow and director of the Center on the United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution. It's my great pleasure to welcome you this morning to our discussion on "does Russia's invasion of Ukraine mark the end of the post-Cold War order?"

After months of preparation and posturing on the Ukrainian border, Russia invaded a post-launch, a full-scale invasion last week in an event, I think, that is one of the most significant, if not the most significant, since in Europe and for European security since the end of the Cold War.

All week we have seen very traumatic scenes of the Russian attack and a valiant Ukrainian effort to resist the invasion. The West has rallied around Ukraine and presented a united front unfolding ever more strict sanctions including this past weekend on President Putin, his inner circle, Russian companies and the Russian economy more generally.

To discuss what's happening right now and also to take a bit of a wider lens on the geopolitical significance of the invasion, I am delighted to be joined by a really stellar, distinguished group of Brookings' experts on Russia and Europe. We have a really terrific panel.

Pavel Baev who is a senior -- a research professor of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo and a nonresident senior fellow with us at Brookings. And Steve Pifer who is the William J. Perry fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford. Also, a nonresident senior fellow at Brookings. For many years a resident senior fellow at Brookings and importantly a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine.

Angela Stent who is a nonresident senior fellow at Brookings, was until recently a professor at Georgetown University. Is the author of many books on Russian foreign policy including, I think, most recently "Putin's World," which I highly recommend to everyone.

Constanze Stelzenmüller who is our senior fellow, a Fritz Stern chair -- I'm sorry, I'm blanking for one second on the formal title. A Fritz Stern chair and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and our resident expert in everything Germany but also generally on trans-Atlantic relations.

Doug Rediker who is a nonresident senior fellow at Brookings, an expert in sanctions, held many senior positions in the international financial world and also runs International Capital Strategies.

And last but not least, Jim Goldgeier who is a professor at American University and a nonresident senior fellow at Brookings.

So welcome all of you on this fairly momentous -- we've been talking about these events. Predicting them for some time. Obviously following them very closely. It's moved even more rapidly, I think, than one might have thought at the beginning.

And, Steve, if I might sort of start with you since, you know, the eyes of the world are fixated on Ukraine. I would say that this just really being a grand swell of international support for the Ukrainian people, you know, and the Ukrainian government. Maybe in a way that wasn't quite anticipated by the analytic community. And certainly, and by Russia. And many expected their forces to collapse and quite quickly. That is obviously not happened. And they're resisting veraciously.

Could you just give us maybe the benefit of your insight as somebody who has served as a U.S. ambassador to Ukraine? Who's been to Ukraine? Outside of that, countless times has written extensively on it.

I guess my question is, you know, are you surprised by how Ukraine has reacted? And what is your sense based on your context there of the mood and the strategic assessment now? And what their military and political objectives are in the weeks ahead?

MR. PIFER: Well, thanks very much. No, I think you've seen a remarkable transition and it really goes back eight years to the Maidan Revolution in which Ukrainians made very clear they want to be in Europe.

And it's also, of course, with the Russian annexation of Crimea, the, then the conflict in Donbas. I recall back in 2014 talking to Ukrainians and, you know, Vladimir Putin has succeeded where centuries of Ukrainian nationalists have failed. As he's actually created a strong sense of national identity in Ukraine and he's imbued it with a strong anti-Russian sentiment. And I think the last two weeks, I mean this conflict are only making it even tighter.

I was in Kyiv a month ago and there were still these petty disputes among political parties. They've all come together now. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, I think there were questions about some of his policies. You know, he has emerged really as a true wartime president. Just contrast the pictures we saw a couple of days ago. Zelenskyy is out there having tea with soldiers. And then there's Vladimir Putin meeting with his minister of defense and the head of his general staff and they're sitting 30 feet away.

But, you know, looking at this as a conflict, you know, people have often said, Russia cares more about Ukraine than the West does. And that maybe true, but they tend to leave Ukrainians out. Ukrainians care about Ukraine a lot. And I think they see this as an existential struggle. If they lose this, they lose a lot.

They lose democracy. They're going to be like Russia. They lose Europe. They lose their hopes of one day becoming a normal European country fully integrated into the European Union. So I think you've seen a fight that's going on with both skill and determination. And the Ukrainians have a sizeable military, about a quarter of a million people in active duty, 400,000 veterans. A lot of those who are now in the territorial events. And we've seen over the first six days that I think they have succeeded in slowing the Russian advance from what many people might have projected, say, a week or two ago.

Now, I think the Kremlin is surprised by this. It does seem that the last two days, there has been a pause on the Russian side as they reorganize and while I think there's a sense of optimism after the last of six days for the Ukrainians. I think we need to bear in mind that the Russian military still maintains significant advantages in mass,

numbers and modern weapons.

And the concern now is with the Russians have failed in relatively small probes to try to get to Kyiv. Do they now resort to more brute force tactics? Do we start seeing something that we saw already yesterday in Kharkiv with mass missile attacks on the city?

It's going to be hard for the Ukrainians to win. I think the Ukrainians are open to a negotiation. A couple of days ago, Zelenskyy suggested even we might be able to talk about neutrality guarantees. But I think what the Ukrainians are offering now is not enough for Putin. So I don't see a lot of prospects for negotiations.

