THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: YEAR TWO AND STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES

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INTRODUCTION:

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FEATURED DISCUSSION:

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PANEL 2:

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Suzanne Maloney Good afternoon to all of those who joined us here in Brookings Institution's Falk Auditorium. Good afternoon, good evening and good morning to those who may be joining us from other parts of the world. I'm Suzanne Maloney, I'm vice president and director of foreign policy here at Brookings. And I'm delighted to welcome you to this very special event as we approach the beginning of the second year of Russia's devastating war in Ukraine. As you all know, February 24th will mark one year since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a brutal invasion and assault on the Ukrainian people and on their land. The war has resulted in massive human suffering and economic costs that have extended well beyond Ukraine itself. Over 8 million Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge across Europe and beyond. Ukrainian resistance with political and military support from nearly 40 countries around the world has proven effective, inventive and unrelenting. Russia has failed to make significant territorial gains in Ukraine since August.

Although the war has not advanced in Putin's favor, many questions about the year ahead and the consequences it will have on global security and the international order remain. How can the United States and its allies in Europe and around the world assist the Ukrainians in defending their sovereignty while also helping to bring about an end to this horrific war? What will the ripple effects of the conflict mean for the rest of the world? We have brought together some truly esteemed thinkers from Brookings and from our peer organizations around Washington to try to unpack some of these issues. First, we will begin by hosting a featured discussion with Brookings Senior Fellow Fiona Hill and New Yorker author Susan Glasser. Following their conversation, the first panel will focus on the state of the conflict and policy questions from the United States and Europe. The second panel will dive into the war's consequences for international order, security and strategy. I look forward to the fascinating discussion and panels that we are about to present.

But before I pass the mic over to Fiona and Susan, I'd like to offer very brief introductions of our next two speakers. It's my great pleasure to introduce my wonderful colleague and old friend, Fiona Hill. She is truly a woman who needs no introduction. She's a senior fellow here in the center on the United States and Europe in the foreign policy program. And Fiona, as you all know, has expertly advised three U.S. government administrations, those of Presidents George W Bush, President Barack Obama, and President Donald Trump. Fiona served on the National Security Council as deputy assistant to the president and senior director for European and Russian affairs from 2017 to 2019. In November of last year, Fiona was appointed as the

Chancellor of Durham University in the UK close to her hometown. She's the author of the bestselling book, "There Is Nothing For You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century," and the coauthor of "Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin." This is only a very short and condensed biography of Fiona, as I'm sure you all know.

Joining Fiona in the conversation for this first session today is Susan Glasser, journalist and writer for The New Yorker. Susan previously served as editor in chief of Politico, where she founded Politico magazine, as well as at Foreign Policy. She spent over a decade at The Washington Post, where she also served as Moscow co-bureau chief and covered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Susan is the coauthor of a New York Times bestseller, "The Divider: An Account of the Trump Presidency." Finally, before we begin, I'd like to announce, let you all know that we are currently livestreaming and on the record. For those of you who are joining us online, you can submit questions to any of the panelists via the email address events at Brookings dot edu or using the hashtag Russia Ukraine on Twitter. For everyone here in person, we'll make sure there's a Q&A session at the end of each of our panel conversations, and individuals will be coming around with microphones so that your questions can be heard. Thanks to you all for coming, and now over to you, Fiona and Susan.

Susan Glasser Well, thank you so much, Suzanne. It is a real pleasure to be here with you at Brookings and seeing everyone who's taken the time out of their afternoon to come listen to what promises to be a really interesting and important afternoon of taking stock of where we are a year into this horrific war and what our prospects are looking ahead. So I'm, I'm really glad in particular to be here with my friend Fiona. I was thinking about it as I was listening to Suzanne, you know, this is a conversation that Fiona and I have been having really for the last 20 years. And Fiona was one of the very first people that, that Peter and I met before we moved to Moscow for The Washington Post, the very beginning of Vladimir Putin's long tenure. Certainly had you asked either one of us at that time, would Putin still be in power two decades later and embarked upon a war of annihilation on his neighbor, you know, we would have not predicted that.

And in that spirit of humbleness, the conversation sadly, you know, will continue from the point that we're at right now. And, and I do think that that it's important to say that, you know, that really if you look at this 20-year arc and this 20-year conversation, both Fiona and I have, have written books about Putin, we have thought a lot about what were the, the possibilities. I recently went back and looked at it and listened to, you know, some notes from conversations that we and other Russia hands were having a year ago at this time, and let's just say one big takeaway is that our expectations shape outcomes more than we think in Washington and not always are in the correct direction. And so in that spirit, I started out and I thought maybe Fiona, we would start out our conversation today by, by looking at some of our expectations and, you know, which ones

turned out and which ones didn't, because I do think that will shape actually in some important ways, not just our conversation, but, but the next year.

One way in which perhaps Washington was right, but many of our allies and partners was wrong, of course, was the mere fact of the invasion. And I will tell you, it's hard to put yourself in the mindset of February 20th, say, or February 21st, February 22nd, even, of last year, when it really was the case that many, many Europeans, many, many Russians simply did not believe their own eyes. They did not believe that this invasion force of 190,000 or whatever it was, was actually going to invade. Fiona, what else has surprised you over the last year? It's an interesting list, actually.

Fiona Hill Yes. Thanks so much, Susan. Before we go on as well, I just want people to also reflect on the not just the manmade tragedy of this war in Ukraine and, you know, the Russian and Ukrainian war, but what's just happened in Turkey. Because, you know, we couldn't have foreseen that for sure. Seismologists were talking, you know, today about, you know, it's been eighty years since there's been an earthquake in that particular zone, though it's not that long since the massive Marmara earthquake in Turkey of 1999. But, you know, the world has a way of surprising us. And the scale of this tragedy is actually right now unfathomable. I suspect, sadly, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of people have died in both Turkey and Syria. And I'd like us all to just reflect on that for a moment, because that will inevitably have a knock-on effect on this next year, because it's happening in roughly the same geopolitical zone as we've got this absolutely devastating war.

It's, it's the larger, greater Black Sea. Turkey obviously has been playing a very important role, actually, perhaps an unexpected role thinking, you know, back to a year in which President Erdogan has been actually a mainstay of some of the interventions in terms of the Black Sea blockade involving opening up again grain exports, working very closely with the United Nations. Turkey's obviously been playing a slightly different role in terms of Sweden and Finland's desires to get into NATO. And I think an awful lot of the way that things might have played out this next year will be affected by what's just happened at Gaziantep on the Turkish Syrian border and in that larger eastern Mediterranean Black Sea region. So I think that's actually just a really good reminder for all of us as we process this awful human tragedy that all kinds of unexpected occurrences can happen.

And so, you know, when we look back to a year ago when we were trying to see if we would predict this manmade, you know, atrocity, just even the scale of that was unfathomable. And I think that's kind of something that all of us have been given pause by is the scale of, of this war. Because even for those of us who did think something was going to happen, and I'm actually on the record of saying he's going to do something, did I really think that there would be a full on invasion of the entire country rather than basically more pressure on Donbass or moving up from Crimea into, you know, the region of [inaudible] region around

the Sea of Azov, but a multi-pronged attack on all of Ukraine, it didn't seem completely rational from anybody's point of view, no matter how much you knew Russia. But of course, that's not what Putin was intending to do.

And so when we think about what did we think, you know, what did Putin think? He didn't think that this is what would happen. He literally thought he was doing a special military operation. And obviously, the Ukrainians themselves couldn't believe this, as we know. And I had lots of interactions with German and French and other colleagues in those days leading up to it where it just seemed inconceivable to anyone that we could end up again with the third great power conflict in Europe in a century, something that, you know, is as devastating as the great wars that we've seen before.

Susan Glasser Yeah. And of course, that's, that's another big thing that, that wasn't expected, even for those of us who understood the Russian way of war and the, the brutality and attacks on civilian targets that might follow, the scale and scope of those have been truly, truly breathtaking. But to, to the other point, which is here we are sitting in Washington, and another surprise, certainly, I would say for most people has been not only the ability to maintain and build a coalition internationally with, with allies in Europe, but also to maintain, at least up until this point, a largely bipartisan support for unprecedented amounts of aid. I looked and as of the end of 2022, when you include all the types of assistance, we're talking about something on the order of $50 billion that the U.S. and Congress have already authorized for Ukraine. That is not something I think most people in this room would have predicted a year ago.

And I am just wondering how you see the prospects going forward, because I do think, again, expectations and how they will ultimately actually shape outcomes, does this mean that we can now expect continued flows of aid? Is that something that Vladimir Putin is now expecting? What do you call this? Is it, in fact, as many people have suggested, really a proxy war that the U.S. is now mounting in Ukraine when you look at the dependance that has been built up of U.S. supplied weapons and assistance? I think these are really important questions. Tonight, we're going to hear from President Biden. He has tried to steer a very delicate line between what he calls the risk of provoking World War Three and offering a very, very robust amount of aid to Ukraine. What do you think we'll hear?

Fiona Hill Well, I'm not sure quite exactly what we'll hear on the State of the Union. And actually, Brookings had an event on that, you know, quite recently. And we can look back at some of the colleagues. But, you know, I think part of the problem is the way that we're talking about this all of the time. We're kind of stuck in a set of narratives which I don't think are particularly helpful also for getting us to think forward. And, you know, even in just in the way of talking about the United States role, you get a whole debate about what the United States would do in World War One, and World War Two has been well-trod, our colleague at Brookings, Bob Kagan, you know, had a recently, I mean, most of you have probably seen it, whether you've got a chance to read a multiple page spread in The Washington Post with extracts from his book looking at,

you know, the United States interventions in World War One and World War Two. And our colleague Michael O'Hanlon, who's sitting here, has written a great book for military strategists looking at American wars from 1861 and the Civil War, you know, all the way through sort of the same time period.

And the lessons from all that is it takes the United States quite a long time to kind of figure out where it is and what it's about, what exactly it's doing. World War One, World War Two, Civil War was obviously, you know, something that was framed quite differently. But other, you know, U.S. interventions. And, you know, I was reflecting on that because I was looking at both of their books and thinking would we have called it a proxy war, our support for Britain against— because I'm from Britain originally— in the 1939, 1940 and 1941, before the United States went into World War Two, was that a proxy war with Germany? I don't think we would have described it like that. And I think that's kind of part of the problem as we look at Russia and Ukraine about what's happening is we're still stuck, actually, all of us, in a Cold War mindset.

I mean, people have been quoting Kennan and talking about saying that he, Kennan saying that Russia would never support Ukraine going independent in 1948. Well, that's immediately after World War Two and the Soviet Union. Of course, he wouldn't, because Ukraine was at that point, of course, Soviet Union wouldn't, that was a, you know, Soviet republic. But Ukraine is an independent country and has been an independent country for 30 years, just like Poland, Finland, the Baltic States, Hungary, Austria, all kinds of other countries became independent after World War One and remain so. We're still stuck in that kind of mind view of thinking that Russia was a successor state to the Soviet Union and therefore we're still in terms of spheres of influence, and that the United States is somehow still the other occupying force in Europe, which is the way that Russia describes it very frequently.

So if we keep thinking about that, it all becomes framed by a struggle between the United States and Russia, and then what is the United States going to do. Rather than looking it from other angles, which is about Ukraine is an independent European country, after World War Two and after the Cold War, all of Europe basically said there was no more annexation of territory, no more forcible changes of borders. Now, we had the wars in Yugoslavia, and this is really, in many respects, a war of Soviet succession in many respects of, you know, Russia, you know, turning back again like Serbia did, you know, within Yugoslavia. But we've tried to break out of that mold.

And so the more we focus on what is the United States going to do when rather how does, what does this tell us about the future of Europe, I think we're going to get ourselves stuck. So the question is how to talk about this and then from that flows, and I'm sure we're going to hear about it in the next panels, about how we're going to deal with it in the realm of international law, in the realm of the kind of support we give, because Ukraine is trying to liberate itself from being invaded, just like the Finns did in 1941 when they were invaded by the Soviet Union, having been independent for 20 years.

Susan Glasser You know, it's a very interesting point because I think one of the things if you look back not just over the last year, but over the last two decades of experience with Putin, is that the conversation in Washington has consistently tended to overestimate our own ability to shape events while underestimating what Putin would do again and again and again. And so I think that seems to me definitely a big risk factor right now in Washington. You know, just provide this or that weapon system, you know, and you'll, you'll see this or that outcome on the ground.