And I guess my last observation would be is at the end of the day the Ukrainians may not be able to win in terms of stopping the Russians and having the Russians leave. But it's hard for me to see how the Russians win. And I use win in quotation marks. Because even if the Russians achieve what appears to be their maximal objective, which is to take Kyiv, oppose the current government and then put in place a pro-Russian government. What happens next?

Any pro-Russian government the Russians install in Kyiv last two minutes after the Russian military leaves. So the Russians maybe setting themselves up for a lengthy, lengthy occupation with a hostile, angry and in many cases armed population and it can be fairly ugly. I think the Ukrainians will continue to resist.

Part of that will depend upon the brutality of the Russian occupation, but I think it will continue. And as I said, this is going to be a long story to play out. It's going to be a tragedy for Ukraine, but I also think it's going to be a tragedy for a lot of Russian families who are not going to see their loved ones coming home.

MR. WRIGHT: Steve, thank you. Fascinating. Angela, if I could come to you next for the other piece of this? I mean Steve talked about Ukraine and the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian people.

You know, you're a lifelong sort of student of Russia and Russian foreign

policy and have written extensively on Vladimir Putin's foreign policy and mindset. And I guess the question really is how do you think both he and sort of the Russian security leader looking at things now? I mean he laid out a view over the past nine or ten months which basically amounted to that Ukraine wasn't a real country.

It was sort of made up and he had a lot of positive optimistic assumptions from his point of view about how Ukraine would sort of fold and collapse. But things haven't quite gone, obviously, as he would have expected. So what's your sense of the mood and the calculations in Moscow this week? And could you maybe take us out a little bit in terms of what you think his objectives are now?

MS. STENT: Well, thank you, Tom. So I think we have some idea of what his objectives were in the beginning because the Russian government, one of the Russian government websites, we had noticed the media organization prematurely published an article two days after the invasion began, and they may have written it beforehand, saying how easily Ukraine had surrendered. That the Ukrainians really wanted to be reunited with the Russians. That we're going to have a completely new world order now. The Anglo-Saxons are finished. This article has since been taken down from the website. But I think these were obviously their orders. And it's interesting to see, you know, what they thought was going to happen.

The war isn't going well for the Russians or as well for the Russians as they had hoped. It's clear that President Putin was misinformed by some of the military around him about how easily the Ukrainians would surrender. And we don't know whether that's because they themselves were misinformed or whether they knew that this was what Putin wanted to hear. But we have that there's clearly an issue here about the information he's getting and what he wants to believe.

We now see, unfortunately, the beginning of much more indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets because, you know, it's been much harder for the Russians to conquer Ukraine than they thought it would be. I'm reminded, you know, if we're looking at

Putin's mindset. How did he come to power?

Just shortly after he was named prime minister, he launched the second war in Chechnya. And if we think about what happened then what did the Russians do? They leveled Grozny, the capital city of Chechnya. So you wonder whether this is part of Putin's playbook now? Is just bombing, destroying?

If we see what's happening in Kharkiv. And these tactics are going to get more brutal and civilians are clearly being targeted. And the other analogy we're thinking about Putin is if we assume that what the Russians are trying to do is to surround Kyiv and maybe starving out. You do have the analogy with what happened in the siege of Leningrad during World War II. Something that Putin herself is acutely aware of, his parents went through it.

So it seems that the tactics are much more brutal because Putin is determined to succeed. And for him, success would mean taking Kyiv, subduing Ukraine and installing a puppet government there. Although, I completely agree with Steve. On day two, if there are no Russian forces there, this puppet government is finished. And the longer-term occupation of Ukraine, I think, is not something that Russia has calculated with.

Now, China has, for instance, now offered to mediate. Other countries have offered to mediate. You know, is Putin at all interested in mediation? And we can't see any evidence of that. I mean, there were talks between Ukrainians and Russians on the Belarus-Russian-Ukraine border, cease-fire talks. They really didn't amount to much. The fact that a former culture minister from Russia was sent to lead the delegation, I think tells you about how serious it is. So I see no interest at the moment from the Kremlin in any kind of an offering.

The sanctions that have been imposed, I think that they were far more than Putin had reckoned with. He's apparently very angry about them. There are, obviously, the personal sanctions against him, but of course the sanctions against the banks. Doug Rediker will be talking about that. But he looks upon this and as a result of this, right, just

actively will announce -- he then announced this sort of vaguely define special alert for Russians, Russia's deterrence and nuclear forces. But this is menacing.

This is out of the Putin playbook. He's now threatening the West. And anyone who helps Ukraine, he was explicit about this, that, you know, there is the nuclear option then. Suddenly, in the past few days, he's had lots of people talking about what this means. You know, would he really consider using tactical nuclear weapons in this fight? We don't know. The fact that this nuclear option now is on the table, again, very vague.

And the U.S., I think, was on it correctly by we didn't put our forces on alert. And President Biden tried to play it down. Again, it shows, I think, about his state of mind. And there is increasing repression inside Russia.

Just yesterday or the day before, the one remaining independent radio station, Echo of Moscow, that has existed, you know, since the Soviet Union collapsed was taken off the air. And other opposition, and not even not opposition sites, have been taken down. So what's happening is a greater repression. And it's impossible now to find information about all of these protests that are going on. But I have to say, I'm amazed that so many thousands of Russians have taken to the streets to protest this war.