That being said, the US clearly has a pretty significant voice in all of this. And by the decisions it makes and the weapons it chooses to provide and potentially the Strategic Council as well, it certainly is, is shaping, if not determining events. And one question I have for you, because it recurs so frequently, is, you know, this trope of sort of like how will the war end, how will it end as if, you know, there's going to be a kind of a magic, you know, moment. And I, and I want to, want to ask you, do you think it's possible for the war to end as long as Vladimir Putin remains in power in Russia?

Fiona Hill Well, I think, again, people are thinking about, you know, as many of the wars that colleagues have written about, where, you know, there is an absolute victory and people sit down on a battleship, all, you know, they sit at a table in a tent somewhere and sign away some treaty. I don't think that's how this is going to end, because it's going to be more of a process. And, you know, in many respects, even with, you know, World War One, we think the Russo-Japanese War, other places or other wars where there was interventions, lots of other things were set in motion. And it really becomes then incumbent upon us to think about the kind of structures and the institutions that might come out of this, which might lead us forward.

And again, we're going to be having our colleagues talk about this in the next several panels. This is a system changing event. I mean, what it is is a failure of deterrence, it's a failure of all the mechanisms that we had to keep the peace after World War Two and after the Cold War. So we're going to have to rethink, do we need a complete overhaul? Remember, just before the war, we had Mike McFaul, the former U.S. ambassador to Russia, write a piece about a Helsinki 2.0 and the Finns who now are wanting to join NATO were offering to host a new set of meetings about European security. We're going to have to think about all of that.

Susan Glasser Right. Can I just stipulate that it's pretty hard to create new institutions at a moment of such incredibly polarized politics, not only here inside the United States. So, again, I want to, I just want to push you a little bit, though, on, you know, President Putin's the one who started this war. Can anyone other than he end it? And is it possible to foresee that he would, that there's any scenario under a short of complete and total victory in which he would choose to end it?

Fiona Hill Well, he's already signaled to us that there are ways that he would end it for now. It doesn't seem, again, when you said, is there kind of a definitive end to this, which is recognizing the new realities on the ground, recognizing that Russia's re-expanded its borders. I mean, again, I think part of the problem is

because we recognize Russia as the successor state to the Soviet Union, so there's kind of then exerting a right to reclaim territory, I think that's part of the problem here. And he's made it clear that Russia wants to have recognition of the full territories in addition to Crimea that was annexed, or at least declared as annexed on September 30th.

Now that, you know, for all of the reasons that everyone can think of is unacceptable. So is there some way then, of having a full-on diplomatic initiative, not just continued support for what's going on on the battlefield in Ukraine on the front lines to push Russia to negotiate something else? And that's where all of these other institutional arrangements come in. So it's incredibly hard. We need a full-on diplomatic effort as well as others to kind of push Putin. It's not impossible for him to change his mind.

Susan Glasser But I want to push you on this, though. Is there any example of Vladimir Putin having any interest in European institutions that would somehow constrain him from going forward with the war in the absence of Ukraine doing what we know it's not going to do, which is to recognize Russia's illegal occupation of large parts of its territory. How are these institutions going to prompt Russia while still led by Putin, to come to the negotiating?

Fiona Hill Well, I'm not suggesting that the institutions themselves will do it. I'm thinking that saying that we need to start thinking about institutional arrangements to frame this. But there are examples of him being dissuaded from doing things. I mean, we're not hearing quite so much about the use of nuclear weapons at this particular point. But that's not on Western institutions. That's really on coalitions of, you know, rather powerful, other great powers, including China and India, perhaps not, you know, in direct coalition, but certainly as a response to diplomacy on the part of the U.S. and others for basically putting some pressure on Putin to step back. So we know that he is, let's just, we're somewhat dissuadable, if not persuadable, and if not completely deterrable. You know, so then what can we do without how can we, you know, push forward?

Also, President Erdogan of Turkey and Secretary General Gutierrez, you know, did manage to push Putin in the U.N. frame to do something on the Black Sea. He had every intention of pulling back that deal at one point and got a lot of pressure back from other countries. So I think we can see hints of things that we could use. There is still the frame of the United Nations. But of course, Putin believes, and you know, we've got lots of studies showing that, you know, perhaps he's not far wrong, that the majority of countries, not those countries that are the most wealthy or perhaps, you know, the most politically influential, majority of countries are neutral on the conflict or at least sort of tacitly supporting. And that's going to be something that we have to work at.

Susan Glasser Yeah, and that's been one of the interesting arguably one of the surprising developments in the last year for all the unity, you know, that we've seen with Europe that you haven't seen, in fact, large numbers of countries outside of Europe who've, who've also joined in the sanctions or joined in the

center of Russia, even in some surprising cases. But you mentioned the U.N., obviously not a model of how to, you know, take international action, given Russia's veto over it. But I was struck that the secretary General Gutierrez, just the other day said that his great fear one year into this conflict is not that we're moving towards a diplomatic solution, but quite the opposite, that in fact, we're poised for what he called wider war.

How, how much do you agree with that concern right now? And you know, where and how would that scenario played out? You know, go back to a year ago. From the beginning, that was probably the biggest thing that you heard from Washington was fears about escalation, fears about even an accident that could prompt a conflict over the border in Poland or another NATO country. So far, more or less, that hasn't happened, perhaps in part because the policy has been calibrated with avoiding escalation in mind, perhaps not. Why is the U.N. secretary general warning about the possibility of a wider war now? And do you think he's right to do so?

Fiona Hill Well, he's always right to do something like that. That's his job as the secretary general of the United Nations, is to flag, you know, great international risks. And I commend him for actually, you know, saying that. It doesn't mean to say that that's what's going to happen. And I think what he's doing is making an appeal, as he should, for a full-on diplomatic effort. And obviously, he's hoping that the United Nations will play a role in that. And if there are areas which we've seen the United Nations step up on, and we can all debate, you know, about the prospects for this. But, you know, if other countries did put their weight behind this, there is things, and there are things that he's already done. And more could be done, particularly, you know, using as leverage food security and a lot of the humanitarian assistance and the desire of many countries that are not on the Security Council, but within the U.N. General Assembly to see the United Nations play a bigger role. We've seen Kenya, Ghana, some of the African countries speak out, for example.

And I mean, if we could find a way, Turkey's said, you know, many times that actually it sees the U.N. as a more important arena. We'll see, you know, after this dreadful earthquake, you know, what happens there. But as an important arena, arena not just NATO for example. So we can think outside of the box and really step up the diplomatic interventions as well. I mean, that really has to be part of the formula. I think that's what Gutierrez is saying he's worried like I think everybody is that we're focusing so much on the battlefield itself and trying to turn the tide that we're not also complementing it with a full-on diplomatic effort. The question is just where does that come from?

Susan Glasser I like to sort of change gears for a second and go back to this question of Russia, not only of Putin and his leadership, but, but how the war has affected Russia. We'll hear more today about the battlefield, about, you know, the sort of foreign policy implications, we can see the horrific consequences every day on, on the news when it comes to Ukraine and how literally the map of the country is being rewritten and

devastated by Russia's actions. But we hear a lot less and see a lot less, how has the war changed Russia and how does that affect the prospects for the conflict going forward?

Fiona Hill Well, I mean, I'll start at the end and then kind of move back to the beginning of your question, because really the way that we see Russia reacting to this does make it very important that we start to think about an international response, not just a Western U.S. and European response, because Russia's unplugging from Europe, or has been unplugged from Europe. We've got plenty of studies and we've had all kinds of reports put out that companies pulling out isn't to the, you know, the extent that we might have anticipated at the beginning.

Susan Glasser That's a surprise.

Fiona Hill But, you know, kind of it's not so much of a surprise in that the now the locus of trade with Russia, you know, it used to be for Cyprus, you know, and Europe was one of the biggest investors because Russian companies were moving to Cyprus. But that's part the European Union, so now everyone's moving now to Dubai and the Middle East and, you know, into China and Turkey. So there's kind of a, a downward different weight, a different center for Russian economic activity. Now, you know, the devastation in Turkey, it isn't in Istanbul and in the center, but this is going to have, you know, knock on effects as well. So I would, I would just say that we have to now look at where is it that Russia is engaging with and, you know, kind of what's the nature of that engagement?

But Russia's going to look like a very different place down the line. It's not going to be a country that's predominantly tied to Europe, which is, was the larger trend line, irrespective of what Putin and the people around him say. Most Russians were not hanging out in Shanghai. There was, there were people in Dubai, but not to the extent they are now. And we also have hundreds of thousands of Russians all the way around the periphery in many, you know, other countries. And the reports that a million Russians have left, four to only another 5 million Russians have been applying for passports suggests a lot more people will leave if they can. This is also hollowing the country out. So Putin may think that time is on his side, and they've still got resources and they can keep throwing everything at the wall. But you're starting to wonder then, well, what does Russia look like five, ten years down the line? Because once people leave a place, as I know myself, they don't go back. And, you know, that's kind of, you know, really problematic. I think it's a disaster for Ukraine because it's also, we've got 8 million refugees outside of Ukraine.

Susan Glasser And 5 million internally displaced persons.

Fiona Hill That's right. And that's women and children and, you know, people who are very vulnerable in a large respect. But, you know, for Russia, this is the, you know, the, the youth boom. These are the people that, you know, we would all know and would study with, the people who would be, you know, kind of driving

Russia's equivalent of Silicon Valley, it's the people who were the most productive part of the workforce who are heading off because they don't want to, you know, die at the front.

Susan Glasser There's also an argument to be made that at least in the short and possibly in the short to medium term, this has helped Vladimir Putin to consolidate his power once again. He has, you know, let the steam out, so to speak. He has, you know, almost comparable to in the 1920s after the, the Russian Revolution, you know, let, let the white Russians leave the country. You know, he has let today's equivalent of that leave the country. The potential regime opponents are gone. He has militarized Russian society, certainly to a greater extent than at any time since not even the late Soviet period. He's already mobilized several hundred thousand Russians. There could be a new wave of civilian [inaudible].

You know, the, the findings suggest that there is strong support, amazingly enough, for the war, even as you hear reports of casualties. And even if the Ukrainian numbers are inflated, you know, they're still extraordinarily high. In late November, the United States military estimated something like 200,000 casualties on both sides of the war. Let's say that's a low number, and Ukraine's estimate of 100,000 Russians killed is a high number, you're still talking about an incredible toll for the Russian people to be supporting this in the way that they are.

Fiona Hill Yeah, and look, I mean, it's not wrong to think that, as I said, that Russia and Putin can keep on pursuing this war. I mean, the talk of 500,000, you know, additional people being sent to the front. First of all, we're talking about people here. You know, there's not, I don't know, what, there's 500 in this room, not even that. I mean, imagine you're one of those 500,000 people. I mean, you're being treated basically like cannon fodder, just being sent off to the front. Do you think every single person is going to want to do that? In World War One, many of the Russian forces put down their guns and just walked home from the front in Germany. And in World War Two, I mean, you know, of course, people were fighting for their lives because they were being invaded. Remember, Russia is invading another country for, you know, apart from Afghanistan from one of the first times in its, in its recent history. So, you know, you have to really question whether there is going to be that tolerance of death and suffering, particularly on the part of individuals who are being treated, you know, kind of in a sort of a mass and, you know, kind of very, you know, kind of offhand manner.

But as I was saying before, this becomes a very different country. This is not the open country that was, you know, heading up the economic rankings that we saw ten, 15 years ago under Putin as well. And at one point, Russia was aiming to be the fifth or the sixth largest economy in Europe. It's hard to forget that now, you know, to remember it, I mean, we've forgotten about it. But the Russia that you're describing of a Russia that's controlled from the center and is completely militarized sounds more like the Soviet Union of the 1950s. Or, you know, kind of a very different country from what we all would have thought it might have been. So

that's what I'm saying is Russia becomes a very different country. It doesn't mean to say it can't pursue the war, but the Russia that most Russians were anticipating they were living in is not the one they will be living in in five, you know, ten years if this is the way this goes.

Susan Glasser Yeah, that's a sobering thought. So we're almost out of time. So I want to sort of end, you know, here in Washington and go back to, you know, you have a familiarity with how multiple administrations, Democratic and Republican, have tried and in most cases failed to really adequately deal with Vladimir Putin. I'm curious, number one, how you assess President Biden, both by his own standards. You know, arguably, he has been successful in terms of the goal he set out for himself. But, you know, how do you look at the current administration's policy and how would you even describe it? Because I think that is one of the challenges right now. What, what is an outcome that we're looking for here short of Putin doing what we've just spent the last half an hour saying he's not going to do?

Fiona Hill Well, first of all, we're sitting here in February. And in February 1945, that was the altar in our meetings at the end of World War Two. And the one thing I think that President Biden does not want to do is sit down at a table and basically divide up Europe. And that's kind of basically the signaling that he was giving to Putin in Geneva in 2021 when he was trying to head all of this off. And, you know, Putin has signaled many times, actually that's kind of what he wants, which is a new Yalta, you know, a Potsdam, you know, division of, of Europe. And again, there are many people pushing in that direction, saying we must recognize Russia's security ergosphere of influence, which, again, it's not 1945, is it? Although some people are still, you know, stuck in that mindset. And I think that that's why, you know, it's so difficult for President Biden and the, you know, the current administration to articulate, you know, kind of what they want. They want to, you know, basically see Ukraine get its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity back, if that's possible. The United States, along with the U.K., promised that they would do something in that regard in 1994, because this war's roots are in the early part of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the early 1990s. And I think that's kind of part of our problem.

I mean, Biden himself has been, as we all know, because everyone always makes jokes about it around for decades, so, I mean, he knows this history, but the United States changes all the time. I mean, 23 years for Putin in power, we mentioned that at the beginning, five U.S. presidents, multiple different people as national security advisers, secretaries of states, defense secretaries. We kind of lose the plot repeatedly. And I think that that's kind of, you know, why there is a lot of caution on the part of the administration. I'm sure in the next panels we'll come up with some new ideas. But, I mean, I think that this is one of the problems of, you know, for this administration that they don't want to be already prejudging the outcome because it also doesn't want to be the America making the decisions for European security again.

Susan Glasser All right. Final lightning round as the new panel comes up. I can't resist this because we're talking about U.S. presidents and Putin. Your former boss, Donald Trump, said last week not only that, he would double down on his very remarkable choice in Helsinki to listen to Vladimir Putin's word versus that of U.S. intelligence agencies about 2016. But he also said, as he said repeatedly, the war in Ukraine never would have happened with Donald Trump, that's when America was strong, that's when we were respected. So, so why didn't Putin invade back when you were in charge of things, Fiona?

Fiona Hill Look, I think an awful lot of the decision making that Putin made was being— we've, we've all talked about this before— being stuck at home in the Kremlin over COVID. I mean, he, many of us have quipped about this, but I think there's a very serious element in which he's stewed in the kind of the juices of, you know, kind of revanchism there, looking back over Russian history and determining the, you know, kind of if he was thinking about his legacy down the line, then returning Ukraine, Belarus, you know, the kind of Slavic world to the fold was what he wanted to do. And when, you know, he looked at, you know, the United States at that point, and, you know, we think back, as I said there to Biden having the meeting with Putin in Geneva, he was trying to test to see whether we would fight for Ukraine or not. And he ascertained that we would not. And I'm sure he's pretty, was pretty clear that Trump would not because Trump was asking Zelensky for a favor and, you know, withholding military aid, you know, back in 2019.

So Putin was just trying to see how much he could put pressure on Ukraine, how much he could dominate Ukraine to seize control of Ukraine and what he might need to do again. I don't think he intended to invade full on initially. And then he decided after Geneva when it was obvious that Biden wasn't willing to do a Yalta and sign away Ukraine, that well, he was going to have to, you know, basically move on in. And then he made that fateful decision, obviously, before January 24, February 24th. And now we've seen the consequences of it. But he didn't anticipate that any of this would have happened. He thought we would have all have capitulated because he didn't think that anyone would fight for Ukraine, because that was the kind of the signaling.

Susan Glasser Well, there you have it. Here we are, one year in and I'm looking forward, as I'm sure Fiona is as well, to the next conversation among our colleagues. Thank you so much, Fiona.

Fiona Hill Thanks, Suzanne. Thanks, Susan.

Constanze Stelzenmüller All right. Hello, everyone. My name is Constanze Stelzenmüller, I'm the director of the Center of the United States and Europe here at Brookings. And it is my immense pleasure to follow up on this brilliant conversation between our colleague Fiona Hill and Susan Glasser with the first of two panels to discuss the lessons of the past year and the outlook going forward. And we here are going to be focusing on the conflict itself and the policy and political questions around that, whereas the second panel,

moderated by the one and only Michael O'Hanlon, will look at their larger global ramifications, which are, as we, you had been saying, significant.

And I'm also glad that, that Fiona was at pains to reference the terrible earthquake in Turkey because not just, it's not just a truly horrific catastrophe, it is also as a catastrophe that is both natural and manmade, yet another potent symbol of what I think you could at this point call a little bit of systems overload of regional and international order, and that so much of what we're having to grapple with seems to elude us increasingly in its complexity, complexity and severity. And you should all read [inaudible] brilliant piece in The Washington Post this morning on the, on the earthquake.

But as I said, we're here to talk about the conflict in Russia, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which has been going on for nearly a year now. And I am going to orchestrate this as a conversation, you should feel free to push back against my questions, to interrupt each other or me. And I have, as you will have noticed, cleverly put myself in the role of moderator so nobody can ask me about tanks. But if you have to, do.

I'm going to start with Kori Schake, who is the director of the Foreign, Foreign and Security Policy at our neighbor institution down the road, the American Enterprise Institute and has held, of course, as you all know, high positions in both the NSC and D.O.D. and past administrations. Kori, do you want to help us situate a little bit where we are in this conflict? We are seeing, as Fiona and Susan were saying, not just the Russians not relenting, but in fact, I think we're well past the point where they're preparing a spring offensive. They seem to be in it. We're seeing the Ukrainians not wanting to give an inch but suffering terrible losses. And of course, we're two weeks out from the Munich Security Conference, the sort of prime venue of international political theater at which all the participants in this war, Zelensky is, will be attending, I don't know whether it'll be virtual or in-person, people will be wanting to score points and make and to bring out messages. So tell us, where are we now?

Kori Schake So I think we're two thirds of the way to Ukraine recapturing the entirety of its internationally recognized territory. It's hard to see it at the moment because, you know, the winter and the Russians are reinforcing, trying to refit, trying to entrench themselves in territory they already hold. But I think you said the most important thing, which is the Russian offensive is already occurring. There's not some, in my judgment, I don't think the Russian military can generate the combat power to actually make significant territorial gains over what they now hold. And in order to, to conscript 265,000 Russians to reinforce their army in Ukraine, they lost between a half a million and a million Russians fleeing the country. And that's not a correlation of forces as the Soviets used to say, that's advantageous.

And as Fiona pointed out, the Russians are having to send soldiers into the fight who aren't soldiers. They're just kids picked up off the street. They're not being trained, they don't know how to use equipment,

they don't know what, much about warfare. There are stories perking around about insurrections among Russian troops, attacks on their commanders. And while it's true that the Ukrainians have great message control and so there's a lot we don't know about what's happening in Ukraine, you can actually see the difference between an army that knows what it's fighting for and an army that doesn't and maybe doesn't support what it's fighting for. That's even before you get to the flow of assistance that Western countries have incredibly generously started pumping toward, have been pumping towards Ukraine.

But I do think the decision about tanks is consequential, not only because it's going to produce the mobility and combat power for Ukraine to go after the Russian entrenched positions, but it's also a really powerful signal that the countries of the West have actually genuinely committed to Ukraine's victory in a way that I think Russian strategy has been predicated on the belief that you can break Western support. And I think the United States, but also Germany, who is the second largest provider of military equipment to Ukraine. People have coalesced in really important ways.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Can I push back at that a little bit? I mean, I think all of that you said is, is correct and true, especially the part about Germany. But the, but, but we're also seeing with the Kremlin a leadership that is both cynical and sadistic and willing to sacrifice any quantity of human lives, particularly lives of ethnic minorities, for its purposes in Ukraine, and that has means of coercing people into military service that I would say civilized powers do not and would not use. That's one thing, also clearly have a great deal of purchase on the Russian public imagination through years and years of straight propaganda.

And almost as or equally as importantly, I would say they have support from the outside, they have an apparently unlimited supply of Iranian drones, which are very cheap and missiles. And I, in another discussion this morning, I heard them not, I haven't had time to look this up that the Chinese are starting to supply weapons parts. I mean, I'm literally this is something I haven't sourced, so I don't know. What's your take on, on what the Russian staying power is on the on the on the ground and how much help they're getting from the outside.

Kori Schake I mean, that's always the central question about warfare, right? It's a contest of political, violent contest of political will. And so at what point the Russians either will stop fighting, as Fiona said, walking home, or the Russian government will decide this isn't worth continuing? I can't say. But what I can say is that, you know, it's fashionable to say that military force can't solve this problem. Military force is going to solve this problem one way or another. Somebody is going to win, and somebody is going to lose. It may not be, you know, Tokyo Bay, but, but somebody is going to win, and somebody is going to lose. Somebody's will is going to break. And it's, one of the things we have seen, one of the really important lessons of this first year of the war has been the comparative adaptation rate of the two militaries.

Constanze Stelzenmüller That's right.

Kori Schake The Ukrainians have been extraordinary. Right. For all the macho videos of the Russian military, the ballerinas and transvestites of the Ukrainian military are handing their hats to the Russians because the Ukrainians are innovative, they can figure out how drones are, the opportunities drones prose on the battlefield, the risk they pose. And, you know, the secretary of defense gets his 50 counterparts together every single month in Ramstein to have the Ukrainians come and tell us what they're seeing and what they need.

And the U.S. is orchestrating among those 50 contributing countries their supplies that help Ukraine continue to adapt. And we are just not seeing that in the Russian military. They continue to do the stupid stuff that's getting a bunch of Russian kids killed. And you're right, they're insensitive to that. And the behavior of those Russian kids and the mass commitment of war crimes is going to be as, as Dr. Hill said, like, we are looking at a very different Russia coming out of this and a very problematic Russia. But at the end of the day, adaptation is what wins wars.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Speaking of adaptation, I'm going to shift gears slightly from what I discussed with you beforehand and move to my colleague Amy Nelson, because I think that the, the, you know, we see the Ukrainians and the Russians are all in. I think the question is, is the alliance all in and are we doing what's necessary? I think what we're seeing right now is a choice between prudence and a push, prudence to avoid escalation, and that, I think, is a prudence shared in the administration and in Berlin, or then there are in large parts of Eastern Europe and in some of the security related ministries here, advocates of a forceful push in order to avoid the exhaustion of both the Ukrainian armed forces and Western publics. So if you could reflect a little bit on that, Amy, and as well, keeping in mind the fact that we have a NATO summit in Vilnius coming up in July, what, you know, there are a lot of other issues on, on NATO's plate that have been highlighted by this, your long engagement.

Amy Nelson There are. Yeah, thanks. Certainly. This brought NATO into the spotlight in ways that were unanticipated. The first panel we talked about, you know, kind of, unanticipated, unexpected, high uncertainty conditions. And I think this was not a fight NATO was prepared to fight or not a scenario NATO was prepared to, to align, to have alignment in confronting. And I think it's forced a lot of difficult choices, a lot of new processes. I'm going to bring up the tanks because it was so very public and in the grand scheme of everything, of all the material going to NATO, to, to Ukraine, of everything that Ukraine needs, of the need to sustain armaments in a war of attrition and cohesion in a war of attrition, this like, this little tank problem was just so public.

And so I think going forward, you know, I, I hope that there are lots of conversations happening on next waves of military aid and that we're looking well past the three-month, six-month timeline, because that's really the kind of preparedness that's going to be required. And that kind of cohesion, that certain level of cohesion

will need to be sustained in order to carry that out. And that said, when this is all said and done, I think that NATO, NATO, OSCE, EU, there, there will be a reckoning, reconfiguring of institutions a forced adaptation or evolution of what, what does it mean to have this security architecture? What does a stable balance of armaments mean anymore when you can get commercial off the shelf drones that are shockingly effective in this conflict? So I think, I think there's a lot of work to be done.

Kori Schake Can I—.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Quickly, I'm going to let Kori jump in, all of you should, should do that within limits. Otherwise, I will stop you. But please go for it.