And my final point here is again as we see Putin determine to crush Ukraine is his state of mind. And there is much more discussion now about what he's thinking? Why is he acting like this? There are questions about his health and things like that. I just put that out there because you hear rumors about reports about his increasingly paranoid way of thinking.

And I was reminded when he became president in 2000, he gave a series of autobiographical interviews. And in one of them, he describes living in a rat-infested apartment in Leningrad where he grew up. And as a child deciding that he was going to corner one of the large rats. And the rat then attacked him. And so, in that book, he says, you know, the conclusion I drew from that is you should never corner someone because they can hit back. And you should hit back before you are cornered.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, he is definitely -- he seems cornered, but we will see what his hit back is. We'll come back to this later. Particularly, the nuclear piece which I want to get everyone's thoughts on.

But, Pavel, you know, we'll move in a minute to the response. But, Pavel, you're an expert on Russian defense policy and the Russian military. Could you, you know, talk to us a little bit, I guess, what has surprised you especially in terms of the performance of the Russian military so far?

But also, where do they go from here? I mean it's widely expected, and we've already seen it begin, a much more sort of group offensive and indiscriminate, you know, offensive in Ukraine. But what's your sense of sort of the tactics and the morale and really the depth, you know, that Putin has to sort of tap into? How much can he assemble this force? But how much can he sort of mobilize, you know, Russian society? And where do you think sort of the military picture is headed in the weeks ahead?

MR. BAEV: Yes, Tom. These are important questions and probably in the immediate picture of things, they are crucial questions. But first, if you hear me all right, I will continue. If there are problems, I will switch off my video.

I think this war never had a chance to go according to plan. The plan was exposed by the U.S. intelligence pretty accurately. And we know about the concentration of forces. And we know about their kind of main directions of their assaults. But I think nobody thought that by the end of the first week of the war, we would be where we are because nothing effectively is happening on the battlefields.

Russians are not really able to achieve much except some territorial gains in the South. Two crucial points in this aggression are certainly Kyiv and Kharkiv. And what we see around Kyiv, I think generally tells you that the Russian assault on this huge organ center is pretty much impossible. There is no capacity to surround it. There is a single supply line which goes for miles and miles, and it's completely stuck. All logistics effectively is not holding. So surrounding Kyiv is really a task too far.

Kharkiv is a different story. It's much closer to the Russian border. It's much more exposed. It's much more difficult to bring Ukrainian reinforcements there in the Western weapons so to say, which are now coming into Ukraine increasingly. It's easy to deliver them through Odessa. It's possible to deliver them to Kyiv. Kharkiv is a different story.

I think that is the crucial point in the current battles. And it is in many ways a very Russian speaking city. It's your part of that more pro-Russian traditionally, Eastern Ukraine and it's holding very firm. It's holding absolutely. And again, Russians are trying to undermine morale of the defenders by delivering selective strikes. We're not speaking about, you know, massive bombing. We're not seeing anything resembling an attempt to erase the city like Grozny was erased or Aleppo for that matter.

There are still very, you know, very few, not particularly well-targeted missile and air strikes intended more to instill fear, to undermine the will to resist. And there achieving the exactly opposite result. So it is in many ways a very counterproductive strategy.

And the main issue here is about real strength of this Russian battalion tactical groups. It was easy to count them. It was very clear from every satellite picture where the tanks and the artillery positions are. But the will to fight is much more difficult to assess. And at least a half of the personnel in these battalions are young conscripts who expected to be discharged in March or in April.

And now, instead they are pushed into the war without any explanations. Without really any indoctrination towards the war because all they were told through the (inaudible) is about exercises. What they were told again and again, suddenly they are in the war. And I don't think there is much will in the Russian battalions who are attacking. It takes a lot of motivation really to go into urban fighting. I don't think this motivation is there and besides street fighting.

You know, every time a soldier is loading an artillery gun and firing into the

city, there is a bit of a thought in his head, what am I doing? What is this? And so, I think that every time they try to connect with their families back home. Every time they speak with their comrades, many of whom has relatives Ukraine. I think the morale is eroding very fast.

So every day where nothing much happens in the battlefield except for some strikes, tragic as they are, is a big win for Ukraine. Is a big setback for Putin's plan for this war. And that is why trying to resort to his ultimately argument with nuclear weapons. And it is pretty much a hallow bluff, the truth be said because putting your strategic forces on this very vaguely defined extra level of readiness doesn't mean anything for the war as far as nonstrategic and tactical nuclear weapons is concerned.

They are still stored in centralized storages. There are a few of them, about a dozen, and they are there for 30 years. Nobody in their ranks has any experience in handling them. There are certainly protocols and persons who are responsible for delivering them from these storages to their real weapon systems is a colossal risk of human error. Is a colossal risk of accident. You are really taking chances with these weapons and I don't think in the military there is much enthusiasm really for going across the nuclear threshold on this battlefield.

So I think so far it is still very much in (inaudible) undermine the morale and the will to resist in Ukraine with this very flawed expectation that it's not a real threat. Push it a little harder, it will break apart. And this ideological proposition really informs the strategy. And the strategy doesn't work. And there is no Plan B. And there is no interest in trying something else.

So I think the war is stuck. And this can continue for another week. And I don't think we are looking into a protracted conflict simply because the material resources in Russia for a protracted war are not there. So it might be a much shorter conflict than anticipated by many Western experts.