Kori Schake Just one quick point, which is I'm not sure it's the right question is, are NATO countries all in? Because the answer is, of course we are not. We're not sending our own troops; we're worried about escalation. I think a sharper question is, are we in enough to help Ukraine win?

Constanze Stelzenmüller This is why I invite Kori. Also, by the way, I forgot to introduce Amy properly. She's the David Rubenstein fellow at the Talbott Center for Security, Strategy and Technology run by Mike. Well, do you want to answer Kori's question.

Amy Nelson The all-in question? No, I don't think we're all in. You know, we have this 2% defense spending marker. Only eight non-NATO countries have hit that, have hit that threshold. Certainly, the United States is contributing a great deal more in terms of material to this conflict. I think there's a conversation to be had and a recalibration to be done on, on what it means to be all in, what it means, what collective security means that this conflict has really, you know, shown a bright light on.

Constanze Stelzenmüller All right. I think we'll come back to that question. But I also want to make sure that we do not leave out the politics of the policy questions on this panel, which is why I was particularly happy when both Matt Duss and Kori said yes, not just because I feel we need to sort of involve our neighbors on the block more, but also because I think both of you can help us understand the US political debate, since presumably we're also being watched by people in Europe and not least in Ukraine. So I'm going to start with you, Matt. Since you were former advisor, you're at Carnegie now as a senior fellow and you were a former policy advisor to Senator Bernie Sanders, help us understand a little bit of the debate within the administration and the and the president's party on where to go with Ukraine as we enter the next presidential election cycle.

Matthew Duss Sure. And thank you for having me here with everyone. And I'll just say the fact, you know, to bring in neighbors from, from different, you know, down the block. But I will just say that the fact that Brookings, Carnegie, and AEI are literally part of the same building confirms every suspicion that everyone has about the foreign policy establishment.

Constanze Stelzenmüller There are underground tunnels where we congregate at night.

Matthew Duss Well, there's one cafeteria. No, I mean, I'll just first for, for the Democrats. I mean, listen, just to say it straight out, I mean, I think it's clear, despite some claims that are, you know, constantly made, the president did not seek this. He wanted to park the relationship over here. I think he showed that with the summit. He was, we were not going to have warm relationships with Vladimir Putin for a whole set of reasons, but he wanted to at least keep it, you know, trouble at a low simmer while they focused on China–.

Constanze Stelzenmüller That became very clear at the summits and in Geneva. Right.

Matthew Duss Right. And I think that's apparent. But I think, you know, in the lead up to what was the invasion, I think they did a very effective job of briefing members of Congress. Multiple high-level briefings, all-senators meetings, all-members briefings. And also, I think, you know, the strategic release of intelligence up to the invasion was not only important for public awareness, but also, you know, again, I don't want to do too, you know, switch gears too much, but I'll just say that, you know, we're a couple of weeks out of the anniversary, the 20-year anniversary of the Iraq war. And I think re-establishing credibility for the use of intelligence and getting people to be able to believe what the United States government is telling them about security issues is a very, very important thing. We are nowhere near back to restoring credibility. But I do think they did make significant steps in the way they use that intelligence ahead of the February invasion.

So I think that, you know, there was support that you've seen since then is reflected by that. I think the administration has been very willing to engage at all levels with members of Congress. I think, you know, the president at the outset, I think, made a number of important speeches and statements. I think he should do more. I do think that, you know, speaking to the American people and repeatedly making clear why we are doing what we are doing, why it's in our interests to continue to help Ukraine defend itself is really important. I think this was coming to a head a bit more last summer when things seemed to be frozen. That's when these kinds of questions, you know, start to rise up. We see that happening now. I mean, I think it was paused with the, the late summer, you know, campaign that we saw on the part of the Ukrainians, because, you know, the American public is going to be more supportive if they see that our support is producing, you know, these kinds of successes on the battlefield.

Where I think it is right now is in the Democratic Party, I think in general, you still have strong support. There are, there are voices who are who continue to stress the need for diplomacy. That doesn't mean to end support for Ukraine. I think these voices are making excellent points about the need to continue to probe for any possibility of a diplomatic opening. And to the administration's credit, I think they are doing that. On the right, I think, you know, I've just been in conversation with a number of former Senate colleagues on the Republican side over this past week. And, you know, even among Republican senators who are publicly remain very supportive, they are hearing at their own town halls these questions again, what are we doing? Explain why this is good for us, why aren't you paying attention to the border, all this stuff, you know? Yes, this

stuff is amplified by Fox News, but we should not treat it as illegitimate. These are questions that need to be addressed, and I think they can be addressed.

But I think what I've, you know, also been hearing is we need to see more, the, the administration lean forward a bit more, at least publicizing some of these efforts they are making not necessarily to, or not at all to lean on the Ukrainians to make concessions, because I think that is just not in the cards, but at least to make it clear that it is Putin's choices who continue to drive this, it is Putin who has chosen not to, you know, offer any kind of sign or evidence that he is interested—.

Constanze Stelzenmüller That's an important contradicting, contradistinction, isn't it? A contrast, simper word, to, to a lot of the European left and the hard left, which has been very overtly skeptical of the purposes of the war, has been in many, in many instances, actually rehashing Kremlin talking points and so on. Do you see, I mean, and it's heartening to see that not happening on the Democratic side, do you see a risk, say, if the economic situation worsened, if inflation spiked again, I mean, luckily we have good, good unemployment numbers, but with inflation spiking again, of a division in the Democratic camp?

Matthew Duss Yeah. No, I think this you know, if we saw greater inflation again combined with, you know, getting bogged down on the battlefield in Ukraine, a number of these things could lead to, you know, greater resistance or at least questions on the Democratic side. And I just want to say with regard to your point about, you know, the European and the hard left, you know, unfortunately, the skepticism is well earned. I just want to repeat that point. So we need to understand that.

And I also, again, returning to, you know, next month's 20-year anniversary, I do think one of the lessons of the Iraq experience is that I do think we should air on the side of welcoming alternative views and welcoming dissent and not dismissing it. Also being aware that a lot of these talking points are being pumped into our discourse and we should know it when we see it. But I am less inclined to, to close off the debate because as we've learned through, through painful experience, sometimes the dissenters turn out to be quite right.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Yeah, I think that's a fair point, and I think that that's a respectful way of treating, creating political dissent. Aslı, I'm not losing touch of you, sight of you, but I do want to bring in Kori on one last point, and that is the GOP, of course. Ahead of, especially the Munich Security Conference, everybody is sort of watching like a hawk in Europe and here, of course, who's going, who's speaking and where are they speaking. And of course, the, the divisions, you know, between the Senate GOP and the House GOP and within the House GOP on the subject of Ukraine, I'm presume are minutely protocolled. Right. And registered by, every diplomat in the city is concerned with this. Can you try and give us a guide through this maze?

Kori Schake So I agree with everything Matt just said about not closing down debate, about the solidarity of Democrats, about the importance of the president making this case more frequently and ardently so that people don't lose the plot and the fact that there are legitimate questions about priorities and where does Ukraine fit in other things that the president wants to do on national security? I think those are all legitimate and they're all winnable arguments. And the best description I have seen of why it's in American interests to continue to support Ukraine fulsomely was by Senator Roger Wicker, the ranking minority on Senate Armed Services. It was outstanding. The president should just take that and say it over and over and over.

I, I think it's very easy to overstate the, the number of Republicans who are genuinely opposed to support to Ukraine. I think they tend to correlate pretty strongly with the Republicans in the House who dragged out their decision on who the speaker of the House would be. And I think a lot depends on how the Speaker of the House chooses to navigate the conference on this issue and on a bunch of other issues.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Fair enough. All right. Let me bring in our colleague Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, who moved here in the fall and therefore looks on all these debates with the, the eyes of a, at least a new resident in Washington, not a newcomer to Washington. And you should feel free to comment on the discussion so far. But I'm also bringing you in, of course, to talk about Turkey. Do you want to start with the first point? Feel free.

Aslı Aydıntaşbaş Let me also sort of talk about perhaps part of this discussion that relates to Turkey. But first of all, thank you for kind thoughts on the earthquake. It is something of biblical proportions, it looks. And Turkish people need all the sympathy that is going to come over the next few days. And we are already seeing countries, including this country, but also Turkey's former rivals sending in search and rescue teams, and that's very important at this point. I just want to before I come directly to Turkey, but I just want to note a very bifurcated response to the war around the world. Yes, there is the Western cohesion and unity that Amy has talked about, Kori has talked about. But on the other hand, a global dissent about the war and what it means.

The West is united, very united, but very separated from the rest of the world. We're looking into, we're looking into a situation in which 85% of the world population is actually not going with Russian sanctions. And the reason this is important is, you know, while we think of this as a sort of a moral fight against an invading country and authoritarianism represented by Russia and China, they see it as a fight over interests. And it makes me very sad, but Turkey is also one of the members of the Global South, even though it's a NATO country, it's very balanced, for lack of a better word, in its approach to the world. And I think the reason this is very important is, you know, our ability to prevail in this long struggle is essentially going to be about convincing these middle powers about being able to do business with these middle powers and also essentially trying to convince some for the world or their next phase of the world order, they certainly want to

be on the table in some fashion or another in the next Yalta. And at least they don't want to be on the menu, that's very clear.

So Turkey. Turkey is one of these middle powers, not alone. You know, Saudi Arabia, Israel, I think to an extent, certainly Indonesia, certainly India is, you know, middle powers that are somewhat neutral, semi neutral. They're often referred to as swing states, but they're not really swinging. They are saying they want a multipolar world, and they are, they see of themselves as a pull, pull in itself. Turkey certainly sees itself under Erdogan as a pull in itself, wants to be part of a great power competition, has an exaggerated understanding of its own regional power, I think, in many ways. But Erdogan, President Erdogan has managed to convince his population that Turkey is about to restore the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire, so on and so forth.

But the fact that Turkey, a NATO ally, is sort of willing to do business trade with Russia has tripled, tripled its trade with Russia, and yes, it's very much supporting the war, Ukraine and its war and selling drones and, and stepped up some NATO responsibilities, but also is remaining quite neutral when it comes to defense and reassurance missions and eastern flank and so on and so forth. I think this is important and I think it's a bigger issue than Turkey and something we really need to think about long term, because this war may be a long war. And, you know, the fact that Turkey is doing, you know, supporting Ukraine, but also doing business with Russia, continuing to trade with Russia, being very cautious in the language that it uses is not different from what we see in some of these other countries, including countries like Israel, who have very close relations with the United States and Western powers.

So I want to just highlight that point as a segue into maybe the conversation on Turkey, and, you know, perhaps this ability, this neutrality is going to allow Turkey to be more and more, more involved if there is at some point something like ceasefire negotiations or mini ceasefire negotiations. But at this point, I think it is there and it is a very important feature of the global set up that we–.

Constanze Stelzenmüller You could, you could, of course, also say that while this situation has empowered Erdogan, it also could risk ending up leaving him, you know, at odds with all sides because he has tried to play all sides against each other. I mean–.

Aslı Aydıntaşbaş Certainly he's playing both ends of this equation, basically, we've seen that. And Erdogan is not hiding that. He, Turkey is very proud of its balanced policy, during World War Two, Turkey's policy was active neutrality and today a similar— which means you go to actually defense agreements with both sides, that's what it amounted to in World War Two. And I think we are seeing a repeat of that, keeping open lines of communication with Putin, but also, you know, really, you know, talking to Zelensky. But that could be helpful on issues like grain deal, we have seen Turkey, Erdogan being able to really convince Putin into something that was for the good of the world. Prisoner exchanges, I think Turkey was very instrumental. Now they're working on, with U.N. I think, a deal, a mini ceasefire, let's say, or a mini deal for a Zaporizhzhia

nuclear reactor. And people tell me that it is looking somewhat promising. So as you say, it's, it's, it's a risk also.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Yeah. Let me give another round to the panel before we end up by taking a couple of audience questions. We have until five of. And I want to, I want us to reflect on two things, if we could. We were saying at the, at the outset and Fiona and Susan were discussing that as well, there are some aspects of this war that are quite old fashioned, including the frankly, the return of, of major war to Europe and the, the return to of the use of military means that at least some parts of the [inaudible] Western European public had thought, you know, done and dusted over forever, we would never see those again. Right. But other parts of this, of course, are very modern and including the fact that we as the West and as an alliance, we know that the Ukrainians are fighting not just for their own survival, but also for us, right. And we are helping them by giving them weaponry, but also by using, by trying to counter weaponize our economic interdependence with the help of sanctions and with the help of decoupling from Russian fossil fuel imports.

I would like us in a last round to, to reflect on, on two things. How good have we been at that, and what more do we need in that sphere? And also, I mean, there are all sorts of ways in which this could still go wrong, right. And which this could still escalate both horizontally and vertically. It could, the Russians could take this to other, war to other countries, they could start using weapons of mass destruction. What's, what's your, what's your worst fear and how do we stave it off? I'll start with you, Kori.

Kori Schake Alright, so I'll start with the first question about economics. I think in part because of the early release of intelligence information about what the Russians were doing, that it not only gave time for, you know, the diabolical creativity of people in Treasury departments across the West to come up with new creative ways, but it also–.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Freezing Russian central bank assets over a weekend.

Kori Schake Yeah,

Constanze Stelzenmüller That takes a fair amount of cooperation.

Kori Schake It was fabulous. And one of the important lessons of this terrible war is just how much the free world actually can control flows of resources. So that's great. And it's important. And Germany deserves extra special support for the fact that in the space of a year, they reduced, almost eliminated their reliance on Russian oil and gas, after saying—.

Constanze Stelzenmüller But the Russians did cut off the gas themselves.

Kori Schake After saying for 20 years that they couldn't.

Constanze Stelzenmüller That we couldn't. No, absolutely.

Kori Schake They did it, and they did it in the space of a year. And that deserves a lot of credit. So but the global economy is a complex, open system. It's, you know, people are going to find a way around

everything. And it's a cat and mouse game about how you track money, how you figure it out. And so, just like with so many of the new technologies, we're worried about the way authoritarian societies can, especially in the near term, capitalize on these things. But, but free societies actually have adaptation advantages, and in the long run, that's the way to bet your money. And so you can see over the course of the last year, right, Janet Yellen, the secretary of the Treasury, saying we got to find a way to use those Russian central bank assets that we've frozen without collapsing trust in central bank assets everywhere in the world. So they're turning keys in lock to figure it out.

On your second question, which is that I have two nightmares, and one is that Vladimir Putin persuades himself that it is preferable to lose a war to the NATO allies than to lose a war to Ukraine. So what, what in defense circles, you talk about horizontal escalation, attacks on Poland or the Baltic states. The good news is, I think NATO countries are ready for that, our paths are postured to prevent its success. And, you know, a Russia that is losing a war to the Ukrainian military has no hope whatever of succeeding against the NATO countries.

The second nightmare I have— I promise I'll go fast through this— but I think it's, is that as the Russian army is pushed out of Ukraine's territory, that the Russian leadership chooses to escalate to a nuclear attack on Kiev in order to claim that they achieved the regime change they went there for. And when I was in Kiev in September, I asked a bunch of people their thoughts on this. And I was so humbled by the strength of Ukrainian civil society, government, in that everybody's reaction was the same, which is this will change the, this will increase the cost of our victory, it will not change the outcome. And we should all hope that we would have that courage if we were under that kind of threat.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Fair enough. Thank you, Kori. That was both to the point and moving. Amy, I'm going to bring you in on this because shouldn't we be having nightmares about stockpiles?

Amy Nelson Nuclear stockpiles?

Constanze Stelzenmüller No, our stockpiles of everything basically, at this point.

Amy Nelson I mean, nightmare is, is kind of a strong take on it. I think there's a problem here, I think we're going to run into a problem where the United States is sending its own stockpiles of munitions, so we're going to need to re-arm afterwards. We're going to need the industrial base to really step up and meet those demands. And then there are going to be questions about how to re-arm. Do we want to re-arm with last generation weaponry? Do we want that for Europe? And, and so we're looking at producing next generation weapons. It's going to be costly for the United States and for the allies. And then in terms of nightmare scenarios, this is, this is a war of attrition in which escalation, there's an inevitability to the escalation. We, we see it and feel it almost daily. We got the tanks. Now we need the F-16s. And then just this morning, the Russian statement on our dangerous escalation and back and forth we go.

So we're developing a pattern of signaling which is good, it's stabilizing. We haven't, we haven't done this in some time. We haven't played the signaling game over nuclear weapons. And so the more time that goes on, in a way, the more we build up a repertoire and a shared vocabulary and a shared understanding of how much escalation is the right amount of escalation. But again, this is a nuclear armed state. And there's something, there's something very destabilizing about this entire conflict. And, and, and unclear if we're dealing with the madman scenario. And then when this is all over, Russia is still a nuclear weapons state. And it's, you know, nuclear weapons states are presumed to have a certain level of responsibility to be responsible nuclear powers. And I don't have a lot of faith that that's going to be sort of a shared understanding immediately afterwards.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Aslı, let me bring you in here. Isn't Erogan also playing with fire a little bit as a member of NATO or as a leader who is at the helm of a member of NATO by blocking the entry of Finland and Sweden at a time when, A, they are clearly at risk and B, they would be, I mean, they already are de facto members. But it was, it was only by joining NATO that they will get the full security guarantees. Is Erdogan at risk of overdrawing his account at NATO?

Aslı Aydıntaşbaş Well, that's a hard question, but he's certainly a risk taker and he's pushing the boundaries. And, but he knows usually when to push and when to scale back, that seems to be, he is street smart in that sense. Now, on two issues, there is huge growing concern. One is when it comes to Turkey. I think people to an extent accept that there will be Russian money, Russian yachts and oligarchs in Istanbul and Bodrum. But when it comes to sale of export of semiconductors and electronics and so on and so forth to Russia from Turkey, which is significantly increased, I think that's something, raising eyebrows and, and, you know, people who work on sanctions are very concerned.

But it's a cat and mouse game of sorts, not just in Turkey, all over the world and Dubai, UAE, because things that were sanctioned, that were not sanctioned six months ago are all of a sudden looking dangerous today. Breast pumps, which apparently have chips that apparently end up in the battlefield. Don't ask me to explain this, but that's just what I'm hearing from officials. So all of a sudden, the expansion of, you know, exports to Russia of breast pumps from, you know, Turkey or the UAE is, is one of the issues people are focusing on.

So on the other issue that you have raised, obviously, that goes to NATO cohesion, Sweden, Finland, you know, it's, it's a hard one made harder now by the earthquake. I think Erdogan wants to negotiate with the United States. It's not about for him, it's not a moral issue, it's not about NATO cohesion, what's in it for me, what's on the table. The Biden administration has been reluctant to engage in that conversation in the sense that they were like, you know, NATO is expanding, Sweden, Finland need the support. And we're all, you know, rallying around them. And Erdogan is, is pretty much wanting to triangulate this relationship, seeing if he

can get US promise for, US sale of F-16s, which is what he's been very interested in buying, sort of pushing back against CAATSA sanctions that were slapped in the first place because of Turkey's close defense relations, approaches from Russia. Last week, 27 senators wrote a letter saying if Turkey does not green light Sweden Finland, they will never ratify, they will never okay the sale of F-16.

So there's something, some way that everybody is trying to see if there can be a deal worked out. But, you know, the chicken and egg situation clearly, you know, is the sale first, is the ratification first and is everyone on the same page. But this is going to be a big drama over the, until the—.

Constanze Stelzenmüller It already is had so many ways, it's certainly got me on edge. The other thing that has got me on edge is timing for this panel. And I do want to give Matt a chance to come in here and maybe take at least one question from the audience. I'm sorry, Matt, you're going to have to take all the other ones. Matt, how do you persuade a Democratic electorate that it is worth America sticking with this to the end? I mean, you told me that you have Ukrainian roots yourself, which I didn't know. So that makes it personal. But how do you persuade somebody in middle America for whom this is not personal, that this matters and is of importance for him or her?

Matthew Duss Right. Well, I think if we're going to you know, we hear a lot of talk about the rules-based order. And my response to these, these words is the same as Gandhi's when he was asked what he thought about Western civilization, it was I think it'd be a good idea. You know, if we are serious about that, there are some pretty foundational issues like, you know, sovereignty and national self-determination. You know, as someone who believes in solidarity, I mean, these are part of my values. But in terms of just straight and national interests, I think there is an argument to be made that, you know, helping Ukraine defend itself now prevents wider war later. I mean, I come to this from the left, from a position of how can we do the least harm or rather, you know, there are times when we can do good and we should seek those times out. But in situations where all the options are bad, I think the question is where we can do the least harm. And I do think the, the answer to that question right now is what we've been doing.

I do want to just say two brief things. One is with regard to the meaning; you know what Ukraine means. Like, you know, I understand from the Ukrainians perspective, for, for them to come to America and say we are on the front lines of democracy for you. You know, it's taking nothing away from them, what they are enduring, what they have achieved to say that I think we should be a bit more modest about what is at stake. I think, again, what we are doing to help Ukraine do is right. I wrote in a piece in The New Republic last summer about why, why I think what I think some may get this reference, but I also cautioned against treating Ukraine as a manic pixie dream war that would restore our sense of purpose and mojo. We will not repair our own politics by, you know, engaging in defending Ukraine by beating Russia or beating China.

I think, you know, if you asked what my nightmare scenario is, obviously my nightmare scenario is nuclear apocalypse. But going a few down the list, you know, I see other costs. One is, yes, the ramping up of kind of nationalist sentiment, sentiment against the new enemy, whether it's Russia or China. Both of these governments represent enormous challenges to the security of the American people. We should be realistic about that. But I think the last 20 years have shown very explicitly how dangerous that kind of politics can be. And I also think we should be quite aware of the costs, even of what we are doing now in Ukraine.

I think Fiona spoke quite eloquently about, you know, how the response to the earthquake in Turkey is going to be diminished because so many of these resources and attention is focused on Ukraine. There are broader costs with regard to, again, the role of the United States, at least rhetorically, was going to try to play in supporting human rights and other things like this, which I think have essentially been now thrown under the bus. As you know, the reason that is given is well, we have to work more closely with a lot of the authoritarian regimes because we're in an era of great power competition and we're focused on Ukraine. That's part of the cost, I think, of the focus on what we're doing.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Thank you so much. And I will only say that the German Social Democrats are having a very, very interesting internal discussion about Ostpolitik and about the, their, the errors of their Russia policy with some really in case anybody is interested, there's some, I think, very forward looking and useful papers being written and the younger party leader Lars Klingbeil really pushing this conversation. Who's going to be one, my one question. Okay. In the back, could you please introduce yourself, make a make a really crisp question and even more preferably address it to someone.

Audience Member My name is Roger Cochetti. I'm an editorial contributor for The Hill newspaper. And my question I'm sorry is for any panelist who'd like to respond to it because the 64-thousand-dollar question that has been raised is, what is the probability that Vladimir Putin, if faced with total defeat, which some panelists have predicted, will revert to the use of low yield nuclear weapons, as in simply eliminating Kiev? What is the probability of that happening?

Constanze Stelzenmüller Okay, that's great, because that permits a short and quantitative answer. So I'm going to go through the panel. I'm going to start with Aslı and go backwards and that'll conclude this.

Aslı Aydıntaşbaş I think I, I think, you know, people mostly think if the regime is threatened, Russians will use a nuclear weapon. I think they are not as desperate as we think they are, therefore not looking likely to me right now.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Thank you. Amy.

Amy Nelson It is not zero.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Okay.

Amy Nelson Probability is not zero. But calculating it, I think, is a fool's errand. That it exists as a possibility at all is why we are here and why this has framed the current scenario, it has framed the current scenario for us. So all that matters is that it is not zero.

Matthew Duss I have an app for this. 17.5, no, I don't, you know, again, I think it's scary enough that it's not zero. But I think the question is, at what point is there the possibility of some kind of cease fire that is sustainable, that he gets something, and the Ukrainians are amenable to it? I think that's a very tough negotiation. I've seen no evidence that Putin is anywhere in that zone of being open to that yet. But I think that's the question.

Kori Schake I would say it hovers around two and ten, but we shouldn't forget we have the ability to affect that and we ought to be affecting that. And here's how. First, we should do what the administration has done well, which is rally other countries to tell Russia just how much it will change Russia's standing in the international order if they make this choice. Second, we should tell the Russians our intelligence has been reasonably good so far.