MR. WRIGHT: Thanks, Pavel. And one thing I think we need to pick up later. You know, we want to move to Europe and NATO and the response now, but one

thing we want to pick up later I think is, you know, if all of that is true than what does Putin do, right?

I mean what's his play now? Because he's presumably not just going to step down and retire, right? So like what's his move?

Constanze, if we can turn to you next and, you know, this invasion, I would say, I think it's fair to say came as a surprise to many governments in Europe. You know, they heard the U.S. intelligence. They were a little bit skeptical. I think they did basically absorb and accept it, but they also thought that it seems the invasion will be somewhat limited.

But what we've seen really over the last week is an extraordinary change in European security and in Germany, in your own country as well. I mean, you've been a very close student of Trans-Atlantic relations but also European security. Often, I think it's fair to say sort of arguing, you know, that they should take much bigger leaps than they were willing to do. And you've been making these points for a long time.

What is your sense just of how do you sort of think about this? If you agree, you know, this extraordinary sort of catalyst? And the second question is the same I asked the others really. What do you think the strategic calculations are now in Europe and in the EU about where we are headed? I mean there's been the tough response, but where do you think they want to go from here?

MS. STELZENMULLER: All complicated questions. Thank you very much. You know, I was in Germany in late November, early December and spoke to some people. And people, you know, with access to intelligence information in Germany had a very bleak assessment of what was to come even then. I have to say that I came back convinced that those who were dreading the worst were right.

The problem is that the security tribe to which I belong, which as you say, Germany has been saying for really decades that we need to change the way we define, conceptualize and implement national security. We're facing an uphill battle against those

who found it very convenient to outsource security to America, energy to Russia and export income to China.

It was a great deal for Germany particularly since EU, NATO enlargement had two fantastic results for Germany prosperity and safety which was that we acquired an enormous value change, the Hinterland, in Eastern Europe. The Eastern European economies are profoundly integrated with outer Germany. And we also pushed out all of our security problems from what used to be the inner German border to Eastern Europe's periphery from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

Leaving Germany's citizens in the (inaudible) conviction that somehow the arch of history had bent in our direction and that we were now being rewarded for having gotten atonement and reconciliation, right? And that everybody was now going to be like us instead of us, you know, previously trying to become civilized members of the world community.

That was a very hard narrative for push against. For those, of course, who were studying what was happening. It was always clear that it couldn't last and that we were going to have to do something. And I would even say that some days developments dramatic as they were, you know, went completely unpredictable. As some of you on this call know, I've been saying and boring many of you by saying that in my view, German attitudes of security at least among those who dealt with these issues professionally had begun to change quite significantly ever since the Russia attack on Georgia in 2008.

But again, the problem was turning that into national policy and policymakers in government telling the public that this was necessary and that what was needed was a seismic shift rather than very slow incremental changes.

Let me just perhaps briefly recapitulate for those of you who unaccountably don't obsessively study every element of German news. We shut down Nord Stream 2. The company operating Nord Stream 2 has just declared insolvency a few days ago. I haven't even found time to celebrate that. The promise to increase the German defense budget to

two percent of its GDP immediately. In other words, yes, it's a promise to keep a promise.

But given the fact that in the last four years, I think our defense budget went from 33 billion Euros to 50 billion Euros. That's a really big additional promise. We've already done something fairly astounding with our defense increases under Merkel government. But this is an even bigger shift.

On top of that a 100 billion Euro as a sort of starter injection of capital to make the shift happen. That is something that we're now reading in German newspaper, Chancellor Scholz discussed only with his finance minister. And when he advanced it on Sunday at a special session of the Comstock. His only parliamentary group, the Green parliamentary group, his vice chancellor and his foreign minister were first informed of this decision which is astounding.

Then the decision to build two terminals for liquid natural gas. As of now, we have none. The opposition leader, Friedrich Merz, chimed in and said, of course, we're going to do this and we won't dispute. You know, we won't engage with you in pointless disputes about details. We are going to be in this sense a loyal opposition. And even the coleader of Die Linke and the quite left-wing parliamentary group leader of the SBD chimed in saying, it's very clear that Russia is the aggressor here and that has to have consequences for our national security.

That is an astounding shift in Germany's culture. And to quote a piece in this week's newspaper I used to work for, sorry. The espada has just thrown 30 years of pacifist foreign security policy overboard. The Greens have finally kicked pacificism ado. The liberals, the finance minister who was a notable fiscal hawk saying goodbye to fiscal conservatism. Saying this is a time to spend rather than to save.

And the CDU, the opposition, Merkel's party saying not everything was good that happened in the 16 years of Merkel's tenure.

And unlike the Munich consensus of 2014, remember when Germany is then president foreign minister, defense minister gone on the podium one after the other and

said German security policy has to change. It has to become more responsible. But were notably silent of the details of how this was going to happen and therefore could not be held to any to any benchmarks of later implementation.

These are very specific promises that this government can be held to and apparently is determined to be held to. Now, so much for what happened on Sunday, but of course we all know that it is going to be extremely difficult for this government to manage a climate transition, an energy transition, a historic inflow of refugees and a historic defense transition at the same time at a time when as my colleagues have suggested, we are looking at a protracted, nasty, brutal Russian war of aggression against a free and sovereign country on our borders.

Promises have been made of offering Ukraine EU membership. That I'm afraid is an empty promise. It's just not politically, technically feasible. Not with a country that is at war and being occupied. But what the EU has done -- sorry, let me retract so nobody gets me wrong.

I am absolutely for saying to Ukraine, we will do everything in our power to help you now and we are doing everything to make sure you come out as the winners of this conflict. And then, we will talk about EU membership and we do it in such a way that you can manage it and we can manage it in the hopes of achieving a transformation at the end of which the question answers itself.

But I think the far more important gesture that's being currently made is that every Ukraine refugee can come to the EU without having to submit to the onerous asylum procedures and stay for three years. And my understanding is that there are now discussions about offering the same to Russians who want to flee persecution in Russia. And that I think is the -- apart from sending weapons to Ukraine, apart from humanitarian aid probably the most important signal that we can send.

That anybody who is persecuted by Putin can find sanctuary in Europe and a productive -- a life in peace and productive employment. And I think that's the best signal

we can send to the world. That's not to say that I don't have grime predictions about how this conflict could still involve Western forces. How it could still be carried to NATO territory. All of us, I think can imagine that, but that's perhaps a related discussion. And I'll stop here. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Thanks, Constanze. Thank you. Doug, returning to you next and then to Jim.

Some commentators have described the sanction responses total financial warfare, you know, on Russia. We certainly haven't seen anything, you know, like this before against a country as large and as significant, you know, as Russia. How sort of -- I guess the two questions are is that right? I mean how historically significant, you know, is this move? And if I may, because we only have until the top of the hour just jump into as well.

Where does this end up? You know, like we're seeing a concertize punishment strategy, but what -- if we played a tape forward, you know, a month, six months, what do you think the endgame or the different sort of versions of this are as we go forward?

MR. REDIKER: Thanks, Tom. Actually, your questions are exactly what I've written in my notes to follow. So I'm on the right page, I guess.

First of all, you know, you said these are an act of war. Yeah, I would say if we weren't in the era in which the world nuclear is being used in a literal context then for those of us who sometimes use the word nuclear as a figurative description of just how big something like a sanction package is then I'd say this is going down the route of the nuclear option on sanctions.

But again, since we're talking nuclear, I'm just going to say it's a big F-ing deal. These are huge sanctions not only on their face but because of the unexpected nature of the coordination with Europe and other G7 and even now in G7 countries just to give a sense. Not only is historically neutral Switzerland onboard, but even Monaco has joined in

some of these sanctions.

When you get Monaco to take on Russian oligarchs, you know you've got unprecedented global unity. So it's not just the nature of the sanctions, but in fact the scale and the scope of the unanimity of those who are supporting it.

Let me go to your question about what the purpose is and what happens next? Because where we are now is effectively what I would describe as a pre-deterrent Cold War economic landscape. So this is about as bad as the relationship has been between the U.S. and Russia, slash, the Soviet Union in many, many decades. People forget how isolated the Soviet block was from the Western economies sphere in the bad old days. And that's kind of where we are today.

So it gets to your question about, well, where do we go next? And the problem is sanctions can play multiple roles. They can be a deterrent. Well, that didn't work because we are where we are. I'm not criticizing. I'm just saying that the deterrent strategy is to preempt something and where we are is where we are.

Then you got the punishment aspect. And I think that's what this primarily is. You know, there was a sense both for setting a precedent on the global landscape, but also on the context of what Russia has done that you need to punish. There needs to be retribution. There needs to be a price paid. In fact, I would argue going after some of the oligarchs in such an overt fashion is not necessarily a means by which to seek to change behavior, but it's to say, enough is enough. We tolerated this for 10, 20, 30 years, enough.

But then that gets to the where do you go next with this? And as we've heard from some of the previous speakers on this morning's panel. Putin is boxed in. He's in a corner. However, you want to describe how he got there or where he is. You know, there doesn't appear to be much of an offramp left for Putin. And I don't think that these sanctions are coming off any time soon.

Let's just be clear. I don't see a scenario in which there's a negotiated outcome in which some of the sanctions, whether they are against the central bank, whether

they are against individuals, whether they are against the banks, whether they are against any of the tools that have been already used. Whether we say, well, we will now go back and reverse those if you what? If you stop the invasion? If you stop the bombing? If you stop the hostile actions?

I don't think that's really on the table, which means that Vladimir Putin is in that corner and the sanctions part are not being structured as a negotiating leverage tool. They are being used I think as punishment. That doesn't mean that there won't be a negotiated outcome. Although, I'm not sure I see where that comes. But the sanctions don't seem to be structured to achieve that goal.

Let me just throw one other thing in because I know we're a little short on time, which is to say. The export controls that we have imposed. And most of what I described earlier, the banking sanctions, the central bank, the oligarchs have been done in coordination with all of the G7, the EU, the U.K. and other countries. That's been a huge multilateral success and an effort.

But the export controls of the United States effectively are imposing under its own laws are unbelievably important over the longer term. And not to bore everyone, the short summary means anything that has a high-tech component in it that contains U.S. intellectual property or other inputs, and that's basically everything on the high-tech side, has now been restricted into Russia.

That's not going to impact iPhones. It's not going to impact daily life. It's not intended to do that. But what it does is effectively take away the option from Vladimir Putin's next economic model, post-fossil fuel. The famous Russian is a gas station masquerading as a country line. And we have now taken that AI, high tech, next phase of economic development off the table. Because what we've done is limit the import not only from the U.S. but from any country in the world of those necessary tools by which the Russian economy can develop.