If we see any indications Russia is moving to do this, we will provide Ukraine the targeting intelligence and the weapons to preempt a Russian nuclear use. If we fail to preempt Russian nuclear use, we will send NATO military, CBRN teams permanently stationed in Ukraine, so they will produce an outcome of NATO forces in Ukraine permanently in order to help deal with the consequences of it. And lastly, we will do our very best to make sure everybody involved in the decision, or its execution gets hunted down and either taken to The Hague or killed.

Constanze Stelzenmüller Awesome. I would just add to that, that that was a great final remark. I will, I would just add to that quote our colleague Fiona Hill, who said that Putin is a highly rational actor who makes a point of pretending that he is not. And I think we, what we need to do is exactly what Kori said, which is make clear in the starkest terms what the consequences would be and that we have seen so far, I think Putin responding to our messaging actually in quite significant points. Thank you. This is a really terrific panel. I apologize to those of you who wanted to ask question, pounce on Mike instead. Over to you, Mike, thank you very much, all of you. You've been wonderful.

Michael O'Hanlon Thank you all for being here, for staying with us. We will spend about half this session on your questions, because I think what I would like to do with this panel and I'm Mike O'Hanlon from the Foreign Policy program, and I'd like to introduce my panelists in a second, then work down the row once with their observations from different perspectives around the world, different kinds of substantive expertise to complement the previous panel and then go to you. And to my left is Patti Kim, who's already established herself as one of the nation's top Asia experts. She's a China specialist but also understands our alliance

relationships in the region. And I'm going to ask her about China's role in this conflict in regard to Russia, but also in regard to possible Taiwan contingencies.

Next to her and welcoming her to the Brookings stage for the first time is Tara Varma from France, a scholar here now at Brookings, previously at the European Council on Foreign Relations, also with considerable Asia expertise. And I'll invite her to address that general part of the world and how it's thinking about and being affected by the Ukraine war, as well as politics and foreign policymaking within her own home country and Europe more generally.

Natan Sachs is our— now I'm getting to the graybeards side of the room— Natan Sachs and Bruce Jones have been up here numerous times with me before so I can make the introductions brief. But Natan runs our Middle East center, and hasn't the Middle East been an intriguing part of this war where it sometimes doesn't even quite seem how Natan's home country of Israel quite knows where it stands in this geopolitical struggle. And I'm certainly going to press him on that question.

And then finally, Bruce Jones, who is an excellent grand strategist, but also has a real tactile feel for U.N. debates and has been around those a long time, understands it, can pick up on where Aslı spoke about the role of many other countries around the world in this conflict. And he's also an excellent naval strategist whose book "To Rule the Waves" is recommended reading here and around the country. And certainly Bruce will think about the global economic and broader strategic ramifications of this war. So without further ado, Patti, thank you for being here. And let me just ask you to reflect on China's role in the conflict so far and maybe where you see it going in 2023. Thank you.

Patricia Kim Great. Well, thank you very much, Mike. It's, it's a real pleasure to be up here with you and my other FP colleagues. So the last 12 months since the Russian invasion of Ukraine have really revealed China's strategic outlook, including how Chinese leaders view the world, how much they value their alignment with Russia, as well as the limits to this partnership that they have. First, Beijing's steadfast refusal to clearly distance itself from Moscow after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, despite the heavy cost to its global image, despite the heavy strategic costs that this has incurred for China— and I'll go over this in a moment— has been quite striking to me.

Beijing has not explicitly condemned Russia's aggression in Ukraine. It has lent rhetorical support to Moscow's argument that it's really NATO encirclement and the West that drove it to do what it did in Ukraine. And rather than downplaying the so-called no limits partnership, Chinese leaders have continued to stress that their relationship with Russia remains strong regardless of what's happening in the international arena, and that they have all intentions to continue to deepen this partnership across military domains.

Now, the actions that we've seen by China have also matched this rhetoric. We've seen a steady pace of diplomatic exchanges between high level Chinese leaders and their Russian counterparts over the last 12

months. There's also been a boom in trade with China's trade with Russia reaching record highs this year, I think it's $180 billion in 2022. And even more striking is the fact that Beijing has continued to engage in military exchanges and exercises with Russia, even after everything Russia has done, including naval exercises in the East China Sea, in the South China Sea, or the Sea of Japan excuse me, this summer, this past fall, also in December. And I think some, in about just a week, the two are scheduled to engage in their first military exercises in a trilateral format with South Africa in the Indian Ocean. So this is, this has really been striking. And I think these trend lines over the past year really show that the China-Russia alignment is not just a partnership of strategic convenience, but it's really a deep alignment that's here to stay for the foreseeable future.

Now, what's motivating this partnership? I think to be sure there are practical concerns. China doesn't want to have an uneasy relationship with a formal rival, former rival, and a nuclear-powered neighbor, especially as it looks towards long-term intense competition with the United States. But beyond this, I think there really is at the core of Beijing and Moscow's partnership is this shared aim of challenging what they see as a Western dominated global order, where the United States and its allies get to define what it means to be a democracy or gets to define what it means to uphold human rights and then have the means to punish those that it deems as failing to uphold these standards through Western dominated international institutions and the like. And so this is really the glue and the narrative that keep these, keeps these two partners together.

But having said that, I am ultimately convinced that Xi has made a real strategic error in choosing Putin to be his key partner in pushing back against what he sees as this Western-centric world, because China's association with Russia has soured already dismal views of China in the Western world. It has increased global attention on Beijing's aggression vis a vis Taiwan. It's been striking how much Europeans have really shown up on Taiwan issues, how many European lawmakers have headed over to Taipei to express support for Taiwan. All of this is not in China's interests. And also, rather than eroding the US-led security architecture that exists today by partnering with Russia, China instead has reinforced the value of alliances among U.S. allies and partners, and we've seen the strengthening of ties between NATO and the United States' Indo-Pacific allies. So in this sense, I think China's tight embrace of Russia have really undermined or have been counterproductive to Beijing's strategic interests.

Michael O'Hanlon Just one follow up on that, if I could, Patti, thank you, that was very, very comprehensive and analytical and helpful. But I do want to press you on the question of just how much China's helped Russia militarily, which strikes me as a major area, area of Chinese restraint so far, not as much as we would prefer, not as much as China should exercise, but nonetheless, on balance, an area where weapons systems, as best I understand, have not been transferred from Beijing to Moscow. Should that factor into the calculus anymore or am I getting bad information, or do you see that eroding?

Patricia Kim So, Mike, I'm glad you asked that. There have been reports in recent weeks about Chinese companies selling dual use items to certain Russian entities. So like jamming equipment and jet parts and so on that sort of ultimately aid Russia's military. But Beijing has not provided direct operational support to the Russian military, they have not sent troops or military equipment in the way that the United States and its allies and partners have stepped up to assist Ukraine. And so in that sense, China has not helped Russia as much as we feared, and it hasn't gone there, I don't see it going there.

And I think this is an important point that even if China and Russia share this desire to erode a Western dominated global order or to work towards a more what they call a multipolar order, this came up in the previous panel, they ultimately have different, they reach for different tools while doing this. And this is because Russia is you know, it's a lopsided power. It's militarily very strong, but its economy doesn't match its military prowess, whereas China is the world's second largest economy, it wants to be the world's first largest economy. It has a lot more in its toolkit it can use to to to to exercise its influence in the global stage. It's done this through investments, loans, infrastructure. This has really brought China unprecedented power and influence over the last few years. There's really no reason why China would join in on sort of blatant military revisionism in the way that Russia has if it has other options, it's not the first option.

Michael O'Hanlon Thank you. Now, I'd like to ask you one more question, but also pose it for the whole panel to the extent anybody else wants to address it. And that is, of course, the question of your best assessment, your best guess of how Beijing looks at the Ukraine war and assesses its prospects for successfully attacking Taiwan and whether the odds of that possibility have increased or decreased in any market way or any way we can have any confidence in it. I mean, maybe that, maybe they have changed, but we just can't tell. And I'm going to be curious about your take as well as anybody else who wants to speak to that question.

By the way, the other big question that I'm hoping that we'll hear from, but I'm not going to, not going to dwell on it with each person is, you know, Dave Petraeus' famous question about Iraq, tell me how this ends, which is the number one question probably on most of our minds. But that's something that people will probably want to hear and maybe some, some of you will ask about when we go to the audience. But, but first, Patti, to you on Taiwan, do you have any best guess as to whether the Ukraine war is making a war over Taiwan more or less likely in the short term?

Patricia Kim Well, the war is not over yet. And so I think it'll really matter how it ends and that will have lessons for Beijing. But certainly at this point, I think the war in Ukraine has made it clear to China, but to everyone else, that just because you have superior military capabilities doesn't mean you'll necessarily prevail or that you know, something you think is a special military operation, a quick operation will go exactly as planned. And so that's been made very clear to China. And so hopefully this should give the PLA some pause

and sort of make them question sort of their, their, their confidence over various military scenarios over Taiwan.

I think China has also seen the United States and its allies, many of the top economies, be able to rally together and sanction Russia. And that's you know, that's certainly eye opening for them. But this has also sped up Chinese efforts to, to erode the dollar dominance, for instance, and to be able to go around Western sanctions. So you've seen China and Russia increase the use of rubles and yen in their trading, and this is, this number is only set to go up. They've also been pushing hard, even before the invasion of Ukraine to work with SCO partners, Shanghai Cooperation Organization partners, for instance, to create alternate financial mechanisms and so on, so that the West, so that if there is some sort of contingency down the line, that they have options. So I think we've seen movement in that way.

In terms of where does this end? How does China fit in? I think as we've discussed in previous panels, we don't have a clear roadmap for a just peace for Ukraine. But I think it is important that when that kind of road map emerges, that we reach out diplomatically to China and ensure that they can use their influence vis a vis Russia to push it in that direction. I don't think China will take on really harsh measures or, or do things that will jeopardize their relationship with Russia. As I said, I think they've really prioritized this relationship. They don't want to tank it. But at the same time, China has a clear stake in global stability. And so I think the way that President Biden and Chancellor Scholz has rallied Xi Jinping to make clear that he opposes the use or threat of nuclear weapons in Ukraine by any power has been very important.

I think the same sort of diplomacy should be used to get Chinese endorsement for whatever peace roadmap emerges, and it'll be important. It'll be frustrating because they're not going to be in lockstep with the U.S. and its like-minded partners. But it's an important player to work with nevertheless, because China, at the end of the day, is Russia's greatest trade partner, its most strategic ally of consequence. And so it's, it's important that they be engaged.

Michael O'Hanlon Fantastic. Thank you. Tara, welcome again to Brookings. Wonderful to have you here on this glorious stage, in this wonderful room and with amazing audience. So let me just, there's a lot on the table. Please go where you like with your opening thoughts but including how you believe the war is now being seen in Paris and other parts of Europe. Over to you.

Tara Varma Thanks so much, Mike, and thanks for, for your kind words. It's, it's lovely to be here. Europeans have undergone a number of shocks since the beginning of the war. I'll focus on two here. The first one, of course, is that war was back on the continent. The very existence of the European Union was basically to prevent any scenario of war. And so the European Union is and remains a peace project. We came out of Second World War with a massive trauma, the Holocaust trauma, of course. And the idea was to create a political entity that would ensure that war would never happen again. Let's be clear, war happened in Europe,

around the European Union in the past 70 years, but it didn't hit us so hard as the war in Ukraine did. And let's also be clear there was already a war in Ukraine in 2014, but this time around it felt different. Even though the theater was European, it felt like, like a global attack. And I think this is where the second shock happened for the Europeans.

There were many— and my colleague Aslı touched upon this earlier in the previous panel— there were many countries in the world that didn't feel like this was a global attack on the international system. Yes, there was a war and Russia did violate Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but in a way that was a European problem. And I think for us to see that there were a number of countries, maybe a majority of countries in the beginning that didn't see this as an attack on our general system was, was really baffling. And we struggled with that for a long time. I think there were massive diplomatic efforts that were put out by the European Union and by the United States to ensure that that the U.N. General Assembly actually a majority of votes would go in favor of the resolution sanctioning Russia. And really a massive work was put into that. I think there was a massive diplomatic work behind the curtains right now going on so that there is a, a resolution that gets also a majority of the countries to condemn Russia's actions again.