That's a huge, though medium to longer term impediment to Russia's

economic growth. And I go back to my earlier point, I'm not sure how you roll that back. So if you're Vladimir Putin, there's not a lot that you look at in what has been imposed on the sanction side that gives him a sense of, well, maybe if I lighten up over here, I'll get some relief over there. It's a very serious package and I don't see a lot of ways to get off this track.

The last point I'll make is China, which is the one actor here that a lot of people are pointing to as the release valve for Vladimir Putin's economy. I think that that is true but only in a very, very small number. China is not a substitute for any of the areas that we have cut Russia's economy off from. Neither financial nor economic. Obviously, they can continue to export oil through the global markets and China will be a ready, willing and able buyer.

There is some financial ruble and (inaudible) trade that can still be facilitated, but make no mistake. China is not the sanctions proof escape valve for what we and our G7 allies imposed on Russia. This is big. This is going to hurt. And again, I'm not sure what the endgame is. It seems to be more punitive than it does to create negotiating leverage. But make no mistake without -- you know, going back to what I said earlier -- in sanctions world, this is the nuclear option.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Doug. Jim, you've been super patient so thank you. But I was hoping we could sort of zoom out the lens a little bit. Certainly, if you have any comment on what has gone before.

But you're a historian of NATO. You've written extensively on that, but also on the post-Cold War, you know, period as well as sort of, you know, following obviously and analyzing, you know, contemporary events. But I'm wondering if you could put on your historian's hat for a minute and tell us a little bit of how you think about the moment we're in?

I mean it feels like the end of one era and the beginning of another. Certainly, the clarification, you know, of an era that we maybe already, you know, entered. But is it a new Cold War? Is it something else? And what do you think looking at the

different ways this could unfold? What do you think the different futures are that we could be headed into?

And I want to just add just before you answer that. If anyone has any questions, you can mention them on Twitter with the #RussianInvasion or send them to events@brookings.edu. We have a few coming in already which we'll get to in a minute. But, Jim, over to you.

MR. GOLDGEIER: Thanks. Well, what a great discussion we've had. It's great to learn from all of my colleagues.

So, you know, I think now it's really hard to even remember back to how much high hopes we had in the early 1990s about the prospects for a U.S.-Russia relationship. About the efforts that NATO made to reach out to Russia and establish the NATO/Russia Founding Act in 1997. In, you know, the hopes of reassuring Russia that whatever NATO was doing on the continent of Europe was not directed against Russia, but was seeking to create more stability and security across the continent.

And I think most importantly to realize that absent Putin's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and after and of course now at a just, you know, a much, much higher level. What would we have seen? We would have likely seen the NATO sort of drift, lose its sense of purpose. The animating issues of the early 2000s enlarging NATO across Central and Eastern Europe, the war in Afghanistan.

I mean these had largely ended by then. There wasn't really much, you know, that same kind of animating sense of purpose. The United States really put a pivot to the Indo-Pacific as it said it wanted to in the early Obama administration and would have lost much more interest in Europe. And I think, you know, we just would have seen something very different.

What has Putin done since 2014? I mean he's united NATO. And he's really united NATO now. The two percent pledge that we talk about. NATO members spending two percent -- aspiring to spend two percent of their GDP on defense by 2024.

The pledge that was made in the Summer of 2014. I mean that came about after his invasion of Ukraine that year. And we would not have expected -- we were not expecting the Germans to meet that two percent goal anytime in the foreseeable future until this current invasion.

The rotation of troops, NATO troops into Eastern Europe. The exercises, the efforts to reassure the Eastern members of NATO. We wouldn't have had any of that absent the 2014 invasion. And so, now what do we have? Now, we have an even greater sense of unity and purpose.

In recent years, of course, Turkey's relationship with the West had become quite fraught. Lots of concern about the Hungarian leader Victor Auburn's relationship with Putin and cozying up to the Russian. And look today at the kind of unity we're getting within NATO, within the European Union. Both of which include Hungary as a member.

The populations of Sweden and Finland showing greater interest in NATO membership. And Sweden and Finland sending military assistance to Ukraine. Never would have imagined that taking place. And a U.S. that's deeply, deeply engaged in Europe. And in ensuring security in Europe and standing up for NATO allies.

A year ago, if you would have asked me what the president would be talking about on foreign policy in a state of the union address in 2022, I would have said, well, of course, the competition with China and the way -- and would have utilized sort of the growing bipartisan sense of concern about China and China's growth, China's impact on the world using that to try to create some sense of unity in the United States.

We didn't hear anything about China last night. You know, this was about Ukraine and Eastern Europe and the way in which this has created at least around that some sense of bipartisanship. So I think that we are really in a different era. The 1997 NATO/Russia Founding Act, which countries have an important sense, really stuck to the NATO countries in that there was an effort to reassure the Russians that there wouldn't be a permanent stationing of troops in the member countries -- from the West into the member

countries that joined in 1999 and after.

And that's why we've seen the rotating troop deployments throughout the Eastern members. I think we should see the declaration that the Founding Act is dead. That Russia has violated all of the efforts, all of the provisions to create a better NATO/Russia relationship. And in fact, that reassurance of the Eastern members requires a permanent stationing of troops on their territory to reassure them.