But we are struggling with that. We have a first shock that we dealt with. We discussed the dependencies that the Europeans puts on Russian oil and gas and the necessity to basically move away from these dependencies. The realization that there needed to be some form of efforts put into European defense within NATO and also within the European framework, that takes a lot of time. The Germans went, started at least a process that they called the Zeitenwende, so turning point, change of era, the idea that Germany was actually going to see itself as a security provider in Europe, for Europe, that is a massive change. What Olaf Scholz announced a year ago is that he was going to put a €100 billion additional budgetary line actually to provide munitions and a number of military equipments. That was quite a shift.

And what we've seen are also a number of sanction packages that were voted by the European Union against Russia in a record amount of time. Six packages in the first five months of the war. That honestly, I don't think would have been possible without the level of political unity within Europeans, amongst the Europeans, and with the trans-Atlantic American ally as well. But again, going back to the second shock, the question is— and it's the question that we have today on our panel— is how this impacts the international order. I think where we are still struggling and I say we I guess as Europeans, but I think we need to define the “we” here, because that's the big question.

We talk about the Global South. I think this expression encapsulate precisely what is wrong with our thinking. Let's say we as the West is Europe at large and the U.S. and Canada and Australia at large. We're talking about roughly 1 billion people. And we're qualifying the remaining 7 billion of people on the planet as the global south. So putting Central America, South America, the whole continent of Africa, 54 countries, the

whole continent of Asia together, denying voluntarily or not, the idea that these countries would have countries, regional entities, would have their own interests, and that we would actually need to convince them that we could be on a global side together, that they don't need to be on our side. Because I think precisely when we talk about the global South, we make the argument that the Russians are pushing that it's the West against the rest.

And so we need to be very mindful of what we're trying to say here. What we're trying to say is that Russia attacked Ukraine and it is an attack on the international order that we built after World War Two. Why is that important? That is important because we need to find a way to live together. It will not always prevent wars. It will not always prevent attacks, but for better actually, of a solution, it is what we have right now. We need to make it better in many ways. We need to make it more democratic, more participative. But we need to ensure that we bring in other nations, other countries, and not qualify them that way. Because I think otherwise, we'll never win that argument.

Michael O'Hanlon Thank you. I just want to do one follow up question with you, please, before moving on to Natan, which is about France and about President Macron. And we saw him try very hard to prevent this war. And I had a lot of admiration for his effort, even though the odds were always against him. Do you see him playing a major role in 2023 or beyond in trying to bring peace back? And do you think that he will be capable of doing that? Hopefully he'll have some help. But do you think there's any special role for France and specifically for President Macron in this war going forward and especially in any peace negotiations that may begin?

Tara Varma I think Macron certainly feels like he has this special role. I mean, he thought of it, he thinks of himself as a leader in European foreign policy, he thinks there is a role, special role for Europe right now on the international stage. This is why he often talks about a sovereign Europe, he's not the only one talking about it now, but he talks about it quite a lot. And he did, I mean, you mentioned his efforts with Putin, he's been he had been trying since 2019 to be one of the people Putin would talk to in Europe because he's been thinking about the fact that we need to build a different security architecture in Europe, one that means that we need to talk to Russia. And I think what he hasn't said so much until now is that he thinks that because if we don't deal with Russia, then there, there are dangers that are always going to be out there for European security and that we won't be able to push Russia away completely.

Geographically, Russia is there. And so basically his idea, I think— my interpretation of his idea— is that there is no choice but to find a deal with Russia. And so he's been the one sometimes with Germany to say that, you know, we need to find a special place for Russia. So there are a number of things that he said. He spoke of security guarantees for Russia also at some point last year. But he's also been very steadfast and clear that France and the European Union are bringing a steadfast and unwavering support to Ukraine winning

this war, and that it is, as, as Constanze said also earlier, in Europe's interest, in the world's interest, that Ukraine win this war.

So he's been saying that. And I think he also feels a special responsibility because he tried to build this dialogue with Putin. It didn't work. He tried to do so until the very last days leading up to the war. And also when the war broke, France was presiding the Council of the European Union. And so France was not presiding the EU but was basically the one member state in the EU that had to be, had to have a moderating role. And even though it was only a moderating role, I think he still saw the potential for leadership there. And so he pushed, he and others pushed a lot for sanctions to be implemented against Russia very, very early on. And I think because France was the presiding country then he has, this special responsibility that he feels I think he felt it prior to the war, but there is also a sense that France has a special role, of course, in European security. France is the only nuclear weapon states in the European Union since the UK has left. France has the third diplomatic network in the world, a huge military. So I think there is also a sense that for him, France has a role to play.

Michael O'Hanlon Thank you. Natan, two questions to you, my friend. One is, how has the war in Ukraine affected the broader Middle East? And then second, how has the Middle East been trying to influence that war to the extent Israel and other countries have had some role so far? Over to you.

Natan Sachs Thanks so much, Mike, and welcome to Tara. I'll try to be telegraphic in the interest of time. You know, we've talked a lot, we've heard a lot from, from our colleagues about countries that are a bit on the fence or trying to sort of hedge and not completely sure what side they are on. I think that's very true for many countries in the Middle East. Part of the story there is that Russia to some degree is in the Middle East and has been in the Middle East for a long time, in particular in Syria. And that's affected first Syrians dramatically and it affects them in the last two days in very dramatic ways. My colleague Ravi Dhingra [phonetic] and other colleagues like Aslı have done excellent commentary on that. The huge tragedy in Turkey, of course, but also in Syria, among some of the weakest populations, and affected very much by Russia's presence in Syria and the availability of humanitarian aid, the possibility of humanitarian aid coming through.

But that also lends itself to the fact that the Middle East has been affected dramatically by this war, whether it wants to choose sides or not. The first is simply the prices of energy and of grain. Grain affecting places like Syria, of course, thankfully, partly because of the UN efforts, the Turkish efforts in the backdrop, also American State Department efforts to try and mitigate that problem, which has been mitigated quite successfully. We should remember that in the early days of this war a year ago, we were foreseeing realistically a much, much worse situation if the price of grain had gone way up. This was truly and still could be a major world problem that has been partly averted.

But energy prices have gone up and that affects the Middle East dramatically in at least three ways. First, of course, it fills the coffers of energy producers in the Gulf who mostly in OPEC and together with Russia and OPEC+ and that dramatically affects their calculation, also explains some of their hesitancy, of course, to necessarily choose sides. Secondly, the price of natural gas, which is mostly local, but liquid, liquefied natural gas, has raised dramatically. And so you can see, for example, Egypt diverting natural gas towards liquefication has two major facilities, for export, that won't last forever, of course, but the price is very high right now in Europe. And that gives a big opportunity, which leads to the third energy effect, which is consumers.

Most of the Middle East, of course, are not wealthy Gulf people. Mostly, most of them consume energy, including Egyptians who are a very big chunk of the Middle East. And they are on the suffering side of that grain, but also, of course, energy. And then there's a third point, which is dramatic, and that is the emergence of this Iranian-Russian alliance that really does change the geostrategic situation. They've already been allies— that's too strong— they've already been partners of sorts in Syria of course, they've fought on the same side. Russia has offered dramatic support for the Assad regime, as has Iran and its proxy, the Lebanese Hezbollah. But now we see, you know, it's a pretty historic moment.

We're seeing a major Middle East powers supplying weapons to Russia, no less, to fight its war in Europe. Russia is not, I wouldn't say dependent on Iranian weapons, but is very much using Iranian support. We've seen reports this week of attempts to or plans to construct facilities to produce UAVs, and we may see missiles in the future. So we're seeing a real dramatic cooperation there that could have real ramifications in the future. It does not mean Russia is forsaking all its other interests, whether it, be it Turkey, be it Israel, be it anyone else, but certainly its allies with Iran is important.

I'd add the China element there that we heard before. There's, of course, the Chinese, China's importing a large number of, large amounts of energy from Iran despite the sanctions, and in that sense is very important. So we have a real potential here for something of a mini realignment. No need to take it too far, but it is very important of course, others are observing that very closely. That affects the JCPOA chances of return there. Of course, P5 plus one includes the whole P5 plus, the whole P5, that includes Russia and of course, China. But it also affects Iranian motivations and U.S. motivations in doing this. So in sum, the Middle East is dramatically affected, even though it hopes not to be.

But to Tara's point, it very much does not see this as a domestic issue. If anything, it sees its own interests and it is a wide thing, its interest be it in Syria, be it in Libya, be it elsewhere affected very directly and everyone trying to hedge their own bets. Israel has been raised as the country I know best, Israel clearly a, clearly an American ally, clearly knows exactly what it wants to be part of, it has no qualms about that. But it also sees dramatic interests with the way, with a country that it defines as its neighbor to the north, Russia and

Syria, and therefore has no qualms of even angering, even angering some people in Washington, it thinks unfairly, but nonetheless doing so for the sake of its interests with Russia.

Michael O'Hanlon Fantastic. Thank you. Bruce, I'm going to go to you next. So forgive the baseball analogy, Washington doesn't have Ryan Zimmerman, Bryce Harper or Juan Soto anymore, but I still have you bat and clean up on my panel. So there's a lot to talk about. Over to you.

Bruce Jones Okay. That's, that's going to be hard to live up to, but ah, thank you. It's better than when he made me feel really old at the beginning with the gray beard comment. So now I feel better.

Natan Sachs My first time.

Bruce Jones Exactly. Look, I want to make an economic, strategic and a diplomatic point before I do, let me say, you know, Fiona at the beginning said this is a crisis that changes things. And that's of course true. But crises also reveal things that have already been true, but were not really the focus of our, of our conversation, and I want to focus a little bit more on that. Three things that I think that the crisis have revealed and where, where they play in our broader debates about the international order. On the economic side, there's been lots of discussion about the sanctions leading into this in the, in the and in the implementation. I want to focus on the Black Sea. Vastly more than this town understands, the world economy moves by sea. 85% of commercial trade, 70% of energy trade, 80% of agricultural trade moves by sea. You take a body of water and turn it into a conflict zone, and you interrupt global supply chains at a massive level. And we saw that in this case, the consequences are global and economic and immediate.

By the way, on the blocks I was, spent most of, a couple of weeks ago in Geneva talking to colleagues there. And among them were people who are handling the implementation of the Black Sea deal. Two points there. One, they're very clear it does not happen without Erdogan. You know, it's not a, it's Erdogan's deal with the U.N. as a kind of framework more than the other way around. And second point, that it's in real trouble in terms of renewal in March. There are major problems in the European Commission's regulatory, I won't bore you with the details, but the kind of implementation is bogging down on the Russian side and real chance that it might not be renewed, which puts 80 million people at risk of starvation in a very short period of time. So it's very dramatic stakes and the, in the maritime trade consequences of the war.

On the strategic, this is a broader than Ukraine point, but Ukraine is now the largest of what have become a series of crises over the last decade or so where we have seen two nuclear states involved in— Fiona was right, we don't have the right terms for this— this is more than proxy wars short of direct war, proxy plus, direct minus. You know, we'll come up with a vocabulary, but this is something more than proxy war. And we have watched over the last decade or so the beginnings of an erosion of what was for a very long time a very sort of deeply held guardrail against going beyond proxy war when it involved nuclear powers. And I think we have to have a kind of laser focus on what it means that we're watching the erosion of that guardrail, not

just in Ukraine, but more broadly Ukraine now by far and with the largest case of that of that phenomenon. Even if we avoid the risk of nuclear escalation, we still have to try to understand what it means that we've moved into a phase where two nuclear powers will be involved in, you know, war short of full-blown war, but more than more than proxy war.

Third, the diplomatic point— and this touches on some comments that I thought Aslı made very well, and that Tara made, made well as well— on the, the non-Western world. And to me, if I look at the kind of diplomatic question of how we've worked to rally the world around this crisis, it really is a Janus-faced reality. I'm, I think, the way that this administration has rallied the West, you know, you can throw around the word masterful, but combining genuine pressure with genuine prudence, with mobilization, with passion, with, I mean, that's a very, very tough challenge and a very deep crisis. And I do think the rallying of the, of the free world, the rallying of the Western world, the non-geographical Western world, the political Western world has been very impressive in this. I think it's a much more mixed bag in the rest of the world for the reasons that Tara raised and Aslı raised. I think the phrase the new middle powers is the right one, not the Global South, we're not exercised about the fact that we lose votes with [inaudible].

But when you're, when you don't have strong support from Israel, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, India and Turkey and Indonesia, you do have to wonder, you know, is our message resonating? And I think the administration makes and it's not just limited to this administration, the kind of strategic community, I'll spare the audience my diatribe about why, why the concept of a rules-based order is so analytically and diplomatically flawed. But trying to rally the non-Western world around the rules-based order does not work. I can elaborate that if it is of interest, rallying in around this framework of the division between democracies and autocracies does not work. We have to re, we have to do a much better job of understanding the interests of these major players from the South who do not see the world the same way we do, who have much deeper interests in China's economic rise. They don't see that issue the way we do. And, you know, we've gotten a lot of that stuff wrong. And I don't think that issue is going to be hugely germane to the actual conduct of the war in Ukraine.

But all three of these issues, the maritime question, the proxy war plus question and the beyond the West question, I think are hugely consequential and cautionary tales if we think about the next set of things that could happen in my mind, thinking about a Taiwan crisis and thinking about what Putin does next. Because remember, for all the fact that he has dramatically degraded his capacity for land warfare, Kori was right about that I think, nothing in this has diminished the potency of his submarine fleet, and it's only to a very minor degree diminished the potency of the Russian navy, which is still a more powerful entity than the Chinese Navy. For all of the fact of our focus here on China's Navy. So, you know, the, that piece doesn't go away. And thinking about the, the consequences of fighting wars in the maritime space when so much of the

world economy relies on maritime-based transport, thinking about the, the risk of escalation among nuclear powers and thinking about this question of how do we rally more than just the narrowly defined Western world, I think will be very consequential in the years to come.

Michael O'Hanlon Outstanding. Thank you. I'd like to now bring all of you in, or at least three of you at first. And so maybe we'll take three questions and then come back to the panel. And if you can be specific, please, about which panelist you might wish at least to start the response. And please limit yourself to one question a piece, because I'm guessing there are a few in the room. So we'll start here with the gentleman in about the seventh row. Please wait for a mic and then introduce yourself if you could. And again, if you can say who you'd like to begin the answer, that would be great.

Audience Member Thank you. I'm Brian Frydenborg with Real Context News. This question is for Patti. When you get away from the think pieces and you just look at the dynamics on the ground and the dynamics internationally as they are now and as they're moving now, I feel like you're increasingly looking at a situation where Putin basically destroys the Russian army, the Russian economy, and is removed from power somehow in Russia at some point. And we're looking at the idea of a post-Putin world. And I'm wondering in that scenario, how do you look at China's role? Do you think that China moves towards, you know what the whole us against the West thing, there's no more us, are we going to go this alone or are we going to shift focus and try to cooperate more even while taking, you know, not a lockstep position, but just a more moderated, thoughtful, maybe sometimes opposition, but one in which cooperation is more heavily featured than it is now? Or do you think that China digs in and becomes more hardcore as like the lone standard bearer against the West? Thank you.

Michael O'Hanlon Thank you. And then there was a question back here and the gentleman in the black shirt.

Audience Member My question for Tara. Hey, this is MG, Mugahed. I want to take your view of Ukraine and Russia War to something more worse. Yemen as the world worst, largest humanitarian crisis in the world, according to the United Nations reported, but two, 24 million on result of famine and hunger. The question when it comes to the European Union and unifying policy toward Ukrainian people, can we have that if that exist, if that exists, saying that European Union has unifying policy toward Ukraine, can we have that standard duplicate in Yemen or other places where they have conflict? Thank you.

Michael O'Hanlon Thank you. Is there a third question before we come back? Woman here in the, in the red on the third row.

Audience Member Hello, my name's Allison Shely. And my question is for the clean-up batter of the panel. If deterrence, if doomsday is no longer scary enough to prevent war, what does this mean for arms control? Is good, bad, indifferent?

Michael O'Hanlon Excellent. Patti, why don't we just start and work our way down?

Patricia Kim Great. Well, thank you. In terms of how is China thinking about a potential post-Putin world? I don't think it is. I think the last thing it wants is for China or for Putin to be brought down. And I didn't mention this up top, but I think a large part of the China-Russia alignment today has been driven by this personal relationship between Xi Jinping and Putin. These two leaders have really strengthened their leadership since Xi came onto the top of the political system in 2012. They've met, I think it's now 39 times in person, it may soon be 40 if Xi heads over to Moscow, as the Russian state media has been saying he will this spring. And so there's very much a personal tie here. And I think that's part of the reason why the Chinese political system hasn't been able to backpedal as much from this relationship and say, oh, you know, maybe Xi was wrong. And, you know, another thing that unites these two powers and unites Putin and Xi is this deep fear of color revolutions and being thrown out by outside powers. So I think the last thing that Beijing would want to see is some sort of, you know, arrangement where Putin has to go or I just can't see China ever backing that, although it could come to that point.

And then, you know, then the Chinese are pretty pragmatic. And depending on how that happened, you know, they, they, they'd figure out who the next person in charge is and move on. In terms of your question about, you know, what happens if Putin is gone, is there no more us against the West? Well, in that us, China sees Russia, as I said before, as a key partner, but not the only partner. It sees other parts of the developing world or the global South, for lack of a better term, as this important contingent in rallying and eroding what they see again as this Western dominated, Western-centric order. And so in that there are Shanghai Cooperation Organization members, there's the BRICS, there are a number of alternate centers of powers that that Beijing and Russia want to work together to sort of counterbalance against the West. And so it's not really just Russia that they see in this us. But yeah, thanks for that question.

Aslı Aydıntaşbaş I'm sorry. I feel I'm really not qualified to answer your question on Yemen. I am not a middle East expert at all. What I can tell you is on Ukraine, the European Union and the U.S. felt like it was in their interest. And I may, maybe I shouldn't put the two at the same level, but the European Union for sure felt like it was in its security interest to save Ukraine this time. It was quite different in 2014. There was a negotiation at the time, but that didn't involve include all the European partners, all the European stakeholders. This time it's quite different. But on Yemen, I'm sorry, I have to deflect, I don't know.

Michael O'Hanlon Before I ask the time to potentially respond to that, let me pick up and Constanze and I, along with a colleague, David Wessel, and our fantastic research team led by Alejandra and Sophie and Mallika, we're building a Ukraine index that we expect to unveil in the next couple of weeks in partnership with The Washington Post. And we're going to try to track some of the trends in how the war has been going that will, we hope, provide some sort of visual and numerical grist for conversations going forward.

I just wanted to mention that in the context of saying that the European Union and Europe more generally, including Great Britain, have really done more than they sometimes get credit for in this debate. We should certainly as friendly allies and rivals, rivalrous allies sometimes point out where each other could do a little better. But the sheer number of refugees that European countries have taken in and the amount of financial assistance really are quite striking. And the unity that we've seen so far, I think is quite striking. So those will be some of the factoids or visual representations that I hope you'll see within a couple of weeks. So forgive me for the advanced advertisement, but now, Natan, over to you, please.

Natan Sachs Okay, thanks. I'm not a Yemen expert, too, but I would say that the chances of a unified position in Europe or elsewhere is very low, unfortunately. There is grave concern and I think universal concern, but first, it's a very low magnitude considering the actual size of the population in Yemen and the actual size of the tragedy there. It is something that unfortunately, it is very low on the priority list and it's a bit of the reverse of what Tara was describing before. Right. Europe sees Ukraine and what's happening there as a European problem, and therefore we see this huge rallying effect also aided by the American administration's action on this. But Yemen is very far away and frankly, not high even on the strategic level in the Middle East itself. It's one of the poorest countries, if not the poorest in the Arab world.

Second, there, of course, inside the Middle East, you see very divergent interests and very divergent positions between the Saudis versus, of course, the Iranians, but also many shades of others of how to deal with this precisely, how much pressure on Saudi Arabia. And lastly, I'll just point to the fact that even the United States, if you think over the span of the last four years, we've had widely divergent policies on this from the Trump administration that embraced the Saudi position, a very strong anti-Houthi approach, to Biden who at least initially tries to untangle the United States position in that regard, a rather stringent approach to Saudi Arabia, then a reversal of that, although not on the Yemen question.

In other words, in short, no. Where you do, I think, see a better chance of advancement is first that we do see the ceasefire holding so far and we do see a widespread desire, I think increasingly even among some of the warring parties, to allow humanitarian aid into to try to see a beginning to the end of the tragedy. So obviously, we're not at the worst point of this tragedy anymore, and I hope we don't go back to that. But to see that the world would actually unite, certainly in Europe, that's busy right now, sorry to be the bearer of bad news. I see zero chance of that.

Michael O'Hanlon And finally, my youthful clean-up batter.

Bruce Jones I want to actually briefly comment on this other wars question and then on the escalation question. And so and not on Yemen per se, but on, you know, can we tolerate large scale consequences in other contexts? You know, you talked about the Europeans being sort of shocked in a way that lots of other parts of the world weren't stridently rallying to, you know, this violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty in

Ukraine. Ethiopia Eritrea war, I was involved in response to that, it was also a crisis of sovereignty, it was also a crisis of territory. 300,000 people died in that war. Did we see the president of the United States mobilizing the free, well, no, we barely notice that it happened. Right. So to my perspective, when you're, in your, when you're outside the political west, we should not be surprised that they don't see us calling them to the defense of our interests in a very receptive way. And that's just one of 100 examples I could give of that of that phenomenon.

On the arms control or escalation crisis. So Fiona since you're back and I picked up on your question of, wars that are beyond proxy wars, less than direct wars, right? And we've now had, at least by my count, at least four in the last decade, where one nuclear armed power is directly involved in killing the soldiers of another nuclear armed power, although not yet fire on fire, direct on direct, right, using advanced weaponry. The closest we've come, strangely, is China and India, who kill each other on the line of control. But they do it with like clubs and sticks. It's sort of strange and limited in a very different kind of way. Nonetheless, we are, we are engaged. We have been now engaged in several contexts where nuclear armed states are very close to direct war versus the kind of way we thought about this in the Cold War.

So, you know, one of my, one of my deep analytical flaws is I often see both sides of a problem. And I think that might be wrong here. But the two sides I see, on the one hand, it keeps me up at night that we are, we appear to be eroding this long-standing norm against not going beyond proxy warfare with other nuclear powers, and that we could trip into direct hostilities between nuclear powers with all the escalation risks that that entails. The other way to tell the story, though, is to say we are learning that two nuclear armed powers can engage in hostilities short of direct full war without escalating to the nuclear level. And if you think that some sort of militarized crisis in the Western Pacific is likely, which I do, then that's reassuring. I mean, in a kind of cold, awful way that we might actually be able to fight in some, especially if we keep, keep the war confined to the sea, there's a good recent article described it, if we can keep our clash with the Chinese in the maritime space, that it might be possible to engage in that kind of war fighting without escalation to the nuclear level. But that's a kind of very cold comfort at best.

And I think I'm, I'm more worried about the first that we're eroding these boundaries, the kind of normative boundaries, so to speak, against direct military action between two nuclear armed powers. Arms control is completely and utterly moribund. There's one treaty left standing between ourselves and the Russians. Everyone else has, you know, they violated, we've abandoned, whatever it is, the U.N. negotiations in every part of the arms control totally, totally moribund. And I don't think that's likely to change any time soon I think unless and until, not unless, until China has significantly advanced its nuclear stockpile and is willing to engage in some sort of arms limitation negotiations with us, I don't think we're likely to see the resumption of meaningful arms control, whether conventional arms control conversations come out of Ukraine and Europe,

perhaps. But that's the biggest risk since we've already decimated Russia's, where they've self-decimated their conventional arms capability.

Michael O'Hanlon Well, until Amy Nelson's book comes out next year and tells us how to revive and rethink arms control. But Natan, you want to make a final point and then we will wrap.

Natan Sachs Well, it's a complete aside, but I think there's an interesting, there are new realms where— Bruce can tell us much more— but they're realms where we don't have arms control of any kind in terms of cyber in terms of space, where actually regulation is direly needed of some kind, even just rules of the game. So that would be an area that's very interested in, that's about the amount I'm willing to talk on these topics.

Michael O'Hanlon Thank you all very much for being here and for your patience and participation and best wishes, of course, across the way to our friends in Ukraine and to the entire region as we hope to see this terrible war end this year. Thanks for coming.