And I think, you know, whether we call it a Cold War or not, it's certainly will be some kind of version of containment of the type that we saw during the Cold War where we tried to ensure that Russian aggression is contained. That it does not spread to other areas of Europe. And, you know, hopefully in this case with the assistance to Ukraine that the invasion that we've seen in the last couple of weeks that this can be reversed in some way.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Jim. That's a terrific sort of segue to that larger question. We do have a number of questions in.

We don't have very much time because we did say we would keep this to an hour, but we've had, you know, obviously a lot of panelists and really terrific conversations. So I'll just ask everybody to keep, you know, treat it as a lightning round. Very complex questions. You can talk for 10 minutes about but try to maybe just give a very short bytes in response.

I'll come to Angela and Pavel on this one. And then I have others for our other panelists. But the question is from Garrett Mitchell (phonetic) who asks -- I think this is on a lot of people's mind.

Is there any basis for thinking that a prolonged and problematic invasion of Ukraine might lead Putin in danger of a coup? Are there key figures who might be persuaded to lead such an effort? So what I -- you know, getting those perspective plotters in trouble by adding here.

Angela, if we could start with you. What is the possibility of political change

in Russia? And is that a little bit of a pipe dream that maybe we're clinging to? Or is there a real, you know, chance of something happening?

MS. STENT: Well, I always hesitate to make any predictions about things like this because Russia can always surprise and we look obviously at Putin now and he seems to be in firm control.

Again, the greater repression than ever, but of course there could be cracks. So the answer to that is of course it's possible. You wonder, and one has heard some rumors about that with all of the people on the top brass of the military really think that what's happening at the moment with this invasion of Ukraine was a sensible or wise or the right thing to do.

And a few weeks ago, there was a group of retired army officers who published criticisms for the invasion. But criticizing Putin and saying that, you know, they should not attack Ukraine.

I couldn't tell you whether there's any one single figure out there who would be a potential alternative to Putin so I think I'll let Pavel do that.

MR. BAEV: Oh, that. That is below the belt. An interesting twist. The question what Putin thinks about it? And I think he's really in the situation of high anxiety because in his mind and it's probably correctly. Every one of his aides, every one of his ministers and every one of his (inaudible) wants him out.

That will be a solution to the problem. And the problem grows larger every day as the war seems to be stuck. So what Putin himself thinks about it? How he perceives that? You know, his inner and kind of outer circles that is an interesting -- I wouldn't begin to imagine his state of mind here.

The only person in his entourage who has his own perspective, his own support base, longer experience in politics than Putin himself is the Sergey Shoigu, the minister of defense.

He's a very experienced courtlier. He knows how to (inaudible) or show

loyalty. But also, in his previous experience as the minister of emergency, he has seen a lot of men (inaudible) disastrous. That is a unique perspective he has. So if the reason a person who is particularly concerned about that's probably him and with good reason.

But I think the larger question is that this regime cannot survive a defeat. It's just plain impossible. Putin's stakes are so high. And everything is on achieving some sort of success and the success remains to lose. You know, he has no possibility to retreat even to compromise. It would signify what sort of shape and form this defeat will take. How this regime will collapse? That is a huge question.

Now, we're all concerned about Ukraine. And Ukraine is a tragedy. I think our next concern will be about Russia where there is a looming catastrophe.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Pavel. That's terrific. Steve, there's a question here. And again, I ask you to be super brief. It's something you could talk about for 10 or 15 minutes, but Florine Van Upenheim (phonetic) asks, how do we balance the conflicting interest of, A, the West supporting Ukraine now and offering EU membership? And, B, efforts to achieve a ceasefire through compromise?

You know, this is a crucial, you know, question, I guess, in terms of the sort of any prospect for diplomatic, you know, outcome? There's military assistance obviously, but the military analysis, it's still pessimistic for Ukraine's chance there. So how do you sort of see this?

MR. PIFER: I think that's one of the big questions, but at this point in time based on the signals you're seeing out of Moscow, I'm pretty pessimistic about the chances to negotiate a ceasefire.

And when you look at the two sides. Where's the overlap? I mean right now it appears that the Russian objective is to take Kyiv, to depose the government and put in place, you know, somebody else. How does the government in Kyiv compromise on that?

So I think it's going to have to -- there's going to have to be some more changes and we'll have to see what happens on the fight before you get a position from the

Russians that could actually allow for a real negotiation.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Steve. I really appreciate this. Steve as well. Constanze, it's a question from Fred Hauder (phonetic), which I think is also on people's minds.

How feasible are indictments by The Hague in the near term? But also more generally, obviously, you have a diesel background. Very interested in sort of the international law part of this. At the same time, you know, the ICC is constrained in what it can do with the major powers. So how do you see this part of it?

MS. STELZENMULLER: Thank you for that question. This is where I put in a plug for another Brookings' event. The Briere lecture, the annual Briere lecture this year will be given on April 8th by the acclaimed author and internationally lawyer, Philippe Sands, on war crimes, genocide and ecocide. He will tie together these and other current questions of international criminal law.

I will just say for the moment that the prosecutor, the chief prosecutor, of the international criminal court in The Hague has just announced two days ago that he is opening a line of forensic inquire into war crimes committed in Ukraine. The problems that you point out are real. A member of the security council has a veto against the bringing of cases in The Hague.

So Russia can conceivably stop such proceedings, but I think that creative ways will be found to collect forensic evidence and create a historic record and perhaps create a body of evidence against such a day when it might be possible to have a Russian government that would be cooperative in pursuing criminal cases against perhaps a former leadership.

Remember that in the '90s it was thought completely impossible that this could ever happen with Yugoslavia and you ended up with Slobodan Milosevic in front of The Hague court. I am aware, of course, as a lawyer of the legal and political complications of such moves. I am aware that the pursuit of international justice can sometimes conflict

with the pursuit of peace.

But as it has been said here before, the current Russian president appears not to be willing or able to find any common ground with Ukraine to negotiate a peace that is not based on the annihilation of Ukrainian democracy. Thank you.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Constanze. We're just about out of time, but I want to ask Doug and Jim one more lightning round question if you can say it. But Doug, and again, this falls in the category of a very complex questions but to have a short answer to.

But is there any -- you mentioned that the sanctions aren't likely to be lifted. And I think that's right. But is there any way to use them sort of strategically so they can be, you know, calibrated in some ways? Part of a negotiation where there could be an exchange for, you know, a ceasefire? There could be some easing of it? How complicated is that to do? And do you think leaders are sort of thinking about how they might be used in a relatively flexible way to achieve a political outcome?

MR. REDIKER: So the answer is it is probably possible to do it meaning from a technical means. You've got executive orders and the EU's directives that have imposed these sanctions. Where there's a political will to actually, you know, dangle the ability to roll them back, I think that is possible.

I just don't think it is plausible because now that you've created not only what Constanze was describing as this, you know, predicate for international condemnation and potential criminal investigation. How do you actually now say, well, okay?

To the oligarchs, well, we are going to say maybe you can have some of your ill-gotten gains if Putin decides to roll back the invasion. How do you say maybe we'll allow you to exchange some of your hard currency for a little bit of rubles to maybe provide a little bit of intervention to stabilize the decline in the ruble? How do you say maybe we'll let your banks do a little bit of transactions on the international markets?

I mean it's just we've gone into, as I say, an economic cold war and it's hard

to go into that détente phase without there being a significant undermining of the premise where you started. If Putin is not there then yes.

I think many of -- well, some of those could be put on the table in a post-Putin regime. While the current regime is there with the agenda that they've espoused, I just find it hard to imagine how you structure it even if legally it's possible to do so.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Doug. Jim, if we could give you the last word. And I guess my sort of question goes back to the state of the union last night when we saw remarkable unity on Ukraine. Remarkable unity on NATO.

As we've spoken about many times in our meetings at Brookings and elsewhere. You know, over the last sort of 10 years, there's a sense that in certain quarters in the U.S. there's sort of less commitment in Trans-Atlantic relationship. I mean clearly the President is committed Trans-Atlanticist, but the country, you know, has increasing challenges in China. You know, there's some support for pulling out of NATO or at least decreasing U.S. commitment to NATO on the Trumpian side.

Is what happened sort of a real pivotal moment in terms of, you know, a greater view or continuing U.S. commitment to Europe and NATO? Do you see this, you know, as a moment where that has sort of crystalized and we will see the Trans-Atlantic reliance remaining sort of a core piece of U.S. foreign policy regardless of election that comes here or is that still in play?

MR. GOLDGEIER: Yeah. I think it's quite remarkable. And, you know, last year I was pointing out that if you went back 30 years, at the end of the Cold War you would have found that Europe and Russia were central to U.S. foreign policy. And the U.S. policy towards Europe and Russia was about Europe and Russia.

The whole effort to create a Europe whole free and at peace. The effort to build a strong relationship with a democratic Russia. And my point last year was that U.S. policy towards Europe and Russia wasn't about Europe and Russia at all. It was about China.

President Biden talked about creating a stable and predictable relationship with Russia. The whole goal there was sort of a quiet Russia that allowed the United States to really focus its attention on China. And the policy toward Europe was about what can Europe do for us in the competition with China?

And now, what we're seeing again is policy towards Europe and Russia focused on Europe and Russia. This constellation, this unity of purpose with NATO allies really recognizing the importance of the Trans-Atlantic relationship.

And of course, unfortunately, compared to 30 years ago when the goal was to create a positive relationship with Russia, it really now is about trying to contain Russian aggression, prevent further Russia aggression and to try to stand up to Russia in order to, you know, hopefully at some point change its own orientation. And so, that we can get a different kind of relationship as Doug was just talking about.

But I do think the one concern I have about all of that is that it does put the United States back in the playing. I mean it's important for the United States to play a major role in Europe right now, but we didn't want to get back into a situation where the Europeans had that sense of dependence once again on American security and America was providing the primary means of security for Europe.

I still think it's important for Europe to develop what's been called strategic autonomy or what we could call strategic capability to be able to take more of security issues on their own. But that's now, you know, right now Europe needs the United States engaged and the United States, I think will continue to remain engaged as long as we have this threat posed by the Russian regime.

MR. WRIGHT: Jim, thank you very much. Thank you to all of our panelists. Doug, Steve, Jim, Constanze, Pavel and Angela. This is a topic I am sure we will come back to pretty soon either in this format or on Twitter spaces which we're doing now relatively frequently.

Thank you all for joining. And with that we are adjourned.

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